



Form Experiences

## WORKSHOP

for the SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

### Testimonies and life stories

*Tools to federate and transmit the strong values of a farmers' organisation*

#### Context of the experience

The MPP is a Haitian peasant movement that emerged in a violent political era: the Duvalier regime. This regime took place following elections in 1957 and lasted until 1986. For the MPP, this meant that from 1973 to 1991, the movement had to build itself in clandestinity. For a long time, it was therefore impossible or dangerous for it to have its own documents, to preserve the memory of its actions on paper.

However, in order to consolidate itself, to exist and to keep track of the strong actions carried out by its members, the MPP started to centralise the strong testimonies and to transmit them to the different generations.

Thus, remembering collective actions and keeping this memory alive was both a necessity for the farmers to keep hope in their actions despite the weight of the context and a means of creating adhesion and unity within the organisation itself, because it is each of these stories and each of the farmers' testimonies that have gradually built the MPP.

#### What the MPP did and how

Gradually, the organisation has built up its repertoire of testimonies that make it possible to federate and honour the memory of the peasants. These are therefore strong stories of awareness, commitment to a collective cause and trauma to remind us of the fundamental values of respect for the individual and solidarity that allowed the MPP to emerge.

These stories are passed on both during training courses in animation for social change and during the collective events of large gatherings. They can therefore be mobilised by trainers or facilitators when they think it is relevant.



## The stories

There is a repertoire of 9 stories that are passed on during the animation for social change training to create links between the different generations of MPP members and to put back at the heart of everything, the values that emerge from these story-learnings.

We propose three stories to discover among this repertoire.

### STORY OF ARNAUD MICHEL

*This is the story of a man who today is over 80 years old. Chavannes, the founder of the MPP, tells us: "When I arrived in Papaye in 1972, I had to do some training in animation for Emmaus, but one of the things I wanted to do was to understand the area, to discover the area, without having a method, I wanted to do some action research; so I went to Montegrard. On the way back, while passing through Los Palis, I decided to go and say hello to one of my uncles who had taken me in as a child. My uncle was Arnaud Michel. When I entered the house, I saw four big cans. The house smelled of Clarin (a local rum-based drink).*

*I said: "But here, it smells like Clarin. What are you doing with that?"*

*He said: "I bought this Clarin in Pion (North) and I'm going to sell it at the border with the Dominican Republic. "*

*I said, "Oh well". And then he explained to me: "Yes, I do this business and it brings me some money. But to do this business I have to borrow 50 gourdes from a person and every Saturday I have to give him 5 gourdes. "*

*He continued to tell me. When I returned home, I thought about it and said to myself: "There are 52 weeks, so 260 gourdes per year, in addition to the 50 gourdes for the person who lent him the money. So this is unacceptable. "*

*I went back home and the group "Kè kontent" ("heart in joy") already existed. Opposite the dispensary, there was Aristène. I went out to see him to explain what I had just learned. I said to him: "But what is happening is a crime, when I do the calculations in terms of percentage, it's 480%!"*

*I had a meeting with the "Kè kontent" group. And they explained to me everything that was going on in the similar area. It wasn't necessarily with the Clairin business but everywhere similar rates were being charged!*

*I became aware of the loan sharks. I then sought to find out more. I then realised that the problem was real and serious and that it was me who had not seen it.*

*So I decided to have a meeting about it. "*

### THE STORY OF FRÉDÉRIK

*This is the story of a woman who was a member of a group. A member of her family got tuberculosis. Tuberculosis is a contagious disease, so all the other members of her family ended up with it too. But people didn't know what it was exactly, so they thought it was caused by the devil. They spent a lot of money to get help from voodoo priests. But the illness had nothing to do with it, so they were always more ill.*

*Chavannes went to visit them. He advised them to go to a sanatorium specialised in tuberculosis because he soon realised that was what it was all about. It was Chavannes who took care of all the arrangements because the family had spent all their money and did not want to go.*

*While they were all at the cure, Chavannes and the group members looked for wood and everything else needed to build a house. In fact, this family lived in a small house, a very small house indeed, and that's part of the reason why everyone was affected by the disease.*

*So, before the family returned, a house was built for them thanks to the solidarity of everyone. And it's been more than 30 years since the house has been there. The house has several rooms.*



## HISTORY OF THE GROUP LA PATIENCE, BONO

*Childérique, a founding member of the movement tells us her memories:*

*"This is the story of a member of the group, Bono Bolivar. One day, Bono was cutting corn; his brother had come to help him. In the evening, at the end of the work, the deputy head of the section sent a policeman to arrest his little brother. Bono did not understand why this had to be done at night and asked that it be done during the day.*

*The policeman left, but when he got to the section chief, he twisted Bono's words, saying "Bono said no one could arrest his brother.*

*They lost interest in Bono's younger brother and turned their attention to Bono himself. The section leader sent the policeman to arrest Bono. When the policeman arrived, the group was working in Antoine's garden; the policeman came but said nothing about his coming, he talked about everything and nothing. Then he left.*

*One of us was a former policeman, he said: "I'm going to go and see him to find out what he's about". When he got to the level of the other one, he said to him: "You, as you came, you wanted something, what do you want? "*

*The policeman replied: "I came for Bono, the section chief sent me for that".*

*The other one said: "for your section chief to have sent you and for you to come back without anyone, it's bad for you. So both of them went back to the group members who were in the field. We collectively decided that we would go together to the section leader. We were one body, we couldn't let Bono get 50 strokes. Indeed, the section leader had decided that Bono*

*should be beaten for obstructing the work of the militia. We decided that each of us would share his strokes.*

*We all set off for the platoon leader. On the way we passed a corporal. He asked us: "Where are you going?"*

*We went up to the platoon leader. We greeted him. The policeman explained the situation to him. Then the section chief said, "so you're all going to get 50 strokes. "*

*So we said to ourselves: "Well, we're really going to get these blows in the end", so we started talking about everything and anything with the deputy.*

*In the end, we didn't get the caning, he told us to leave. He said he would visit us in the gardens."*

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