

# FOSTERING LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Collaboration for Adaptation and Resilience in Mali (Co-FARM)



## Background

START and Reos Partners first collaborated in 2014 on the Adaptation at Scale in Semi-Arid Regions (ASSAR) project, one of four projects of the Collaborative Adaptation Research Initiative in Africa and Asia (CARIAA). In 2021, we signed an MoU that formalized the intent of building a strong and impactful partnership between the organizations around strengthening the capacities and competencies of early-mid career African scientists and practitioners working in the field of global environmental change and sustainability.

In this context, we began co-exploring a potential Leadership for Sustainability effort based on our respective experiences around what skills and competencies are important, and have had the opportunity to pilot this effort through a Leadership Lab for sustainability researchers in Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso as part of the Collaboration for Adaptation and Resilience in Mali (Co-FARM) project (a CLARE transition project focused on increasing the resilience and adaptive capacities of water resource users in Koutiala, Mali). This is in support of the Co-FARM objective of strengthening capacities of diverse stakeholders including young Francophone scientists.

## Leadership

For this effort, leadership is not conceptualized as a any particular professional position or seniority level, but as a personal orientation that encompasses the inner and interpersonal skills, knowledge, capacities and competencies to: 1) be able to effectively work and collaborate with others, in particular those who think and see the world differently to us and each other; and 2) be able to navigate the cognitive, emotional and pragmatic challenges of trying to address complex, seemingly intractable wicked socio-ecological problems of our time, in the context of enormous uncertainty and rapid change.

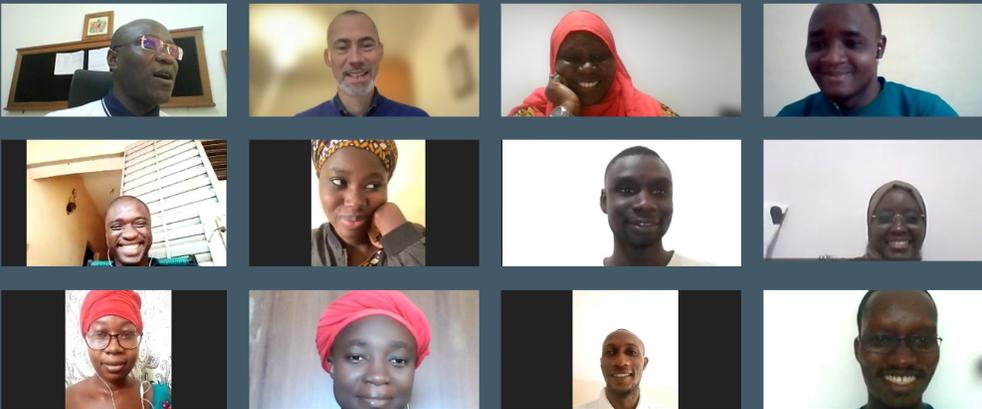
This work was carried out with financial support from the UK Government's Department for International Development and the International Development Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada.

The views expressed herein are those of the creators and do not necessarily represent those of the UK Government's Department for International Development, IDRC or its Board of Governors.



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"[This lab] allowed me to realize how much I wanted to express these feelings while working on my previous project, and to express my opinions in an open way to my colleagues. I would have made better decisions and solved problems differently if I'd had these capacities before."

"I think all the tools taught in this [lab] are useful for me. As part of my research I will be more attentive to my collaborators but also adapt to new ideas concerning my field of research through planning scenarios and anticipating the future"

## About the Leadership Lab

The Leadership Lab was offered in a combined synchronous and asynchronous virtual format. Weekly online modules consisted of informative pages meant to strengthen understanding of the concept at hand, quizzes, critical thinking exercises and supplementary links and resources. At the end of each week, a virtual French-language contact session was convened by START and Reos where participants had the opportunity to reflect on what the concepts meant for their own lives and work, and to put their learning into action through lively interaction with their peers. The four traits and capacities highlighted in the offering modules are reflexivity, empathy, foresight, and flexibility.

### Reflexivity

The process of critically thinking about how your own assumptions and experiences can influence your work.

### Empathy

The ability to recognize, understand, and share the thoughts and feelings of another person.

### Foresight

Developing an imagination for the multiple ways the future could unfold, and how to plan for it now.

### Flexibility

The capacity to adjust to change quickly and calmly, so you can deal with unexpected problems or tasks effectively.

