



The Board's Report on UBU activities 2020-2021

UBU Board work

At the General Assembly in 2020, the maximum of seven people were elected (+ three substitutes) for UBU's Board. The new board members were Emil Risum Brøgger, Carlos Arregui, Henrik Bregnhøj, Benedikte Krogsgaard, Emmely Vigsø, Kristine Duelund Vilsgaard and Viktoria Ourania (Vinia) Hatzidaki. The board constituted itself on June 30th 2020 with Emil Risum Brøgger as chairman, Vinia Hatzidaki as vice chairman and Emmely Vigsø as treasurer.

Eight board meetings have been held mainly as online meetings due to the Covid-19 situation, but also partly in the private premises of the board members. At the meetings we discussed various issues related to managing the main activities in UBU including:

- Supporting the India group in relation to our project in West Bengal (Sustainable Water Resource Management, or SWRM).
- Supporting the Ecuador group in discussions of what project opportunities to seek in spite of Covid-restrictions making it impossible to visit potential project sites
- Planning and conducting an Extraordinary General Assembly in September 2020, where a statutory change was approved making it easier for UBU to comply with bank requirements. It was also discussed to change the official Danish name of UBU, but the suggestion was not passed.
- Updating UBU's financial management with the formulation of accounting rules of procedure and the implementation of a new accounting system, ensuring that we live up to CISU's requirements.
- Formulating administrative guidelines and reporting formats for the UDERF (UBU Disaster Emergency Relief Fund), as discussed at the General Assembly in 2020. The objective of the UDERF is to provide flexible and rapid humanitarian funding enabling existing partners of UBU within the onset of an acute humanitarian crisis to initiate provision of emergency relief to affected populations to meet urgent needs and prevent further loss of life or escalation of suffering. Budgeting of funds to the UDERF is decided on an annual basis during the General Assembly.

This year we unfortunately had to cancel the annual Christmas party due to Covid-19 restrictions, but a virtual New Year's bar was held. The board hopes that the next board will investigate whether a summer party can be arranged instead.

Public relations

Since the last General Assembly held on June 17, three news articles have been published, which is less than previous years. This is mainly because of the Covid-19 situation. Our goal is to produce articles with updates regarding UBU's activities in both India and Denmark.

Only one newsletter has been sent out since last year. We still publish via MailChimp. Every time a new member joins UBU via our homepage, they will receive a welcome letter.

On Facebook we now have 322 likes and 334 followers in total, which is around the same as last year.



Activities in India

JGVK and their work has been challenged by unusually many negative events. The election of the local government in West Bengal in April recently led to violent attacks on supporters of the losing party in some of our villages. They are also - like the rest of India - this spring experiencing an extraordinary lack of rainfalls, so many more tubewells have run dry since February or March. The COVID-19 situation in India started to get better for a while but has worsened with the country now holding the record of daily cases. Partial lockdowns and curfew have become the new normal and the situation is severe. In addition, people are still suffering from the aftermath of the super cyclone Amphan that hit the Sundarbans in May 2020. During these uncertain times, JGVK has still managed to continue many of the SWRM project activities, due to the skills, dedication and passion of the staff. During lockdown, the activities have included agriculture data collection, groundwater level, tide gauge and rain gauge measurements. During periods where restrictions have been lifted, activities have included workshops, Farmers Field School trainings, and house visits as well. As a result of the corona situation, JGVK has conducted more workshops on hygiene and COVID-19 specifically. JGVK has also succeeded in arranging several Block-level activities in the latter part of 2020 and start 2021. February 2021 was particularly busy for JGVK, both in general and for the SWRM project: Apart from their regular work, they held a three day long Annual Programme which included a visit from the Governor (i.e. highest leader) of West Bengal, and short after a visit from the Danish ambassador Mr. Freddy Svane, the Head of Political & Economic Section at the Danish Embassy Mr. Steen Malthe, Consul General at the Royal Danish Consulate Kolkata Mrs. Smita Bajoria.

Last summer, the UBU India group did some reorganisation and decided to split the work into three working groups: Agriculture, Groundwater, and Hygiene. This to make the work sessions more efficient and allow members to tune in on the field they are most interested in. The members of each working group decide on meeting times themselves (approx. one meeting per month). At the "normal" monthly UBU India meetings, members can catch up with each other and get up to date on the work of the other working groups as well as the work of the Board. The split-up of the work will be reviewed this summer.

UBU has been in close contact with JGVK the last couple of months to discuss a possible project extension until May 2023 where the last five months would primarily consist of monitoring and data collection. In the project extension, extra focus will be put on hygiene in the household, increased sharing of experiences amongst villagers and farmers (transitioning to "farmers teach farmers"), and water-related assignments for the school students. UBU will send the project extension application to CISU at the end of May.