



Structuring into collectives
to gain power of action

s'émanciper



Collectives for
emancipation!

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« Former pour Transformer » collective - 2020

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1 Introduction

Structuring
into collectives

to gain

POWER OF
ACTION

« Structuring into collectives to gain power of action » is at the heart of the political vision for social transformation of the *Former pour Transformer (Train to Transform)* collective.

Why is this important?

- The formation of groups or collectives often accompanies emancipatory training.

It is a way of continuing the learning while promoting action taking.

- For the most vulnerable, the group or collective is a structure where to get training and contribute.
- The strength of the collective allows its members to become aware of certain social relations that enclose them and to act on them collectively.

The collective is also **a springboard for social change.**

Emancipation is not enough to fight the relationships of domination and to change society.

It is **collective actions** in solidarity that contribute to it.

Once functional, collectives can seize opportunities or initiate projects that help create other ways of living or producing wealth.

For all these reasons, the member organisations of the *Former pour Transformer*¹ collective pay particular attention to these collectives.

¹ The **Former pour Transformer** collective, created under the impetus of Frères des Hommes, brings together in 2020, the following civil society organisations: MPP (Haiti), CENCA (Peru), UGPM (Senegal), APEF (DRC), Duhamic-Adri (Rwanda), Adenya (Rwanda), Fédina (India), Batik International (France), Frères des Hommes (France).

4 booklets for further reflection

These 4 booklets focus on 4 angles to better understand the ways of the **APEF, CENCA** and **UGPM** teams.

Intended for facilitators and trainers, these booklets share lessons learned and questions to improve the support provided to groups. We hope that this will inspire those working in these groups on a daily basis!

More specifically, **this booklet focuses on emancipation** and presents the «*liberating*» benefits of collectives at individual, collective and local levels.

The delicate search for a balance between individual/collective and economic/social interests is also discussed.

①

Collectives for emancipation !

②

Governance and prevention of relationships of domination in collectives


③

6 practices for supporting groups

④

Collective structuring processes

*Transversal
capitalisation as a
learning method* ↙



2017

**Launching seminar
of the Former pour
Transformer
collective.**

Focus on «The
structuring of groups
of population» as
learning angle.

2018

**Facilitation of a
series of webinars.**

Refining the topic!

**New seminar by the
Former pour
Transformer
collective.**

Forming of a first
working group.

**Launch of
transversal
capitalisation.**

Mapping the
practices and
experiences of the
member
organisations of the
working group.

2019

**Workshops and
interviews with
populations in
Senegal, Peru and
DRC.**

APEF, CENCA and
UGPM are organising
themselves internally
to manage their
capitalisation actions
and write their
summaries.

**New seminar by the
Former pour
Transformer
collective.**

The 3 organisations
share the findings of
their capitalisation
effort. Start of the
transversal analysis.

2020

**Lessons learned by
APEF, CENCA, UGPM
and by the other
members of the
Collective.**

Drafting of the
transversal analysis²
in the form of 4
booklets. Each
organisation is to
produce deliverables.

² Independent consultant
Jean-Eudes BEURET
provided methodological
support to Frères des
Hommes and drafted the
transversal analysis.

*The
3 organisations
capitalising
their
experience*





APEF works with the women of South Kivu (region of the Democratic Republic of Congo) on an economic approach (support to the development of income-generating activities) and for the promotion of their rights through awareness-raising.

APEF offers vocational training:

Tailoring, sewing, dyeing, embroidery for 4 to 6 months and then invites women from the **UPCs (Collective Production Units)**.



These UPCs are a means of accelerating the socio-economic integration of women and, above all, a lever for gaining power of action.

APEF's capitalisation focused on **2 UPCs, Charité and Amina**, whose capitalised structuring practices date back 20 years.

Further information on *UPCs*:

Organisation

Committee of elected women and distribution of tasks based on skills

Composition

4 to 6 members, all **craftswomen**

Scale

Mostly **local** economic activity

Types of activities

Production of clothing for sale, **marketing** visits, **experience sharing** between UPCs, **management** of a solidarity mutual aid fund, ...



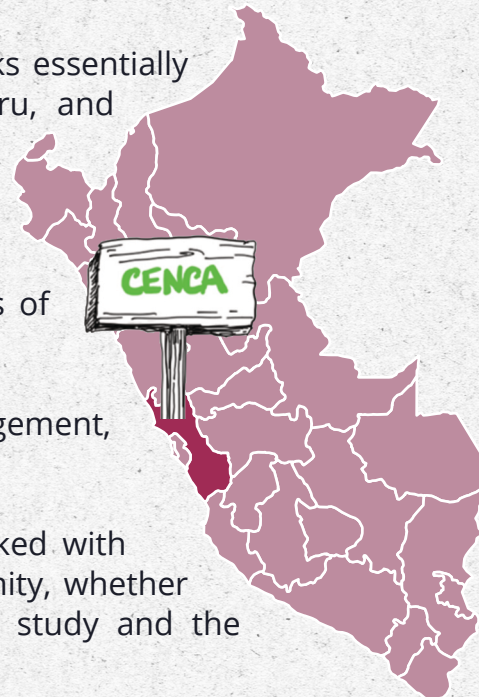
Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano

CENCA works essentially in Lima, Peru, and addresses a

major issue of the city: the growing rural exodus which leads to the extension of the city and the construction of precarious and vulnerable popular districts on the outskirts of the capital.

In 2014, to conduct a study on territory management, CENCA decided to «*call on the people.*»

CENCA selected people having already worked with CENCA and well respected by their community, whether community leaders or not, to validate the study and the questions.



Together they questioned the assumptions, then organised interviews in the field and created thematic committees.

This study made it possible to consolidate a group that would be mobilised again for another study (observatory of everyday risks).

The **community team** was born.

Further information on the community team:

Composition

A dozen members

Organisation

No representative, open collective managing new joiners and departures

Scale

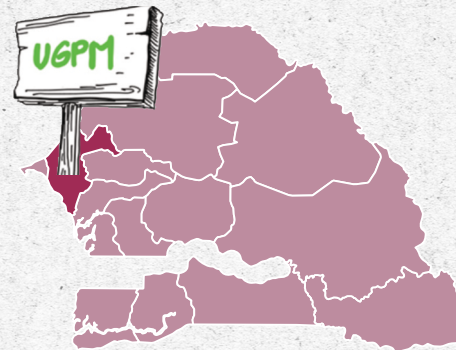
Mariatégui district in Lima

Types of activities

Community mapping, technical and social training, popular housing, social economy, ...



In the Meckhé area (Thiès region in Senegal), **UGPM** helps families develop their farms through sustainable agro-ecological practices and the diversification of their sources of income.



UGPM is composed of 76 farmers' groups.

The objective of the groups is peasant self-promotion: **training, getting stronger, defending one's rights, being a stakeholder** able to influence public policies. UGPM has a technical and a political dimension.

UGPM's capitalisation focused on the provision of support to **Femboul farmers' group**.

This group has been provided support for more than 10 years and is emblematic of the local community actions provided by UGPM in order to revitalise farmers' groups.

Further information on Femboul farmer's group:

Organisation

A chairman and a chairwoman, for parity purposes, an office, an AGM, committees for the management of common activities

Composition

51 members,
all **farmers**

Scale

Village

Types of activities

Provision of services to members through mutual aid, **small loans, solidarity** towards members in need, **training, literacy, management** of a collective grain warehouse...

2

Learning together as a means of empowerment



When joining a collective, an individual may open the way to new learning and get the opportunity to share her/his own experience and knowledge with the group. Contribute to her/his emancipation and that of the group!

APEF focuses on the individual serving the group, and the group serving the individual:

> The individual serve the group :

« I wanted to share my experience with the other members of my UPC. »

> The individual learns from the group :

« By working in a group, I can gain experience by contributing to the group's management and use these skills for the creation of a small business if I ever leave the group. »

UGPM's experience also shows a tangle of individual learning that serves the collective, which serves individuals.

> The group was formed to deal with the disengagement of the State, the worsening of the situation due to the rainfall deficit, natural resource management, and the problems encountered in groundnut cultivation.

« There are problems that no family farm can handle on its own. »

> The collective is a means of accessing partners and support, which are necessary for everyone:

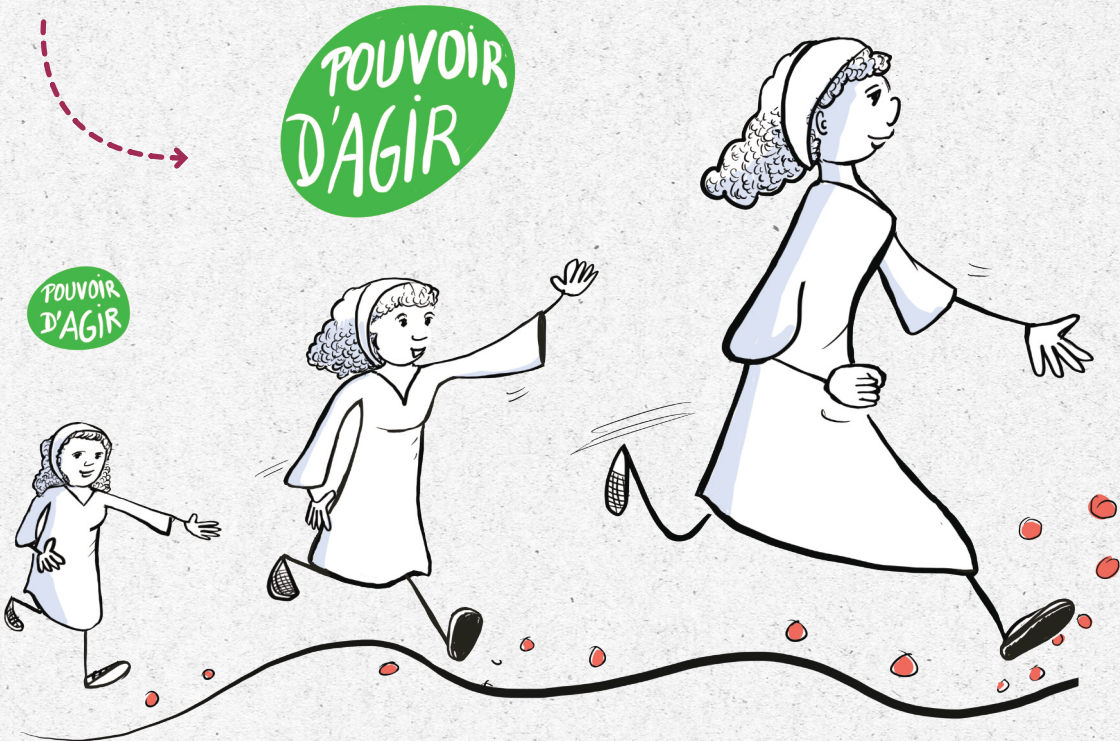
« The collective was the solution to better dialogue and negotiate with other partners at local and national level, to meet our needs. The State provided support to the villages that had organised themselves. Being a strong collective was crucial to be heard by the authorities and access the programs that the State had set up. »

CENCA realised that the community team presented interdependencies between individual and collective benefits in terms of learning and empowerment:

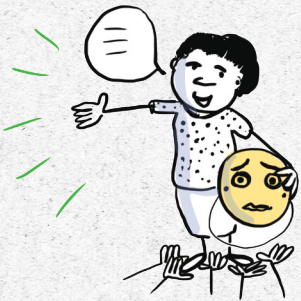
> Collective benefits:

- Being freer.
- Defending oneself against abuses of authority.
- Self-confidence, pride.
- Act for oneself.

POUVOIR
D'AGIR



> Individual benefits that serve the leadership and the collectives:



- Public speaking skills and smooth communication (e.g. by presenting the results of a participatory mapping in public).



- Improving as a leader.



- Building dialogue skills: adopting a communicative posture, instead of a confrontational posture.



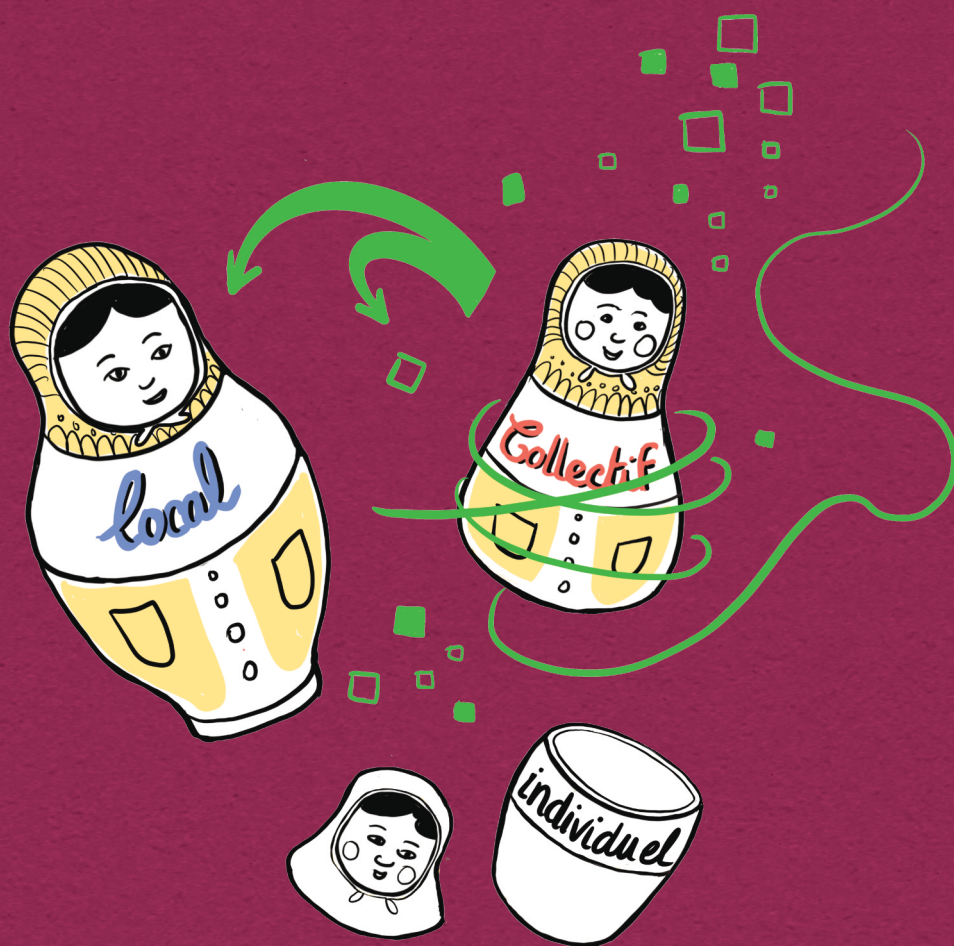
- Addressing other institutions, taking initiative.

Takeaway

Supporting population groups, mostly through individual training along with collective actions, is a learning process that promotes both individual and collective empowerment.

3

Structuring of collectives and local actions



While some collectives form around common actions to change their territory, others make sure they have structured operating procedures before taking action.

It's all a question of approach, but the aim remains the same: working as a group and acting on one's environment.

UGPM collectives seem to generate two types of benefit:

Benefits improving the collective's efficiency:

- More commitment and mobilisation in the activities: the group is attractive, membership is growing. Mobilisation increases during activities.
- Collective skills: improvement of the group's capabilities in terms of reflection and projection into the future.
- Good management: the group is well organised, and its community activities are well managed internally.
- Financial balance: the group is financially stable.
- Responsibilities are more widely shared.



Benefits for the village, for all. In Femboul, the benefits resulting from the group's work are as follows:

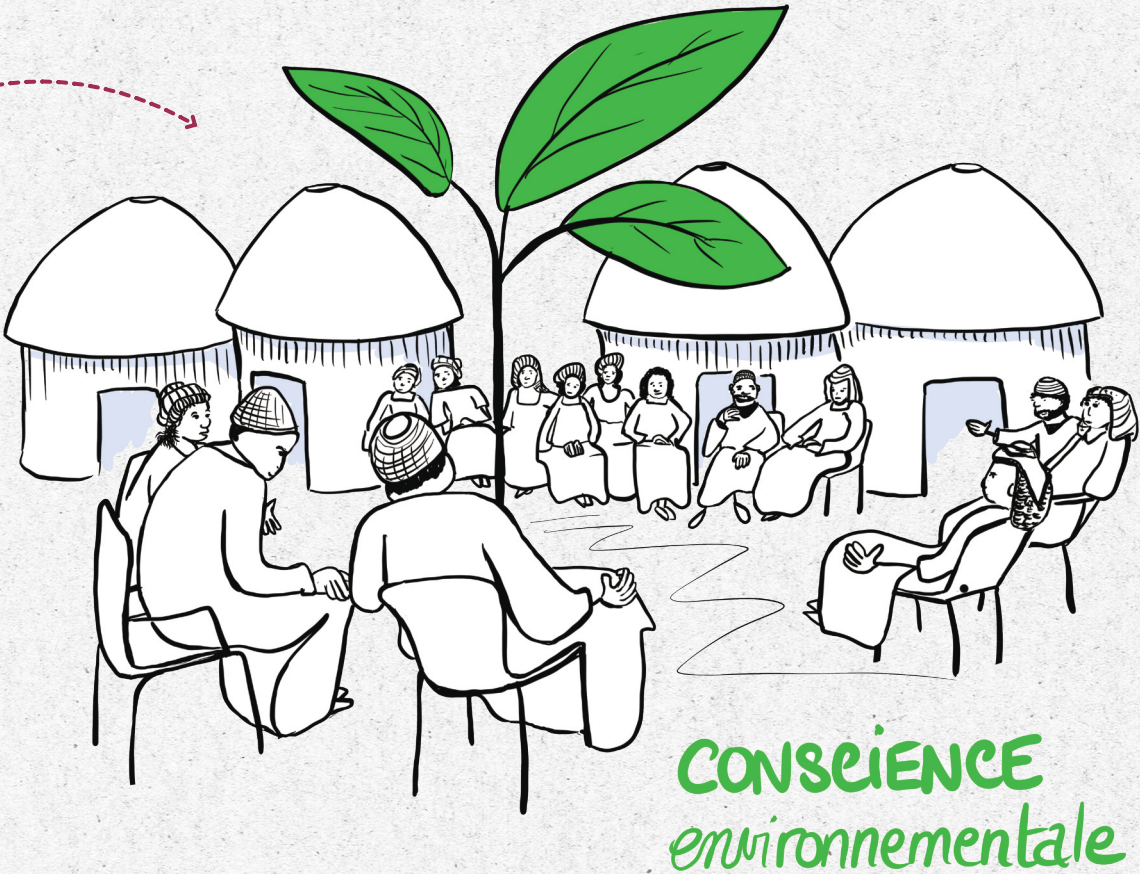
- Social cohesion and strengthened solidarity. There used to be two groups in the village, before they decided to merge. There has also been an improvement in the systems of solidarity and aid for the most vulnerable.
- Young people are returning to the village and getting involved. 10 to 15 young boys and girls joined the group, along with other youth who decided to come back to the village and whose parents had received funding.
- Economic gains, with a better valorisation of agricultural products, reduction of the hungry gap, a certain diversification of individual and collective activities.
- Emergence of an entrepreneurial dynamic in the village, resulting in more economic initiatives thanks to training and the fact that *«initiatives are fostered*

through the financing of family farms.»

- Femboul's increased visibility and leadership.
- Environmental awareness: *«environmental management is taken into account by the groups.»*

CENCA for its part focuses on interpersonal benefits on the one hand, and local common benefits on the other hand. Here are some examples of actions:

- Supporting, guiding one's neighbours.
- Concrete city planning: green spaces, road signs, etc.
- Community work on risks, urban agriculture, fostering the taking of initiatives.
- Awareness-raising on issues such as violence against women.
- Showing that women can be community leaders just like men.
- Raising awareness about the fact that other people have the same



problems, to foster structuring on a larger scale.

- Organising meetings between local authorities and the community team in a risk-mitigating effort (e.g. to avoid the collapse of a road on houses).

Takeaway

Philosophies may differ: for some organisations, the collective must work smoothly to be considered useful while, for others, it is the usefulness of the collective that will make it work.

4

Balancing interests



It is sometimes difficult to find a balance between individual and collective interest.

APEF and UGPM tend to coordinate economic and solidarity objectives. CENCA, for its part, puts the emphasis on individual commitment mix: neither too much nor too little.

In the case of APEF, women start by creating collectives sharing economic objectives at several levels:

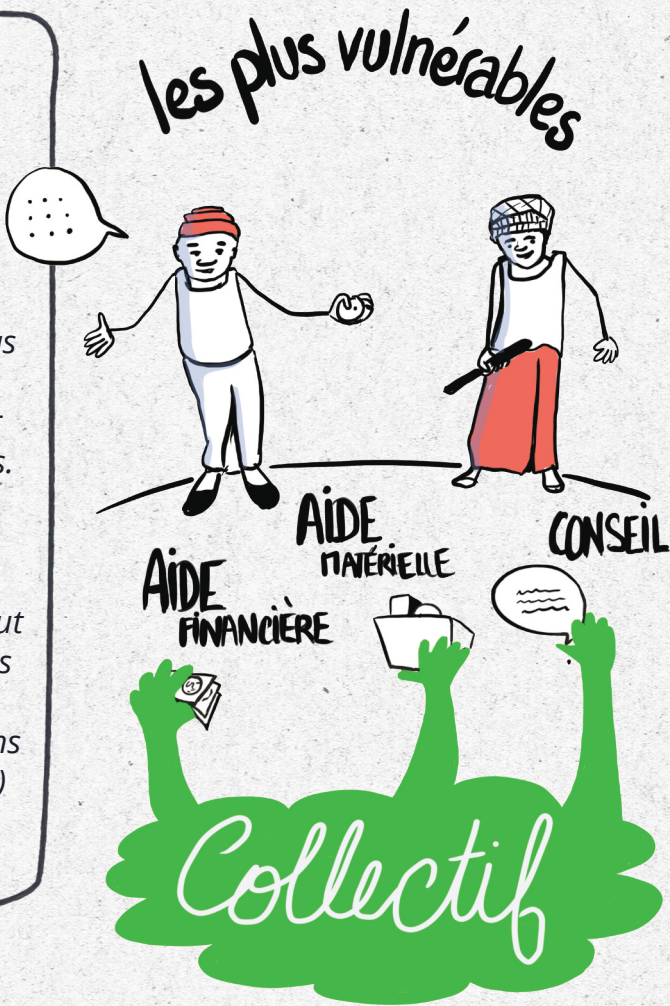
- > « Reducing expenses as well as the production cost. »
- > Access support from APEF (credits)
- > Developing a range of products:

« I saw that there were other women in the UPC who already know how to dye. And as we stayed together, I could develop several models. »

... then the collectives become a means to support the most vulnerable:

« I shared my experience in drawing: drawing without compasses, because there were old women who did not know how to hold compasses. »

« During our meetings, I would share my social problems such as paying my children's school fees, and hospital expenses and other happy as well as unhappy events. The UPC members would support me and I felt as if my husband was still by my side. I was not the only one to talk about my problems, the other members would also share theirs and together we would look for means of action (material and financial) but also for advice. »



CENCA has a distinct dynamic.

CENCA's community team's members want to change their environment and know that «it would require the communities to work together.»

This implies being committed to a collective interest, especially in the long term (otherwise, members may lose track of things).

However, one inhabitant said she regreted that some members would leave the community team once reaching their own personal benefit (getting a small house, or technical training). To her, losing cohesion or a member weakens the team. In some cases, individual interest prevails over collective interest, leading to disengagement.

According to UGPM, solidarity is mostly achieved through «calebasses de solidarité», a solidarity initiative proposed to farmers' groups.

Takeaway

It is necessary to ensure that the members of the collective meet individual interests and expectations, but also that individual interest is not the main driver for engagement. Otherwise, once this individual interest satisfied, members tend to disengage, which is detrimental to the collective dynamic.

5

Going further



Should we try to articulate individual leadership with community legitimacy?

In some cases, leaders assert themselves without community legitimacy.

CENCA had to face this situation: the people attending the meetings and getting involved sometimes have difficult relationships with their community, which did not mandate them to represent them. Some members of the community team face legitimacy issues: they are de facto representatives of their community.

CENCA supports their emancipation and their emergence as leaders, and relies on their enthusiasm and individual commitment: do they need a community mandate? If so, there is a risk of that mandate being granted to less willing and less committed people.

Question to be asked in its own context :

How to combine the individual emancipation and emergence of leadership abilities among motivated and enthusiastic people serving community actions with the fact that these leaders have not been mandated by the community?

Should support be provided to a small number of individuals within the collective or to the greatest number of participants?

This question arises from the experience of **UGPM**.

In 2010, Femboul farmers' group was selected to receive focused support for revitalisation purposes. Then, within this group, 20 learners were selected to benefit from training and from support for an individual project.

The learners received modular training for 15 months, then designed a project to improve their farm and received funding for the same. After 2012, the training led to a collective project: the building of the warehouse. This training and financial support resulted in individual benefits which also reflected collectively. For example, the secretary of the group, who became an endogenous coordinator, went through 56 days of training: *«She has greatly improved her skills. She is on the management committee and is very involved in the group.»*

But does focusing training and support on potential leaders still serve the collective? This seems to be the case in Femboul, but the question deserves to be asked more generally.

Question to be asked in its own context :

Does the structuring of a collective require focusing training on a small number of individuals? Or on the greatest number of participants? Under what conditions?

How to support individual emancipation initiatives to foster social change?

Among the benefits of training and collective actions, the women supported by **APEF** mostly value the notion of emergence: buying a plot of land, building a house, feeling at home, being a respected member of the community, improving their economic and social situation.

The notion of « *emergence* » means that women are acknowledged by their family: they participate in family expenses, they are involved in the family's decision-making process, they save up, can pay for their children's school fees and sometimes buy a plot of land.

These economic and social benefits, resulting from the action of APEF, are considerable. But individual emancipation fostering social change cannot be taken for granted. When some women decide to join political parties, for example, they do not always serve the people.

Question to be asked in its own context :

How to support individual emancipation initiatives to have them result in actions for social change in a systematic way?

6

Summary



- 1 Supporting population groups, mostly through individual training along with collective actions, is a learning process that promotes both individual and collective empowerment.
- 2 Philosophies may differ: for some organisations, the collective must work smoothly to be considered useful while, for others, it is the usefulness of the collective that will make it work.
- 3 When a collective mainly serves an economic interest, it is crucial to combine the latter with a social dimension, through solidarity mechanisms, to strengthen collective actions.
- 4 How to combine the individual emancipation and emergence of leadership abilities among motivated and enthusiastic people serving community actions with the fact that these leaders have not been mandated by the community?
- 5 Does the structuring of a collective require focusing training on a small number of individuals? Or on the greatest number of participants? Under what conditions?
- 6 How to support individual emancipation initiatives to have them result in actions for social change in a systematic way?

Notes



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