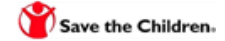




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Harande



The Environmentally Sustainable Way to Project Closeout

On the 5th of March, 2020, thirty-five Harande staff members from all sectors of the project came together in Sevare, Mali, for a workshop on “Environmental Considerations for Project Closeout and Sustainable Exit Strategies”. The workshop was facilitated by Sun Mountain International, Harande’s technical partner in environmental compliance and sustainability, and had as its objective to train participants on the importance of considering environmental consequences of project implementation throughout the project cycle, including after the end of the project when the activity has been handed back to the beneficiary community.

To do so, participants were walked through a number of illustrative examples of activities similar to those implemented by Harande, in which direct and indirect environmental impacts were not considered from day one at the onset of activity design. Participants were also invited to share examples they had come across in the field of development activities implemented by other projects that did not survive the end of the program due to poor exit strategies.

Several exercises were conducted in the development of environmentally sustainable exit strategies for the Harande project. After being divided in groups according to their respective components (namely Agriculture and Irrigation; Health, Nutrition and WASH; Construction; and Micro-enterprises), participants were invited to reflect on the various activities they had implemented so far under the Harande Development Food Assistance Program. Each component group reviewed the long-term environmental impacts associated with their activities, as well as the mitigation measures to limit, reduce, or eliminate these potential direct and indirect negative impacts. In doing so, they identified challenges that may come up in order to ensure the continuity of these mitigation measures by beneficiary communities. The most recurrent challenges included lack of financial funds to continue best practices, lack of technical capacity and support, and discontinuity of best practices due to loss of interest or relevance of these practices.

Group discussions revealed that most of the challenges in ensuring long-term sustainability of best practices had already been addressed with solutions built into most of Harande’s activities right from the design phase of these activities. For instance, in order to address issues associated with lack of technical capacity and support, Harande collaborated with extension services during all training initiatives in order for them to continue disseminating best practices and providing support to both beneficiary and non-beneficiary communities, even after the departure of the Harande project. Likewise, community members, local authorities, and government representatives were involved in community-owned infrastructure design, construction, and hand-over. They were also made aware of their roles and responsibilities in ensuring the sustainable operation and maintenance of this communal infrastructure beyond the life of the project itself.



Photos 1 and 2: Participants at the workshop

However, in cases where gaps were identified, each component group drafted next steps to ensure that any pending actions in their environmental exit strategies would be adequately implemented before the end of the project. For example, in the case of micro-enterprises and promoting youth entrepreneurship, it was determined that more could be done to raise awareness among these entrepreneurs about the impacts of their activities (especially waste management) and overall environmental stewardship. To address this challenge, it was decided to continue training these young entrepreneurs in proper waste management following the guidelines outlined in Harande's Integrated Waste Management Plan. Team members also decided to involve the various Chambers of Arts and Trades in the capacity building of these entrepreneurs, in order to continue the monitoring of the compliance of these micro-enterprises with best practices in waste management once the Harande project has come to an end.

By the end of this one-day workshop, team members and leads from each component group of the Harande project had developed an exit strategy for their component. Each exit strategy included next steps, a set deadline for its implementation before the end of the project, a responsible party (both within Harande and among the beneficiary community), as well as the financial and technical resources necessary to implement each action. The overall implementation of each exit strategy would be overseen by the Harande Environmental Safeguards Specialist, Sadio Ba, all the way through project closeout.



Photo 3: A participant from the "Agriculture and Irrigation" component presenting their exit strategy

Overall, this workshop was very well received and provided participants with insights to understand the importance of environmental considerations in project closeout, as well as the resources to develop concrete plans to ensure the continued success of their activities beyond the end of the project.