



Project Title

A Path Towards Autonomy

Project number

PN2017/13

Project

To strengthen institutional, programmatic and financial sustainability of L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA

Funding partner

Fondation Assistance Internationale
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Lead Organisation

St. Martin CSA

Introduction

St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya are implementing a joint 3 years (April 2018-March 2021) project dubbed "A path towards Autonomy" with funding and technical support from Fondation Assistance Internationale. FAI is a humanitarian foundation, for the benefit of the general public and implements all its activities believing in the value of common good and of communities. It gives priority to the fundamental conditions

that make it possible to achieve development responsibly and to build the common good. This resonates well with the mission of L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA.

St. Martin - Catholic Social Apostolate

St. Martin - Catholic Social Apostolate (CSA) is a Trust that works with and for the marginalized groups of people in the society. Its work focuses on children in need of care and protection, people affected by addiction and mental health issues, survivors of violence and human rights violation. It works in parts of Laikipia, Baringo and Nyandarua counties with a population of approximately 1 million people. St Martin works through a network of over 500 volunteers supported by 80 staff and 50 committee/board members to address exclusion, deprivation and discrimination of vulnerable people. It envisions a just society that upholds dignity for all and endeavours to strengthen community capacity to care for and empower vulnerable people in mutually transformative relationships.

L'Arche Kenya

L'Arche Kenya is a member of an international federation of communities where people with and without intellectual disabilities live and work together. These communities offer people with intellectual disabilities a home where they will be valued, respected, and their gifts welcomed and celebrated. It was founded in November 2008 by a group of staff and volunteers of St. Martin CSA, out of their experiences with adults with intellectual disabilities in the villages where the organization addressed among others the needs of children with different forms of disabilities. Many adults with intellectual disabilities after they were disengaged from special schools and special units, after attaining the age of 18 years, remained in their homes without any meaningful engagement.

L'Arche currently runs two homes; Effatha and Betania, where people with and without intellectual disabilities are welcome to share life together in mutually transforming relationships. L'Arche Kenya also runs Marleen crafts project comprising of a leather workshop, seven occupational therapy workshops; kitchen, candle making, crafts, bakery, farm, carpentry and Maranatha welcome house. L'Arche Kenya also runs an outreach wing that offer services to over 1000 children with disability.

The L'Arche approach is unique as it combines "living together", "professionalism" and "spirituality", aspects that are essential for creating an atmosphere of growth, acceptance and love.

PTA project background

A healthy nonprofit organisation is vital to the quality of life in a democratic society. Nonprofits are a cornerstone for a vibrant "third sector," where people can come together to address basic needs and problems, to bring new ideas to life, and to engage in meaningful leadership and service. Nonprofit organizations often focus organizational development on programs while neglecting systems and infrastructure. Improving management practices is a well-accepted tenet in the business world. However, the practice has traditionally gotten short shrift in the nonprofit realm, where the focus has more often been on projects rather than infrastructure. Without capacity building, organisations run the risk of focusing all their energy and attention on providing services and expanding projects. This lack of a strong foundation may lead to organizational instability, which might appear in old and deteriorating equipment, poor communication between leadership and staff, and "mission drift" — a loss of focus on nonprofit's founding principles.

St. Martin and L'Arche Kenya occupy an invaluable niche in the target community. They provide needed services that improve the well-being of the community and on which many people depend. Wendy Tyndale, in her 2003 analysis of a World Bank survey that collected voices from around the world, found that "no other organisations are more firmly rooted or have better networks in poor communities than the religious ones". This ability to foster deep connections in communities cannot be overlooked. The environment in which St. Martin and L'Arche operate has become increasingly complex and challenging as demand for

their services increases while their conventional funding streams have become more limited. It is against this backdrop that A *path towards autonomy* project was conceived. Both St. Martin and L'Arche Kenya need certain capacities such as strong leaders, resources mobilisation and financial management capacity, technology, as well as softer things like communications, adaptability and relationships in order to deliver results.

Objectives

A Path Towards Autonomy project was conceived to strengthen the institutional, programmatic and financial sustainability of the two organisations. The project is working towards:

- i. strengthening the capacity to develop, implement and evaluate strategic plans
- ii. enhancing communication and visibility
- iii. improving the quality of services provided to the vulnerable population through reinforced individual, groups and organisational capacity and an enabling environment
- iv. increasing community support
- v. strengthening the technical and human capacity to use and manage ICT
- vi. ensuring greater financial support

Components

The project has 6 domains of development:

1. Strategic planning
2. Organisational development (management formation)
3. Information and communication technology (ICT)
4. Communication and visibility
5. Community engagement
6. Resource mobilization

Strategic planning component

Strategic planning is an essential tool for any organizational success. Strategic planning assists organizations financial sustainability as well as in allocation of scarce resources in order to achieve competitive advantage. It helps organizations to reach their mission, goals and objectives and improve its performance efficiently and effectively. Strategic planning has high impact on overall organizational success. Since inception, St. Martin has operated with programmes and departments strategic plans, while L'Arche had operated with 1 strategic plan.

This component aims at strengthening the capacity of L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA to develop, implement and evaluate strategic plans at organization and programme level.

Organisational Development (Management Formation) component

St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya has over the years placed priority on promoting the capacity of local communities to develop, implement and sustain their own solutions to challenges and needs of vulnerable people; and on enhancing the capacity of beneficiaries individually and collectively to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Little attention has been put in organisation capacity development- the process by which individuals and organizations obtain, improve, and retain the skills, knowledge, tools, equipment and other resources needed to do their jobs competently or to a greater capacity (larger scale, larger audience, larger impact). There was minimal investment in capacity building especially at organisational level with an impact on fundraising ability, governance, leadership and technical areas. Additionally, organisational capacity assessment is not an entrenched culture in the structures on the organisation. St. Martin has conducted only 1 donor driven organisational assessment in its lifetime while L'Arche has never conducted one.

This component aims at improved quality of services provided to the vulnerable population through reinforced individual, groups and organisational capacity and an enabling environment.

Information and Communication Technology component

ICTs enable not for profit organisations to improve operational efficiency, increase mission impact, and enhance sector competitiveness. In spite the great potential of ICT in nonprofit organisations, L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin had not fully embraced ICT. This limited realization of organizational mission and fundraising potential. This component aims at strengthening the technical and human capacity of L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA to use and manage ICT.

Communication and Visibility component

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of information and knowledge management, there has been minimal innovation and openness to change, in these areas in both in St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya. This is partially attributed to insufficient financial resources, inefficient channels of communication, low adoption of communication technology, lack of professional standing, multiple organizational perspectives on the appropriateness and role of information infrastructures, focus on technology rather than on organizational culture, and differences as to the value and implementation of ongoing assessment and improvement strategies. St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya ability to store and manage information and knowledge is a critical component of organizational capacity, mission delivery and institutionalization of lessons learned. This component aims at enhancing the capacity of L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA to communicate effectively and manage knowledge for learning and institutional memory.

Community engagement (mobilisation) component

This component aims at increasing community support to St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya. The project used different platforms to build ongoing and permanent relationships for the purpose of applying a collective vision for the benefit of vulnerable people and moving target communities towards mutual transformation. Community engagement is critical to the success and continued operation of both L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin CSA. Without the support of the community in which the two organisations operates, they have little chance for long-term prosperity.

Resource Mobilization component

St. Martin and L'Arche Kenya, are largely dependent on funding from external donors. Without this support, the two organisations would not be able to operate at the levels at which they currently operate. Such a level of dependency impacts the sustainability and resourcing of St. Martin and L'Arche Kenya in a number of ways. They have to attune their work areas to the funding focus of donors out of necessity. They also have to be reactive and adapt their work areas to the changing funding priorities of donors, if and when they arise, in order to maintain their funding sources over the long term. The impact of this nature of funding on the two organisations is wide ranging: from the areas of strategy planning and human resources, to procuring and maintaining equipment. Being vulnerable to the funding whims of external donors also limits the possibility of engaging in the kind of programmes St. Martin and L'Arche Kenya see as best suiting their strategic intent.

The component aims at sustainable financial resources to execute the mandate of the organisation.

Major outputs

This project has set St. Martin CSA and L'Arche Kenya in a new trajectory of operational, programmatic, financial, and organizational maturity. During the reporting period, the following major outputs were realised:

1. Recruitment, induction and introduction of 2 resource mobilisation officers, an ICT officer and a communications officer to support project implementation
2. Recruitment and engagement of 5 consultants to support various processes

3. Procurement and installation of ICT infrastructures-computers, server, printers, photocopiers, cameras, internet connectivity and routers
4. Evaluation of St. Martin Approach
5. Enlarged community engagement
6. Extensive organisational capacity assessment
7. Strategic planning, communication and visibility, resource mobilisation and ICT capacity assets and needs assessment
8. L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin 5 years strategic plans
9. L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin communication and visibility strategy
10. L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin resource mobilisation strategy
11. ICT and Communication policy
12. L'Arche Kenya fundraising event
13. L'Arche Kenya and St. Martin refurbished interactive and user friendly website