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SNAPSHOT

FROM THE MINES TO THE FARMS: ASM COMMUNITIES PROGRESS IN THEIR RECONVERSION FROM MINING TO LIVELIHOODS ACTIVITIES

Support to artisanal mining communities is encouraging the promotion of income generating activities by members of the communities

In the prefecture of Forécariah, artisanal mining activities have generated significant enthusiasm among community members, who have depended traditionally on lowland farming and selling their produce locally. With the intensification of mining activities, lowland areas with alluvial diamond deposits have generated a lot of interest and have been diverted from agriculture to mining by customary landowners.

When the PRADD Project began, farmers' organizations existed in some of the villages where alluvial diamond mining was occurring. These organizations, however, lacked appropriate structures, official recognition, and technical support. PRADD has conducted outreach sessions with some of these organizations, who have expressed the need to collaborate with and obtain support from PRADD in order to become more active and be able to invest in complementary livelihood activities.

Early in this collaboration, PRADD identified all of the existing farmers' organizations and facilitated the creation of others in the six project sites in Forécariah. PRADD facilitated training sessions to assist these organizations to meet required conditions for their creation and operation consistent with the principles governing the cooperative structures in Guinea.

Additional training activities were designed to support the farmers' organizations to identify, prioritize, plan, and implement economic activities. To date, nine of the organizations are fully operational and have invested in various activities, including seasonal farming (sweet potatoes, corn, rice, peanuts, watermelons, peppers, cucumbers, etc.) and palm oil retail. The results achieved by two of these organizations are noteworthy.

In Feindoumodouya, the organization named "Sobèfolemayo" (meaning in local dialect "the beginning of something big may look small") is composed of 25 members (12 women and 13 men) with 7 board members (3 women) and 3 commissioners (2 women). Training and technical assistance were provided to this organization to cultivate approximately 1 hectare of sweet potatoes. Following the harvest, despite some constraints encountered during the planting and the marketing of their

Photo: Djeinabou Barry



Corn harvest by "Djigui" in Tafory.

Photo: Boccar Thiam



Potatoes harvest by "Sobefolemayo" in Feindoumodouya

produce, the organization generated the equivalent of around \$1,000 in cash and 700 liters of palm oil (worth \$500).

At the end of the first planting season the organization independently negotiated with a customary landowner to borrow additional farmland and plant ½ hectare of sweet potatoes and a ½ hectare of peanuts. The group reached out to the District authorities to sign a long term lease of a parcel of communal land to develop a plantation of palm trees. As an expression of support to the local community, the organization donated the equivalent of \$100 to the community to purchase materials and fix the roofs of the community policy station and the school teachers' residence. The female President of the organization (Madame M'ma Cissé) noted that *"thanks to the support received from the PRADD project, social cohesion between members of the organization on one hand and between the organization and the communities and the District office on the other hand, has been strengthened very much"*. She also acknowledged that *"after encountering some difficulties during our first season, which impacted our revenue, we've learned some lessons that were discussed during our extraordinary general assembly. Discussions in this meeting, with support from PRADD, enabled us to strengthen our operation and plant new crops (on our own) and contribute to community development"*.

In Tafory, the organization named "Djigui" (meaning "hope" in the local dialect) is composed of 37 members (22 women) with 7 board members (2 women) and 2 male commissioners. PRADD provided training and technical support to this organization to plant 2 hectares of corn. *"Members of the organization acquired technical skills on corn and watermelon production through the support from the project"* confirmed the Secretary of the organization, Mr. Lamine Cissé). The group generated the equivalent of \$500 in local currency. Some of the produce was consumed by members of the organization, which was not in compliance with the rules set up during the feasibility studies, but lessons were learned from this. *"This revenue generated from corn farming was highly appreciated by our organization. This is the reason why, unanimously, we agreed to use the money to establish another farm on our own,"* noted the Treasurer of the organization, Mr. Yaya Camara. On its

own, the organization used a portion of its revenue to procure seeds and plant 2 hectares of watermelon for the dry season. Currently, the watermelons are growing very well. *“Before the arrival of the project, we lacked courage because we did not have any support. But thanks to the training we received from the project to plant the corn, we also received training to a conduct feasibility study and plant watermelon”* added the Treasurer. *“We have noticed that the results of these economic activities have created a productive emulation among the communities of the three villages that form this organization,”* concluded the President of the association, Mr. Alya Bangoura.

Working with these farmer’s organizations required patience and re-adjustments, and building trust throughout the process. Lessons have been learned, and more work need to be done during the seasons to come. The support from PRADD to promote income generating activities has built strong working relationships with miners and their communities. This solid foundation is encouraging miners and their communities to work with PRADD to improve the governance of the artisanal mining sector in Forécariah.

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