



Structuring into collectives  
to gain power of action



*Processes for  
the structuring  
into collectives*



« 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*<sup>1</sup> collective pay particular attention to these collectives.

<sup>1</sup> 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 reflexion

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!

①

Collectives for emancipation !

②

Governance and prevention of relationships of domination in collectives

③

6 practices for supporting groups


④

Collective structuring processes

More specifically, this booklet focuses on the **processes for structuring into collectives**. The transversal analysis revealed that structuration steps are not necessarily sequential, they can overlap and be complemented with phases of consolidation/erosion/recovery of the dynamics, etc. Each collective has its own specific path.



*Transversal  
capitalisation as a  
learning method* ↙



## 2017

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

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

## 2018

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**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

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**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

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

Drafting of the  
transversal analysis<sup>2</sup>  
in the form of 4  
booklets. Each  
organisation is to  
produce deliverables.

<sup>2</sup> 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, ...





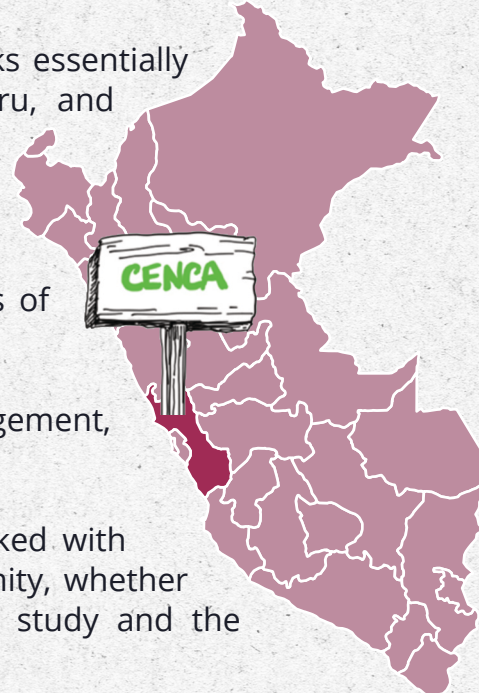
Instituto de Desarrollo Urbano

**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

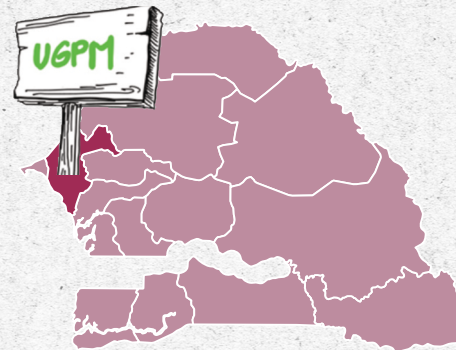
#### Types of activities

**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**

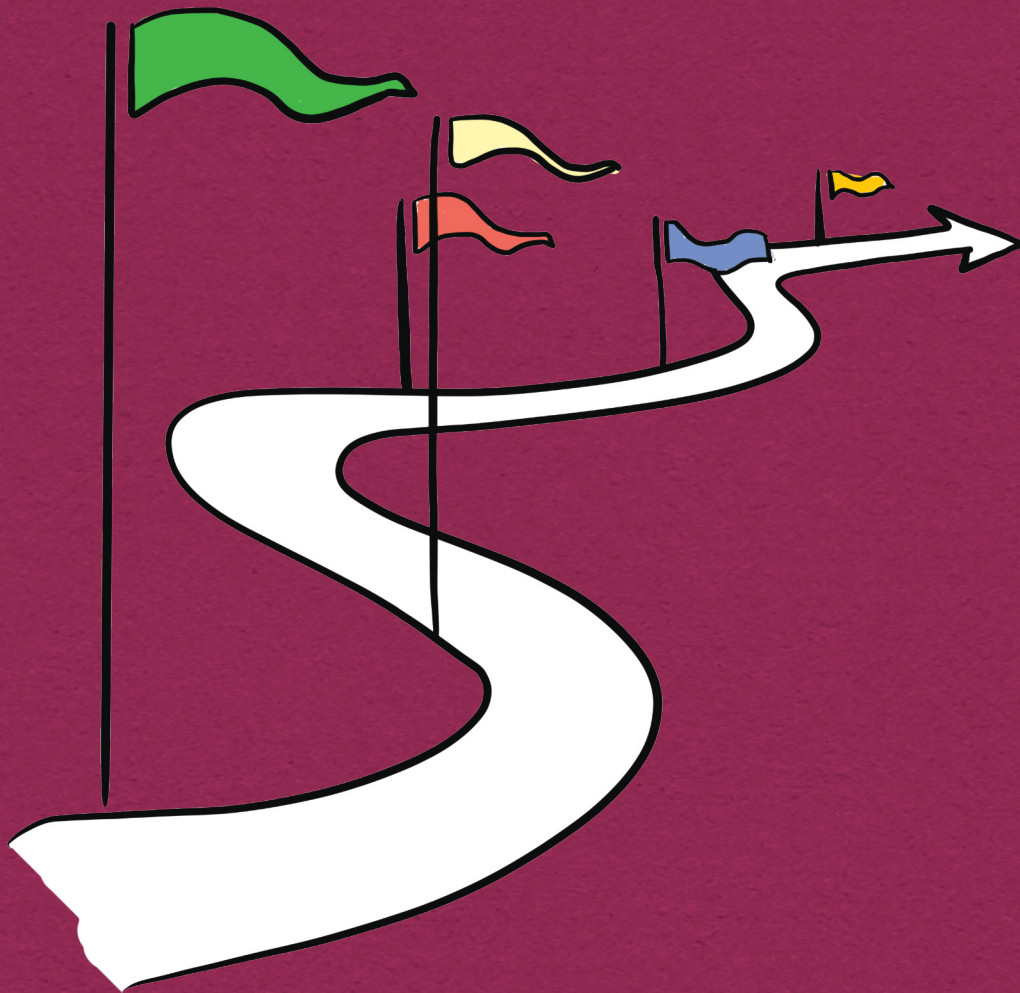
#### Types of activities

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



2

## Supporting the structuring : which processes ?



At the beginning of the transversal capitalisation, the assumption regarding the structuring into collectives was:

1  
Collective  
awareness and  
definition of a vision

2  
Taking action

3  
Autonomy

It turns out that these stages are not necessarily sequential: they can overlap and be complemented with other steps.

Here are the different stages of structuring:

- > Emergence
- > Consolidation
- > Resilience
- > Empowerment
- > Serving social change



# 3

## Emergence



There are two different methods in which collectives emerge. Either emergence is driven and more or less steered by a project, or emergence is not designed as part of an agenda. In that case, the collective emerges (or doesn't) during an action.

Training can be used to foster the structuring into a collective: learners are recommended to structure into collectives, an important step to gain access to material support.

**In the case of APEF**, a collective is created systematically after such training cycle.

**In the case of UGPM**, this is much less systematic, but the practices of facilitation and awareness-raising on local development are part of

the «*starter training*» at least as a basis for reflection on some topics.



**CENCA does not have an agenda for the creation of collectives.** The emergence process is described as follows:

«*the populations, with an impulse from CENCA, begin to meet to further reflect on certain topics. The collective is not generated by the project, nor does it pre-date the project itself. It is an extension of the project.*»

### Takeaway

The emergence of collectives can be driven and more or less steered by the supporting organisation, sometimes with the help of «*starter training*.» But collectives can also emerge as a result of an action, irrespective of a pre-established agenda.



# 4

## Consolidation



Some organisations try to consolidate collectives through activities that mobilise members and the structuring/ institutionalisation of the collective. CENCA's position is different and the comparison between both approaches is worthwhile.

There are several areas of opposition:

### > Should activities be favoured over the building of relationships?

According to CENCA, collaboration was key for the consolidation of the community team: meetings, visits in the field for risk mapping, etc. The building of relationships is crucial.

Activities are thus mere pretexts for the collective consolidation of the team and for individual and collective emancipation.

Consolidation is seen as a means toward cohesion, group identity and strong relationships between members.

### > Should a specific orientation be defined? Or should the collective build its own path?

CENCA points out that the community team redefined its original orientation. The team is open to new ideas, developed with different people.

Organisations other than CENCA have contributed to making collective life more dynamic, which is why it is important to encourage the collective to be more open to other organisations. Opening up and an ability to «recreate» oneself are highlighted as essential ingredients for consolidation.

### > Structuring and institutionalisation: essential or optional?

Today, the community team is described as a «human collective»: it is a consolidated but not formalised network, with no established governance. The structuring process was not studied because it was considered optional at this stage.



This contrasts, of course, with collectives implementing policies and procedures, articles of association, elected positions, etc.

Today, the members would like the collective to be formally recognised, to be acknowledged as representatives and gain access to the municipality and the partners more easily: this would necessarily require some structuring, but would help reach out to the authorities.

### Takeaway

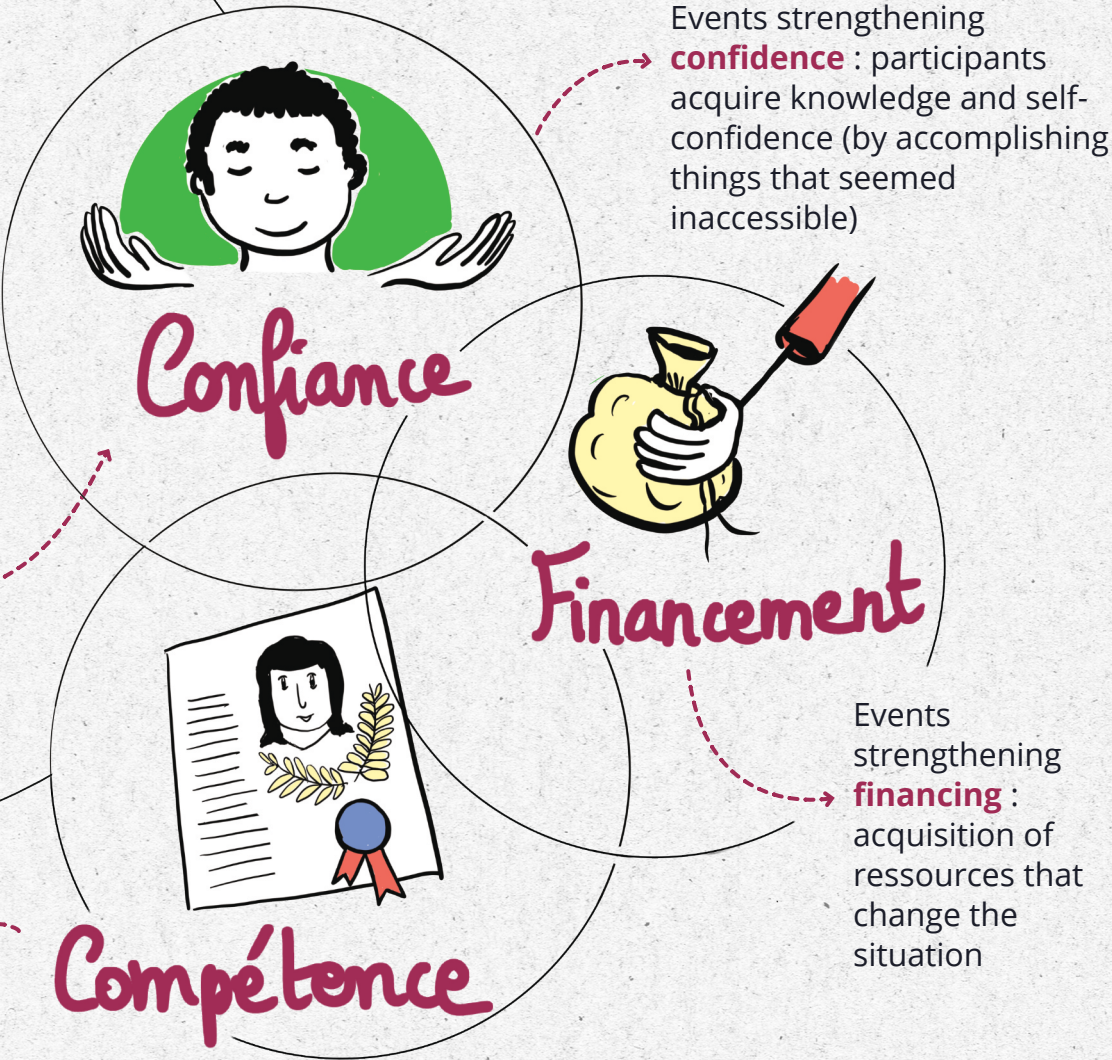
For some organisations, consolidation mostly relies on the activities of the collective and on its structuring, sometimes very formalised.

For others, the consolidation of the collective mostly relies on its ability to invent itself, to define its own path based on the various actors and activities, that are not an end in themselves but rather a means toward emancipation.

At this stage of consolidation, the members of the collectives mostly focus on the events that served individual emancipation: technical training, literacy training, funding, etc. In other words, they talk about events from which they benefited personally and which, according to them, had a strong impact in the consolidation of the group.

These events can be classified in 3 categories, and represent **3 drivers for individual emancipation at the service of the group**

Events strengthening **skills** : learning techniques that change the way of doing things



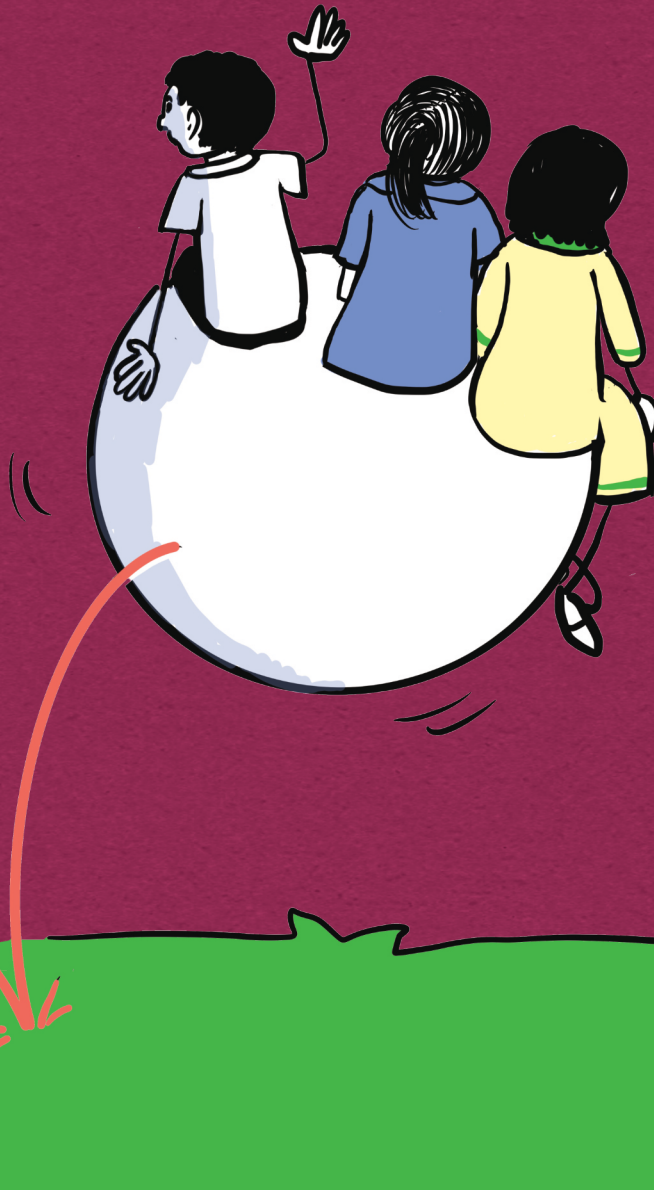
### Takeaway

Events that contribute to individual emancipation (skills, confidence, financing) help the situation change and consolidate the collectives.



# 5

## Resilience



Can collectives be prepared for certain major difficulties, to overcome them, while getting stronger (notion of rebound, resilience)?

Capitalisation made it possible to identify two types of recurring difficulties.

**For example, UPC «La Charité» first experienced a structuring phase, before falling apart.** Over time, problems in the functioning of the collective emerged (negligence/death of some members).

Today, the group no longer works towards collective production. Each member now works for her/his own household. The remaining members would still participate in the activities related to the professional training platform for dyeing.

The main reasons for these difficulties are:

- The members' mobility (death, transfer of one's husband, etc.): the departure of a member is a challenge for the group.
- Non-payment of large public procurement orders: the collective did not know how to secure sufficient guarantees, at a time when it had access to larger markets, which are important challenges.



This raises two key questions, which the capitalisation process could not answer:

**How to reduce the collective's vulnerability when members leave?**

Should relationships between members be more institutionalised, should responsibilities be further distributed, or should identity and shared commitments be prioritised over institutionalisation?

**How to prepare the collective to face the political sphere?**

As the collective makes progress, it may be confronted with the world of politics and public procurement order. This represents a threat (fraud, payment defaults): how can it be better supported at this stage of its development?

**UGPM** reports the members' mobility as one its main challenges.

Mobility is a crucial issue. However, mobility does not compromise the Femboul's activities.

The size of the collective obviously plays a role, but it is important to identify the factors accounting for the resilience or the collapse of collectives.



*Takeaway*

Collectives are challenged or even defeated by two recurring factors: key members' mobility and, once they have reached a certain level of activity, confrontation with the political sphere.

Can we prepare them to be more resilient?





# 6

## Autonomy



The objective, for most of the members of the «*Former pour Transformer*» collective is the autonomy of the collectives supported. But what kind of autonomy are we talking about? Functional autonomy and political autonomy seem to be the most appropriate options.

**UGPM** groups are closely followed-up and have little freedom to choose their form of organisation.

On the other hand, they can carry out actions themselves and look for partners. They receive organisational training, to help the group reach «*autonomous management and organisation.*»

**UGPM's objective is self-promotion:**

«*the group should be able to achieve self-promotion (i.e. observing, thinking and acting for itself).*»





Two dimensions seem to emerge:

- > functional autonomy: the collective is autonomous;
- > political autonomy: the collective thinks for itself and takes its own initiatives.

**CENCA clearly emphasises political autonomy,** based on freedom of initiative, combining collective and individual initiatives.

### *Takeaway*

Two types of autonomy stand out: functional autonomy (the collective is autonomous) and political autonomy (thinking and acting for oneself). The two do not always go hand in hand and supporting organisations often prioritise one over the other.

### **Autonomy, with or without support?**

The community team was always supported by CENCA. What is the objective? For the team to become autonomous by acting for itself or to continue to receive support?

The important thing seems to be «*building something together.*»

For a farmers' movement such as UGPM, autonomy does not mean breaking away from the collective and the supporting organisation.

Autonomy is thus possible with or without support.

### *Takeaway*

Autonomy does not necessarily mean «*acting alone.*» An autonomous collective can also mean maintaining relations in order to «*act together.*»



# 7

## Becoming an actor for social change



Beyond autonomy, the goal, for the collective or for individual members, is to choose to be an actor of social change through solidarity and collective action.

### At individual level:

The collective serves the emancipation of individuals about to become actors for social change either in their collective or elsewhere.

### At local level:

Training benefits individuals but also local development.

- **For example, CENCA** community team is meant to become a small social change unit, and to modify relationships of power in the area.
- **For Femboul farmers' group, supported by UGPM**, training is recognised as serving the public good. For example, the training on «*small ruminant manure*» and «*compost*» had a significant impact on the members of the group but also on the village since several people have now adopted this practice.
- **APEF supported the creation of professional associations** or «*trade*» associations and continues to structure «*trade*» associations via UPCs.



### At other levels:

Through networks or bodies, scale changes, from local to global.

- > **CENCA would like the community team to be a stakeholder in a social movement** for change that would include intellectuals, NGOs, trade unions, etc. The team must be part of the development of collective consciousness.
- > **In the case of UGPM, each group takes actions locally**, at village level, for the sake of its members. But the groups also support the legitimacy of UGPM, to take action at a higher level, as a political force. UGPM is also present in national (FONGS, Action Paysanne, CNCR) and international (Via Campesina) bodies.

### *Takeaway*

The collective can become an actor for social change:

- > By contributing to the training of individuals who can be actors for change here or elsewhere;
- > By taking part in higher-level bodies or social movements that allow for a wider scale of influence.

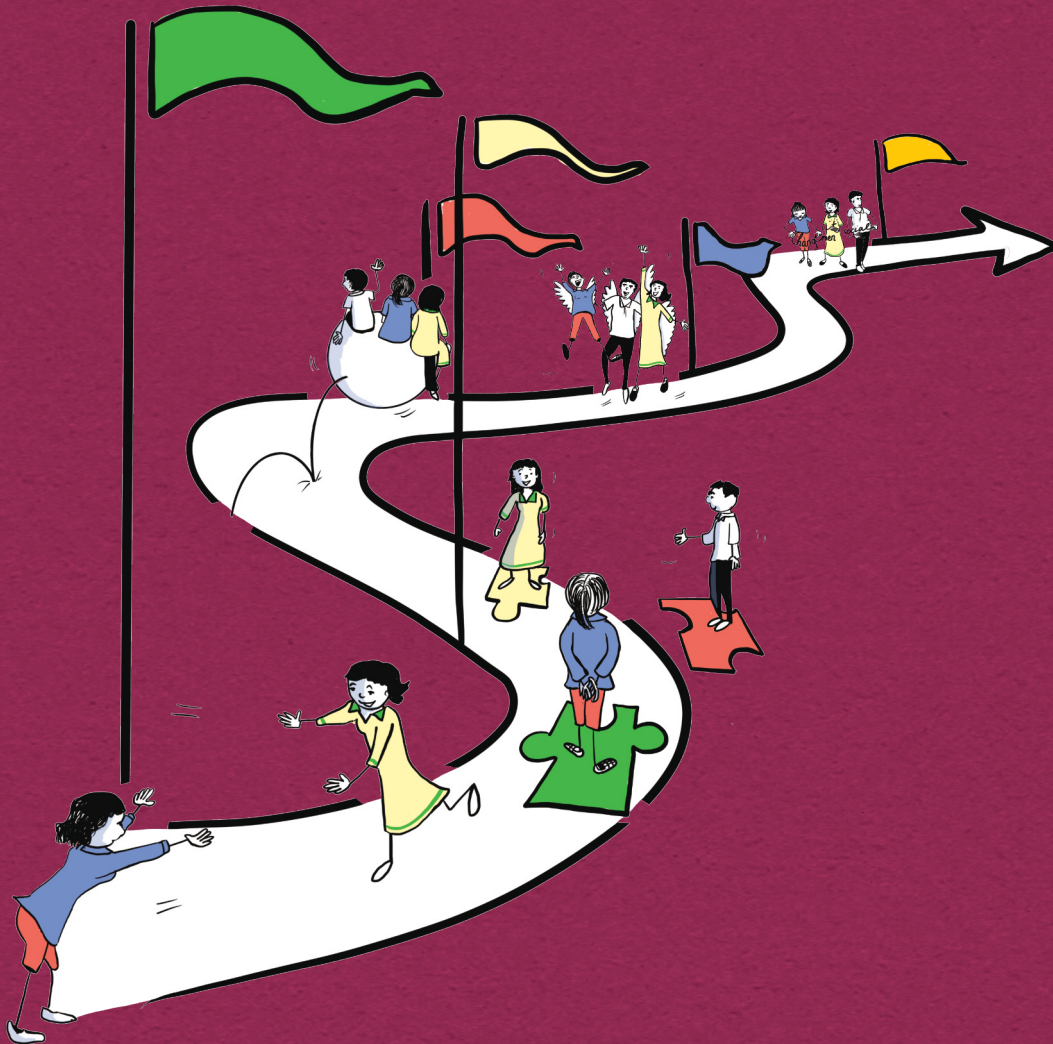
It is important to conduct or support this scaling-up.





# 8

## Summary



- 1 Here are the different stages of structuring:
  - > Emergence
  - > Consolidation
  - > Resilience
  - > Empowerment
  - > Serving social change
- 2 The emergence of collectives can be driven and more or less steered by the supporting organisation, sometimes with the help of «starter training.» But collectives can also emerge as a result of an action, irrespective of a pre-established agenda.
- 3 For some organisations, consolidation mostly relies on the activities of the collective and on its structuring, sometimes very formalised.

For others, the consolidation of the collective mostly relies on its ability to invent itself, to define its own path based on the various actors and activities, that are not an end in themselves but rather a means toward emancipation.

Events that contribute to individual emancipation (skills, confidence, financing) help the situation change and consolidate the collectives.
- 4 Collectives are challenged or even defeated by two recurring factors: key members' mobility and, once they have reached a certain level of activity, confrontation with the political sphere. Can we prepare them to be more resilient?



5 Two types of autonomy stand out: functional autonomy (the collective is autonomous) and political autonomy (thinking and acting for oneself). The two do not always go hand in hand and supporting organisations often prioritise one over the other.

Autonomy does not necessarily mean «*acting alone*.» An autonomous collective can also mean maintaining relations in order to «*act together*.»

- 6 The collective can become an actor for social change:
- > By contributing to the training of individuals who can be actors for change here or elsewhere;
  - > By taking part in higher-level bodies or social movements that allow for a wider scale of influence.

It is important to conduct or support this scaling-up.

Notes





Transversal capitalisation of experiences by:



Capitalisation coordinated and published by:



With the support of the Agence Française de Développement:

