International Journal of Social Science Studies
Vol. 5, No. 7; July 2017
ISSN 2324-8033 E-ISSN 2324-8041
Published by Redfame Publishing
URL: http://ijsss.redfame.com

Exit Strategy for Aid Programs: Planning Exit before Entering

Hyejin Lee[1]

[1]Institute for International Development Cooperation, Konkuk University, South Korea

Correspondence: Hyejin Lee, Institute for International Development Cooperation, Konkuk Univeristy, 120 Neungdong-ro, Gwangin-gu, Seoul 05029, South Korea.

Received: May 18, 2017 Accepted: June 7, 2017 Available online: June 12, 2017

doi:10.11114/ijsss.v5i7.2427 URL: https://doi.org/10.11114/ijsss.v5i7.2427

Abstract

As aid interventions by nature are temporary, they will eventually be withdrawn. Reasons and circumstances of withdrawals vary since withdrawals can be part of a strategic approach to long-term sustainability, a change in organizational priorities, or a political decision made at a higher level. A growing international demand for effective and sustainable outcomes of aid programs emphasizes a proper exit and exit strategy. However, a successful exit takes a well-planned strategy at early stages of aid programs and significant amounts of resources. This study reviews approaches to exit and exit strategies at a program level, and common elements of a viable exit strategy including setting an exit timeline, establishing specific criteria and indicators, identifying key actors, and building a monitoring and evaluation system. These elements need to be guided by transparency, inclusion, predictability, obligation, and flexibility.

Keywords: exit strategy, sustainable exit, sustainability, international aid, intervention program

1. Introduction

Aid by nature is temporary (Jerve & Slob, 2008). Accordingly, intervention aid will be eventually withdrawn for a variety of reasons and circumstances. A withdrawal can be part of a strategic approach to long-term sustainability, a change in organizational priorities, or a political decision made at a higher level (Lewis, 2016; Oswald & Ruedin, 2012). For a general timeline to withdraw program activities, a funding cycle decides it, and in many cases, a program exits at the end of the funding cycle (Rogers, 2004). Yet, a funding cycle does not necessarily coincide with the time required to achieve program goals. A donor's fiscal year and other predetermined conditions for a program can impose an asynchronous timeline between an actual program exit and achievement of program goals (Gardner, Greenblott, & Joubert, 2005).

Exit in intervention programs refers to the withdrawal of externally provided program resources that include material goods, human resources, and technical assistance from the entire program area (Rogers, 2004). Exit is technically hard to do well because it cannot be manufactured or imposed under a tight control, and needs to be done in a contextually specific way (Lewis, 2016). Also, a program tends to evolve over a funding cycle as situations change. A program's evolution often necessitates modifications of program activities while different program elements require different approaches to exit for sustainable outcomes (Rogers, 2004). Thus, a successful exit is considered rather an exception than a rule (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012).

With growing global demands for aid effectiveness and sustainability, a proper exit with strategic approaches has been emphasized. A basic premise behind strategic approaches to exit is to encourage effective and sustainable program outcomes (Gardner et al., 2005). Despite the increasing demand and significance of a proper exit, one of the most commonly practiced exits is a simple withdrawal from the ongoing supports at the end of the contract period. Moreover, a constant flow of new programs being implemented tends to overshadow the issue of exit and management guidelines that should, in theory, be sensitive to different contexts, and protect values of a donor and recipient as well as sustaining benefits (Rönngren, 2011).

An exit strategy can be viewed as a tool to plan and structure the implementation of exit, typically a withdrawal of financial resources from a specific program, country or region (Lewis, 2016). The goal of an exit strategy is to ensure that program outcomes and benefits are sustained after a program exits, and that the benefits are not compromised by the fact or means of exit (Rogers, 2004; World Food Programme, 2005). The existing literature on exit strategies recommends some general principles for good practice, such as planning for exit from the outset of a program, consulting and communicating with stakeholders at a regular basis, and considering sustainability early on (Lewis, 2016). However, most discussions of exit strategies begin with the question of what triggers exit of a donor's involvement. Some of those triggers are political pressure generally from the donor's side, an unexpected decrease in donor resources, or ideally no need for further aid (Levinger & McLeod, 2002).

For a country-level exit decision, political motivations play a major role. For instance, a study that evaluated 14 country-level exit cases showed all the exit decisions were politically motivated, all but one were donor-initiated, and no case assessed sustainability of supported activities before an exit decision was made (Rönngren, 2011). It might not come as a surprise since aid forms part of political relations with donors' policy agendas (Heldgaar, 2008). Accordingly, aid policies tend to be coupled with and instrumentalized for a foreign policy (Jerve & Slob, 2008). Therefore, understanding a political motivation for a donor's exit is important as it influences how the exit is handled. Some common political motivations are; first and ideally, the recipient country can manage program outcomes without donor aid; the recipient is disqualified due to the perceived violation of good governance standards; the recipient is accused of aid mismanagement; and the donor's criteria for selecting a recipient country are revised (Jerve & Slob, 2008). A unilateral exit decision made by a donor may not involve a timely assessment and plan for sustainability of the supported activities, and a recipient country could exert little control over the exit and process. A study debates that when a recipient country perceives a program being imposed by a donor and feels excluded during the process, the recipient country less likely supports for sustained program outcomes (Lee, 2016). In rare cases, a recipient country may direct an exit when; an aid program is perceived as interference of domestic affairs; it seeks to enhance its international image by reducing aid; or it needs to decrease a burden of aid coordination (Jerve & Slob, 2008). Furthermore, donor countries rarely explore possibilities of other donors taking over their programs. This situation unlikely ensures sustainability of program outcomes particularly when a recipient country itself lacks necessary resources or capacity to take them over (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012).

At a program level, a program design should include exit strategies, guided by rules from the program outset. This does not seem to be the reality. Instead, organizations tend to develop rules, and design an exit once the exit decision is made (Lewis, 2016). This can result in retrofitting exit rules and strategies. In some cases, an implementing agency retrospectively learns from its experience with difficult exit, and develops strategies that are to be integrated in similar future programs. At the same time, it is often practically difficult to have exit strategies in place at the beginning of a program. Circumstances change, contexts differ, and program elements may require a degree of modification during the program implementation. Despite the challenges, exit strategies should be built into a program design and consider how the exit needs to happen under what rules as a roadmap towards sustainable program outcomes (Lewis, 2016).

Ideally, an exit strategy, timeline, criteria, and a monitoring system should be coherently drafted at the program outset, and pre-planned exit activities be implemented along the program (Gardner et al., 2005). Those coherent activities can promote stakeholders' capacity building and program ownership to better sustain benefits. With significance of exit and exit strategy for aid effectiveness and sustainability in mind, this study reviews approaches to exit and some common elements of a viable exit strategy, and intends to draw suggestions for playing out an exit plan in practice.

2. Approaches to an Exit Strategy

An exit strategy is a specific plan describing how the program intends to withdraw from a region while ensuring that the achievement of the development goals is not jeopardized, and that further progress toward these goals is made (Rogers, 2004). Or more simply, it can be a tool to plan and structure the implementation of an exit, typically the withdrawal of financial resources from a specific program, country or region (Lewis, 2016). An exit strategy should include exit indicators, monitoring systems for measuring progress to exit, and identification of capacities to be built when donor assistance ends (World Food Programme, 2005).

A study by Levinger and McLeod (2002) describes an exit strategy with three approaches; a phase-down, phase-over and phase-out (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). With a phase-down, program activities are reduced whereas with a phase-over, a program or part of it is transferred to a different organization. A phase-out withdraws a donor's involvement without turning the program over to another organization. In some cases, these approaches take place in a sequential manner; the phase-down is followed by the phase-over or phase-out, and the phase-over by the phase-out. Yet, implementing one of the approaches is mainly based on organizational and programmatic objectives. The phase-down may aim at enabling a donor to become more strategic with its scarce resources while readying local stakeholders to become more capable of sustaining program outcomes. In fact, the phase-down needs to ensure that reduction in inputs and activities should not correspond to reduction in program benefits. The phase-over aims at continuing vital services or activities under a new management (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). Accordingly, it emphasizes institutional capacity in a taking-over organization for continued program outcomes (Gardner et al., 2005). The phase-out targets on achieving a constant benefit flow without external inputs, and the best outcome after the phase-out is self-sufficiency while the worst is loss of benefits gained during the intervention after the phase-out (Levinger & McLeod, 2002).

Besides organizational and programmatic objectives, the nature of a program largely determines how an exit is operationalized (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). As a general rule, programs that require continued provision of resources and supervision suggest the phase-over approach. Otherwise, programs may choose the phase-out approach (Rogers, 2004). In some cases, the phase-over and phase-out are not very different or mutually exclusive (Lewis, 2016). Even though a donor phases out its support, some of the key components are phased over to local stakeholders or other organizations during or as a transition period. Therefore this blurs the line between the phase-over and phase-out.

For the phase-over, a local community or permanent high-level institution may take over program activities (Rogers, 2004). First with a local community's take-over, the success depends on a community's management capacity, mastery of necessary technical skills, and ability to obtain or generate resources required for continuing relevant activities. These three criteria need to be met for a fully functional community organization to sustain program outcomes. Clear indicators are often necessary to determine a current level of community's technical and institutional capacity, and demonstrate changes in capacity when a program exit nears. Thus the indicators help assess the readiness of the community organization to take over key program activities, and should be part of the phase-over strategy. When provision of resources are crucial to sustain program outcomes, community organizations might require legal empowerment, for instance, to charge user fees or receive government subsidies. Secondly, a take-over by a permanent high-level institution intends to integrate a program into the existing government support system. Governmental commitment to maintaining a program seems ideal when continued resource, staff, or infrastructure inputs are crucial. Such integration becomes particularly important when charging user fees for cost recovery is not feasible for legal, cultural, or economic reasons, and external funding is scarce. This approach assumes that the government is able to support activities to achieve program goals. But many developing countries lack necessary resources or political will to mobilize available resources. The decision on which type of the phase-over should be adopted needs to be based on a careful analysis of power dynamics, available resources, technical and managerial capacity, cultural values and other relevant institutions as they widely vary across communities and government agencies. In general, the best outcomes are expected when the central government provides resources and legal authorization for program activities whereas the local community assumes responsibilities for their implementation (Rogers, 2004).

If program outcomes can self-sustain, exit strategies may not seem necessary. Some of the self-sustaining outcomes occur with infrastructure constructions or behavior changes (Rogers, 2004). Seemingly permanent though, infrastructure construction is likely to require maintenance over time. Without resource provision and a mechanism for maintenance, the infrastructure would probably deteriorate. In this case, the phase-over allows key stakeholders to be responsible for maintenance of the infrastructure to sustain it. Behavior changes that a program intends to bring about are likely to self-sustain if the benefits associated to the behavior changes are well perceived. An example is improved agricultural production practices that farmers adopt because they appreciate the advantageous practices (Rogers, 2004). Yet there is a subtle difference between their application and adoption of agricultural practices. The application indicates the practice is used at least over one farming season while the adoption in a sustainable way over an extended period of time (Nelson & Swindale, 2013). When program outcomes are implementable and beneficial to adopters, the outcomes are likely self-sustaining (Rogers, 2004).

However, a challenge arises when the program goal is, in fact, to expand or scale up the beneficial changes after the program exits. A key to a program's scalability as well as sustainability is both technical competency and an institutional system in place (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012). Local stakeholders may take up the technical hardware part, but the institutional software part especially for enabling environment is often beyond the scope of a program exit plan.

3. Principles and Elements of an Exit Strategy

Across contexts and motivations of an exit, overarching exit principles are suggested; transparency, inclusion, predictability, obligation (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012), and flexibility. The OECD study includes sustainability as one of its five principles (Oswald & Ruedin, 2012), yet instead flexibility is included in the current study. The reason is that sustainability is a goal of an exit strategy rather than a principle in this context. The five principles are explained in Table 1. Individually or collectively, they could be used as guidance for elements of an exit strategy that are discussed in a later section.

Table 1. Five principles of an exit with a detailed meaning and guiding actions for each principle, adopted and modified from Oswald & Ruedin, (2012)

Principle	Detail of principle	Action
Transparency	- Plan exit based on transparent communication about relevant activities - Ensure all stakeholders informed of when, why and how exit occurs	- Coordinate and utilize open communication channels to inform/explain reasons, methods and timelines for exit with clarify
Inclusion	- Include stakeholders in discussions on exit process	- Define stakeholders' roles and responsibilities clearly with their participation - Set up meetings at a regular basis and include all or key stakeholders to discuss exit strategies
Predictability	- Use program outcomes and impact for making justifiable decisions about exit	- Set up sessions with key stakeholders for their understanding of outcome measures and impact assessment
Flexibility	- Include room to modify and adjust exit plans and activities - Stay flexible in case of sudden changes in program components and funding	- Set up regular meetings for voices of stakeholders heard and reflected - Obtain agreement with stakeholders on plan modifications and rationale behind them
Obligation	- Identify and manage risks and opportunities associated with exit for local stakeholders	- Analyze risks and opportunities associated with exit for stakeholders, and draft potential solutions to risks - Acknowledge emotional aspects of possible stakeholder deprivation by exit

The five principles can be an overarching guidance for formulating an actual exit strategy and coherent activities. Existing literature and exit guidance have identified several elements of a viable exit strategy. Among them are setting an exit timeline, establishing specific criteria, benchmarks, and action steps for exit, identifying key actors, and building a monitoring and evaluation system. They appear the most relevant, thus are discussed individually.

3.1 Setting an Exit Timeline

In theory, donors should not exit until the program benefits can be sustained, but in reality an exit rarely takes place with ensured sustainability of benefits due to financial or institutional constraints for formulating and implementing a solid exit plan (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). Planning for exit is a sophisticated process that includes development of a set of an exit strategy, criteria and their benchmarks, and a monitoring system. Those exit activities need to be continuously reassessed in the context of changing circumstances (Gardner et al., 2005). Thus, they should be planned at the earliest stages of a program design to secure a lead time for modification, consensus and resources required.

From the beginning of a program, all stakeholders, especially local stakeholders, should firmly acknowledge that exit will happen. This recognition likely eliminates a sense of dependence on the program and resentment against the exit. More importantly, it stimulates stakeholders to become self-reliant by strengthening their technical and institutional capacity. A greater sense of local ownership can be expected as local stakeholders are part of an exit planning (Rogers, 2004). Another advantage of setting a timeline at early stages is that it provides sufficient lead time to devise means for generating necessary resources, and plan a staff-transfer to other relevant programs after the exit (Gardner et al., 2005). The staff aware of the exit timeline may better align themselves to implement the exit activities effectively and efficiently (Lewis, 2016). Therefore, setting an exit timeline as early makes it less likely that a program withdraws without proper preparation or simply rolls over from cycle to cycle (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). Duration of a program determines an exit timeline as well. With a one-year program, an exit strategy and relevant activities would be established and implemented within a narrow time frame with little room for modification, compared to a longer-term program (Gardner et al., 2005).

A timeline for an exit should be set in a gradual and flexible manner. A gradual exit allows implementing agencies to observe which program components are solidly established, and provide complementary programs as needed (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). In addition, a gradual exit of program activities guided by program goals allows lessons learned to be applied to subsequent activities, similar programs, or a next strategic planning (Lewis, 2016; Rogers, 2004). Furthermore, stakeholders may build experiences in independent operations prior to exit. These experiences can assess their technical, managerial and institutional capacity (Rogers, 2004). A degree of flexibility with an exit timeline is also important as program components or external circumstances can change during the program funding cycle. The flexibility makes unplanned but necessary adjustments more implementable. Additionally, exit timelines with similar programs around the program site needs to be considered. In some cases, coordinated exit timelines among relevant programs bring synergistic effects to sustain benefits.

3.2 Specific Exit Criteria and Benchmarks

Exit criteria such as achievements of impact targets or progresses made toward sustainable outcomes should be established and agreed upon (Rogers, 2004). The principle role of impact indicators is to suggest whether key program components are effective and sustainable (Gardner et al., 2005). Good impact indicators for an impact assessment should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (World Food Programme, 2005). Thus impact indicators are a good proxy to gauge the readiness to exit (Gardner et al., 2005). Yet, the use of impact indicators poses risks. The targeted level of impact may be unachievable on the exit timeline, in which case the indicators in turn are indicative of a need for an exit timeline modification (Rönngren, 2011; Rogers, 2004). The use of impact indicators for exit could disincentivize achievement of program goals. When local stakeholders perceive that reaching a given level of an impact target will trigger a withdrawal of program supports, this reduces their motivation to achieve that impact (Rogers, 2004). Likewise, if exit is considered abandonment with local stakeholders' demonstration of competency, their motivation for achieving impact targets or strengthening their own capacity is easily undermined (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). This is a fundamental challenge with an exit strategy because it punishes motivation and success.

Benchmarks are the operationalized measurable indicators of the exit criteria, and benchmarks should be linked to specific program elements that are to be phased down, over or out. Therefore selection of exit benchmarks needs to be based on an analysis of effective aspects of a program and identification of indicators that clearly show the progress (Rogers, 2004). Benchmarks can be expressed qualitatively, yet more likely quantitatively with percentage or frequency (Gardner et al., 2005). Instead of the term benchmarks, the exit policy of the World Food Program uses the term, trigger to describe a benchmark that needs to be achieved before exit. Triggers can be programmatic, contextual, systemic, and external indicators (World Food Programme, 2005). Finally, action steps to assess and measure the stated benchmarks should be delineated. Accordingly, responsible parties or key individuals have to be identified to take those action steps with their roles and responsibilities spelt out (Rogers, 2004).

3.3 Identifying Key Actors and Their Relationships

Identifying potential and actual key actors is a conscious choice because they vary in expertise, capacity, geographic location, focus and value. For instance, some of them have built sufficient capacity to wield a political influence, and disseminate a particular agenda while others not. Some might be highly professional with a strong position at a national level whereas others at a developing stage with a local foothold (Rönngren, 2011). Nevertheless, identifying key actors and tapping their cooperation set the stage for a successful exit because their clear understanding of program goals likely provides necessary supports to realize those goals (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). A program exit, by definition, almost always means the end of funding and other resources. But the key actors may plan and assist in mobilizing adequate resources to maintain the necessary scope and quality of services for sustained benefit flows after exit (Gardner et al., 2005). Furthermore, acknowledging the program goals clarifies roles and responsibilities among stakeholders. This reduces potential misunderstandings of the exit and exit activities, and future dependency on external supports (Rönngren, 2011). As important as identifying key actors is figuring out their underlying power dynamics that can play a role to form a consortium and advocate one another for exit activities (Gardner et al., 2005).

Horizontal and vertical linkages are essential to sustain program outcomes and benefits when those linkages are functional and strong. Horizontal linkages are networks of similar groups or key individuals, and their regular contacts provide them with a source of information, mutual support and assistance. Horizontal linkages potentially offer economies of scale in purchases, and keep morale and motivation high. Vertical linkages, on the other hand, are networks with higher-level organizations. Local or lower-level actors receive resources from those organizations such as consumable supplies or training, administrative assistance including supervision, and legal authorities (Rogers, 2004).

Quality of a relationship can influence over the quality of exit. Key actors who are disengaged in an exit planning tend to find an exit unacceptable or even a crisis (Lewis, 2016). However, key actors who are deeply engaged and well informed may contribute to setting a positive tone on exit activities in order not to lose the momentum. This positive tone gathers further support for a smoother exit by shifting a negative denial of the exit to a claim for ownership.

With and after exit, donors and local stakeholders could build a new relationship with new roles, rather than abruptly ending their established relationships; donors adopt an advisory role on local organizations and individuals while those local actors assume responsibilities to run program activities. Their linkage can ensure that the program outcomes continue being beneficial, and do not have detrimental impacts or deteriorate later on (Lewis, 2016).

In summary, although identifying key actors is a critical step for exit, efforts should be made to foster their linkages for a stronger network and partnership with other donors or organizations. This is likely to produce synergistic effects among other relevant programs, government agencies, and donors through sharing administrative channels, financial and human resources, and innovative ideas.

3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism

Exit plans should be periodically reviewed to ensure they are feasible, realistic and on-track (Levinger & McLeod, 2002). An exit monitoring system provides stakeholders with a degree of flexibility and room to modify exit plans within a timeline or funding cycle. When an exit monitoring system can be integrated into the overall program's monitoring plan, it reduces a burden of monitoring efforts and maximizes resources allocated to the monitoring plan for both exit and program activities. For instance, when funding for exit monitoring is not sufficiently allocated, the overall program monitoring system can help collect data on some exit indicators. This saves scarce resources to operate two separate monitoring systems in one program (Gardner et al., 2005).

There are three overarching measures to evaluate effectiveness of an adopted exit strategy whether; the program impact is sustained, expanded or even improved after a program exit; the program activities are continued in the same or modified format; and the developed system continues to function effectively (Gardner et al., 2005). Ironically, the success of an adopted exit strategy cannot readily be assessed without a post-exit evaluation that is rarely carried out (Rogers, 2004). Most of the evaluations tend to be conducted at the end of the program cycle, not returning to the program site some years after exit. Post-exit evaluations, if properly conducted, could provide stronger evidence of effectiveness of adopted exit strategies, and identify what factors predict long-term sustainability of key program outcomes. Rarity of post-exit evaluations is attributable to a program funding cycle that hardly allows for a return after the program funding cycle ends (Rogers, 2004). Thus, funding for a systematic post-exit evaluation should be secured to [1] determine effectiveness of an exit strategy, [2] identify factors for a successful exit, and [3] draw lessons for future exits with similar programs.

However, an evaluation challenge arises when an exit strategy is implemented under changing contexts. In such cases, it may be practically impossible to separate factors that led to a successful exit from other factors that the changes in contexts brought about. For instance, when a recipient government formulates a specific policy that happens to support the program or sector, the sustained program benefits after exit can be partly or entirely attributable to the government supports. Or when there is a political upheaval or natural disaster at the program site, it would be irrational to solely blame the exit strategy for discontinued benefits.

4. Discussions and Conclusions

The guiding principles and elements of an exit strategy can collectively assist in framing an exit strategy. Table 2 summarizes each element with notable considerations for a program-level exit.

Table 2. Common elements of a viable exit strategy with central principles and potential challenges

Element	Key consideration	Central principle	Potential challenge
Setting exit timeline	- Types of exit strategy - Program funding cycle - Operational objectives - Key checkpoints on a timeline - Exit timeline of similar programs nearby	- Transparency on explaining rationale for exit timeline - Inclusion for ensuring all stakeholders' participation - Flexibility for reflecting local stakeholders' opinions on timeline	- Drastic change in exit or program activities - Premature program ending - Frequent staff turnover
Specific exit criteria and benchmarks	- Overarching exit criteria - Benchmarks of each criterion - Methodology for data collection and analysis	- Predictability with measurable impact indicators - Transparency for justifying exit criteria and benchmarks - Flexibility for modifying exit criteria, benchmarks and relevant activities	- Difficulty of data collection in timely manner or data interpretation
Identifying key actors	- Key actors' commitment for assuming roles - Existing capacity level of key actors - Power and interest dynamics among key actors	- Transparency with criteria for key actor selection - Obligation for considering risk and opportunity with key actors for assuming their roles	- Difficulty in keeping key actors incentivized, motivated and satisfied while assuming roles
Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms	- Compatibility of exit monitoring with overall program monitoring - Regular review of exit - Funding for post-exit evaluation	- Transparency in monitoring and evaluation process - Flexibility for modification of monitoring methods	- Lack of financial and human resources for exit monitoring and post-exit evaluation

Planning exit before a program inception and implementing an exit strategy as planned reduce operational challenges and likely improve program outcomes (Gardner et al., 2005). This requires integrating an exit strategy with the program design, and an exit timeline needs to be established at the earliest possible stages. While challenges such as drastic changes in plans, premature program ending, or staff turnover may arise, expecting potential challenges and preparing for them should be part of an exit strategy. Exit criteria and their benchmarks are critical as they assess the readiness for exit. Those criteria and benchmarks should be measurable and simple to interpret. Although overarching criteria and benchmarks should not be subject to change without firm justification, flexibility for their potential modification needs to be considered. Depending on the program nature and goals, a degree or needs of local stakeholders' participation may vary. However, they always play a critical role for a successful exit as well as program implementation. Identifying key stakeholders is one step towards smooth exit. And effectively linking them is another step to bring out synergies and outreach to other potential partners for resources and a possible phase-over. Yet, a difficulty is to incentivize and motivate local stakeholders for assisting in exit activities especially when financial resources are limited for economic incentives, and training or re-training programs. Additionally, the process to identify and link key stakeholders should be sensitive to power dynamics, and social or cultural norms. A social violation of them could cause key stakeholders to opt out or refuse to cooperate. A monitoring of exit activities never intends to punish errors, but direct them to the right direction for a successful exit. A caveat with an exit evaluation is that exit cannot be truly evaluated until a post-exit evaluation provides empirical evidence on that exit. As mentioned, such an evaluation rarely takes place largely due to funding issues after the end of the funding cycle or contract.

Exit needs to be viewed as an achievement, not a failure (Lewis, 2016). When properly done in a gradual, sensitive and flexible manner, exit can ensure empowerment of local actors and transform power dynamics to sustain program outcomes and benefits.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

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