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Reintegration program for the Homeless to farming environment, Antananarivo Madagascar

Best Practice

New for 2002

Categories:

Poverty Eradication:

- income generation
- job creation
- vocational training

Housing:

- affordable housing
- homelessness
- land tenure and security

Land Use Management:

- development incentives
- geographical information systems
- land-use planning

Level of Activity: Provincial/State

Ecosystem: Tropical/Sub-Tropical

Summary

Madagascar, with a population of 16 million people, is a least developed Island State located in the Indian Ocean. Economic and social crises have affected the country since 1970, increasing overall poverty levels. Hoping for a better life, peasants migrated to the capital city, Antananarivo but many have joined the homeless. In 2001, 10,000 people, including 6,000 children, were living in the streets of Antananarivo. They live off alms and have no access to basic sanitation facilities or medical care, and feed from dumpsters. In response to this pressing social issue the Franciscan family created ASA in June 1991 under the aegis of CIFM, the Inter-Franciscan Order of Madagascar. A.S.A.'s main objective is to reintegrate whole families in farming environment after a series of intense two-year agricultural studies. Their new land is located 200 km west of Antananarivo - in the Maroharona district, in the Mid West of Madagascar - a property covering 15,000 hectare that the Malagasy government has given to the association. The association went a step further to secure the land title for this land and now holds it in trust for the eventual beneficiaries. The main strategy involves a re-integration program to rebuild lives and provide for basic necessities. The progressive re-integration program lasts 3 years. During the first year, the homeless are retrained on societal rules and norms by social workers while at the same time having their papers regularized through registration by the government. The second year, agricultural extension officers train them on productive farming practices on demonstration farms. The 3rd year is the final reintegration stage in mid-west Madagascar. Each family builds a new home on the 5 ha piece of land that they cultivate using agricultural equipment lent and/or donated by the association. Communal wells and a dam were dug to provide water for domestic and agricultural use.

ASA tries to motivate and integrate 20 families each year. Initial contact with the homeless is establishing social workers deployed to identify potential beneficiaries. The association has invested in quality monitoring where professionals undertake follow-up activities at household level for 3 years. ASA has recruited staff who are involved in development and humanitarian projects. A production center, staffed by 34 single mothers, contributes to almost 15% of the project costs. Social workers, all women, provide basic, civic, communication and familial education. A health center, staffed by a qualified physician, treats beneficiaries and neighbours and an ASA sponsored elementary school ran by qualified teachers caters for all the children.

The initiative is a partnership between the Franciscan family, the Central and Municipal governments and the homeless formerly or presently living on the streets of Antananarivo.

Since ASA was formed, 100 families were re-integrated in 7 villages and given plots. The reintegrated and relocated families become autonomous house and landowners. The initiative targets women and girls and health issues are incorporated into the process while soil and water protection awareness are promoted. Cost recovery is routinely practised with financial support provided and sustained by both national and international organizations.

Narrative

Situation before the project.

Several crises affected sorely the economy since 1970, increasing the overall poverty. Hoping for a better life, peasants moved to the city and joined the homeless horde. In 1985, the government displaced them forcibly. The religious congregations reacted strongly to this and the Franciscan family created ASA to remedy the problem starting from the grass root level.

Priorities

ASA set out to study the homeless by identifying their number, factors that led to their homelessness and whether or not the homeless wanted to improve their situation. After a three- year study, ASA defined two priorities:

1: A serious re-integration project to rebuild the precarious life and provide basic necessities and security.

2-Progressive integration: ASA sought to reintegrate their subjects within a period of three years. During the first year, the homeless re-learn the society rules under social workers. In the second year, monitors teach them agricultural practices and techniques. The 3rd year is the final stage of reintegration in the lifestyle of the Middle West.

Objectives

- ASA chose to help whole families, because these are the most fundamental social units. Half of ASA's beneficiaries are women, since they are in charge of the family budget and their children's education. Their craftwork supplements the family income. ASA tries to motivate and integrate 20 families each year.
- ASA invests in quality monitoring. Professionals monitor each family for the 3 years of formation.
- ASA promotes progressive integration by creating 3 distinct but coordinated steps in the transformation of the homeless.
- ASA's final objective is to ensure that the households are totally autonomous and are the rightful landowners.

Resources

Human resources: Skilled employees are recruited to work in any area of their choice in development and humanitarian projects. A production center, manned by 34 single mothers, contributes to almost 15% of the project's manpower.

Technical resources: the 1994 sociological survey by A.S.A's technical program determined the staff's

specialization:

- Agriculture: A woman agronomist volunteer supervised and coordinated farming and environmental programs.
- We installed computers in order to computerize our accounting procedures and acquire better management tools.
- International communications: Besides having an e-mail address and a fax, we created a web site.
- Social and cultural animations: Social workers, all of whom are women, provide basic, civic, communication and familial education.
- Health issues: a competent physician works in the rural area. A health center manned by a husband and wife, treats beneficiaries at CASA 1.
- Education: City children enroll at the local school. ASA has set up an elementary school in the Middle West manned by teachers with national diplomas.

Financial resources. At the beginning, the Franciscan family provided the necessary funds to start the project. Then, a support network of associations was created outside Madagascar. Finally, we managed to acquire funds from public and private institutions, both national and international.

The first step that ASA took was to reach out to the street families. To do this, the social workers went to the streets, informed the street dwellers about our project convincing them into joining in. Despite the efforts of the social workers, it was very difficult to reach our target of having 20 families participate in the initiative. Of the street dwellers willing to participate, we separated them into different groups according to the nature of their problems. For instance, we sent some to single motherhood centers, orphanages and others to alcoholic anonymous institutions.

After the third year, 5 out of the 20 families were ready to leave the center. Since our idea was to release all the 20 families in order for us to conduct a new intake, ASA decided in 2001 to open a pre-center called the PRE-CASA which would conduct a 9 months orientation programme to the street dwellers. The main preoccupation of ASA has been its need to organize itself as a professional enterprise. The recruitment of employees and volunteers has been based on this fundamental aim.

ASA has faced the challenge of stabilizing and strengthening its financial situation. To counter this, ASA has maintained its network of financial supporters since 1995. Today ASA is trying to get more financial aid from bigger institutions like the World Bank and the European Union. We are also looking at the possibility of exploiting huge open lands for cultivation. ASA has also faced the problem of securing fundamental landowner rights. However, this problem has been solved and ASA is the legal owner of that land. Currently we are trying to individual property rights for our beneficiaries living in the Middle West.

At every stage of this project, we solicited the collaboration of municipalities or other local authorities in community work like road construction and welcoming of the families to the area.

Results achieved.

- Currently, ASA has a membership of 80 families. 100 families (680 individuals) have moved out to live their independent lives. These people have set up their own homes and are able to acquire basic needs. Several of them have kept poultry for subsistence. Through the agricultural techniques that they have learned from ASA, these people have been in a position to produce more per acreage.
- The Malagasy government has emulated ASA's project. Other organizations too have followed ASA's footsteps.

Financial sustainability:

- We get financial aid from national or international institutions.
- We have maintained a support network with Europe, which covers 25% of our financial requirements.
- An international program of development (PSDR) sponsored by the World Bank, funds the agricultural department.

- The absence of indebtedness as a principle

Social and economical sustainability is achieved because the ASA's program is not just a charitable project.

- Its primary objective is to reduce poverty and overpopulation in cities, by giving its subjects a sense of independence.

- Equalizing the odds between families by offering them the same education and resources.

Cultural sustainability

Traditionally, the Malagasy people associated themselves with the tanindrazana, that is, land of the ancestors, and the familial tomb. By acquiring land, our migrants are in a position of having this kind of attachment. ASA creates a sense of community among the peasants by regrouping them into traditional collectivities or villages. They also solve the conflict that may arise in this setup.

Environmental sustainability

Environmental equilibrium is a priority for each village:

- Better utilization of energy sources: solar cookers, improved cooking fires (braseros), grass and combustible coal.

- We dug new wells and built small dams to supply water to villages.

- We have tried to conserve the environment through controlling soil erosion, planting trees etc

Lessons learned.

Ten years into this program, we have realized that some people prefer living in the streets. For this reason we have sought other alternatives. These include:

a) ASA established a small vocational center, which provides training and employment on embroidery and woodwork to the needy living in the urban areas.

b) ASA liaises with other associations, local or international, which could provide other viable and reliable options to the homeless, for example, single mother centers, orphanages, religious communities, etc.

c) ASA is planning to convert CASA I - which orientates the street dwellers - into an urban re-integration center. The pre-center, Mahavelona, will take over the duties of CASA 1

Another problem we faced was in obtaining financial security.

We encouraged self-sufficiency through:

- Food production: ASA disengages itself after the 2nd year of admission of members.

- Convincing peasants to engage in other income generating activities like animal husbandry, handicraft industry etc.

- Peasants reimburse a fraction of their profits to ASA for the purpose of its sustainability.

- ASA functions like a real enterprise and advocates a policy of savings, especially in "general costs".

- The development of auto financing is not sufficient and ASA would like to use other techniques used by international financial institutions like a credit union and a savings program.

- Promoting intensive farming methods.

Transferability

The whole strategy, of reducing poverty by a progressive social and economic reinsertion of the homeless, was based on the economic, social, and political conditions of Madagascar. The social and cultural intervention was necessary for families who had lost all traditional values and a sense of self-worth. This kind of social change was necessary in order for these individuals to co-exist.

Since there was so much unutilized land, ASA decided to provide a viable way of solving the problem of unemployment. Government land was given to organizations who would in turn develop it. Other natural resources are also abundant in Madagascar. However, mismanagement and dilapidation of the country's resources coupled with indifference in governance, made private organizations engage in humanitarian activities.

When ASA started this project, the Middle West region was practically deserted. As it gained momentum, landless peasant families joined the association and formed two new villages on the site. These individuals were taken in and treated just like the rest, that is, they received counsel and receive the

same benefits: counsel and help in building homes, obtaining agricultural tools, seeds among other things.

Information on ASA's project can be accessed through its web site:

<http://www.multimania.com/asamadagascar>. Several associations have used ASA as a reference point in carrying out their development initiatives. Other projects started through this perfect example are:

- In Fianarantsoa region, by Fr. Jesuits Domenico Fazio and Michel Hubert.
- in Antananarivo region, in N.R.J. - Andavamamba and ESPOIR - Tsiadana, which take care of the homeless adolescents of those two districts.

Key Dates

- 1991 : creation of A.S.A by Fr. Jacques Tronchon (Franciscan)
- 1994 : publication of a social documentary on the Antananarivo homeless.
- 1995 : A.S.A. receives the first families (promotion 1) at CASA I.
- 1997 : Promotion 1 is installed on their new land CASA III.
- 2001 : 100 families are on the property.

References

- Malagasy newspapers

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LA CROIX de Paris, January 2002; Les Semeurs de l'Avenir (Bulletin de l'I.E.C.D.) 2001-2002; Documentary on video transmitted on television LE JOUR DU SEIGNEUR, on France 2, in January 2002.

- Information bulletins from ASA and its Support Network; Fanilon'ny ASA, a quarterly publication since 1995; Info-RESEAU ASA, a biannual publication since 2000.

- Video tapes produced by ASA and its network: Justin's Story (1999)And their land will be green (2002)

- Social and anthropological study done by ASA (private edition, available on photocopy)The homeless of Antananarivo (19

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Type of Organization: Non-governmental organisation (NGO)

Nominating Organization

Same as above

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Year	Total Budget (US\$)	Partner A (% of budget)	Partner B (% of budget)	Partner C (% of budget)
1999	144,807.10	40	0	0
2000	227,386.30	0	15	0
2001	201,235	0	0	5