

Internal Evaluation Report of the Project “Promo Youth of Bansoa”

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1 Purpose and scope of the report

The purpose of the report is to evaluate the project Promo Youth of Bansoa, that is to answer questions: What were the objectives of the project? Did we achieve them? The problem we wanted to solve with the implementation of the project: had it been solved? Has the situation improved? If yes, how do we know we achieve the objectives? If not, what prevented us from achieving them? What are the lessons we have learned which could help us do better in the future, if we were to implement more projects?

2 Brief summary description of “Promo Youth of Bansoa”

Youth of Bansoa, especially those living in the rural environment, make very little effort to engage in productive activities. Those who dropped out from school spend most of their time roaming in the village. This has resulted in their involvement in criminal and unorthodox activities such as robbery, smoking cannabis and binge drinking. Because they are idle, they also engage in sexual activities with girls who find themselves with early pregnancies or sexually transmitted infections.

But, as we learned through meetings with these youths, they would like to go back to school or join a vocational training programme if they were given opportunity. It is for this reason that this project was created in 2008 with the aim of training school dropouts, as well as disadvantaged youths, in order to improve their socio-economic situation and hence facilitate their re-integration into the Bansoa community. After few lethargy moments, the project was “redynamised” in 2011; and a new coordinator was recruited, giving the project a slight re-orientation and the possibility to be really implemented.

The project aimed at providing a 90% sponsorship in the training of 30 youths of Bansoa within a period of 3 years. The project intended to train 10 youths for each batch within this 3 years period. The first batch that started in 2012 was comprised of 3 youths in motorcycle mechanics, 4 in carpentry (wood works), 1 in metal work, and 2 in dressmaking.

The first graduation ceremony took place in March 2013 under the patronage of the sub divisional officer of Penka-Michel and traditional authorities.

3 Identifications and selection of apprentices

After the creation of different flyers and sensitization through churches and numerous meetings with parents, youths, as well as bill boards displaying in various public places, many parents came with their children and some young men came by themselves for recruitment.

The criteria of recruitment were objective based on the age of the child (boys and girls between the ages of 14 to 18), born in Bansoa, being a dropout or have never been to school, as well as coming from a poor or disadvantaged family. The issue of gender equality was considered but was difficult to implement: many parents prefer to go to the farm with their daughters or to marry them early rather than sending them to learn a trade. The first two girls that were initially involved in the programme abandoned training a few months after the programme started, as they got married. They were immediately replaced by others from the awaiting list.

After the identification and the selection of the apprentices, contracts were signed between parties. Before this was done, apprentices were put on observation and adaptation for two months.

4 Contractual arrangements

The contracts were signed by parents, AFFAMIR, trainers, and trainees. The contract highlights the rights and the obligations of each party: parents are obliged to send their children to the workshop every day, and to contribute 10% to the training fee, as well as participating in all meetings relating to the training of their child.

The Friends of Berlin contributed 90% to the training fees. AFFAMIR assured the follow up during and after the training.

Trainers have the obligation to deliver the full training to the apprentices and should not use them for other activities that are not related to their training. Trainers are expected to participate in all relevant meetings, and to evaluate the training progress jointly with the coordinator.

Trainees have the obligation to attend the training until the end, to create their own business in Bansoa, as well as to train free of charge other Bansoa youths. But this turned out to be unrealistic because of the relatively small village population affecting the job market, coupled with extreme poverty of the parents so that they were unable to assist trainees to open their own workshops.

The contractual arrangement has worked well so far, with all parties respecting their obligations. The problem now is the post-training situation as mentioned above. After their training, some trainees had to leave the village, and to go to town to look for opportunities for creating their own business. To change this trend, it would be desirable to assist financially those who accept to establish their business here in the village, in spite of the narrow job market, and of the saturation of some trades. There is also the need to identify other training and market needs that are not being satisfied, instead of training people to do what many other people are already doing.

5 Financial implications

Training and graduation of this first batch of ten apprentices has required financial contributions of AFFAMIR, of parents, of the Friends of Berlin, of trainers, and of the coordinator. For instance, trainers provided 150 FCFA to per day to sustain their trainee, and they contributed for 5 racks of beverages for the graduation ceremony. Parents contributed for 10% (120.000 FCFA) to the total training cost, and 40.000 FCFA to the graduation ceremony. The coordinator contributed 20.000 FCFA to the graduation ceremony, not including other financial expenditures for transportation to and from Penka Michel for the follow up of one trainee.

AFFAMIR contributed in many ways. At the beginning of the project, AFFAMIR, with the support of the Friends of Berlin, did put at our disposal an office equipped for 260.000 FCFA. AFFAMIR also contributed some money for the project's running costs (220.000 FCFA.) The organization also donated two second hand sewing machines (evaluated at 100.000 FCFA) to two trainees at the end of their training.

The Friends of Berlin contributed:

1. a budget of 2.068.700 FCFA for months 1 to 6 of the training (September 2011 to February 2012)
2. a budget of 1.050.000 FCFA for months 7 to 12 of the training (March 2012 to August 2012)
3. a budget of 961.000 FCFA for months 12 to 18 of the training (September 2012 to March 2013)

Thus the training programme has necessitated a total amount of 4.439.700 FCFA a

In the future, trainees might need financial support at the end of the training to start and run their own business. Post training monitoring and financial support should be envisaged.

6 What has turn out to work well?

The training and the participation of the parent has worked well. Trainers have done their best to give good training to the apprentices. Payment of training worked also well, despite the time delays of instalments, which were not appreciated by the trainers. The departure of some trainees before the end of the training is regrettable, especially of the girls who abandoned the training and got married. We are not against marriage of girls, but at least they should complete their training. Here also stands the problem of gender balance.

7 Situation at the end of the training period

At the end of the training period, some apprentices were still anxious about the future. They did not know what to do due to the lack of finances. The tender age of some is one of the factors. During the initiation phase of the project, they were encouraged to work in group if possible; but this seems to be very difficult because they do not trust each other.

Those who have left the village are big enough to take care for themselves. Parents are also afraid to allow their teenagers to go for an adventure. Some are still in the workshop for capacity building, or had been recruited by the trainers to work with them as their assistants. We are going to continue monitoring the professional activities of those trained by visiting them from time to time. However, this is only possible for graduates who are in the village or in nearby in Bafoussam. We have telephone contacts with those working out of the village and our intention is to pay them visit once in a while to witness their efficiency at work.

Support from abroad may help to keep the trainees in the village, so that they can work together in a common big structure. This could be an idea to consider for carpenters because we do not have carpentry machines similar to those available in Banefhang. The support I am suggesting may help them to open their own businesses immediately instead of waiting for their parents to financially support them.

For the project to become self-sustained, we will also need the support of the Bansoa Council and of internal and external businessmen. The Secretary General of Bansoa Council took part in the graduation ceremony and was very happy with the project. This is a sign that the Council may help in future, although no promises have been made yet.

8 Involvement of the local community

To ensure the local community's ownership of the project, many contacts and sensitization efforts have so far been made. Joint partnership has been signed with AMEIBANS (Amicale des Elites Intérieures et Extérieures de Bansoa) to obtain their advice. Many things still have to be done. It is only now that some people are really aware of the project, because they saw the graduation ceremony and believe it is an important project. Sensitization should be improved as well as assistance to the trainees to start up their own businesses in the village.

9 Lessons learned for future activities of Youth of Bansoa

From the experience of the first batch, we have learned many lessons: The duration of the training should be extended because of the poor level of education of the apprentices. The age limit should be extended to up to 20 years, so as to permit those who want to do motorcycle mechanic to consider a training period of three years. Currently, children are interested only to what they see as trade in their environment. Therefore, we should maybe start thinking about other trades out of Bansoa, with the obligation of the trainees to come back and establish in Bansoa, and to train others in that domain after their training.

Before signing a contract, an observation period of two months should be given to the apprentice to make up his or her mind about the trade.

For the girls, the problem remains difficult. Some girls are willing to learn a trade, but when there is an opportunity to get married, they prefer to abandon the training. Joint ideas are requested for gender equality. We need to keep sensitizing parents about the necessity to encourage and support their girls' efforts to learn some useful skills to join the world of work. Even if they are going to get married, which is their right, it is good that they continue and finish their training, as this will be of great help for the girls, her family when she gets married, and for the community.

10 Reaction of the stakeholders and partners at AFFAMIR

The project is a very good one, one which aims at contributing to fight the causes of poverty in our families, our community and our country. We at AFFAMIR welcome it and are committed to do our best to support its implementation, and help empower our youth because we strongly believe there can't be any development if youths are left behind. Many children are not going to school in Bansoa or drop out from school. But this does not mean they are unable to do things. They need guidance and support to live a happy, healthy and successful life. If not given this opportunity, chances are they will become a burden and nuisance for their families, the community and the whole country. For these reasons, we advocate for the project to continue. If the number of the apprentices can be increased, this will be wonderful.

On the other hand, at AFFAMIR we think it is also critical to put great emphasis on the basic entrepreneurial skills. As we have all learned, many businesses do open, but do not survive three years mainly because of management problems. It is not easy to start a business, but it is even much more difficult to run it. We need to be entrepreneurs, and for this to be a reality, we should invest in this kind of training to equip our trainees with the necessary skills they need to succeed in businesses.

As far as the gender issue is concerned, we at AFFAMIR would love to see more girls in this project because when we empower women, we empower the whole family, the community and the country.

11 Other observations and recommendations

It would be good to revise some points of the contract, for example the obligation for those trained to establish only here in the village, and not to limit the training to Bansoa only. Some new trades are found in Bafoussam and Dschang, and some Bansoa parents may have relatives in these two towns to accommodate the trainees. Some financial assistance should be given to trained youths with priority to those willing to establish here in the village.

Post-training monitoring should be done in Bansoa, and also for those who establish out of the village, so that the entrepreneurial network can be expanded. This needs to be overseen by the coordinator.

To encourage girls to continue and finish their training, the project may donate some useful things, like the sewing machines which AFFAMIR has offered to the two girls of the project.

We can also offer some prizes to parents who encourage and support their girls to enrol, to continue and to finish their training.