**Sustainability and Exit Planning for Care Group Approach: Workshop**

**Attendance:** Hadija Rajab, Valiant Ezabuku, Hadad Salim, (Directors), 4 x RAVASA Social Workers, 1 x RAVASA Project Coordinator, 1 x Finance Manger, 1 X Safeguarding Manager

**Methodology:**

The existing literature and guidance materials on exit strategies in international cooperation frequently recommend principles for good practice. Examples include:

 Plan for exit from the outset

 Think about sustainability early on

 Consult with partners and stakeholders regularly

 Communicate constantly

Islamic University in Uganda facilitated a workshop for planning the exit from the Care Group project that RAVASA is going to be implementing in Bidi Bidi Refugee settlement. RAVASA (implementing partner) staff attended the workshop (3 x RAVASA Directors, 4 x RAVASA Social Workers, 1 x RAVASA Project coordinator, 1 x Finance Manger, 1 X Safeguarding Manager) to consult and have input into the process.

The outreach desk used a presentation to introduce the concept of exit planning and provide an introduction to how the Donor looks at exit planning for Child Focused Programmes (P:\Departments\Programmes\Countries\Africa\Uganda\RAVASA\2022 Care Group\Supporting and Required documents). The presentation then promoted discussion around exit planning and how project design includes certain elements, along with activities that will be ongoing throughout to ensure a principled and informed approach to closing a community programme. The below outlines the exit plan and criteria.

**The Exit Criteria for Child Focused Programmes/Care Group is as follows:**

1. **As far as possible, ensure the work we have done is sustainable – this could be continuation of services or lasting changes in beneficiaries’ lives.**
   1. *For the new Care Group project, a special focus has been made on the work that the partners will be doing with the children’s main care giver. This includes intensive backyard agriculture training to be able to provide a range of fresh produce for consumption. RAVASA will also be supporting families with access to market with excess produce. The aim being that families will have a sustainable food source, and potential income to support the children in the case that RAVASA/ Donor is no longer able to fund the project.*
   2. *The partner will have training sessions monthly to introduce new modules of caregiving approach to the mother and father Care groups created within the community through the care group volunteers who will be trained prior to these sessions.*
   3. *The partner will create links between the community and the Health centres to ensure beneficiaries have access to the appropriate medical support and encourage mothers to attend trainings about breastfeeding within the health centres to build their knowledge on the importance of breastfeeding of children below 2 years.*
   4. *Caregivers will be engaged with regards to income needed to support the children without the assistance of Donor/ RAVASA. A baseline for this will be set in induction interviews with the families. Improvement on income will also be monitored.*
2. **Ensure that the exit does not have a detrimental effect on the children and communities where we work.** 
   1. *Families should be made aware of the timeframe of the project, and whilst there may be a strategic plan to continue the project for a number of years, funding is not guaranteed. For this reason, the initial time frame, and that alone, should be communicated through engagement sessions with the families and communities, ensuring clear project end dates are shared and expectations are managed.*
   2. *Communities will be engaged at all levels of the project life cycle to ensure ownership and encourage proactive conversations around the rights of children and what individuals can do to ensure these rights and needs are met. The main aim being to mainstream wellbeing of children below 2years, exclusive breastfeeding, safeguarding and protection practices into everyday life and ensuring everyone always has access to information around this and that processes are clearly defined and communicated to all relevant parties, stakeholders, and individuals.*
   3. *Capacity building will also continue with RAVASA to increase their opportunities and exposure to alternative sources of funding. RAVASA will proactively seek out funding opportunities and identify organisational development needs to meet compliance requirements for other funding bodies*
3. **As far as possible, ensure that expertise and momentum for change in the country is not lost.**
   1. *As above, and in line with the guiding strategies that influenced this project, communities will be heavily involved in the project to encourage ownership over the project outputs. Furthermore, the agriculture element focuses on equipping the communities with lasting knowledge and tools to be able to continue to produce product after the project closes.*
   2. *Discussions around seeking healthcare, breastfeeding, safeguarding, WASH, income generation and childhood educational development will be promoted throughout the project with Health centres, schools, guardians, local authorities and national children’s rights organisations to encourage proactive conversations within the communities of operations. The education around these topics aims to ensure a right based and protection focused approach towards children.*
4. **Honour our commitments, even if not in writing, where partners have reasonable grounds for expecting something to happen and have made plans based on that expectation.**
   1. *The project has been agreed both verbally and in writing to last for a 12-month period. IUIU Funders have communicated that there is a possibility for extensions and RAVASA will be informed 3 months before the end of the project if the Funders wish to extend or close the project.*
   2. *Both exit and continuation will be planned for throughout the project to make sure both parties are prepared for either outcome. In relation to conversations with communities, the 12-months’ time frame will be used as the project duration period to manage expectations.*
5. **Consider the sustainability of the partner organisation but recognise that addressing this may be beyond the Funder’s remit and capability.**
   1. *The programmes team is very aware of RAVASA’s current dependence on IUIU Funders, and it has been something we have been focusing on with the partner. Capacity building will centre around infrastructure and governance, safeguarding and MEAL.*
   2. *RAVASA will proactively look for alternative funding opportunities from other organisation to sustain the project and expand and diversify the number organisations they are awarded funding from.*
   3. *IUIU will support RAVASA through providing reference letters to new donor organisations, offer capacity building training in areas identified by RAVASA and provide exposure via our social media platforms when discussing projects implemented together.*