Phasing-Out Development Interventions:

Approaches, Challenges and Opportunities for Community-Focused NGO Projects and Programmes

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Phase-out, i.e. the ending of external support in the context of development interventions, typically carries negative connotations. Instead of achieving sustainable change, development practitioners and beneficiaries report countless negative experiences, including the total collapse of that which interventions had aimed to attain. Planning efforts for phase-out show little effect in reducing problems. Phase-out is one of the least understood aspects of development work, despite its relevance to the overall success of development interventions. A theoretical foundation is lacking, approaches and tools for dealing with phase-out are extremely rare or simply non-existent. This research uses a participatory action research approach for investigating current phase-out practices and key problems related to phase-out. Root causes are studied in detail with an analysis framework based on an organisational model. One focal point is aid dependency: the genesis and dynamics of dependent relationships. Approaches and tools for reducing problems attributed to phase-out and increasing the likelihood for sustainable change are provided in the three case studies of this research and summarised in four key opportunities. The analysis framework presented allows key development actors (donors, NGOs and communities) to review systematically their capacities for phase-out. The context of this research is community-focused development interventions of Non-Government Organisations in East Africa. About the Author: Karim Sahyoun, born in 1972, has been working since 1999 in international development as consultant, researcher, trainer and facilitator. Facilitating participatory learning and reflection processes has been a common thread in all his work. This involved designing tools and processes enabling stakeholder participation. The issues of this research have emerged from practice and the learning has been applied and adapted in different contexts.