



Experience Sheet

WORKSHOP

for the SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

A participatory action supported by APEF: the construction of a bridge in Rubumba

The Participation group, which brings together several members of the "Former pour Transformer" collective, is responsible for managing a support fund for participatory actions, made available to the populations supported by the member organizations of the collective. This fund is used to finance participatory actions carried out by and for the populations, with the aim of addressing concrete problems affecting them and experimenting with alternatives for social change.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, APEF has been supporting the Mapendo cooperative since 2016. This cooperative consists of 60 members, all of whom are women. It is primarily focused on agriculture, with a particular emphasis on the maize sector across the entire value chain, including the production, processing, and marketing of maize flour. The cooperative has received various forms of support from APEF, including assistance with structuring the cooperative, providing processing equipment, legalizing the cooperative through the acquisition of regulatory texts, capacity building for members on agroecological techniques and practices, as well as organizational and managerial support.



A group of women members of the Mapendo cooperative supported by the APEF team.

From the collective definition of the action to its implementation.

The women of the cooperative identified several problems within their community of Kamanyola, in the Walungu territory of the South Kivu region, including the impassability of the agricultural access road in Rubumba and issues with accessing agricultural inputs. A meeting was organized by the cooperative members to prioritize these problems. A majority agreed that constructing a small bridge on the agricultural access road in the village of Rubumba was of paramount importance. This bridge would ensure access to fields for agricultural producers, enable the free movement of people and livestock, and facilitate the transport of agricultural products.

The bridge construction took place over two months, with cooperative members working voluntarily on the project under the supervision of a civil engineer.



Photos : the different stages of the bridge construction

Testimony

Merveille Furaha Muhemedi, the pedagogical coordinator at APEF who supported the women of the cooperative throughout their action, recounts:

"The women members of the Mapendo cooperative have been highly involved since the beginning of the process. They identified the needs within their community and communicated them to APEF agronomists during a meeting. The members also participated in prioritizing the problems, choosing

the action to take, finding an engineer, preparing the construction budget, purchasing materials, negotiating labor for the construction, and monitoring the progress of the action.

The women members collaborated with local authorities to facilitate the implementation of this action and to involve them throughout the process. They also raised awareness within the community so that they could take ownership of the action and participate in the construction. The Rubumba community thus contributed to the implementation of this action. Local media, in turn, helped with member mobilization and increased the visibility of the action and the cooperative.

The women members of the Mapendo cooperative demonstrated great dynamism and showed their ability to manage the action independently from start to finish, successfully involving the community and the media in the process."

Impact of this Action on the Lives of Rubumba Residents

The construction of this bridge has significantly facilitated the transportation of agricultural products from the fields of farmers to storage locations. It has enabled tractors, trucks, and farmers to access the fields more easily. This improved transport infrastructure has led to increased agricultural production and a decrease in food prices in the market. Some members have even reported an increase in their incomes due to easier access to the fields, higher production levels, and quicker sales of their products.



Discover [here](#) other participatory actions implemented by the communities supported by the organizations in the "Former pour Transformer" collective and funded by the participation fund.

Link to the article : <https://atelier.fdh.org/en/take-action/our-experiences/participatory-collective-actions/article/a-participatory-action-supported-by-apef-the-construction-of-a-bridge-in?lang=en>

Author : APEF

