



Structuring into collectives
to gain power of action

6 practices for supporting groups



«Former pour Transformer» collective - 2020

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1 Introduction

*Structuring
into collectives*



« 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.

¹The **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!

Collectives for emancipation !

Governance and prevention of relationships of domination in collectives

6 practices for supporting groups

Collective structuring processes

More specifically, this booklet focuses on support practices. **Six categories of support practices for structuring collectives** have been identified: community diagnosis, training, follow-up and support, opening up and connecting, funding, debrief/media coverage.

Capitalisation makes it possible to further study the specific aspects of these practices.

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 UCPs, 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:

Organisation

Composition

A dozen members

No representative, open collective managing new joiners and departures

Scale

Mariátegui 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

A community diagnosis to drive dynamics



Two organisations use participatory diagnosis to drive collective dynamics (to generate or revive them).

CENCA considers community diagnosis an efficient tool for the empowerment and emergence of collectives. Here is how:

Selection of the participants:

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. Together, they will form the core of the collective resulting from this work.

A diagnosis conducted by the members:

They help validating the study and the questions, questioning the assumptions and then organising interviews in the field and creating thematic committees. The study was a way to strengthen the group, soon to be mobilised again for another study.

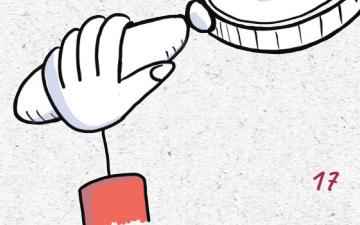
The members would carry out interviews and draft risk-related documentation.

Empowerment through diagnosis:

A standard diagnosis conducted by experts distances local stakeholders: language, position of superiority of the expert, who provides her/his own expertise at the expense of other types of knowledge. Making the participants work on an issue and take ownership of it gives them the ability to build a sense of ownership and make personal progress. This contributes to the participants' self-confidence and security, and helps them integrate new people and contribute without fear of their contributions being swept away.



This practice and the empowerment dimension of this diagnosis prepare for collective action.



UGPM grants a limited time for diagnosis, but the purpose is the same: driving dynamics.

Training/awareness-raising is used for local development, and makes the group question local issues. These sessions last one day and follow the below process:

Selection of the participants:

Members of the farmers' group but also members of the surrounding villages, sharing the same territory and facing the same difficulties.

Bringing people together and setting the framework.

First of all, an ice breaker helps win trust and make everyone participate. It is important to remind the participants that there are no bad ideas, and that everyone is free to say what they think. Exchanging is crucial to go forward.

Exploring the concept of local development together.

«First, we try to go over the local development in terms of initiatives implemented and participation of the populations. We ask awareness-

raising questions, to measure the degree of knowledge of these populations on local development. The facilitator will complement if required.»

A diagnosis of local development initiatives.

«*We identify all initiatives and activities, whether individual or collective, to bring out the main difficulties.»*

Raising awareness on proactivity.

The partners and facilitators reach a conclusion: the challenge for the collective is to become aware of its role in local development.



Takeaway

Participatory diagnosis practices - from mere meetings to in-depth diagnosis carried out by the population - are an effective tool to stimulate collectives, in order to emerge or revive.

Participatory diagnosis: how can local knowledge be collected and exploited?

CENCA's practices aim at collecting local knowledge, via the below process:

Focusing the diagnosis interviews on local knowledge. The diagnosis carried out by the community team focused on risks: much local knowledge, practices, experiences were collected, based on the populations' knowledge about risks, accidents, local history, events, etc.

Community mapping:

Conducted by the team members who defined the elements to study. The members interviewed each other in the field.

Interviews conducted by peers:

The interviews were conducted by the community team, to establish a true dialogue between the interviewee and the interviewer. Discussions are facilitated compared to interviews conducted by a professional interviewer.

These practices must be integrated into the popular education approach, and be based on the population's knowledge, instead of a pre-defined project. These practices can be a source of inspiration for everyone.

Takeaway

Interviews conducted by peers, research focusing on local knowledge, knowledge of the region, all these elements constitute best practices. They help enhance local knowledge which tends to be marginalised or discredited by external contributions.

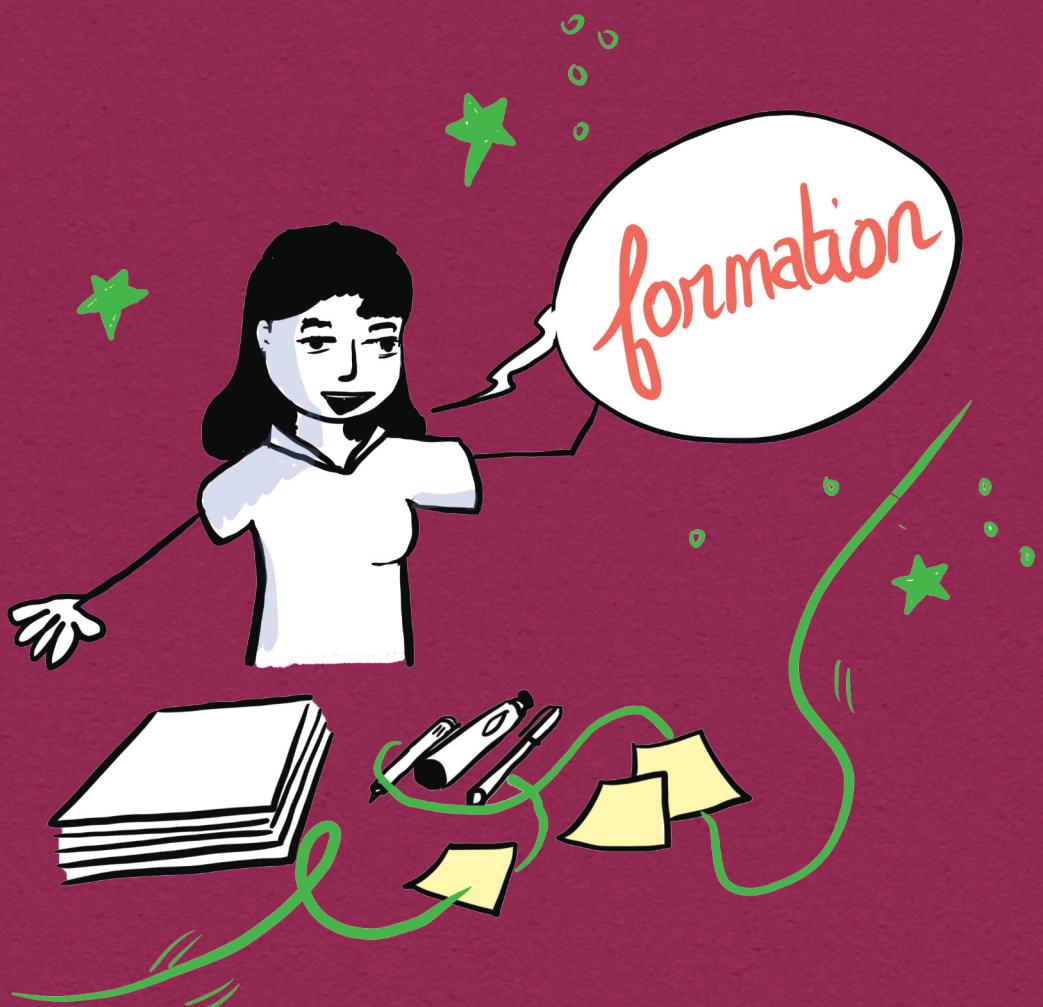
Food for thought:

Training can enhance external knowledge at the expense of local knowledge. How can local knowledge and experience be enhanced in training courses?



3

Training practices for collectives



Training is one of the main forms of support offered to collectives by both UGPM and APEF. In both cases, different types of training are offered, especially technical and organisational programs, and sometimes basic training (literacy).

3.1 - Combining several types of training: technical, organisational, basic, etc.

UGPM thus combines technical training for the adoption of new practices (individual and collective), organisational training to ensure the autonomy of the group, and literacy.

More specifically:

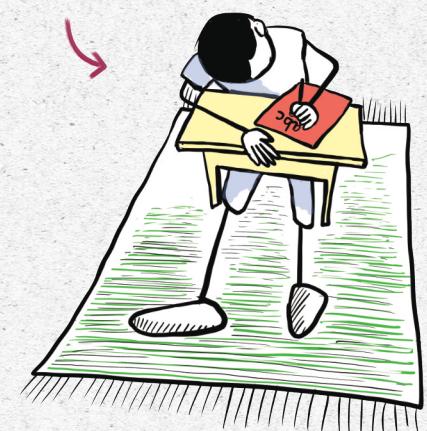
➤ Technical trainings:

«i.e. they allow the groups to enhance their practices with new skills.»

➤ Organisational training:

to improve the group's autonomy and ability to monitor its own activities.

➤ Basic training, such as literacy training, «to preserve the knowledge acquired.»



Literacy is crucial, according to Salla Niang, a participant, because «if you don't have skills, you can have something but also lose it. If you have skills, everything is possible.»

Takeaway

The combination of several types of training aims to acquire something, individually and collectively, but also to preserve or even defend what one has acquired.

3.2 - Combining several learning approaches: training, post-training follow-up, sharing, etc.

Both UGPM and APEF combine training with follow-up and experience sharing.

UGPM ensures a follow-up in addition to the training.

The team facilitator and the endogenous facilitator are «as close as possible to the groups (...), available so that a privileged relationship is built.»

Experience sharing completes this support, and is part of the learning process.

The same is true at APEF where, in addition to training, experience sharing sessions between collectives are organised, and a follow-up is conducted within the collectives (a highly appreciated measure).

Follow-up activities make the training more durable in several ways:

It broadens the benefits:

Thanks to the support and advice of the facilitators when visiting workplaces and thanks to the training received, the members of the UPCs have shared what they have learned with their families and the members of their communities.

It makes it possible to identify complementary training requirements.

In the event of a problem observed during the follow-up phase, appropriate training is offered, «for example, marketing training for market-related issues, business law training for red tape issues, credit management training for reimbursement issues, microbusiness management training for poor management issues.»



Takeaway

Training courses are not enough. They must be associated with other arrangements to support a learning process. These arrangements can involve training, collective action, follow-up, support, and experience sharing.

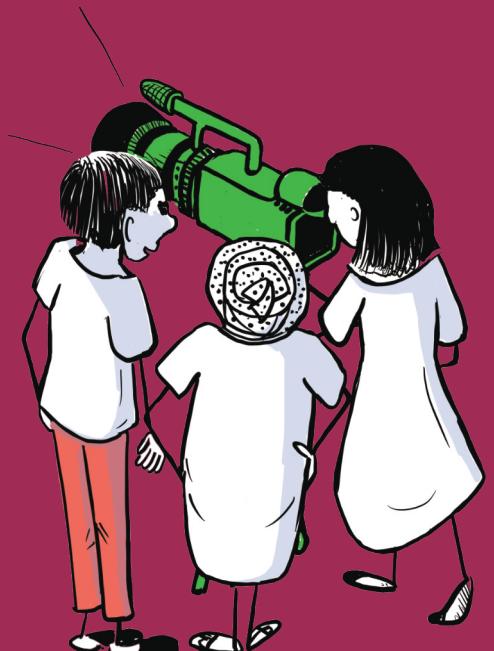
Example of a learning and strengthening tool: the participatory video

Several CENCA members refer to the participatory video as a crucial tool in the community team's path. This tool is used by CENCA only, but deserves to be recognised. It is useful in terms of:

- Clarification: its short format requires clear thinking;
- Learning: it requires the participants to collect and organise information;
- Ownership: participants identify with the work, take ownership of it;
- Mobilisation: participatory videos attract new members.

Takeaway

The participatory video is a key tool in terms of learning, mobilisation, clarification and ownership of action. It should be used to strengthen collectives.



4

Follow-up and support of collectives



Both UGPM and APEF ensure a close follow-up of their collectives.

APEF facilitators attend the UPCs meetings.

Each member takes turn to organise the meetings at their place. This practice «*strengthened social cohesion between the members and their families.*»

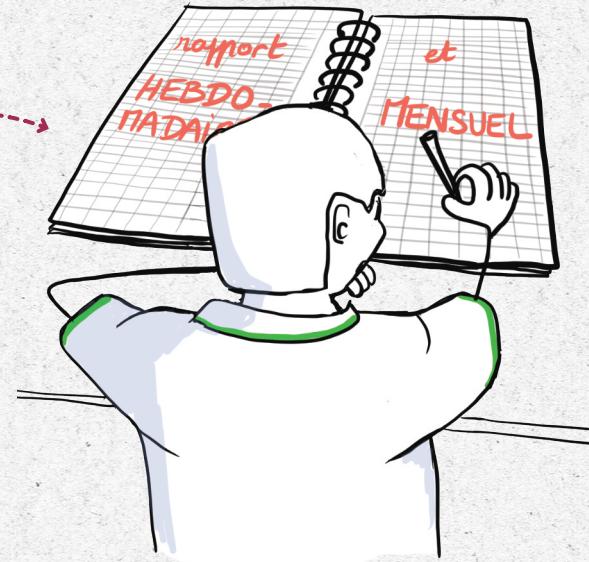
A follow-up logbook, as well as weekly and monthly reports in which the facilitators log the difficulties encountered and the possible solutions implemented.

In addition, monthly meetings between facilitators allow them to discuss the way they provide support.

UGPM participants highlighted the importance of having the same person following-up the group for a very long time:

This person is very available and her/his presence is regular in the village.

It is crucial to provide long-lasting follow-up by the same person.



Takeaway

How to combine close follow-up and more autonomy for the collective?
How can the collective start its path towards autonomy while receiving follow-up?

Distinguishing support from follow-up: defining the notion of support to answer this question.

According to UGPM:

«Providing support means following up on the implementation of the lessons learned from the training, and when it is poorly done, corrections are made.»

«It also consists in helping the group to build new perspectives, for example, by diversifying economic activities, addressing social issues, and developing communication structures.»

According to CENCA, support involves several elements:

➤ The concerns of the group become those of the support provider:

«support always combines various aspects: local dimension, empathy towards the inhabitants and the community team taking action.»

➤ A relationship that goes beyond projects:

support involves the building of relationships that go beyond mere projects.

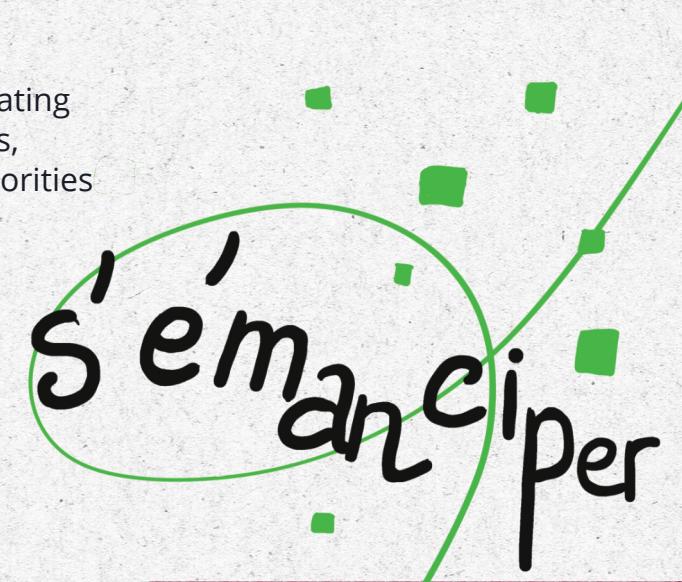
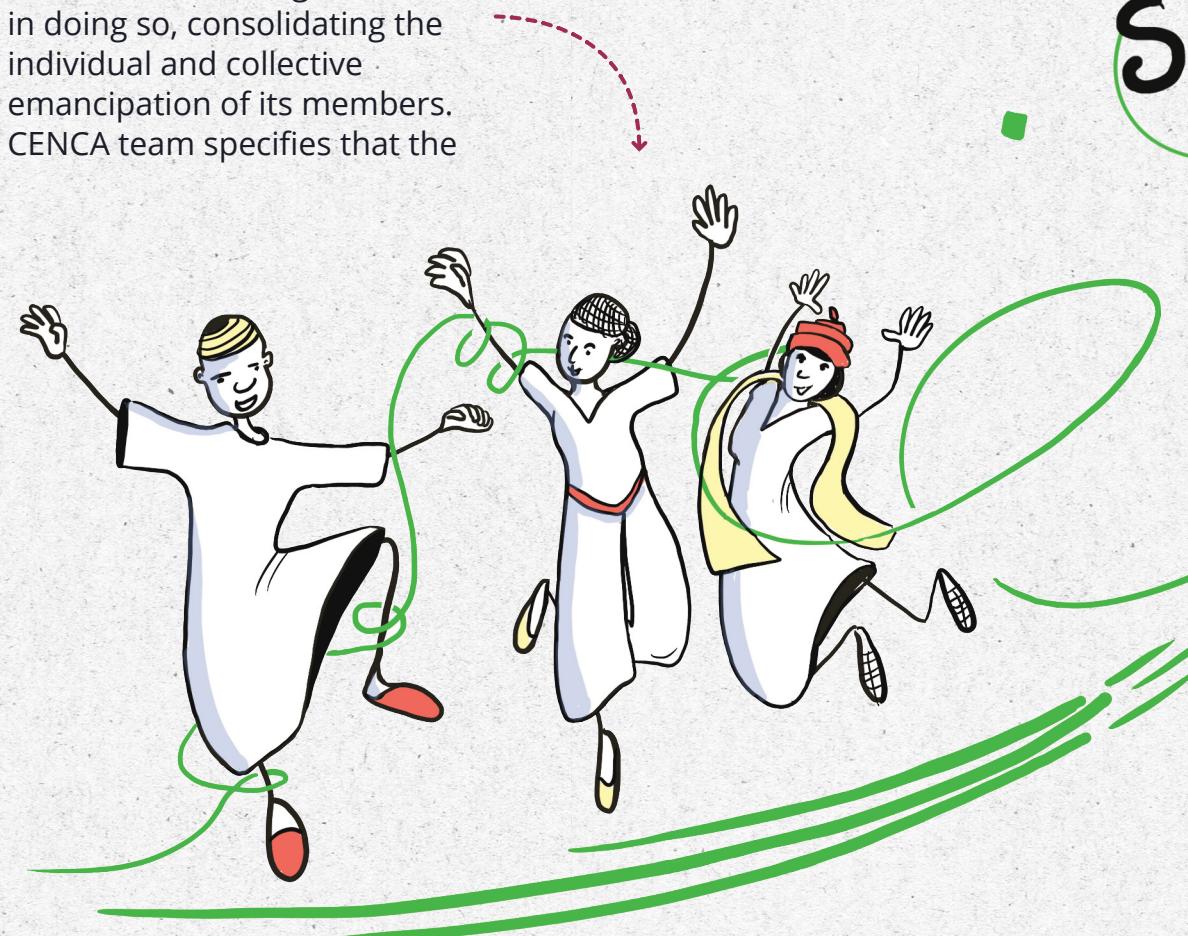
➤ The emancipation of the collective as a key objective:

support aims at making the life of the collective more dynamic and at consolidating it, but also, in doing so, consolidating the individual and collective emancipation of its members. CENCA team specifies that the

actions are «excuses», pretexts, to work on emancipation, which is the key objective.

➤ Opening doors, accessing other actors:

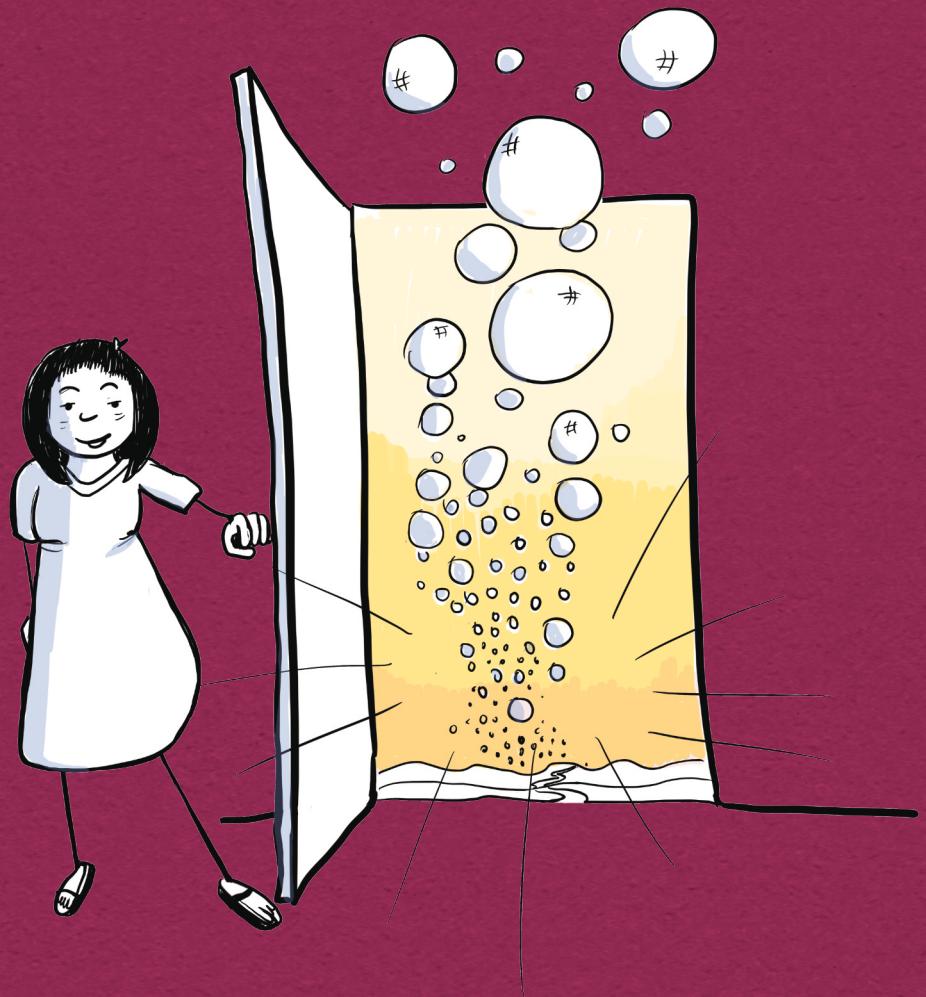
Support also means facilitating access to other institutions, opening doors to the authorities and other partners, via institutional support.



Takeaway

Distinguishing support from follow-up is crucial. Support is more focused on collective emancipation. It encourages the collective to invent or reinvent itself based on new perspectives. It is based on the building of local relationships that go beyond mere working relationships.

5 Opening up and connecting collectives



While some organisations encourage sharing between the collectives they support, others seek to connect them with external actors.

This is the case of CENCA, which encourages opening up, and UGPM, which relies on «exchange trips, getting in touch with resource persons, local authorities or national or international organisations, according to the opportunities or needs of the group.»

These outward-looking exchanges aim to make use of external skills.

According to UGPM, «we know that we can't do everything ourselves. We have to encourage having things done externally and calling on external expertise. Forging alliances is part of the culture of UGPM.»

For example, collaborating with research institutions made it possible to strengthen technical skills.



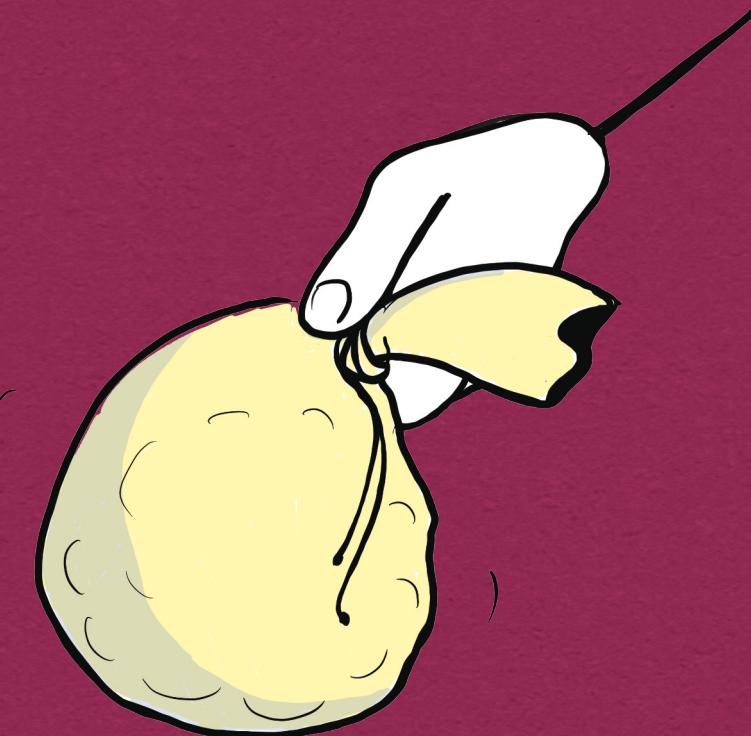
However, this outward-looking approach also aims to create connections that will serve both individual emancipation and the dynamic of the group. One of the group members, now an endogenous facilitator, highlights the many contacts she has made.

Encouraging collectives to open up to other potential partners means giving up some kind of exclusive relationship between the supporting organisation and the supported collective: opening up to new relationships represents a positive impact and benefits in terms of new skills and of individual and collective learning.

Takeaway

Some organisations encourage the collectives they support to connect with various stakeholders (decision makers, supporting organisations, etc.), which is positive in terms of acquisition of new skills, resources, opportunities and in terms of social capital and relational capacity.

6 Financing of collectives



APEF supports the emergence of collectives by granting them equipment (when setting up) in the form of leasing agreements.



- Economic development and combating rural exodus:

«The financial support helps develop economic activity in the group and in the village, and is therefore a means of combating rural exodus.»

UGPM uses it to incite young people to return to the village and get involved in the groups.

Financial support is crucial: *«funding was extremely important because no matter what we say, people see money as a means to develop their projects.»*

- The structuring and empowerment of the group:

Financing is part of the group's empowerment strategy *«whether with standard or interest-free loans, the funds are to be self-managed by the group.»*

- Strengthening the cohesion of the group:

«Strengthening social cohesion and the group's mainspring is crucial, while encouraging meetings related to fund management.»

Takeaway

Material and financial support for collectives aims at strengthening the cohesion of the collective and at providing it with the means to structure itself, in the long run, to become autonomous. In the case of UGPM, this support is also a tool to combat rural exodus and attract young people to the collectives.

7

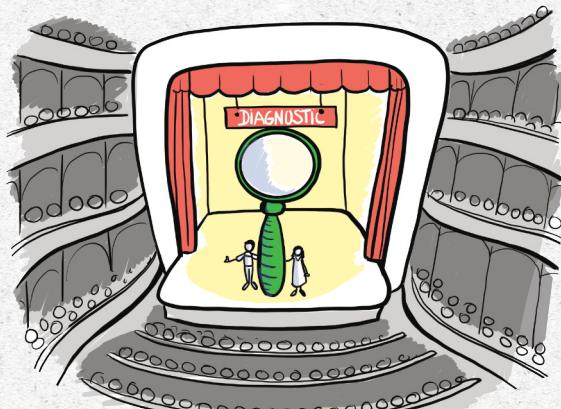
Reporting and media coverage of collectives



When releasing funds to finance collective and individual projects, UGPM organises an event to which public figures, administrative and political authorities, and partners are invited.

It is said that «*releasing funds in public has a positive impact.*» The funds are given to the group which is responsible for granting loans to its members. The group is empowered and the public granting of funds helps to reinforce this accountability. It is a form of ritual. This event also allows for media coverage, which sheds «*a different light on the village.*» The participants say they benefit from this recognition, which is promoted by UGPM: it is a source of motivation that can boost external support.

In the same way, CENCA organised public events to mark important milestones, particularly



during the reporting on risk mapping. This reporting was carried out at the municipal theatre and presented the solutions found to the local authorities. It was a way of making this work visible, mobilising new people and marking the passage from one stage to another.

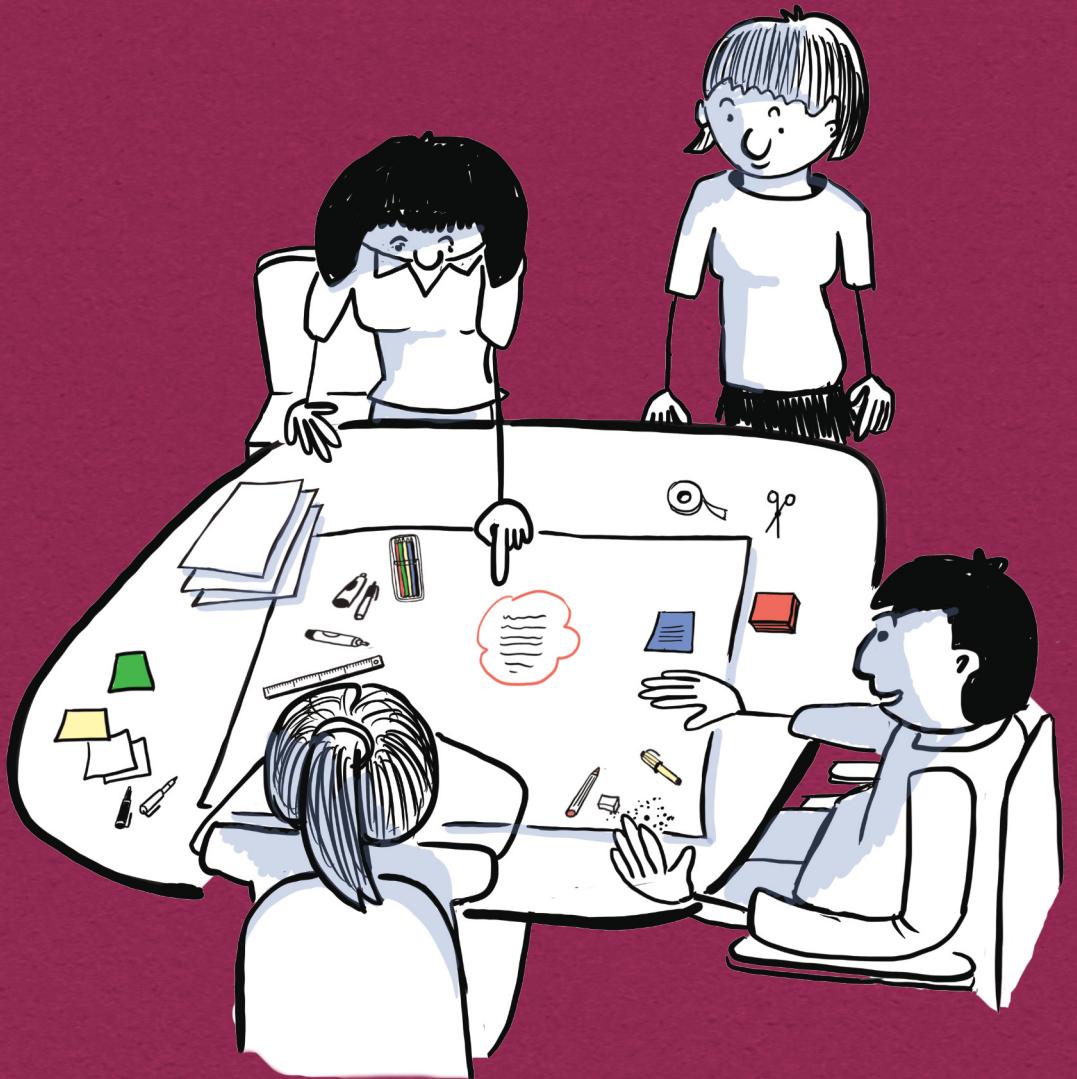
But the members of the community team also reported that they learned and benefited a lot from these events, a challenge that led them to speak in public, after being trained by CENCA, and gain self-confidence.

Takeaway

Organising public events that are mediatised makes it possible to turn an important event into a ritual. This is considered a turning point in a collective's journey by:

- empowering the collective and its members,
- complementing the training (public speaking, relationship with institutions),
- supporting both motivation and momentum.

8 Summary



- 1 Participatory diagnosis practices - from mere meetings to in-depth diagnosis carried out by the population - are an effective tool to stimulate collectives, in order to emerge or revive.
- 2 Interviews conducted by peers, research focusing on local knowledge, knowledge of the region, all these elements constitute best practices. They help enhance local knowledge which tends to be marginalised or discredited by external contributions.
- 3 Training can enhance external knowledge at the expense of local knowledge. How can local knowledge and experience be enhanced in training courses?
- 4 The combination of several types of training aims to acquire something, individually and collectively, but also to preserve or even defend what one has acquired.
- 5 Training courses are not enough. They must be associated with other arrangements to support a learning process. These arrangements can involve training, collective action, follow-up, support, and experience sharing.
- 6 The participatory video is a key tool in terms of learning, mobilisation, clarification and ownership of action. It should be used to strengthen collectives.
- 7 How to combine close follow-up and more autonomy for the collective? How can the collective start its path towards autonomy while receiving follow-up?
- 8 Distinguishing support from follow-up is crucial. Support is more focused on collective emancipation. It encourages the collective to invent or reinvent itself based on new perspectives. It is based on the building of local relationships that go beyond mere working relationships.

9 Some organisations encourage the collectives they support to connect with various stakeholders (decision makers, supporting organisations, etc.), which is positive in terms of acquisition of new skills, resources, opportunities and in terms of social capital and relational capacity.

10 Material and financial support for collectives aims at strengthening the cohesion of the collective and at providing it with the means to structure itself, in the long run, to become autonomous. In the case of UGPM, this support is also a tool to combat rural exodus and attract young people to the collectives.

11 Organising public events that are mediatised makes it possible to turn an important event into a ritual. This is considered a turning point in a collective's journey by empowering the collective and its members, complementing the training (public speaking, relationship with institutions), supporting both motivation and momentum.

Notes



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