

THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

IN THE AGE OF DECENT WORK



Belgique
partenaire du développement

solidar

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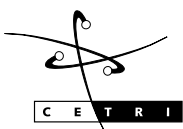
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THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY

IN THE AGE OF DECENT WORK



SOLIS

Colombia

- ATI
INTERDISCIPLINARY
WORK ASSOCIATION
- IPC
POPULAR
TRAINING INSTITUTE

Bolivia

- AYNI
CIVIL ASSOCIATION
- FUNDDASUR
SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT
FOUNDATION
- PASOS
FOUNDATION FOR PARTICIPATION
AND SUSTAINABILITY
- REMTE
BOLIVIAN NETWORK
OF WOMEN TRANSFORMING
THE ECONOMY

Morocco

- AFAQ
WOMEN OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD
ASSOCIATIONS OF GREATER
CASABLANCA INITIATIVE
- AJR
REGIONAL YOUNG PEOPLE
FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD
ASSOCIATIONS INITIATIVE
- IFAAP
TRAINING AND
SUPPORT INSTITUTE
FOR LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

Belgium

- SOLIDARIS
- FGTB
GENERAL FEDERATION
OF BELGIAN LABOUR
- FOS
FONDS VOOR ONTWIKKELINGSSAMENWERKING
- IFS/ ISVI
INTERNATIONAL
TRADE UNION
TRAINING INSTITUTE

Palestine

- MA'AN
DEVELOPMENT CENTER
- PAC
POPULAR ART CENTER
- PGFTU
PALESTINIAN GENERAL
FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

Senegal

- GREEN SENEGAL
ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH
AND STUDY GROUP
- OYOFAL PAJ

Burkina Faso

- ASMADE
ASSOCIATION SONGUI
MANEGRÉ/DEVELOPMENT AID
- UCRB
UNION OF LORRY DRIVERS
OF BURKINA FASO
- UMUSAC
UNION OF HEALTH MUTUALS
IN THE CENTRAL REGION

Burundi

- ADISCO
SUPPORT FOR INTEGRAL
DEVELOPMENT AND SOLIDARITY
IN THE HILLS
- FEBUTRA
BURUNDIAN FEDERATION
OF FOOD INDUSTRY WORKERS
- CNAC-MURIMA W'ISANGI
NATIONAL CONFEDERATION
OF COFFEE GROWERS'
ASSOCIATIONS OF BURUNDI
- PAMUSAB
PLATFORM OF MUTUAL HEALTH
INSURANCE ACTORS IN BURUNDI

DR Congo

- CENADEP
NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT
AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION
- CRAFOP
COMMITTEE FOR THE RESURGENCE
AND SUPPORT OF RURAL WORKERS
- DIOBASS
APPROACH FOR INTERACTION
BETWEEN GRASSROOTS ORGANISATIONS
AND OTHER SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

A PARTNERSHIP FOR SOLIDARITY ALTERNATIVES

VERONIQUE WEMAERE, DIRECTOR OF SOLSOC

The Solsoc Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) emerged from a movement of solidarity with Spanish republican fighters and their families, during the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Eighty years later, it continues its action and reflection in defence of economic, social, cultural and political rights. In partnership with organisations representing the most vulnerable populations deprived of their rights in both the South and the North, it implements programmes to combat exclusion and improve access to basic social services, while also giving them a voice.

Solsoc supports the struggles for the respect of human rights and international law, as well as initiatives to reduce social, economic, environmental and gender inequalities. Its action is organised around the “Decent Work” agenda of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This is based on four pillars: promoting employment, guaranteeing workers’ rights, extending social protection and encouraging social dialogue. They are part of the *United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

“Popular education, network partnerships and capacity building are at the heart of the strategy of Solsoc and its partners”

In Belgium, Solsoc works to call the political decision-makers to account and mobilise the social base in joint socialist action. It benefits from the financial¹, technical and political support of the FGTB (General Federation of Belgian Labour) and the UNMS (National Union of Socialist Mutual Companies) health mutuals. Together with two organisations which like itself are rooted in Belgian joint socialist action, FOS (Fonds voor OntwikkelingsSamenwerking) and IFSI/ISVI (International Trade Union Training Institute of the FGTB), it helped to create the Common Strategic Framework for Decent Work.

The collaboration between these three organisations is based on shared values: the struggle for better working conditions and wages for workers, as well as better living conditions and social services through international solidarity. Together, they have drawn up an action programme to promote the complementarity of experiences and expertise, with the aim of building viable and sustainable solidarity, political, social and economic alternatives to the globalised economic competition model, by strengthening social movements.

People’s education, network partnerships (see appendix) and capacity building are at the heart of the strategy of Solsoc and its partners. When encouraged at all levels, they facilitate emancipation and individual and collective action, as well as the participation of actors and populations in decisions that affect them. Solsoc’s programme is therefore a showcase for the action of its partners to a large extent. It makes the link between defending the recognition of social protection and Decent Work as universal rights, establishing mutual health health mutuals to ensure universal health coverage and, finally, expanding the social and solidarity economy as an economic alternative to the conventional economic model.

Thanks to its belief in its power to profoundly transform the economy, and instil an emancipatory dimension to the notion of “work”, Solsoc has put the social and solidarity economy at the heart of its intervention strategies, and its concept of Decent Work. By giving a voice to those who daily play a role in this transformation, this publication sets out the case for moving in this direction. We hope it will convince you!

¹ Solsoc also receives financial support from P&V insurance, Multipharma, socialist parliamentary groups, the Belgian government, the Wallonia-Brussels federation, the Brussels capital region, Actiris, CNCd 11.11.11, etc.

CROSS-CUTTING

IS THE SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY EMANCIPATORY?

AURÉLIE LEROY, RESEARCH OFFICER AT THE CENTRE TRICONTINENTAL – CETRI

The social and solidarity economy (SSE) is growing in popularity around the world. It has become more attractive and visible as countries have been caught up in economic crises which have had devastating effects. The plethora of innovative legislation, public policies and social practices underscores the trend for *“organising the economy differently”*.

In its most advanced form, it is seen as bringing about change and shaking up perspectives by taking the economy out of its supposed independence, by *“re-embedding it”* in the complete range of relationships – both social and political – that form a society. The economy is then no longer at the service of the individual and “selfish” commercial interest, but of people as a whole, with a view to achieving social justice, equality and democracy.

However, some of the criticism levelled at these initiatives has been deprecating, with people preferring to describe them as strategies to adapt to an unfavourable context, or measures to compensate for cuts to public spending. In the end, it is (so they claim) a paid plan *“for the deserving poor”* and, above all, a beneficial situation for disinvested States.

In reality, the SSE part of a dynamic of resilience, adaptation and transformation, and confronts the dilemma of autonomy-manipulation. This does not invalidate the system, but refutes the simplistic view that it mechanically seeks to achieve the ideal of emancipating women and men.

GENDER: OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

The power of solidarity initiatives is even more acute when it comes to gender equality. Women are numerically over-represented in a sector described by Isabelle Guérin as “female”, but not necessarily “feminist”. The SSE undeniably has emancipatory potential, but the practices of this sector are not “neutral” with regard to the sex-based division of labour, the differentiated valuation of female and male work, and the simplification of certain values, such as solidarity, empathy or self-sacrifice, which are socially attributed to women.

Women’s organisations in the South which are involved in organic agriculture projects in Mindanao, in the Philippines, and others which are active in urban market committees in Bukavu, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, testify to this ambivalence. The main objective of these groups is to enhance economic power in order to safeguard household living conditions in hostile contexts. Increasing income or production is at the heart of women’s involvement in these collective projects.

The prospect of financial autonomy, however legitimate and central it may be, only partially meets the challenge of emancipation. The notion of empowerment, at the crossroads of popular education and feminism, has been translated as a process of acquiring power at two levels: the individual and the collective. By focusing exclusively on personal, liberating empowerment and the sole capacity of women to take action, these initiatives may ultimately mobilise the same economic principles as the market. And therefore disempower economic and political actors, while perpetuating patriarchal and inegalitarian rationales.

The utilitarian and instrumental approach of *“pro-women”* strategies (micro-finance, *smart economies*, conditional cash transfer programmes, etc.) is common in the field of development, including in the SSE sector. It leads to an overload of work, and the hyper-empowerment and exhaustion of women. The additional investment in (productive) economic activities is not counterbalanced enough in men taking care of domestic and childcare tasks (reproductive activities), thereby jeopardising the transformative potential – as well as the sustainability – of these initiatives.

Despite what at first glance appears to be a negative observation, it is undeniable that the SSE also offers room for manoeuvre to promote equality. The examples from the Philippines and the Congo show that women “use” and take advantage of these opportunities to be recognised, rise up and demand justice.

In Bukavu, the women we met believed that it was in their “interest” to get involved in this type of activity. In addition to enhancing their entrepreneurial capacity, not only do they pool the risks, but also the resources and results in view of the severe shortcomings in terms of social protection. The local anchoring – within their local territory – and the proximity between the men and women involved also create links, encourage mutual assistance, and give meaning to their engagement.

The visibility in the “public” sphere of experience and knowledge traditionally held by women in the “private” sphere also allows for a decompartmentalisation, a requalification, in the sense of a positive re-evaluation of “their” spaces and “their” roles. They therefore gain self-confidence, and thus the recognition of men and other members of the community; these are essential conditions for the positive development of gender relations.

In this process of consolidation, both personal and collective, they ultimately create alliances with social movements, in particular women’s movements, with whom they share common concerns. Behind the principal mission to improve living conditions, this convergence makes it possible to attack centres of power and defend the rights of the most vulnerable, thereby giving the SSE a broader political dimension to its struggle.

GATEWAY

The search for income or employment is women’s gateway to the SSE. But this is not the only springboard for emancipation. The actions of resistance which they develop through these initiatives (against neo-liberal policies, patriarchal norms, racial discrimination, etc.) have enabled them – more than in other public, official, masculinised places – to enhance their capacity for initiative, and their power of action and decision-making. Thanks to these initiatives, they feel they have more recognition, and are more “sheltered” from life’s daily struggle.

“In reality, the SSE falls within a dynamic of resilience, adaptation and transformation”

The solidarity initiatives open up a whole range of socio-economic and political possibilities. The women innovate, experiment, and re-energise themselves. They combine the areas of actions – collaboration, confrontation, formalisation – with the surrounding social and political partners. The opportunities are real, but fragile, since preserving the founding values and principles is a constant challenge.



CREATING A BALANCE OF POWER

INTERVIEW WITH **TANGUI CORNU**, JOINT PRESIDENT OF THE FGTB HORVAL

What are the main challenges for the FGTB Horval and the trade union struggle in Belgium?

Tangui Cornu: I don't know whether Horval has different challenges to the other [trade union] centres. For four years, the unions have been highlighting the fact that there is a problem of purchasing power. Yet it took action by the "yellow vests" [the social movement started in winter 2018] who blocked motorways, refineries, etc. for people to stop and think that maybe it was true; that there was a problem of purchasing power!

Just go to a supermarket, watch how people fill their baskets, and you can see straightaway who is who. By looking at consumption, we can visually identify the people who are in difficulty at the end of the month, and others, for whom shopping is simply a fact of life. This government has ensured that Belgian society is both more unequal and more divided, between those with money and all the rest. And the people in between are pulled towards one side or the other. And, in general, they are pulled towards the less fortunate side...

So the issues are all about purchasing power. And this pops up in all the other issues. When I started my career, we started with a full-time permanent contract. Today, there is hardly any young person who does not start their career without going through a temping agency. For months, even years. And during this period, they have no stability; neither legal nor financial. They cannot build a future for themselves. Furthermore, after having built up a system over decades that allows people to stop working at an age where they can enjoy life, today the retirement age is being pushed back, removing almost all opportunities for career breaks and early retirement.

These are therefore financial issues, but they are found in all the qualitative issues. It takes me between three and four hours every day to come to work in Brussels; if that's the case for me, it's the case for many other people. This time is wasted time, which causes stress, and this stress is translated into illness. Besides the pace and atmosphere of work, there are therefore a whole range of elements that clearly affect the health of workers.

You have recently demonstrated against the Belgian government, which you claim is in cahoots with employers. But isn't it the tripartite model itself which is in crisis?

Firstly, there is no tripartite model, but a bipartite model between the social partners, with a third actor, the State, which can intervene as an arbitrator or by facilitating things. We achieved that. Not always easily... And it didn't mean that we necessarily had the ability to change laws, but they listened to us.

Now we have a right-wing government, which has taken up all the points that the FEB [Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique; the employers' body] had in its memorandum. As far as we are concerned, this means we are dealing with a government led by employers. A government that considers that, since it is elected, it can do whatever it wants, and that everyone else just needs to get on board; it is an authoritarian vision of society.

"And what is a trade union? It is an organisation that is capable of creating a balance of power"

Is it really still in our interest to sit around the table to reach a consensus? Either we agree with the FEB or there is no agreement. We have spent four years in a biased situation in which, if we had meetings, it was just for show. So: 1. there is no tripartism; 2. with the policy that exists in Belgium today, there is no longer even a bipartite system, since one of the parties, the FEB, has decided to move the consultation forums directly to the government level.

The three Belgian trade unions are part of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). Don't we lose in struggle what we gain in unity?

All European countries have found themselves confronted with austerity policies, with the European community at the epicentre. If we want to have a trade union at the European level, we need one that federates all the other trade unions. And what is a trade union? It is an organisation that is capable of creating a balance of power. But most European and even global structures often behave like lobbies. Nonetheless, we have never moved our boundaries in line with a lobbying rationale; unless we are an NGO and we are talking to consumers. That means that we have a relatively limited militant activity. We are currently debating whether to change that.

“There is a link between the quality of products and the way they are produced”

Why and how are you engaged at the international level? How do you cooperate with countries where the informal economy predominates and trade unions are at the margins?

When we come to the end of a congress of the FGTB or in socialist bodies, we sing the *‘Internationale’*. So we already realised a long time ago that people need to group together to be stronger. Our struggle is not only the struggles taking place in a company; the trade union struggle is first and foremost a struggle for a type of society in which people are not exploited by other people, wherever they are in the world.

We have projects in Latin America and Africa, where Belgian companies rub shoulders with each other. However, depending on whether they are in Belgium or another country, these companies do not have the same social policy. When a trade unionist is dismissed, accused of terrorism or attacked, we defend him or her, and we make sure this defence is boosted through social media. And we work hard to make our partners the essential interlocutors with company management. In short, we try to build support for social and political democracy.

The underlying question is: what do we do if the majority of workers are in the informal sector? Starting at the formal level – we always take the formal sector as the rear base – we try to work with informal workers, to get them to group together, sector by sector, to think about social protection – this is what is lacking the most – so that they too can be sick, old, and not have to be without means of subsistence. However, the solution that workers have found for this is social security, coming together, entering into a collective dynamic, creating social movements; that is creating a balance of power.

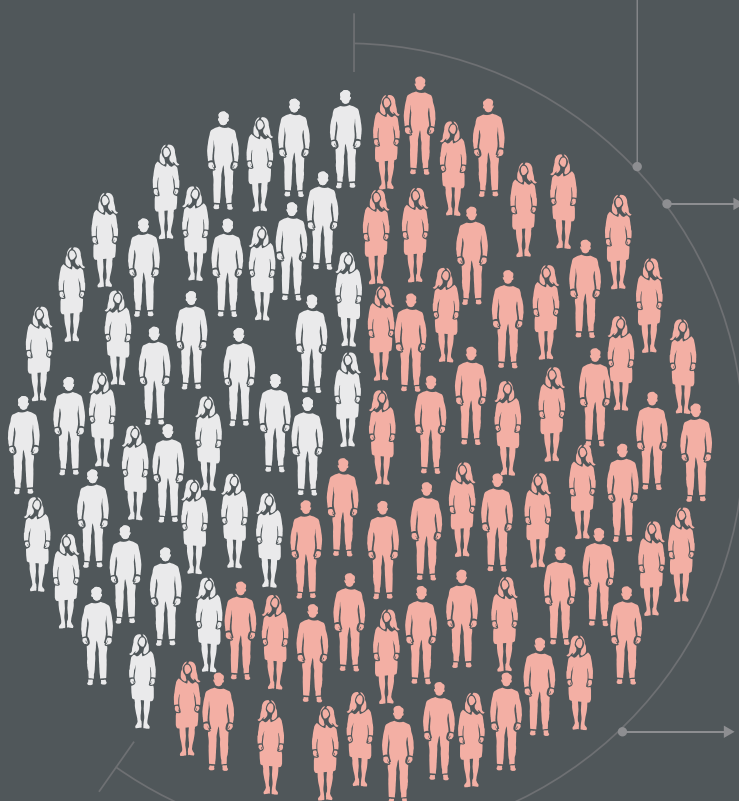
This balance of power that you are trying to build by linking the national and international levels, is it also related to what you mentioned earlier; purchasing power and qualitative issues?

To create a balance of power, it is first necessary that workers understand that their employer is only a cog in the political system, and that they are aware of their situation; they have no control over their economy, decisions are made at another level. If we want to influence company policy, there is no other way than to create dynamics at the global level. As such, it is necessary to federate at the international level.

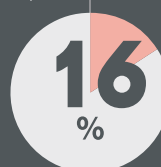
There is a link between the quality of products and the way they are produced. If you look at a person's nameplate, you can see who they are. That's a huge simplification, but... When there is a lot of subcontracting, there is usually a company policy that also has an impact on the quality of products. For example, in abattoirs, where there are very frequent problems, the workers do not react in the same way. The work is done differently depending on whether you are from the company or from outside the company. If a company has no respect for its products, it has no respect for its workers, because it is the same rationale: costs are driven down to make as much money as possible, with no regard for products or workers.

THE INFORMAL SECTOR

60%
of global work is in
the informal sector



In Europe

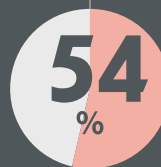


17%



14%

In emerging and developing
countries on the
American continent

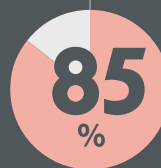


53%



55%

In Africa



83%



90%

OF TOTAL
WORK

IN THE INFORMAL
SECTOR

REDEFINING WEALTH, THE ECONOMY AND POLITICS

INTERVIEW WITH **ISABELLE GUÉRIN**, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH
AT THE INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH (IRD)

10

What is the feminist economy?

Isabelle Guérin: It is an economy that puts the issue of “social reproduction” back at the heart of its concerns, defined in the broadest sense as the range of activities necessary to sustain life, starting with caring and connecting activities.

A large part of gender inequality, as well as the inconsistencies of the capitalist model in which we live, come from the “productive” bias of our methods of calculating wealth: only activities that can be traded on a market contribute to value creation. This approach has wide-ranging consequences. It makes caring and connecting activities *invisible*, yet these are absolutely essential to so-called productive activities (workers do not come into the world “ready-made”, as Marx said), and as such it denigrates the essential role of women, since they are the ones who are primarily in charge of caring, regardless of the country.

This approach leads to atomised, hyper-individualistic and materialistic societies, where individual fulfilment and freedom are measured in terms of the capacity to own and consume. Finally, the approach threatens the very existence of life and our planet, since caring also covers the preservation and maintaining of natural resources.

Do you question the idea that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) is “naturally” an opportunity for women’s emancipation?

There are no statistics available, but it is clear that many SSE initiatives are initiated and managed by women and/or intended for women. In France, for example, one of the few countries where figures are available, we know that two thirds of employees in the SSE are women. At the global level, if we look more closely at certain sectors, we see that there is a strong female presence. This is the case, for example, for collective catering, sanitation and waste recovery services, certain forms of fair trade, mutual health funds and credit-savings societies, barter clubs and social currencies, or even innovative social protection initiatives.

But the fact that these are primarily made up of women does not tell us anything about how these initiatives tackle gender inequality. It may be that it is a second-rate economy, with low pay, and responsible for supplying what the state or the market cannot provide, for a low price. Unfortunately, part of the SSE has already fallen into this trap.

“A lever to overcome this false distinction between production and reproduction”

Is the link between “production” and “reproduction” (sufficiently) taken into account by the SSE?

Unfortunately, the question of “reproduction” is still the weak link of the SSE, especially when it becomes institutionalised and the subject of public policy. A “productive” bias always prevails. This is the case in many countries, even when feminist movements championed the SSE in its early days, like in Quebec. Nonetheless, the SSE could act as a lever to overcome this false distinction between “production” and “reproduction”.

At the micro-local level, a number of SSE initiatives continue this struggle. They devise innovative ways of pooling so-called reproductive tasks (preparing meals, childcare, domestic work, recovering waste, etc.), but also valorising them and having them recognised for their true value. This revalorisation is based on various techniques at multiple levels, starting with women themselves, their female and male entourage, and ending with political decision-makers in order to obtain fair remuneration for these activities, which are in the collective and general interest.

This struggle to redefine wealth, based on local initiatives, is essential. It is sinuous, chaotic and very slow because it touches the very foundations of our systems of representation. But it is the only way to break with the productive bias that undermines our societies.

Feminist economics and the SSE are part of the same political reinvention. Is this different approach to politics understood and valued?

Indeed, SSE initiatives invent or reinvent alternative modes of political action and democratic action, based on debate and dialogue (which also includes conflict), which sometimes cannot avoid certain forms of radical opposition. These deliberations are essential for various reasons. They make it possible to adapt to local realities and constraints: people, locally, decide for themselves on priorities and possible responses.

Moreover, it is rare for women to decide to overthrow the capitalist or patriarchal system. Rather, they opt for pragmatic approaches, but which nevertheless have the potential, in the long term, to contribute to radical struggles by their ability to change our systems of representation. This is the second benefit of deliberation. Changing norms cannot be imposed or decreed, but debating and discussing them can help. Discussions are also essential between SSE initiatives and the rest of the world, through public debate on issues which up until now have been seen as private.

However, here again, these forms of political action, outside the usual modes of representative democracy or opposition, attract little interest and are often disparaged, even by various feminist movements that consider that only paid employment and/or radicalism can overcome gender inequality.

How can the potential for change of these initiatives be highlighted?

Recognising these initiatives for their true value is essential. The productive bias helps to keep them invisible. Because they are often small-scale, locally-anchored, and economically weak, it would appear that they have no potential for change. Above all, it is vital not to advocate for a “scaling up”, which is the buzzword of most decision-makers. It is precisely because they are rooted in territories where they are set up and are meaningful that these initiatives can adequately respond to specific needs. And it is precisely because their horizon is indeterminate, as a result of ongoing discussions and deliberations, that these initiatives can have the potential for change.

“These forms of political action, outside the usual modes of representative democracy or opposition, attract little interest and are often disparaged”

Confining them to “best practice” that could be replicated on a large scale is therefore doomed to failure. Decision-makers, social movements and researchers need to get out of this productive bias. These initiatives are part of a large-scale struggle to redefine wealth, economics and politics. It will be long, but the survival of our societies and our planet depends on it.



THE SOCIAL ECONOMY: WHY AND HOW TO “CREATE A MOVEMENT”?

QUENTIN MORTIER AND FRÉDÉRIQUE KONSTANTATOS, COORDINATORS AT SAW-B

12 2019 is the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The aims it pursues – promoting and implementing Decent Work, social protection for all, etc. – resonate with the outlook and challenges of the social economy. (We generally use the terms “social economy and social enterprise”, which are found in the current legal frameworks in French-speaking Belgium, and rarely the terms ‘social and solidarity economy’; especially as these originate from the French context, and are increasingly used by the academic world).

The meaning, quality and, ultimately, the reinvention of work are indeed some of the challenges faced by social economy actors. By assuming a necessarily partial point of view, that of SAW-B, a federation of social economy enterprises in French-speaking Belgium, we would like to present a brief overview of these issues.

A UNIQUE VISION

Of course, SAW-B is based on the ethical principles enshrined in the Walloon Decree of 2008 on the social economy, and can be found in the indicators of the network of European researchers on social enterprises, EMES. But the thrust of our work goes further. This is thanks to our vision of a social economy that goes far beyond the simple role of repairing the social damage caused by capitalism. For us, the social economy is a vector of social transformation. In this sense, it constitutes a utopian ideal of a future society, based on practices and mechanisms already in place.

The roots of a project like this one can be found in the ‘*associationist*’ project, the range of labour practices from the early nineteenth century, which played a pioneering role in building a just and united society. This project linked cooperatives, associations, mutual societies and trade unions. In so doing, it closely combined the economic, social and political spheres for collective emancipation. Today, one of the challenges in this new phase of capitalism is to avoid manipulation, trivialisation and capture by the State and the market, and to influence the choices of society, by taking back and reinforcing the emancipatory potential of the social economy.

Social enterprises include deliberation at the core of productive actions, translate political activism into pragmatic actions, and deepen democracy through the active participation of citizens in political decisions and, by extension, in economic issues. Thus defined, the social economy can be seen as an ever evolving citizen’s movement. This requires broadening the base and developing alliances, on the one hand, and deepening the links between the values and practices of social enterprises, on the other. Or, at a time of increasing crises, “to create a movement” and “organise the economy differently”.

WHAT WE HAVE IN COMMON

What potentially unites this diverse range of social economy actors? Three elements are particularly important in our opinion: making work meaningful; democratising businesses and the economy; producing and consuming differently. The first element stands out in particular given the increase of work-related suffering in recent decades. We need to question the meaning of work, which is related to issues of rights: the right to work, social security, food, etc.

The succession of economic crises in recent years has called into question the second element. We want to link the issue of democracy in businesses with that of businesses in a democracy. It is not only companies, but also the economy and society itself that need to be democratised. Implementing participatory practices in certain social enterprises may be related to the transformation of the workplace into a potentially democratic and political place.

The methods of production and consumption invented and imposed by the West on the rest of the world are not sustainable, and their consequences are alarming. Faced with growing social inequalities, over-consumption by some people and extreme poverty endured by others, as well as increasing health and environmental problems, we believe that it is possible to produce, distribute and consume differently. Based on the concept of “respect” – for customers, workers, suppliers, environment, etc. – and not “profit”, the social economy aims to meet the social needs and aspirations of the largest number of people.



Moutarde de Dijon
1.20 €

Moutarde jaune
préparée
1.20 €

Tortillas
1.20 €

Oranges
1.20 €
Max 1 par personne

Recettes

Soupe tomate
1.20 €

Soupe crème de
champignons
1.20 €

Lait de vache / 200 ml
0.20 €

The will to create a movement implies a dual approach; ambitious and critical. A quantitative and qualitative leap forward is needed from the current situation to transform society, the social economy and ourselves. But this also requires incessant and necessary work with all the stakeholders, questioning, critical analysis (deconstruction), redefining, experimenting and putting forward proposals (construction).

SEARCH, GET A Foothold, TRANSFORM

In recent years, the question of evaluating the impact of the social economy has emerged with a bang. Simply accepting the requirements and tools of evaluation from the capitalist financial world as they stand is tantamount to subjecting ourselves to external standards. It is imperative that we demand that no tools are imposed, and that there is a joint approach. We have helped create a collective space for questioning, research and experimentation. The work thus carried out today opens up prospects in terms of spin-offs and advocacy.

Based on various ongoing projects, another issue has emerged: the *territorialisation* of the social economy. Recent research conducted with a large number of social enterprises shows that one of the unique features of the social economy is its re-territorialisation¹.

As such, experiments such as the one for 'food belts' (there are now several in French-speaking Belgium), which are based on developing strong cooperation between multiple actors who were previously isolated (farmers, associations, traders, processors, craftsmen, citizens, consumers, local elected officials, etc.) in order to give the inhabitants of a given territory access to organic food. These experiments make it possible to relocate the production and consumption of food, but also to rebuild local ties, without falling into parochialism.

"Transform society, the social economy and ourselves"

The question of "how" the disparate group of social economy actors should create a movement is obviously far from resolved... In the context of worsening environmental and social crises, it also becomes a question of the major types of social transformation. The social economy oscillates between two approaches, to use Erik Olin Wright's typology: the attempt to *tame* capitalism; and the attempt to *erode* and *break* the system from within.

The approach outlined here tends to move from the first type to the second. There remains a third approach on which we need to position ourselves. What can we propose to the people who are taking to the streets in increasing numbers, in particular to ask the question – which is important to us – of deepening democracy, and who call for a "*transformation through disruption*"?

1 Charlotte Moreau et Quentin Mortier, *L'économie sociale en pratiques, Projet SECOIA: pratiques spécifiques aux entreprises d'économie sociale et analyse des impacts générés*, 2017, www.ces.uliege.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/rapport_secoia_web.pdf.

WORDS FROM THE SOUTH

BOLIVIA



THE CONTRADICTORY ASPECTS OF A “REVOLUTION”

On the one hand, there is the reduction of inequality and poverty, the reaffirmation on the international scene of the country's sovereignty and multi-ethnic (“plurinational”) identity – with Evo Morales, a president of Indian origin, at the helm – and the implementation of large-scale social programmes. All of which has been achieved by implementing an original strategy, based on an alternative form of development, whose title has a utopian ring to it: *Buen Vivir*.

On the other hand, in contradiction with its environmental claims, there is the overexploitation of natural resources, the highest poverty rate on the continent, a dependence on the international market in general and Chinese imports in particular (one fifth of the total), the co-opting or capture of social organisations by the State, and a man in power since 2006, who intends to run for the third time in the 2019 elections, thereby defying the outcome of the 2016 referendum and the Constitution.

These are the two conflicting sides of Bolivia, which divide public opinion, both nationally and internationally. Although Evo Morales remains very popular, his method of governing and his longevity in power are alarming, recalling the traditional figure of the “caudillo”, a charismatic leader to whom the power of institutions must be subordinated. Above all, the popularity of the caudillo depends first and foremost on the stability and good socio-economic performance of his regime. Since 2015, poverty has stagnated or even increased (and remains almost twice as high in rural areas compared to cities), and the end of the commodity boom is starting to be felt....

The transition to *Buen Vivir*, respect for Mother Earth and the plural economy - which incorporates the diverse forms of economic organisation implemented by the Bolivian state: community, state, private, social and cooperative, etc., has not moved beyond paying lip-service to the idea, which appears to be a screen for much more conventional economic policies and development strategies, based on the export of natural resources (mainly gas, oil, minerals and soya), with little or no processing.

As a result, socio-environmental tensions are high and agriculture continues to expand, causing deforestation at a rate of 270,000 ha per year, according to the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). (Transgenic) soybean production is the main culprit. Between 2005 and 2015, the land area devoted to this monoculture increased by nearly 40%, according to the National Institute of Statistics. Furthermore, this expansion went hand in hand with the exponential use of chemical fertilisers (including the controversial glyphosate).

At present the divided political opposition has no credible alternative project and the social movements – which brought Evo Morales to power in 2006 – are fragmented and polarised between opponents and supporters of the regime. The challenge is to be able to strengthen and unite on an autonomous basis.

The Solsoc programme, in collaboration with FOS and with the support of the FGTB-Horval, focuses on Decent Work and social protection, by incorporating gender equity and respect for the environment. It is implemented by the four Bolivian partner organisations: the Bolivian Network of Women Transforming the Economy (REMTE), the Development Foundation for the South (FUNDDASUR), the Civil Association (AYNI) and the Participation and Sustainability Foundation (PASOS). The programme aims to strengthen their capacities, help create alliances, promote lobbying and the transformation of these organisations into veritable vectors of change, capable of creating Decent Working and living conditions for workers and producers, in particular young people and women.

CHANGE: BETWEEN DECLARATIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

INTERVIEW WITH **JUAN CARLOS BAPTISTA**, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR
AT FUNDDASUR (DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION FOR THE SOUTH)

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What is the situation of the workers supported by Funddasur? Has it improved under the thirteen years of Evo Morales and his government?

Juan Carlos Baptista: We support workers in both urban and rural areas. In urban areas, we support two workers' unions in the food and hotel sector, and in rural areas, organisations of small rural producers. With the first group, we focus on the issue of Decent Work, with the second group on the social and solidarity economy (SSE). These small-scale producers are workers in the informal economy, i.e. they are, in inverted commas, outside the labour laws and all that this entails. I do not have the exact figures, but I can safely say that 80% of workers are in the informal sector.

One of the weakest points of the programme of the incumbent President, and which has changed the least over his term in office, is the issue of employment. There is a government programme, "My first job", for young people, whereby the government pays part of their wages. But it's too small to really make a difference. Around 2012, there was a significant drop in unemployment, but from 2015-2016 onwards, unemployment grew again. This was obviously linked to the slowing of the economy, with the end of the commodity boom. This has had a direct impact on public investment, and consequently on the living conditions of workers.

Why is employment one of the weak points of the current policy?

The government takes various 'political' measures. It enacts laws to strengthen workers, promote Decent Work, etc. But that is precisely the point, they are just laws, they are not translated into implementing regulations, and even less so at the operational level.

For example, the double bonus [*"doble aguinaldo"*] for workers in the private and public sectors, to be paid when Bolivia experiences annual growth of at least 4.5% - which was the case for 2018. This has a severe impact on medium-sized and small businesses, because the country's growth is not directly linked to their income. As a result, many of them go bankrupt because they cannot afford to meet their legal obligations, implement this measure and pay the bonus.

"But it is a rationale of scholarships and not of social policies!"

What is the social protection situation in Bolivia?

Social protection policy is enshrined in the Government's Development Plan [2016-2020] and in its *Dignified Bolivia* strategy, with objectives including the eradication of poverty, exclusion, marginalisation, etc. In its rationale of wealth redistribution, the government has implemented actions, by creating scholarships, particularly for schoolchildren so that they do not drop out of school, for pregnant women, for the disabled, etc. There is also health mutual for children under the age of 12. This is all part of the umbrella of social protection. But it is a rationale of scholarships and not of social policies! Just yesterday, the Chamber approved universal health insurance. In theory, from this year onwards, this system will start to be implemented. Everyone suspects that this is politically motivated, in view of the election campaign. The government says it will invest 200 million *bolivianos* [25 million euros], but experts agree that it needs to invest 2 billion! This highlights the fact that the current health system is highly deficient. As such, if we expand coverage without having the resources, we will provide low quality care... even if, in theoretical terms, the idea of universal health mutual for the poor, or those in rural areas who do not have access to health, is like a dream!

Have inequalities decreased in recent years?

The urban population continues to grow, due to the difficult situation in rural areas. Access to basic services, water and electricity has increased and improved, but the gap between urban and rural areas persists or has even increased. Another difficulty is that the urban environment does not have the capacity to cope with migration and provide services to all those people who leave the countryside to settle in the city.

As for gender relations, they have evolved slightly, as has women's access to services, their level of participation, etc. All this has improved, but levels of violence remain very high.

What is the trade union situation in Bolivia?

The unions have been co-opted politically. The Bolivian Workers' Central, for example, no longer represents the needs and demands of the labour sector. It is completely aligned with the government. Current or former union leaders are moving into government positions... For example, the current Minister of Labour is a former trade union leader. The main challenge is tackling this mismatch, and for unions to go back to doing what they were set up for.

What is the reality of the plural economy in general, and the social and cooperative economy in particular?

The Constitution specifies four types of economies, including the community economy. But this community economy, in its essence, lacks key elements of the SSE, even though, in rural areas, it covers important solidarity actions (e.g. *minga* [collective work for social purposes]). But there is no clear and coherent proposal from the government to support this type of economy in practice.

There has been a distortion of the cooperatives, primarily in the mining sector where they are very much present, which now more resemble the management of companies, with a vertical structure, and which are camouflaged behind the mask of a cooperative.

In the beginning, when Evo Morales came to power, the government was the standard bearer for the social economy and the community economy. And there was a strong movement in support of the SSE, fair trade, etc., but over time it has diluted and lost its strength. We are trying to make the elements of the SSE, of the Community economy, more visible, to show their pillars, for example associative production and marketing, fair trade, etc.

However, the organisations within these economies have significant social and community capital. They remain out of the reach of the government's policies. Their only way to progress is to implement their practices. And what they do have is only thanks to their organisation, their collective work. In addition, they contribute to the national economy and support a large part of agricultural production and the rural economy.

"The idea of universal health insurance for the poor, or those in rural areas who do not have access to health, is like a dream!"

2019 is an election year. Evo Morales is running for re-election. Is there a credible alternative project on the side of the opposition?

There are three important elements.

1. Essentially, there is no credible project for which the public can vote. In a referendum, the majority rejected the possibility of Morales running for re-election. This generated a social awareness. Since the president is trying again, they will vote against it. But not for an alternative or the interesting project of a candidate; just to avoid continuity.
2. Systematically, as the elections approach, there is a polarisation of organisations depending on whether they are pro or anti-government.
3. The opposition remains fragmented, without a common political project that could unite them. The only thing that brings them together is their opposition to Morales being re-elected.

TRANSFORMING THE ECONOMY: STARTING WITH WOMEN AND WOMEN WORKERS

INTERVIEW WITH **GRACIELA RAQUEL LOPEZ QUINTEROS**, COORDINATOR OF REMTE
(BOLIVIAN NETWORK OF WOMEN TRANSFORMING THE ECONOMY)

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What does it mean to be a trade unionist and a woman – a woman trade unionist – today in Bolivia?

Graciela Raquel: Being a woman and a trade unionist is not an easy task! It is a battleground against capital, colonialism, and patriarchy. In Bolivia, despite legal progress and our contribution to the country's economy, most women continue to work in the most precarious, least productive jobs, with major wage gaps, fragile rights and the permanent threat of violence, including both workplace violence and sexual harassment.

The informal sector accounts for more than 70% of women workers. In Bolivia, there is an organisational fabric at all levels, and the informal sector has its own forms of organisation. But there is no platform to represent all these workers. That is why we demanded a labour code, which also includes informal workers, all Bolivian workers, rather than a labour law, which only concerns employees. But we have not been successful up until now.

For women workers, the union is there to defend their rights and interests, but it also a place where the macho power relations of the male management staff are replicated.

Has there been any major progress for women workers under the Morales governments?

Since 2009, we have been working on amending the General Labour Law, which is a very old law, but unfortunately we have not been able to make significant progress in incorporating women workers' rights into it. This is due to the legal complexity, with the plethora of laws, revisions and amendments, but there is also a political problem, of political will. The main challenge today is that the state applies the laws.

Do the different types of solidarity economies in Bolivia have specific importance for women?

Alternative economies (feminist economies, community economies, solidarity economies, etc.), based on ethical and reciprocal links, bring together a large number of women. The community economy is the cornerstone of this umbrella of alternatives. But the main problem is that the government does not really take an interest in these initiatives, does not issue laws to strengthen them, to recognise the rights of workers and women who work there and who lack any social protection. This raises the question: what is our government's outlook?

Alternative economies are initiatives which are still under construction, created by people themselves, but without them thinking about their rights. This also raises questions for us. For example, we support agro-ecological producers. We tell them: *"That's great, you've improved people's diet. You are offering healthy and high-quality food. But what about you? Do you have a pension, do you have more rights? Have you overcome poverty, improved your living and working conditions?"*.

The name of your union, REMTE, refers to the transformation of the economy by women. Why?

Why transform the economy? Just look at the current situation of the capitalist system! Feminist movements, based on theoretical reflections and organisational forms of peasant, indigenous and community economies in the South, have reinvigorated the criticisms of the capitalist economy. Currently, women's movements are strengthening at the global level and are demonstrating the possibilities of anti-capitalist, anti-colonial and anti-patriarchal struggles.

"For women workers, the union is there to defend their rights and interests, but it also a place where the macho power relations of the male management staff are replicated"

SOLIDARITY WITH THE POOREST, THE ENVIRONMENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

INTERVIEW WITH **ADELA PALACIOS**, PROJECT MANAGER FOR THE RIO CHICO AREA, PASOS

What role do women play in the initiatives of the solidarity economy with which you work? Do they occupy a specific role?

Adela Palacios: The organisations with which we work have articles of association which recognise the same rights and obligations for men and women. Women's participation in management positions can vary; they often have no experience and have difficulty in managing. We support, guide and train them in leadership and entrepreneurial management, to strengthen their participation and their organisations.

Traditionally, in agriculture, women have primarily taken care of growing, post-harvest activities and selling. They are the ones who take part in the fairs. For example, once a week, they go down to the city of Sucre to sell their produce directly to consumers. We should also highlight the role they play in negotiating prices in the markets, as intermediaries.

What makes an initiative successful and sustainable?

We have seen that organisations where women and young people are well integrated are, in general, more likely to survive in the long term. Another condition is that the activity, the chosen "business" is viable and profitable quickly. If they are not, the subsequent problems are more difficult to bear. It also needs to be clear what each partner's own contribution is, as well as their obligations and duties. Finally, resource management, leadership and relationships within the organisation clearly have an influence.

Have women's conditions improved under the presidency of Evo Morales?

The government has implemented national programmes to support productive organisations. However, gender aspects are rarely taken into account. There are some specific projects for women's organisations, with varying results. Training is generally rare and of poor quality, and support for projects is practically non-existent.

You talk about a solidarity and "clean" economy; why?

The main economic activity in the area is the production of fruit and vegetables. This is carried out using clean production techniques, i.e. the associations have agreed to use natural fertilisers and crop control. There is a concern about natural resources; especially water, which is the most important element for agriculture and livestock and which, in recent years, has been threatened by pollution from mining activities and the city. Moreover, a Committee to safeguard natural resources has been set up. It has mobilised various communities and is highly dynamic.

Clean production is a recognised quality of the local produce on the market, and it benefits the city's consumers. It is their only source of healthy food. As such, solidarity is demonstrated between producers and consumers, but also, within organisations, by giving priority to the poorest families, and by encouraging mutual support and collective work. Finally, solidarity also takes into account the environment, good conditions for agriculture and livestock, and future generations. Families want future generations to benefit from the resources and production conditions they have.

"The associations have agreed to use natural fertilisers and crop control. There is a concern about natural resources; especially water, which is the most important element for agriculture and livestock and which, in recent years, has been threatened by pollution from mining activities and the city"

BURKINA FASO



FROM ALTERNATING TO ALTERNATIVES

At the end of October 2014, Blaise Compaore, who had been head of state since 1987, was ousted from power by a popular uprising, which was primarily made up of young people. The “Sankara generation” – from Thomas Sankara, also referred to as the “African Che Guevara”, the president who was murdered 27 years earlier – seemed to have turned the page on authoritarianism, and open a new path to hope. After the Arab spring, the Burkina spring?

Looking back after five years, it has been a bitter experience for the population. Alternating has not resulted in an alternative, and the social situation remains dire. One of the poorest countries in the world, near the bottom of the Human Development Index (HDI) – 183rd out of 198 countries – Burkina Faso is dependent on the international market and vulnerable to both economic and climate shocks.

Agriculture – more than 70% of the population lives in rural areas – is highly dependent on rainfall. However, rainfall trends are declining under the pressure of climate change – even though the populations of the Sahel are already among the most exposed – thereby increasing food insecurity. What’s more, this vulnerability is also economic, due to its concentration on a limited number of commodities: oil, cotton and especially gold.

Cotton and gold account for nearly 85% of all the country’s exports, and oil, on average, accounts for a quarter of its imports. But the Burkina State has no control over the highly volatile prices of these raw materials. Caught in the vicious cycle of an undiversified economy which has no processing industries, dependent on imports of industrialised goods, income from gold and cotton, and fluctuations in oil prices, the country became indebted... forced to turn to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which imposed its conditions.

In addition, since 2015, Burkina Faso has faced increasingly frequent and deadly jihadist terrorist attacks throughout its territory. Military spending is increasing, as are tensions between ethnic communities, at the expense of social policies that are better able, in the long term, to ensure the long-term security of goods and people. In addition, the implementation of basic health coverage for all Burkinese, a symbolic issue in building social protection, risks being undermined and put on the back burner due to a lack of resources and political will. Social discontent is growing against the cost of living, the lack of access to health and basic social services – which are constantly being hollowed out in the pursuit of a liberal policy – and the government’s inability to counter terrorist attacks. With a weakened social fabric, the security threat and a deteriorating situation, Burkina Faso is going through dark times. But, as the highly politically engaged rapper Smockey, co-founder of the ‘Balai citoyen’, sang in October 2014: *“On passe à l’attaque, on passe à l’action. Aussi longue est la nuit, le jour fera son apparition”* (We move to attack, we move to take action. No matter how long the night is, day will come).

The Association Songui Manégré / Developent Aid (ASMADE), the Union of health mutuals in the central region (UMUSAC) and the Union of Lorry Drivers of Burkina Faso (UCRB) are working together to extend social protection and promote Decent Work, especially for young people and women. The Solsoc programme supports them, facilitates the convergence and networking of actors, and strengthens them, so that they represent a veritable force for mobilising and claiming their social, political and economic rights.

ACCESS TO HEALTH FOR ALL

INTERVIEW WITH **INOUSSA OUEDRAOGO**, COORDINATOR OF THE UNION OF HEALTH MUTUALS IN THE CENTRAL REGION (UMUSAC)



24 **What is the employment situation for young people, who are the majority of the population?**

Inoussa Ouedraogo: What is obvious is that the government will not be able to provide employment for all these young people. In order to absorb as many people as possible, the State has implemented a number of measures, including social protection floors; in other words, a number of strategies to ensure a minimum level of social protection, pending comprehensive and broad coverage.

Is there a policy to formalise employment? Are unions involved?

Trade unions? A new one is set up every day! There is a conflict at the moment because the administration is in the process of formalising private companies. But they do not want to, because once they are formalised, they have to pay taxes, etc. Not only are you listed in the State's files, but you have to be "legit"; for example, pay workers the minimum wage – even if it is not much here in Burkina Faso – 33,000 CFA francs [around €50]. In return, the State provides limited resources to develop. But many people prefer to remain in the shadows to run their businesses.

***"Ultimately, it should allow
16 million Burkinese
to get treatment at a lower cost"***

What are the challenges of the campaign for Universal Health Coverage?

Ultimately, it should allow 16 million Burkinese to get treatment at a lower cost. At the moment we are waiting for it to be launched, because there is a problem. For it to be a genuine success, all the municipalities need to be covered by health mutuals. Out of around 360 municipalities in Burkina Faso, just over 200 are covered.

What is the main obstacle?

The main obstacle is financial. The World Bank, which is supporting this process, says that there is no more money until we start the operational phase. But it's one thing to support the programme, another matter entirely to implement it!

In Burkina Faso, the cost of living is high. On the one hand, the state is obliged to levy taxes. The price of fuel has just gone up again, and people came on the streets to protest. On the other hand, you need to pay civil servants... But the main problem for the ruling party right now, given the terrorist attacks, is security. As a result, the funds that were planned to finance social security may be reallocated to security...

How does your organisation work in this campaign?

Our mission is to promote community-based health insurance, which allows people to access health care at a lower cost.

What we are helping to do is to avoid situations where people who had previously sold their goats in order to be cared for in health centres have to do the same thing again. Many people pay their registration fees to the mutual insurance company in the first year, and the following year, and after that they are unable to pay their fees. Not because they don't want to or they don't understand the importance of mutual health insurance, but because they can't manage it financially. That's why we set up a revolving fund so that, with the profits, people can pay their contributions; and so that they understand that they can pay contributions in advance, before they get ill. And in solidarity.

TENSIONS BETWEEN SECURITY POLICY AND SOCIAL PRIORITIES

INTERVIEW WITH **DOUSSA DRAMANE**, PERMANENT SECRETARY
OF THE UNION OF LORRY DRIVERS OF BURKINA FASO (UCRB)

What is the UCRB and what does it do?

Doussa Dramane: The UCRB is the Union of Lorry Drivers of Burkina Faso, which unites all the country's lorry drivers. We are fortunate to have only one union for lorry drivers. We defend their moral and material interests.

We are affiliated to a central organisation, the Confédération Syndicale Burkinabé (Confederation of Trade Unions of Burkina Faso - CSB). It is with this same trade union centre that we carry out our lobbying. Just last week, we submitted a request to review our 2011 agreement, to revise the salary and allowance components. The drivers felt that, given the current cost of living, it was rather low and needed to be revised upwards. We are currently lobbying for this. Negotiations with management are expected to start soon.

"The major problem is still social security"

What is the situation of lorry drivers in Burkina Faso?

It's not too bad. There was a time when the sector was very informal. The main problem that lorry drivers faced was the lack of a legal basis to regulate relations between workers and employers. In 2011, we were able to obtain a collective agreement. We have also strengthened our struggle, with a lot of lobbying with the authorities. We were faced with salary problems and safety problems.

It's now starting to get better, becoming more formal as time goes on. We are seeing structured and formal companies being set up, in the true sense of the word, with workers benefiting from a minimum wage, social security, etc. The major problem is still social security. Many drivers work without it. But I think this problem is being solved. So, things are starting to look better.

What are the causes of the current social unrest in Burkina Faso?

The causes are quite deep-rooted. In 2014, we had just emerged from the uprising in Burkina Faso, which saw the fall of a 27-year-old regime seen as corrupt. With the support of trade unions and young people, we were able to lead this uprising. You know, after 27 years in power, the practices were so deeply rooted in everyday life that people were used to a certain ease... And now, with the new regime, we have first moved to a transition. We then elected our president, who has a lot of difficulty governing.

The main problem right now in Burkina Faso remains the security problem. We are being attacked from all sides, especially in the North and East, by terrorists who are attacking families every day. So it's a very deep problem.

Does the security problem takes precedence over social problems?

I think the security problem remains the government's priority right now. The public, the workers (through the unions) organised various marches, rallies, etc. But, in his last speech, our president asked the whole population to form a united front. It is as if we had made a pact with the unions to call a truce, so that we could focus on security issues, which are really growing. But the trade unions were also making demands, here and there, about reclassification conditions, working conditions, living conditions, etc. But I think the unions understood that security is paramount, because the situation is starting to get worrying.



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MAKING SOCIAL PROTECTION OPERATIONAL

INTERVIEW WITH **JULIETTE COMPAORÉ**, COORDINATOR OF ASMADE
(ASSOCIATION SONGUI MANEGRE / DEVELOPMENT AID)

ASMADE is an NGO that aims to improve the living and working conditions of people in Burkina Faso. One of ASMADE's main areas of intervention is the environment. How do you work in this respect, and what is the challenge?

Juliette Compaoré: We work in line with our strategic objectives of understanding and managing the risks associated with climate change, and supporting the emergence of responsible and engaged young people. In this context, our NGO has set up an agro-ecological farm, which provides a space for practical work, but also allows us to brainstorm on environmental management, agriculture, breeding, etc. For us, it is a springboard to promote good practices at the national level in the agro-ecological field, and in managing the effects of climate change.

The third National Social Protection Forum was held in 2018. What is it about?

Indeed, this forum was organised by the Permanent Secretariat of NGOs of Burkina Faso, SPONG, of which ASMADE is the president. The purpose of this forum was to draw up a mid-term assessment of the implementation of the operational plan for social protection; to see what progress had been made and what future challenges lay ahead to make this policy genuinely operational. Don't forget that Burkina Faso formalised a national social protection policy in 2012, under the impetus and with the participation of civil society.

For a social protection policy to be effectively implemented, it requires a willingness on the part of the State and the collective strength of civil society. Are these two elements there?

In the case of Burkina Faso, there is no shortage of challenges or needs in terms of social protection, because, as we say in our country: "everything is a priority"! We can say that the commitment is there because the policy has been adopted, an operational plan has been incorporated, a permanent secretariat has been set up, etc. We therefore believe that there is a strong political commitment, even if, when we see how resources are mobilised and the priority choices of budget allocation according to the various challenges, social protection still often takes a back seat.

There also needs to be collective action on the part of civil society. We believe that SPONG, which brings together 256 NGOs, does not only limit itself to mobilising its members, but serves as a gateway, as a space for mobilising other civil society actors. Collective participation and action are essential. We also need to know what the public actually feels through this policy. We have also carried out alternative studies to provide a different perspective than that of the State regarding the accomplishments, to make it possible to assess the effectiveness, or not, of this policy.

"Social protection still often takes a back seat"

I think that there is another type of actor, apart from civil society and the State, which can participate: the various technical and financial partners who support Burkina Faso in implementing social protection policy.

So we think that, overall, the framework is there, all the actors are there and they are aware of the need to coordinate their interventions. There is still a need to strengthen synergies and coordination. And to improve the monitoring tools put in place to capitalise on all interventions, and use them more effectively. Finally, significant resources still need to be put in place to make all the aspects of this policy operational.

BURUNDI



BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

This small landlocked country in Central Africa, one of the poorest countries in the world (three-quarters of Burundians live below the poverty threshold), with a life expectancy of less than 58 years has been in political crisis since President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision in 2015 to run for a third term and his re-election, which has further worsened social conditions for the population.

This situation is all the more difficult as a result of international sanctions and a withdrawal of donors and the private sector, while the country is structurally dependent on imports and international financial aid. Burundi has tried to cover the shortfall by turning to the East – Asia and the Middle East – in order to find alternative donors (India, China and the United Arab Emirates account for around a third of its trade), but has been unsuccessful in its efforts.

The Burundian economy is based essentially on agriculture, which is by far the main source of employment and food. It is family agriculture, with the main cash crops being coffee and tea. The agricultural sector, with very limited resources and infrastructure, is dependent on rainfall and vulnerable to climate shocks. Hence its low productivity, dependence on price fluctuations on the world market, and the scale of food insecurity (it affects 1.7 million Burundians, and about 56% of children suffer from malnutrition according to the UN).

Pierre Nkurunziza's announcement that he will not stand as a candidate in the 2020 elections has helped allay the fears of the population and international bodies. However, serious and repeated human rights violations, political tensions, and the resurgence and manipulation of the ethnic issue continue to be a source of serious concern. In any case, the political deadlock is a catalyst for social and economic problems, and solving these requires political change.

The current situation has resulted in an economy of making-do and scarcity, which is particularly evident in access to medicines. On 22 August 2018, the government launched its *National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2027*, which aims to achieve “*structural transformation of the economy in the long term*”. Besides the fact that the assessment it contains, which is largely positive, is problematic, the full implementation of this Plan requires 2.5 billion dollars... most of which would need to come from international donors.

Health and social protection are included in strategic orientation 2 of the NDP: “*developing human capital*”. However, community-based health mutuals and the solidarity economy are barely mentioned, and no strategy of support and collaboration is outlined. This is all the more problematic since in Burundi, health mutual is based on a juxtaposition of the Medical Insurance Card (CAM in French) and community-based health mutuals, and this juxtaposition is a brake on the development of the latter.

The Solsoc programme in Burundi focuses on the four pillars of Decent Work. With three of its partners, the Association Support for Integral Development and Solidarity in the Hills (ADISCO), the Consultation platform for Mutual Health Insurance Actors (PAMUSAB) and the National Confederation of Coffee Growers' Associations of Burundi (CNAC-MURIMA W'ISANGI), and with the support of Solidaris Mons-Wallonie Picardie, Solsoc supports 27 mutual health health mutuals and cooperatives. It builds their capacities, the quality of their services, their autonomy and their advocacy for better social protection. In addition, in collaboration with the FGTB-Horval, Solsoc supports the Burundian Federation of Workers in the Food Industry (FEBUTRA), which brings together nine unions in the formal and informal agri-food sector.

TRADE UNIONS FACING THE CHALLENGE OF DECENT WORK

INTERVIEW WITH **THARCISSE GAHUNGU**, PRESIDENT
OF THE FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS IN THE AGRI-FOOD SECTOR (FEBUTRA)

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What are the conditions of the men and women working in the informal sector?

Tharcisse Gahungu: The conditions are very harsh, characterised by precarious employment, low incomes, the absence of any social protection or mechanism for dialogue on living and working conditions. Labour legislation does not recognise them. They do not have access to a whole range of services, including microcredit, etc. The main challenges for them are related to their conditions, and can be summarised as the problems of meeting minimum Decent Work standards.

How do the workers organise themselves in Burundi?

In the informal sector, which includes most workers, especially women, they are not well organised, or not at all. Some people have formed associations or cooperatives, but not many. Very few are affiliated to a trade union.

Workers in the formal sector are organised into trade unions, primarily structured by company and rarely by sector. Nevertheless, attempts to organise sectoral federations such as FEBUTRA can also be highlighted.

What are their principal demands?

In the first instance, workers demand that legislation that recognises their right to organise freely, defend their interests and bargain collectively is observed. ILO (International Labour Organisation) Conventions no. 87 (on freedom of association) and no. 98 (on the right to organise and collective bargaining) have been ratified by Burundi. The demands are often related to living and working conditions: wages, social security, coverage of basic needs, etc.

At FEBUTRA, we aim to strengthen the capacities of our member unions, so that we can have a greater impact on policies that affect the interests and rights of workers, and that promote a fair and dignified distribution of labour income.

How is consultation with the government and employers organised?

From a trade union point of view, the situation is not easy, employers demand extreme flexibility. We have already been arrested and imprisoned for organising a staff gathering at a tea plantation. Paradoxically, it was good publicity for our union, and it increased the number of union members!

The challenges are immense. Nevertheless, we manage to find a forum for discussion with all the social partners within the National committee for social dialogue. There are regular consultations. Within these bodies, workers sit on an equal footing with employers and government representatives. For the time being, relations between the Government and the trade unions can be described as good, but we remain vigilant.

“The demands are often related to living and working conditions: wages, social security, coverage of basic needs, etc”

What can be done to improve the conditions for workers?

We give priority to social dialogue and including all stakeholders to address problems calmly, propose consensual solutions and consequently make progress on employment and social protection. On the other hand, the social and solidarity economy is a niche to be invested in. Cooperatives and health mutuals can play an important role in improving social protection and access to microcredit for workers, especially those in the informal sector.

THE ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF RESTRUCTURING THE COFFEE SECTOR

INTERVIEW WITH **MACAIRE NTIRANDEKURA**, ADVOCACY OFFICER AT THE NATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF COFFEE GROWERS' ASSOCIATIONS OF BURUNDI (CNAC-MURIMA W'ISANGI)

What is the role of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in Burundi? Does it contribute to changing people's situations?

Macaire Ntirandekura: Burundi has a capitalist economy that ensures that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. This context does not help the poorest populations to get ahead. The 'écosol' [solidarity economy] has been well received by the 90% of the population that lives from agriculture.

"Coffee growers should not be poor, because it is coffee that brings foreign exchange into our country!"

If what we do is positive, there are immediate spill-over effects, since the country is very small. We are already seeing the impact at the population level: creating a cooperative allows people to *"help each other"*. At the level of our organisations, the principles of the solidarity economy are well established. The added value is not yet significant, but people feel that there may be a slight improvement for the members of cooperatives. Some of the principles of the solidarity economy were already implemented in the country, solidarity itself in particular. ADISCO and the CNAC [National Confederation of Coffee Growers' Associations of Burundi] have identified an opportunity in the solidarity economy for the rural movement to have power and have its own voice. Coffee growers should not be poor, because it is coffee that brings foreign exchange into our country!

You mentioned the CNAC. Can you tell us a bit about its history and the privatisation of the coffee sector?

Before privatisation, all activities related to the coffee sector were carried out and supervised by the State. Coffee growers would harvest their coffee cherries (a red or purple fruit produced by the coffee tree, which has coffee beans at its core), take them to the washing station and wait to be paid, knowing that the State needed to maintain price levels. The State then handled the processing and marketing through OSIBU, which was a State entity.

Everything changed with the neo-liberal structural adjustment policies of the 1990s. The government was obliged to withdraw from the coffee sector and adopt the privatisation strategy to obtain debt relief. Many government funds went into the sector while, according to the World Bank and the IMF [International Monetary Fund], the sector could be self-sufficient.

In 1995, a decree of the President of the Republic enshrined the privatisation of the coffee sector. *"Anyone can work in the coffee sector, from production to marketing"*. Privatisation was therefore imposed. The state's hands were tied. From that moment on, we saw that coffee growers (who previously considered that the State owned the coffee) needed to organise themselves to have their place and a framework to express themselves within privatisation. It was during this period, in 1997, that the first associations for coffee growers were set up. The CNAC was set up in 2004.

The vision of the growers' associations was that producers needed to step in where the government was backing away and disengaging. As such, in the decision-making bodies of the coffee sector, coffee growers needed to have a place to defend their interests. Finally, they had to organise themselves to control the sector, from production to export.

Do coffee growers control the sector?

Lobbying was carried out in this respect and the CNAC was successful in 2007, when the President publicly declared that coffee now belonged to producers, from production to export. And all the other actors in the sector were service providers. The CNAC took the bull by the horns and shook things up. People who bought coffee in Burundi were not happy, but the exporters, in reality, were agents for the multinationals! The CNAC dismantled the system for marketing coffee.

“If they bought the stations without the consent of the CNAC, the same thing would happen to them: they would buy the building, but they would not buy coffee from the growers”

SOGESTAL, a mixed company (the State is a shareholder), was not the owner of the coffee. All coffee had to be collected and marketed at the level of the OSIBU, and no one could buy coffee without going through the “exporters” association, the ABEC. Since coffee growers now owned their own coffee, we set up a marketing commission. These multinationals, which work closely with the World Bank, were surprised, because nowhere else do coffee growers enter the market!

In this struggle, the challenge of the washing stations was key, wasn't it?

Yes. Privatisation meant the sale of the washing stations and curing factories [a process to remove the coffee bean from its parchment, a thin film that surrounds the bean]. And coffee growers started to try to buy washing stations. However, in order to buy one, one of the conditions of the specifications was to contribute 1 million dollars. None of the coffee growers had that kind of money! The CNAC, supported by ADISCO, INADES [INADES-formation, pan-African network of associations], Solsoc, IRED [Innovations and Networks for Development], etc. lobbied the government and the World Bank aggressively to remove this condition. And it set up coffee growers' cooperatives, which could have an economic activity and buy washing stations.

One of the first private companies to purchase washing stations was Webcor (Switzerland). A study was carried out by OSIBU into setting up a distribution grid that was effective and profitable for all stakeholders in the sector. This study argued that 72% of the price of coffee should go to growers after marketing, and the remaining 28% should be distributed among other actors/service providers.

Webcor did not respect this distribution. In the first year, there was a problem because in the other regions (not yet privatised), coffee growers had received a higher price for coffee than those who had sold their production to Webcor. So they decided to stop delivering the cherries to Webcor, which was forced to close and resell the washing stations it had purchased.



At the time, the CNAC wrote to the parties interested in buying the washing stations, explaining that if they bought the stations without the consent of the CNAC, the same thing would happen to them: they would buy the building, but they would not buy coffee from the growers. This put them off and allowed coffee growers' cooperatives to purchase their own washing stations.

And what is the situation of the coffee sector and coffee growers today?

At the moment, 50 cooperatives own a washing station, and these cooperatives have created the Consortium of coffee growers cooperatives (COCOCA), which bought the curing factory at Horamama. COCOCA is also responsible for marketing the coffee. We therefore control the entire sector these days [for the share of the coffee that belongs to CNAC member growers]. With regard to price setting for producers: the coffee remains the property of the growers, meaning that after marketing, if there are surpluses, the members of the cooperatives share in these profits. This is one of the principles of the solidarity economy. We also hope to set up a quality centre for coffee growers. We have always worked on the quality of the coffee since, to get good prices, you need quality coffee.

But at the cooperative level, not everything is perfect. There are problems of governance and management, but also the search for quality. Some people think that having large volumes is more beneficial. But the COCOCA has quality standards and certifications (organic, *fair trade*), which allows us to obtain attractive prices.

What is the situation with the privatisation policy? And what challenges still remain?

We were successful in obtaining a review of the privatisation strategy. The national coffee advocacy platform has been created to incorporate all stakeholders in the coffee sector, and provincial platforms are also being set up. If something needs to be improved within the sector, we work together to draw up proposals and solutions. For example, at the moment there is the question of how to change legislation that has become obsolete.

But some challenges remain. Even though the privatisation strategy has been reviewed, it has not yet been implemented. At the sector level, there is a lack of clarity regarding government policy for the coffee sector. The privatisation was carried out on a part of the State's assets, but there is still another part: 77 washing stations that have not yet been sold, and in which the State is a shareholder. This is a problem because the State cannot control the sector and at the same time be part of it!

On the other hand, there are private companies that have bought washing stations, but they are not sure where to position themselves in the privatisation policy. We don't know yet whether the government will re-nationalise the sector or complete the privatisation. Finally, not everyone works on an equal footing because in companies where the state has shares, if a problem arises, it can intervene to rectify the situation, while other companies have to manage without state support.

The distribution grid, which specified that 77% of export revenues had to go to coffee growers, has been scrapped. There is now a framework for setting the producer price, but the figures used in this table are not transparent. The price is set in February, when the coffee is still growing, while the marketing is done in August-September-October. We are therefore paid at the February price while the price fluctuates; prices may increase or decrease. It is not really possible to calculate a fair and equitable price for all stakeholders.

In addition, many traders have not followed the emergence of new private companies in the coffee sector, and do not know how the associative movement was set up. They joined the cooperative movement to look after their personal interests first and foremost. They do not have a feeling for the movement and do not serve the general interest. We need to revitalise and reconsolidate the associative movement at the grassroots level.

What place do women have in this sector?

In Burundi, the culture is still fairly traditional. A woman cannot represent the household if her husband is present. And yet, coffee is a family crop. Of course women are growers too, but they are rarely seen outside the orchards. On the other hand, women generally do not get elected to decision-making bodies. We also need to raise awareness among men to make progress. Today, the association movement for coffee growers encourages men to give part of the coffee trees to their wives so that they have access to the market and a certain representativeness in the associations. We're starting to see that, but it's just the start. An association of women who produce their own coffee, the "women's" coffee, has been set up. This is processed separately in the washing stations, and is marketed separately, to promote their initiative. This coffee gets a good price internationally. As such, the CNAC is trying to promote women's leadership and democracy.

THE RIGHT TO HEALTH AT A CROSSROADS

INTERVIEW WITH **ESPÉRANCE KANEZA**, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE CONSULTATION PLATFORM FOR MUTUAL HEALTH INSURANCE ACTORS (PAMUSAB)



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When and how did health mutuals emerge in Burundi?

Espérance Kaneza: Mutual companies are a fairly recent movement in Burundi. The first ones appeared at the end of the 1990s, at the initiative of the Archdiocese of Gitega. In 2008, new mutualist initiatives were set up, including the well-known CNAC (National Confederation of Coffee Growers' Associations of Burundi), which aimed to facilitate its members' access to health care.

In 2010, the country's five main health mutuals decided to coordinate their efforts by creating the Platform of Mutual Health Insurance Actors in Burundi (PAMUSAB). This allowed us to speak with one voice with the authorities, but also to harmonise our management and services to members.

What do the health mutuals represent today?

Our health mutuals currently cover the country's 18 provinces, and 91 municipalities out of 119. This means that they guarantee access to healthcare for just over 18,000 households, or around 90,000 people. However, the penetration rate remains low, at 2.39% of our target group, the rural and informal sector.

Why is the percentage of members so low?

Because membership is voluntary and it is difficult for most people to think about social protection, to set money aside to cover an unpredictable risk. Family incomes are so low and uncertain that spending choices are guided by a rationale of day-to-day survival. And then there is the competition from the Medical Assistance Card, the CAM, which is managed by the Ministry of Health.

The CAM was widely distributed in 2017 and covers a good 25% of the rural population. It gives holders access to health-care for a flat rate of 3,000 Burundian francs [€1.50] per year and a user fee of 20%. The annual contribution to the community-based health mutuals has been harmonised at 22,500 francs [€11] for a household of six people.

But in that case, what is the added value compared to the CAM?

Firstly, the quality of care and access to medicines. Unlike a beneficiary of the CAM, a member of a health mutual can go to any approved health facility, whether public or private. Members of health mutuals benefit from better attention and access to medicines, as health facilities are confident that they will be reimbursed on time by the health mutuals, which is not the case with the Ministry, as the CAM is insufficiently funded.

Then there is 'intermutual', which allows members to receive care wherever they are in the country, and not just within the territory of the mutual insurance company of which they are members. There is also access to related services in certain health mutuals, such as access to funds for income-generating activities. Quality is also fostered through assessments of patient satisfaction and quality of care.

The health mutuals also carry out prevention, awareness-raising and health education activities. A member who falls ill gets treatment immediately, whereas before they might have waited several days, resulting in a worsening of the illness and an increase in the cost of treatment. Finally, whereas CAM members never meet up, health mutuals contribute to social cohesion and solidarity, by organising various activities to bring people together. This strengthens resistance and resilience in a complicated socio-political environment.

Can the social and solidarity economy foster the development of health mutuals?

We see that health mutuals that are endorsed by cooperatives or tontines have better coverage and a higher rate of renewal of contributions. This is related to the income that members can earn from it, but not only that. The sense of belonging and social connection also play an important role. When you are a member of a health mutual, there is a relationship that is created between the members. When a member of a health mutual gets sick, they always have people around them, they are cared for in the first instance.

The same is true for the members of cooperatives. Apart from the cooperative's main activity, other actions are developed, such as tontines or cleaning up sources of drinking water. It is a complete community which is mobilised.

What is the potential of health mutuals in implementing universal health coverage?

The potential is significant and real, but it all depends on the government's decision whether to integrate health mutuals into the Universal Health Coverage system (CSU in French). The efforts to create synergy within the framework of PAMUSAB has been decisive and give us a lot of hope.

“Our health mutuals currently cover the country's 18 provinces, and 91 municipalities out of 119. This means that they guarantee access to healthcare for just over 18,000 households, or around 90,000 people”

Talking of which, what is the situation with the CSU process?

The national policy for social protection reserves a place for health mutuals. We helped revise the social protection code. We are waiting for the adoption of the new law code to make progress in drafting a law on health mutuals. We work closely with the Ministry of Human Rights, Social Affairs and Gender to develop and implement social protection with the participation of health mutuals. We try to do everything in our power to negotiate the position of health mutuals. This is easy on some issues, difficult on others, particularly regarding the CSU.

Where exactly is the deadlock?

Various discussions are ongoing regarding the architecture of the CSU. Three proposals are on the table, two in favour of health mutuals and one in favour of the CAM without health mutuals. There is therefore a discrepancy between these two approaches. It is a conflict between the Ministries of Health and the Ministry for social protection, who disagree on the management of the project. It is a political question rather than a technical one. The Ministry for Social Protection is in favour of health mutuals. But the Ministry of Health isn't. It is in favour of the CAM, and since they are the ones who manage it, they do not want it to be delegated to health mutuals.

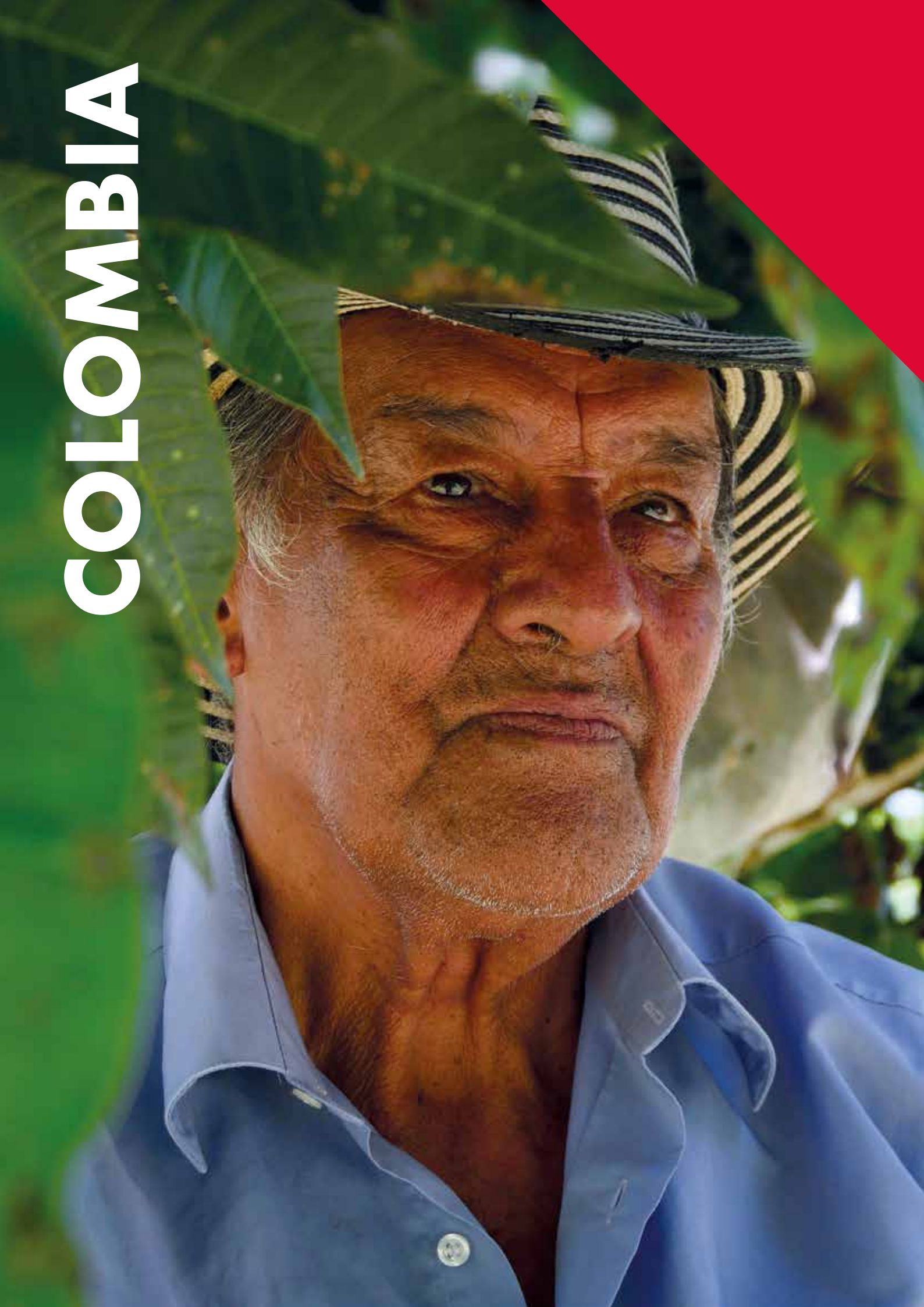
The problem with the CAM is its target population and its funding. Today, everyone can join the CAM and benefit from free access, whereas there are sectors of the population that should not benefit from it, but should be insured through a health mutual for example. The social protection policy clearly specifies that people will need to go through a categorisation system in order to implement universal health coverage. Since the government is dragging its feet, we at PAMUSAB have taken the lead. We are launching a pilot project in a municipality, involving the Ministry for social protection, which involves developing a model of categories and criteria with a coverage system adapted to each stratum, and which demonstrates the relevance of health mutuals in the management of health insurance.

Health mutuals have established close relations with cooperative and rural movements.

What is the situation with the trade union movement?

In collaboration with the Fédération syndicale du secteur agroalimentaire (Federation of Trade Unions in the Agri-Food Sector) (FEBUTRA), we have already made a diagnosis of Decent Work and set up a national multi-stakeholder network for social protection that includes PAMUSAB and two trade union organisations, the Confédération des syndicats du Burundi (Confederation of Trade Unions of Burundi) (COSYBU) and the Confédération syndicale du Burundi (Trade Union Confederation of Burundi) (CSB). We are drawing up an action plan to extend the health mutuals to the members of these confederations. Other organisations of the solidarity economy have expressed their willingness to join the network. Thanks to this work of uniting health mutuals, cooperatives and unions, we hope to succeed in our advocacy work and make concrete progress in implementing a CSU with a key role for our community-based health mutuals.

COLOMBIA



IN SEARCH OF A JUST AND DIGNIFIED PEACE

On 24 August 2016, the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) signed a peace agreement to end the longest armed conflict in the continent's history (52 years). But Colombia is still at war; a war against all those who believe in another model of society. And "post-conflict" has been reduced to a sales argument to attract foreign investors.

As such, according to *Defensoría del pueblo* (an institution that monitors public authorities and ensures respect for human rights in particular), 423 social leaders and defenders of human rights were murdered between 1 January 2016 and 30 November 2018. In addition, according to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Colombia remains one of the ten worst countries in the world for workers' rights, and the leading country in terms of the number of trade unionists killed.

The past weighs even more on the present, as the total number of murders has not been calculated. During the conflict, 263,000 people were killed, 45,000 went missing and nearly 7 million were displaced. However, the causes – land concentration, which is one of the highest in the world – and the actors – around three-quarters of the human rights violations were committed by paramilitaries and/or armed forces – of these crimes remain unchanged and are still present.

War has been – and continues to be – the price to pay for a development model. Specifically, it is the price that the ruling class, which derives its power from land concentration and natural resources, and from state capture, makes Colombian society pay for not completing agrarian reform, not touching its privileges and not changing inequality. The situation of Colombians, primarily peasants, indigenous people and workers, is bleak. And it is getting worse with the spread of neo-liberalism and disregard of the agreement signed by the Duque government.

Informal work, precariousness, illness and accidents (there are around 1,800 accidents at work every day) and liberalisation – mainly in the form of outsourcing ("*tercerización*") – characterise the reality of work. Two-thirds of workers lack basic social protection, and the informal economy (nearly 56% of employment according to the World Bank) is first and foremost a desperate alternative so as not to fall into poverty.

Although anti-union violence has decreased somewhat, is it not also because the war has done its job and fear remains? But not to the point of paralysing all the social movements that continue to struggle for a just and dignified peace.

Through these two partner organisations, the Interdisciplinary Work Association (ATI) and the Popular Training Institute (IPC), Solsoc develops the mobilisation and action capacities of social movements to help build a new Colombian nation that respects human rights and international law. In collaboration with FOS, IFSI and FGTB Horval, Solsoc is also involved in strengthening three trades unions, Ustiam, Sintra 14 and Sinaltrainal, in order to create Decent Working and living conditions for workers in Colombia.

1 A mechanism for making work more flexible, whereby an employer transfers the drafting and signing of employment contracts to a third party, so that there is no direct link between the company and the workers.

TRADE UNIONISM IN COLOMBIA



4,6%

of Colombians are
trade union members



Between 01-01-2016 y el 31-12-2018

431

social leaders
were killed



TRADE UNIONISM IN AN AGE OF VIOLENCE

INTERVIEW WITH **CARLOS OLAYA**, HEAD OF RESEARCH AND TRAINING AT SINALTRAINAL
(NATIONAL UNION OF FOOD INDUSTRY WORKERS)

What is the general situation of workers in Colombia today?

Carlos Olaya: We are confronted with a diverse situation for workers. The vast majority of the new generation of workers no longer have access to collective bargaining and agreements, only have “rubbish contracts” and outsourced contracts (“*tercerización*”), with low wages (the minimum wage is around 250 euros). Instability, poverty and the suppression of rights – of association, bargaining, etc. – paint a very dark picture.

“Workers are in a one-against-two situation, facing an alliance of employers and the state”

You seem to suggest that there were more rights in the past?

There were more rights because the unions were stronger. Today, they are diminished and weakened insofar as they have not been able to capture this new generation of workers, or only partially and not very well. On top of this is trade union repression and the media campaign to denigrate trade unions. There has been a general deterioration of rights; not only does this affect workers in their workplaces, but also in their living environments and in their human rights.

What is the situation of women?

Discrimination is even stronger towards them. In general, like everywhere else in the world, Colombian women workers – many of whom are single mothers – receive lower wages than men, and are assigned to the most difficult, degrading and unskilled tasks. They also face harassment – psychological and sexual – from employers, but also, unfortunately, from male workers. In short, they are poorer, more exploited, and have less time and fewer rights. Their access to trade unions is therefore more difficult.

In Colombia, we are confronted with a double paradox: there are more than 5,000 trade unions, but they cover less than 5% of workers, while two-thirds of workers are in the informal economy...

That needs to be clarified. Of these 5,000 unions, only around half exist on paper. Then, over the past fifteen years, there has been an explosion in the number of unions. Just for the Coca-Cola company in Bogota, there are 17 unions.... with only 200 workers. This is called the “union merry-go-round”; they are only set up to protect themselves against dismissal. Finally, trade unions are part of a culture that dates back to the 19th century, which is one of caciquism – with the “perpetual” leader – and of interference by political forces, which seek to control social organisations. The general trend in trade unionism is towards fragmentation and “patronage”.

The situation of informal workers is difficult. They have an unskilled job, which is not even temporary, but occasional. They are often self-employed and earn much less than the minimum wage. They are obliged to go out on the street and do a bit of everything; everything they can do, everything they find to do. Given that they are highly dispersed, and do not have fixed working hours and locations, it is very difficult to organise them, but it remains a major challenge.

You mentioned trade union repression; in what way does that happen?

It is expressed in various ways. One of them is paramilitary and military repression, which aims to systematically eliminate trade union leaders. Especially in three areas: extractive industries (mining, oil, agribusiness, etc.), multinationals and the public sector (telecommunications, education, etc.).

The second most important manifestation of this repression has been intimidation and threats. Basically, it comes down to: “*Te mueres o arreglas*” [you die or you take care of things]. And taking care of things means that you go away – to another city or into exile, but you leave the company – or face the consequences.

This violence is not visible, but it is on a massive scale. It has dispersed organisations and neutered their resistance. This is also the reason why murders of trade unionists have declined in recent years. It reflects a balance of power, where bosses do not feel obliged either to resort to extreme violence or negotiate. Labour disputes are settled in the courts by management. Workers are in a one-against-two situation, facing an alliance of employers and the state.

Can you tell us a little bit about your struggle against Nestlé and Coca-Cola?

Violence and assassinations accompanied the paramilitary escalation, especially after 1995. Within Coca-Cola, the persecution was brutal: the idea was that it was possible to end the unions, to resolve labour disputes by force. There was also a legal part to this strategy, with the dismissal of around 15 trade union leaders within Nestlé, and accusations of terrorism against about a dozen others at Coca-Cola; they would be imprisoned for a year, before it could be proved that they were framed. But the damage was done.... Finally, there is a strategy of dividing the trade unions, collective redundancies (around 10,000 workers at Coca-Cola), outsourcing of work and turning companies into satellites, by setting up branches and subcontractors. In other words, a very, very bitter war.

We conducted a global campaign at the international level, which had huge repercussions. We succeeded in impugning Coca-Cola; not only over the problem of anti-union violence in Colombia, but also the issue of the company's in-house policy. Nestlé and Coca-Cola agreed to come to the negotiating table. But we did not reach a general agreement. This does not mean that there are no longer any conflicts. Under global pressure, the most radical forms of violence have been defused. However, they have not disappeared – nor has fear; they remain “on standby”.

What has changed with the Peace Agreements?

Everything carries on as before. We are faced with a very rapidly changing labour environment, under strong pressure, which is tantamount to harassment, and a series of government measures – tax, pension and labour reforms – that make workers even more vulnerable.

And in this situation, what is your strategy?

We are working to create what could be called a space for convergence. The idea is to build a strong inter-professional trade union, and an autonomous social bloc, which involves trade unions, but goes beyond that, and engages the population on issues that affect them beyond labour issues. But this requires time, and standing up to the violence and culture of caciquism [the traditional figure of the *cacique* refers to a notable person exercising de facto control over the political and social life of the population at the local level].



Sugarcane cutter and member of the Sintracatorce trade union, in Palmira in the Valle del Cauca.

TRADE UNIONISM UNDER THREAT

INTERVIEW WITH **EFREN CUELLAR**, TRADE UNIONIST FROM SINALTRAINAL

What was the reason you set up the union within La Colombina?

Efren Cuellar: The company withheld the part of wages which was due to workers for medical disabilities, while the number of sick people was growing. And the employers' union did not implement the mechanisms for accessing the health system, and organised the outsourcing of production processes. Worse still, it was stealing from the workers: it had set up a funeral fund for the workers, and was embezzling the funds. The sick workers then decided to organise themselves.

From the moment you set up the union, what happened?

The company punished us. Today, I am no longer allowed to work. I arrive at the company, my mobile phone is taken off me, and I have to stay alone, in an empty room, doing nothing all day long, with a camera fixed on me. If I get up and don't appear on the video for a while, a security guard comes to see what's going on. Every day, all day long. And I have been threatened. Four times. The first time, an anonymous letter was posted in my mailbox.

"Inside the factory, they threaten to fire you, and outside, they threaten to kill you"

What did that letter say?

Stop the union or you will die.

What about the other threats?

Another letter, accusations and intimidation on WhatsApp, and I was even approached in the street, twice. The last time was a month ago. Two men, on a motorcycle, stopped and told me I was going to die.

Did you report these incidents?

Yes, to the specialised department in the *Fiscalía* [Prosecutor's Office]; a department set up last year precisely because there was an increase in violence against social leaders. The first two complaints were filed away, even though the names of the people from the employers' union organisation involved had been given, and they were recognised. The other complaints were investigated. The *Fiscalía* requested that the police visit from time to time, once a week or once a month.

Apart from their presence, were the police any help?

They give technical advice on what you could call "self-preservation"; such as looking in the street before going out, changing your route regularly, not going out alone, etc.

Are you afraid?

Yes, of course....

How do you manage on a daily basis?

It's very difficult... All this has affected my health. I have anxiety problems, I had a breakdown...

Do you feel supported by your family, friends, union colleagues?

I live alone with my young children, so in that respect.... I have the support of fellow unionists, because everyone has been threatened. I went to see the occupational doctors, but they told me that my health problems had nothing to do with the threats. I went to see the company's management, and the response was: "No one asked you to be a trade unionist". It is not only threats; it is also harassment, intimidation, pressure. Inside the factory, they threaten to fire you, and outside, they threaten to kill you

1 Efren Cuellar has been working as a machine operator in the Valle del Cauca subsidiary of the food giant La Colombina since 1997. In April 2017, he was one of the founders of the Sinaltrainal union within the company.

REBUILDING PEACE AND DEMOCRACY IN THE TERRITORIES

INTERVIEW WITH **LUZ NELY OSORNO**, VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE POPULAR TRAINING INSTITUTE (IPC)



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IPC works in Medellín and Antioquia; what is so special about these regions?

Luz Nely Osorno: To understand Medellín, you need to extend the territorial context to the department of Antioquia, of which Medellín is the capital. Antioquia was one of the epicentres of the internal armed conflict in Colombia, which is reflected in the number of assassinations, large-scale forced displacements, land grabbing from peasants, etc. A whole range of abuses that make it one of the most unequal regions in the country.

Moreover, since the signing of the Peace Agreements, Cauca has been the department with the highest number of assassinations. The people reclaiming their lands and defending their territories, etc. are those most at risk.

Medellín is similar to Antioquia in terms of inequality and insecurity, which have long made it the most violent city in Colombia, even though it has been “sold” on the international scene as the most innovative city, thanks to its infrastructure.

What is the situation with the Peace Agreements today?

There have been various undertakings by the Santos government to ensure peace. A whole institutional structure (Special Jurisdiction for Peace, Truth Commission, Commission for the Search for Missing Persons, etc.) has been set up. However, the implementation of this policy shows the weaknesses of a State which has been co-opted by actors, both legal and illegal, who are opposed to the peace process.

Are we really in a post-conflict situation in Colombia?

No, and even though there is a debate on this subject in Colombia, we spoke out, along with other actors, as soon as the Peace Agreements were signed, to say that they did not necessarily mean we were entering a post-conflict chapter. What started was a post-Agreement scenario, because not everything that fuels the conflict in Colombia had been negotiated (the development model, the mining industry, etc.) and the Agreements had not been made with all the armed actors, including the ELN [National Liberation Army; the other historical guerrilla group].

“The SSE opens the possibility that the people returning to their lands can stay there, create living conditions for their families, and move forward in building territorial peace”

The point on the Integral Rural Reform in the Peace Agreements relates to the solidarity economy. What is the relationship between the solidarity economy and agrarian reform, and beyond that, with peace? And how does the IPC link them together in its work?

The impossibility of accessing land, whether due to dispossession or for other reasons, prevents alternative production experiments being completed on small and medium scales. The peace process opens up the possibility of transforming the rural environment and giving social and solidarity economy (SSE) initiatives potential.

The IPC has been developing its strategy for more than sixteen years with the disadvantaged urban population of certain districts of Medellín, which are blighted by conflict, and with landless peasants and victims of dispossession in the Uraba region. The SSE opens the possibility that the people returning to their lands can stay there, create living conditions for their families, and move forward in building territorial peace. That is our strategy: to help restore the rights of these people and generate sustainable conditions so that they can live and remain in their neighbourhoods or on their land.

A DIFFERENT ECONOMY FOR A DIFFERENT COLOMBIA

INTERVIEW WITH **JULIANA MILLÁN**, CO-DIRECTOR OF THE INTERDISCIPLINARY WORKING ASSOCIATION (ATI)



How and why did ATI come to incorporate the social and solidarity economy?

Juliana Millán: As an organisation, ATI discovered SSE structurally more than eight years ago, but intuitively long before that, through its work on food sovereignty and autonomy. We supported indigenous and peasant communities, who had succeeded in implementing autonomous forms of food production and distribution within their communities. But this autonomy was lost when they entered the market.

“To reinvent the SSE, not only from the grand academic theories, but also from the reflections and struggles of other peoples and communities”

We needed to learn and reflect on building a sustainable alternative system. This meant confronting the need for and challenges of transforming the rules and social fabric within which the economy functions. During this process, ATI discovered the theoretical and political reflection on the SSE in Latin America, as well as practical proposals for building these social fabrics. We realised we needed to reinvent the SSE, not only from the grand academic theories, but also from the reflections and struggles of other peoples and communities, and from what they were doing and proposing.

What is the current context, post-Peace Agreement?

The disagreements and inconsistencies of the new government regarding the implementation of the Peace Agreements are a step backwards in all respects. There is political chaos and issues such as territorial development, the replacement of illegal drug crops, land restitution or developing priority public policies for family, peasant and community agriculture have been frozen. And right now, the far-right party, the most powerful party in the government, is presenting a reform to Congress to give more power to the executive at the expense of popular and citizen initiatives.

The dismantling of the Agreements and their implementation means the return of fear as a means of exerting pressure, stymie the capacity of social organisations, allow an even greater concentration of power, and make it impossible to show that it is possible to build a different world.

The Colombian government did not vote in favour of the declaration of peasants' rights at the UN, even though Colombia is a traditionally rural country? How do you position yourself faced with this?

The elite that currently has the majority in government and parliament derives its power from land concentration. It is not surprising that this elite, with a very right-wing political tendency, is not interested in recognising rural existence as a social, ecological, economic, integrated and sustainable way of living.

Our task is not to lose what has been achieved in the past in building social processes, which not only illustrate possible alternative worlds, but make them a reality, through alternative forms of education, care, production, justice and, in general, living.

The country owes a debt to rural communities; part of this debt is that they ought to be recognised. This presupposes the implementation of a differentiated policy that guarantees not only a way of living, but also forms of social appropriation, construction and reproduction. Once this has been achieved, and in conjunction with indigenous communities and those descended from Africans, the challenge remains of ensuring that these policies are actually implemented through comprehensive rural reform, which clearly involves territorial reorganisation, allowing all sides to live in rural areas with dignity, without having to compete for land and control of the territory.

Morocco



A TWO-SPEED COUNTRY

As a stable country and popular tourist destination, which, unlike its neighbours, has been relatively spared from terrorism, Morocco enjoys a positive image. Poverty is declining, growth is on track and the free trade agreement with the European Union (EU) is supposed to bolster this virtuous circle. However, a closer look reveals a much more contrasted country. Informal employment dominates, inequalities persist, and democratisation is still not on the agenda.

The tree of macro-economic indicators hides a forest of social issues: access to water, electricity, public services, etc. The official figures only partially and partly reflect the daily life of most of the population. This is reflected in the gap between perceived poverty, especially in rural areas, which is increasing – one in two people consider themselves poor! – and its statistical decline.

Moreover, the latest report of the Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE in French) questioned the country's development model and the non-inclusive nature of the country's growth - in a language that is clearly cautious and self-censored, referring to various "*dysfunctions*" (alliance to the kingdom is a prerequisite). While nearly one in two Moroccans is under 25 years of age, the youth unemployment rate (26.5% in 2017) is almost three times higher than the national average, and is higher than 40% in urban areas.

The situation is even more problematic for women. The CESE report refers to '*the eviction of women*' from the labour market and, in general, emphasises '*the lack of an integrated public policy to reduce gender inequalities*'. The result is discrimination in access to housing, health, education (the illiteracy rate for women is almost twice as high as that for men), etc., and greater poverty.

Despite the increase in basic medical coverage (60% according to the Ministry of Health), the health system is two-speed and inequalities in access to care due to socio-economic factors actually increased between 2012 and 2015, according to the 2017 assessment of the Medical Assistance Scheme (RAMED in French). The small share of the public budget allocated to health (around 6%), territorial disparities and staff shortages in the government exacerbate rather than correct these inequalities.

We can obviously highlight the under-utilisation of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and its manipulation, in the service of a neo-liberal development strategy. The scattered public actions and institutions, as well as the lack of resources and credits, reflect and reinforce the lack of political will. The draft framework law for the SSE, which has been on the State's agenda for three years, is one of the most telling manifestations of this.

On the other side of the beneficial image that the regime is trying to sell, these shortcomings and inequalities are fuelling a *Ya Basta*, which surfaces sporadically. For example, Morocco has been shaken up in recent years by a multi-faceted social awakening, driven by major popular mobilisations, particularly in The Rif, which, beyond their differences, have similar demands for social justice and dignity.

Fifteen associations and twenty SSE initiatives from six popular districts of Greater Casablanca are supported by the joint programme of Solsoc and its three Moroccan partner organisations: the Women of the Neighbourhood Associations of Greater Casablanca Initiative (AFAQ), the Young people of the Neighbourhood Associations of Casablanca Initiative (AJR) and the Training and Support Institute for Local Associations (IFAAP). The projects implemented respond to the needs of people in these neighbourhoods, especially young people and women, and provide a basis for relaying their concerns to the public authorities.

OPENING UP THE ECONOMIC VISION

INTERVIEW WITH **ABDALLAH SOUHAIR**, PRESIDENT OF REMESS

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The Moroccan Social and Solidarity Economy Network (REMESS) has been operational since 2006. What is its background?

Abdallah Souhair: REMESS was set up by a group of cooperatives, associations and resource persons who, during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, in Brazil, saw examples of the social and solidarity economy (SSE) and had the idea of creating this network, with the support of the Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of the Social and Solidarity Economy (RIPESS). Like all civil society organisations, it has had its ups and downs over the past 13 years. I can divide this period into two stages; setting-up and construction, where REMESS worked at the national level, then at the international level, especially in Africa. During this stage, gaining a territorial foothold was somewhat neglected. A new team, of which I am a part, came from the regions in 2015 to try to work with a territorial vision and build bridges at the regional level in Morocco. This is the second stage. Twelve hubs, one for each region of the country, have been set up. This means that twelve regional REMESS entities have been created. We tried to incorporate the various components of the SSE in each case. However, we didn't overlook the international dimension, but we focused on the territorial aspect, trying to invest in this dynamic.

Has the institutional landscape of the SSE changed over the past 13 years?

There has been an appropriation and institutionalisation of the SSE since the early 2000s, with laws passed, institutions created, including the creation of a social economy secretariat in 2011, the organisation of the Congress in 2015, etc. These are elements that demonstrate the link between the State and civil society actors. But civil society is much more advanced than the institutions, if we make a comparison in terms of dynamism, approach, products, etc. The institutions are still catching up.

What is the reason for this lag?

It is the appropriation and concept itself, the basis on which SSE is envisaged. It is a tool to remedy and correct social divisions, a tool to fight poverty, social exclusion and all divisions; divisions caused by these same State policies. It's a sticking plaster. From our side, the SSE is a sector that can create wealth, that can create employment; it is not a spare wheel! But for the State, it is a tool for quick fixes and sticking plaster solutions. And the results reflect this notion. What makes the SSE so unfortunate is this political vision. And even if it differs from one government to another, there is no political will to promote this sector.

"The SSE is a sector that can create wealth, that can create employment; it is not a spare wheel!"

Is lobbying to promote this sector one of REMESS' main challenges?

Yes, it is a major focus. It is a question of getting laws enacted, but also of ensuring that they actually reflect the values and principles we embody. For example, the framework law on the social economy. A draft law was already produced in 2016, with the support of the FAO (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations). But it is held up in Morocco's legislative bodies. Our mission is to advocate for this legislation to be enacted.

We also advocate for the fair trade law, especially now that, with the social and economic crisis, social movements are developing in The Rif, in Zagora, elsewhere, or with the small grocers strike because of the 2019 financial law (it introduces the obligation to keep electronic accounting and invoicing, reviews the turnover ceiling to benefit from advantages, etc.). Our mission is to be at the same level as the social movements that challenge us, because SSE can be one of the solutions of these actors, among others.

WOMEN AT THE HEART OF THE STRUGGLE FOR DIGNITY

INTERVIEW WITH **KENZA CHAAIBY**, COORDINATOR OF THE WOMEN OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATIONS OF GREATER CASABLANCA INITIATIVE (AFAQ)

You work with women in the working class neighbourhoods of Casablanca.

What is their situation?

What are their main expectations and demands?

Kenza Chaaiby: These women live in a situation of poverty, marginalisation, exclusion and violence. In these neighbourhoods and slums, the patriarchal mentality is still dominant. And women in Casablanca's industrial districts are exploited as cheap workers, without rights or social protection.

All these women demand equality, freedom, a dignified life, Decent Work and income that guarantees them dignity, as well as the right to participate in public life and to make decisions regarding public policies.

"An alternative economy that must play a role in ensuring social justice"

You have set up a collective and participatory monitoring mechanism regarding discrimination against women. What is it about?

AFAQ has set up ten labour branches in the local districts. They were set up by representatives of neighbourhood associations, social and solidarity economy (SSE) initiatives, local trade union sections and development and human rights associations. Their role is to monitor and evaluate public policies, local development projects and municipal development plans, ensuring that the principle of fairness and equal opportunities and the gender approach are respected. And to speak out against the various forms of discrimination against women, by questioning political party leaders, elected officials and public authorities about such phenomena.

There are laws on the social and solidarity economy in Morocco. Do they meet your expectations? If not, how do you position yourself in relation to them?

We should acknowledge that Morocco is making progress in promulgating strategies related to this issue. Examples include the law on cooperatives and the draft law on the social and solidarity economy (SSE). These are ambitious laws, which aim to develop a framework and define its scope. There is also the national strategy 2018-2028, which is designed to increase the contribution of the SSE to the creation of wealth and jobs.

Our strategy is to pressure the government to treat the SSE not only as a sector that compensates for the role of the state in job creation and generating wealth, but also as an alternative; an alternative economy that needs to play a role that guarantees social justice, a fair distribution of wealth, and contributes to the democratisation of the state and society.

Morocco has signed a free trade agreement with the European Union; does this benefit or disadvantage the SSE?

The signing of this agreement in 2000 was designed to attract investment, create jobs and improve the competitiveness of the local economic fabric. But unequal exchanges with the European Union do not benefit the SSE. And they cannot do so given the lack of protection of the local market against the dumping of competitive and cheap European products, the absence of any strategy to improve the access of cooperative products and Moroccan SSE initiatives to the European market, and finally, given the very fragility of SSE institutions and actors.

BREAD, WOMEN AND DIGNITY

INTERVIEW WITH **MOUNIA LAMRANI**, MANAGER
OF THE CHHIWATE BLADI COOPERATIVE



48 Can you give us an overview of your cooperative and its members?

Mounia Lamrani: There are ten of us – a group of women, with three men – working in this pastry, bakery and catering cooperative, but we used to work as an association. It has been a year since we formed the cooperative. The women here are often in difficult situations; widows, divorcees, or neither married nor divorced... For women who live alone, the situation is more difficult: rents are too expensive, children have to go to school, transport is difficult, etc.

There are also two women from Guinea. We have an agreement with an association that works with migrants; we supply them with a catering service. They asked us why not give training to some of these young migrants, why not teach them what you do?

How did these women find out about the cooperative?

It's word of mouth in the neighbourhood; we're known in the area. I counted that there have already been four generations of women in difficult situations – widows, divorcees – in the association.

Isn't it difficult for people in difficult situations to come here to work?

No. They learn cooking, catering, and at the same time, they work. And a crèche is organised to look after their children. And we organise meetings; we invite psychologists and doctors, who follow up these women. We have an agreement with a specialised association, which works with women in difficult situations and has lawyers. We try to work on the social skills of these women, and show them how to say "yes" and "no". Before, they didn't know how. We organise lobbying, and with the help of the psychologists and lawyers, we manage to find solutions.

There are two Guineans and one Berber, women in difficult situations... isn't there any tension?

No, there is no tension at all. For example, the Berber lady did not speak Arabic when she came, but with the Guineans, they understand each other very well; they speak with their hands! We have just drawn up an agreement with an association that works with disabled people; three of them, in their second year of hotel management, will come here to do an internship, learn about group work and the steps to be taken to set up a cooperative.

What is the salary?

The salary is almost the same for everyone, because they work more or less the same number of hours, from 8am to 4pm-4.30pm; 2500 dirham per month [230 euros]. We hope it will be raised to 3,000 dirham soon - *Inch'Allah*. And this year, for the first time, we were able to pay insurance [sickness, accident, etc.] for all workers!

How do the inhabitants of the neighbourhood view you?

Very positively. The neighbourhood is well aware that we have a very good product, very good hygiene and very good service. We have changed their view of Guineans, of Africans... Sometimes people come to buy bread, see that there are Guineans, and ask questions. We bring them into the workshop. They see how these women and young people work, and say "well done"! We had a surprise visit from the hygiene department of the prefecture, which was visiting all the establishments in the neighbourhood. It was the first time for us. And do you know what they told us? That we were the best, and they gave us ten out of ten! Everything is clean. Everyone here in the neighbourhood knows about this aspect. And word-of-mouth brings other customers from further afield. We don't only work to sell things, it's about our health, and our neighbourhood, our family, our children and our friends who eat. And we eat too! You won't find any cockroaches or mice here; it's like home.

"We don't only work to sell things, it's our health, and it's our neighbourhood, our family, our children and our friends who eat"

DEMONSTRATION THROUGH SOLIDARITY

INTERVIEW WITH **HASSAN DAFIR**, COORDINATOR OF THE TRAINING AND SUPPORT INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS (IFAAP)



Most employment in Morocco is informal. Is the social and solidarity economy (SSE) a response to this situation, a bridge towards formalisation?

Hassan Dafir: In the working class neighbourhoods, there is a lack of formal jobs and there are problems. There is a lot of unemployment. We are working on vocational training and setting up companies that are economically viable and that respect principles. We show that there is actually the possibility of incorporating the association-based dynamic, solving specific problems, such as employment, social protection, and responding to people's interest. However, getting people interested is very important, because it is the gateway to mobilisation.

It is a framework of specific proposals, from which we advocate, to convince the State that this dimension needs to be integrated as another way of solving the employment problem, and not get stuck in the "employer" rationale, in the entrepreneurial spirit, where the only possibility is to formalise the informal.

Are these demonstration efforts towards the State bearing fruit? Is it more receptive?

There is a willingness to strengthen the SSE to address employment within vulnerable groups, and there are goals: increase the contribution of the SSE to GDP, expand the number of actors, etc. That's the intention, but the reality is rather different. The Secretary of State for the SSE is linked to the Ministry of Tourism, Air Transport and Handicrafts. In practice, the field of action of the SSE is focused on the tourism sector; promoting handicrafts, presenting local products, etc. This equates to reducing the SSE to organising certain complementary tasks of large companies.

For example, the State has granted the status of 'auto-entrepreneur' to itinerant traders, organised into associations set up by the prefecture, by putting them in a market, in a more confined sales space. Their activity is complementary to that of the leading families, who control the market, who own the *Marjane* stores, the supermarkets, and where people do most of their shopping; they remain locked in a situation of complementarity. We have not transformed the market, we have not helped them organise themselves and turn themselves into a cooperative, to allow them to go further than having a little money on a day-to-day basis.

How then can the SSE be developed so that it can be institutionalised without being manipulated?

We are lobbying to ensure that the framework law for the SSE is adopted, and that the SSE becomes national policy. It is the State's responsibility to create jobs. Our role is to work in proximity on social and solidarity links, meet certain needs in neighbourhoods, and therefore diversify the ways in which public policies solve problems, including that of employment.

The official figures and pronouncements give a very positive image of Morocco. Has the country changed for the better?

Yes, it has definitely changed. In terms of infrastructure, there is a clear improvement. But who does this improvement serve? For example, there is a major project to transform Casablanca into a services and business city. Who made this decision? Neither the elected officials nor the public. And with which funds? Above all, who will be the beneficiaries?

Slum dwellers are pushed out to the outskirts, workers leave to get closer to the factories, pushed further away. And in the city, industries are being replaced by service activities, which do not offer as many or the same type of jobs. This automatically changes the sociology of the population. Who is moving to Casablanca? The people who have the qualifications for these jobs and the means to pay higher rents. It is a two-speed Morocco.

"This equates to reducing the SSE to organising certain complementary tasks of large companies"

ANOTHER WAY TO DEMONSTRATE

INTERVIEW WITH **AMINA ZAIR**, PRESIDENT OF THE WOMEN OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATIONS OF GREATER CASABLANCA INITIATIVE (AFAQ)

50 What is everyday life like for women in the working class neighbourhoods of Casablanca?

Amina Zair: Firstly, looking at the whole picture, we can see the complete inequality in geographic terms, in the distribution of wealth, and in the implementation of public policies. If you focus on the working class neighbourhoods, you see poverty, marginality, illiteracy. There are no gardens, no public spaces for women and children, no transport, no sports clubs, waste collection is patchy, etc.

And if you zoom in even more, you see that there are several categories of women; the housewife who thinks she knows nothing and is worth nothing; the woman who works in industry; the woman who works in an economic initiative... But for all these women, there are no good working conditions or respect for their fundamental rights. And all are victims of harassment and violence, whether verbal or physical.

“And all are victims of harassment and violence, whether verbal or physical”

Does the social and solidarity economy (SSE) meet the needs of these women more specifically?

Yes, the priority need of these women is to have a stable income. That is why AFAQ supports them, to provide training, bring them together in an economic initiative, strengthen their management capacities, and find solidarity means and tools, to meet their needs.

There has been an evolution. The women with whom AFAQ works now have a stable income, a life which, in inverted commas, is more favourable. There has been a change in behaviour, and they have managed to integrate other women. This is because we are not only aiming for an economic return, but also the general interest, in order to have an influence in neighbourhoods.

Aren't these women facing resistance from families, from men?

At first, there was strong resistance from fathers, husbands and even brothers. But we work in parallel with the men, to integrate them, and explain that our initiative will not affect their positions as men, so that they accept and respect the fact that women go out, work and have their own income. On the contrary, it will help to improve the family situation, to give the family stability, at least economic stability. And the women change, through training, their way of discussing things, managing conflicts, and looking after the children. All this is reflected in life in society.

What about state policy in the area of the SSE?

The State has developed various policies, invested a lot of money, invited international specialists to major events, etc., but without a strategy, without a clear vision, without taking into account the Moroccan context... and it has therefore been ineffective! It makes grand announcements, such as the creation of 500,000 jobs in the social economy. But is the State preoccupied with just absorbing the unemployed or creating decent jobs with good working conditions?

In recent years, Morocco has been shaken by various social movements. Is the SSE linked to them, or unrelated?

They were not isolated movements, because the SSE is part of the social landscape. The decisions taken by the government are a step backwards in relation to what has been achieved. They are decisions against the public, which threaten the lives of the poor. The most recent example is the finance law, which affects cooperatives.

It can be said that with the SSE, women demonstrate in their own way. It is a way of telling politicians that we have managed to improve things, when they have not even been able to give us any hope. A way of saying: *“we are here, we are living and we have developed something that brings us together and is in our image, and that meets our actual needs”!*



PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES



YOUNG PEOPLE IN SEARCH OF A FUTURE

War (low and high intensity) and colonisation; this is the daily reality faced by Palestinians for the past 50 years. The territory and the political field are divided, the economy has been throttled and is dependent, the social and environmental situation has atrophied. The Israeli blockade, control and military incursions undermine any prospect of development, including agricultural development.

The situation is particularly problematic in Gaza, the 42-km-long coastal strip, which, according to the UN, has the highest unemployment rate in the world (54%) and where more than two-thirds of Palestinians suffer from food insecurity. And socio-economic indicators continue to plummet, to the extent that the UN warned in 2017 that Gaza will become “uninhabitable” by 2020.¹ In general, young people, the majority – two-thirds of the population are younger than 29 – are the primary victims. But they are the main hope for change.

Following the Oslo Accords, the establishment of a Palestinian Authority in 1994 rapidly collided with authoritarianism and cronyism, the split between Hamas and Fatah, and, above all, the continuation of Israeli settlement activity. The armed Intifada, the large-scale peaceful marches of the *Movement of 15 March* [2011], which was designed to blow the wind of the Arab spring into Palestinian society, the war waged by Israel against the Gaza Strip in 2014, and the *Great Marches of Return* in 2018 are the main stages of the cycle of violence and protest in recent years.

In an international context of the increasing power of right-wing governments, primarily in Israel and the United States, the Palestinian Authority's economic and political dependence continues to grow, and turn against the population. On top of this are unemployment (around 30%; twice as high as in Israel), regular violations of rights and political deadlock, which would appear to jeopardise any prospects for the future...

Faced with internal divisions (geographical, political, cultural), violations of freedom of movement, expression and association, and the dual challenges of Israeli repression and political confiscation by Fatah and Hamas, the hope of Palestinian youth lies above all in their own capacities for mobilisation; mobilisation from which they can assert their autonomy, develop shared values, defend their rights and, ultimately, generate political, social and economic change.

In this sense, the *Great Marches of Return*, despite the mass repression – between 30 March and 31 July 2018, 164 Palestinians were killed and 17,000 wounded by Israeli forces (at the same time, one Israeli soldier was killed and nine others wounded) – mark, at the same time as a rejection of “ghettoisation”, a renewal of the terms of the struggle, as well as an affirmation of the autonomy and initiative of the social actors outside the parties.

Through its support for three partner organisations, MA'AN Development Centre, Popular Art Centre (PAC) and the main Palestinian trade union, the PGFTU, Solsoc aims to strengthen the capacities of young people and women as a priority. In collaboration with the General Federation of Belgian Labour (FGTB), Solsoc supports workers in the quarries and stone industries so that, with a view to Decent Work, they can obtain better working conditions. In general, the Solsoc programme aims to ensure that Palestinians in general, and young people and women in particular, have better access to their social, political, economic and cultural rights, including through training, awareness-raising, networking, alliance and advocacy work.

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, the data are from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT IN PALESTINE



Israel

14,9%

of young people are unemployed



14%
Of
men



15,8%
Of
women



Palestina

33,2%

of young people are unemployed



27,7%
of
men



39%
of
women



OVERWORKED YOUNG PEOPLE

INTERVIEW WITH **GHADIR ZAINEH** (MA'AN DEVELOPMENT CENTRE),
RAMI MASSAD (PAC) AND **GHADA HASAN ALI ABU GHALYOUN** (PGFTU).



Nearly one in two young Palestinians is unemployed. What is the reality of unemployment in the country?

Ghadir Zaineh: First, if we talk about unemployment in general, the rate is 30% [44% in Gaza]. But if we talk about young people with higher education, this rate rises to 45%. And the situation is even worse for women: only 7% of women who leave university work. There are also cultural reasons for this; sometimes, as women, they do not have the opportunity to work in a specific field. But, in any case, there are not many jobs and the labour market is saturated.

Do many young people study? What is the situation of the education system?

Ghadir Zaineh: We have the highest level of education in the Arab countries. Most young people go to university. That can sometimes create problems or a mismatch: many people follow the same routes. Every year, we have a large number of young people leaving universities as engineers, economists, doctors, etc. The labour market is saturated with these professions, and these young people cannot find employment; all the more so as Palestine is a small labour market.

That is why we need to focus on vocational and technical training, but also on agricultural work, to encourage young people to follow these courses rather than always the same study routes. It may also be that people sometimes have a narrow outlook; they want to be bosses or civil servants or work in a large company, and they lose interest, ignore or underestimate the importance of agriculture, vocational and technical jobs.

So where do they work?

Rami Massad: It is the public sector that offers the most jobs. And besides, people prefer to work in the public sector. The hours and working conditions are better, and you have more advantages.

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: Otherwise, people look for small jobs or just something to do. Or, given the economic difficulties and problems, they go to work in Israel and in the settlements. But even those who work there do so under very difficult conditions, without protection, without rights...

Ghadir Zaineh: They work long hours for low wages, in very harsh conditions, without insurance if they get sick or injured...

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: They should be protected by Israeli labour rights and trade unions, but they do not enjoy this protection. And if they get injured, they rush to the nearest checkpoint to cross the border again...

Why do so many Palestinians have to work in Israel and in the settlements?

Ghadir Zaineh: The reason why so many people go to work in the settlements is the high unemployment rate, the lack of opportunities in the labour market, and low wages that do not match the high cost of living in Palestine. So they go to work in the colonies. And even if there are risks, if they do not have social protection, no rights, at least they have a higher salary that allows them to live better.

This is one of the problems: in Palestine, we have difficulty finding workers in certain sectors because most of them work in the settlements. There, all unskilled positions are taken by Palestinians.

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: Either they work in Palestine, in a difficult situation, with low wages, or they work in Israel, attracted by higher wages, but without any guarantee, without knowing what can happen from one day to the next, or they leave. Especially young people; they emigrate, they go to look for the job they can't find here.

Is there a minimum wage in Palestine?

Rami Massad: Yes. It is 1,450 shekels [just under 350 euros]. This is almost three times less than in Israel, whereas the cost of living is similar! The problem is that our economy is connected to the Israeli economy. So we have low salaries with a high cost of living.

Between 40,000 and 60,000 Palestinians work in Israeli settlements. Compared to Israeli workers, they are discriminated against in terms of wages, social security and working conditions.

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: Often, remuneration is lower than expected, lower than what was indicated on paper or what they were told. And they are often day workers. Palestinian trade unions cannot defend them because they are subject to Israeli law.

“Don’t blame the workers!”

How is the Palestinian Authority reacting to this situation?

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: It is opposed to Palestinians working in the settlements. But they don’t offer any alternatives, and Palestinians aren’t overjoyed to have to go there. Don’t blame the workers!

The Palestinian Authority says it does not agree that Palestinians should work in the settlements, that they become workers for the Israelis, and even participate in the construction of the settlements. But at the same time, when Palestinians turn to their government, what do they see? There is no investment in projects to support jobs, young people and the agricultural sector. There is no environment conducive to employment, to small-scale entrepreneurs; nothing that encourages people to stay....

Rami Massad: The Palestinian government depends on international support, and 60% of its budget depends on taxes. That’s why prices are high, everything is expensive. And we have a liberal economic policy and a free market; not a productive economy. In the government budget, only 2% is set aside for agriculture, while Palestine is an agricultural land! Health, education, etc., each account for less than 6% of the budget. That is the problem: there is no social policy, no social economy policy.

More than half of the budget is devoted to security. Following the Peace Accords, our government has been reduced to playing a security role - securing the territory and preventing terrorism – and a functional role – providing services (educational and other).

What about social organisations?

Rami Massad: The situation is not easy, but there are social mobilisations. In particular to increase the minimum wage to 2,450 shekels [around 580 euros]. Another campaign of the trade unions, social organisations, etc., is related to the social security law. It’s new in Palestine...

Ghadir Zaineh: The government wants to take inspiration from what is happening in Jordan. But it is a challenge; there is a lack of studies to see if it is suitable for Palestinian workers.



Rami Massad: There is also an implementation issue. For example, the minimum wage, adopted in 2011, was not applied until 2015. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour to organise implementation. But the problem is that in this ministry, there are only 80 people in charge of inspections. This is not enough to visit every company and, in any case, they have no authority over them. In addition, workers are afraid of losing their jobs.

For you, what would be an alternative economic policy?

Ghadi Zineh: It is up to the government to create jobs, by investing in communities and increasing the budget for agriculture, social protection, supporting projects and encouraging people to follow vocational training, go to the land and work in agriculture. Most of our products are imported and we have no exports. We import most of our food, which costs us a lot of money.

The government needs to invest in communities and create an enabling environment for initiatives that interest young people, such as agricultural cooperatives, women's cooperatives, etc.

Rami Massad: It is a fact that we are in an economic crisis. The main challenge is to change the allocation of the government budget, and to strengthen economic and social policies. It is a strategic issue. But we need to face the situation. It has been four years since the government stopped hiring new employees in the public sector. On the other hand, 40,000 to 45,000 people work in NGOs. But they depend on international aid. And aid financing is falling or drying up. We have 18,000 students graduating from university every year. There are no jobs for them in the public sector, NGOs have started to cut back on staff, and the private sector cannot absorb them. That's why we talked about vocational training and the social economy; it could be the solution, to create jobs, etc.

In the current situation, is the government reorienting towards the social economy?

Ghadi Zineh: No, not yet. On the contrary, in fact. A new law for cooperatives is being drafted, because the old one is more than fifty years old. The government does not encourage people to work in cooperatives and the social economy; it makes things more complicated, more difficult, with more charges and taxes.

Rami Massad: It's a financial issue: the government needs money, more money, so more taxes, to cover the loss of international aid. They want a higher tax rate on profits; this would destroy the process rather than reorient it.

Could elections be an opportunity for a policy change?

Rami Massad: It has been more than ten years since the last elections. And because of the Palestinian division in Gaza, Fatah and Hamas have stopped working together. All laws are now signed by the President, and he has signed more than 130 over the past three years.

The division between Fatah and Hamas concerns the occupation: not the social economy. The social economy is not part of their programme. They are right-wing, liberal parties. And the left-wing parties are so weak... in reality, the civil society organisations are stronger than these political parties.

"The government needs to invest in communities and create an enabling environment for initiatives that interest young people, such as agricultural cooperatives, women's cooperatives, etc"

But in this context, does international aid really help?

Ghada Hasan Ali Abu Ghalyoun: All of the donors are a great help to us. But not for very long.

Ghadi Zineh: International aid has created dependency. The Palestinian government is dependent on this international aid. That is what we are seeing today. When there are cuts in funding, there is a crisis. And we have no alternatives, we have no plan B and no money that comes from Palestine.

Rami Massad: Some of these donors send aid or food, but these are not investments. This is the main approach of international cooperation. Palestine is made to be a humanitarian and not a political topic; not a struggle for freedom, a struggle for land.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Artisanal miner in the Kasulo district in Kolwezi, a former residential district where residents used to dig on their land and in their homes before it was declared an artisanal mining zone.

THE HOPE OF A REAL CHANGEOVER?

The recent presidential and legislative elections, held under chaotic conditions and two years late, gave rise to an unexpected scenario. The declared winner, Felix Tshisekedi, known as “Fatshi”, is not the candidate of the outgoing government, even though it appeared to have blocked everything. But nor is he the candidate who, in all likelihood, won the most votes in the polls.

What is most surprising is that, with the exception of the defrauded candidate, all parties – political actors, civil society, the international community – turned a blind eye to the electoral process and were satisfied that the representative of the oldest opposition party was proclaimed president, relieved that a changeover took place without violence. It was a question of keeping up appearances. And the worst was avoided. Even the young people of *Lucha*, one of the most active and radical opposition movements, are playing the game by launching “*fatshimétrie*”, a strategy of citizen vigilance that involves evaluating the new president’s observance of his commitments.

It is no exaggeration to say that the challenges are huge. Building democracy and the rule of law determines the social and economic issues. The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is the second largest country on the continent and the third largest in terms of population (84 million inhabitants). The richness of the soil (80 million hectares of arable land) and the Congolese subsoil (1.100 minerals and precious metals) are well known. But as is often the case, the geological blessing is actually a curse.

Mining activity is predatory on the environment and social rights, including those of the more than 2 million miners. Corruption and mismanagement, the pillage of resources and illegal exports keep the mining sector’s contribution to the state budget below what it should generate. As for the agricultural potential, it attracts the greed of agribusinesses that monopolise peasant lands. 50 million hectares of tropical rainforest are controlled by commercial companies, including for the planting of oil palm trees.

Despite this wealth, public spending remains structurally low. It was never higher than 16% of GDP in the period 2011-2015, due to insufficient revenues. This makes it difficult to fund the expenditure necessary to provide public services, and even for the functioning of the administration. As a result, households, more than 75% of whose income comes from the informal economy, continue to support a large part of social spending, and have extremely precarious living conditions.

More than half of the population lives below the poverty line, and the DRC is ranked 176th out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI). Women are the most affected by poverty (the gender inequality index is among the highest) and are also the primary victims of the conflicts that have plagued the country since the 1990s..

Improving working conditions and fighting for better social protection, especially for young people and women, are the objectives of the four partner organisations of the programme: the National centre for development support and public participation (CENADEP), the Committee for the Resurgence and Support of Rural Workers at the Equator (CRAFOP), the Diobass Platform in Kivu, and the Network for the Promotion of Democracy and Economic and Social Rights (PRODDDES). Supported by Solsoc, they strengthen the organisational, mobilisation and lobbying capacities of mutual health health mutuals, farmers’ and youth movements and market committees to pave the way for the SSE and allow them to monitor and influence public policies.

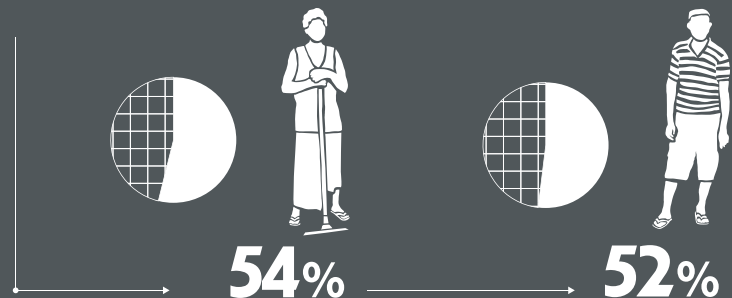
EMPLOYMENT IN DR CONGO



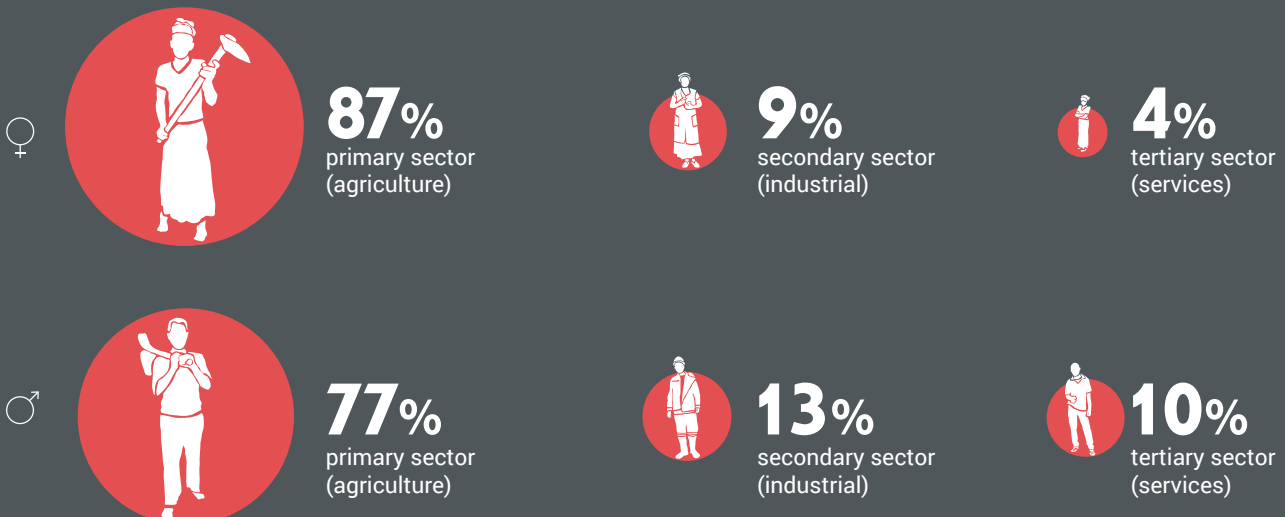
Jobs considered as
"vulnerable" represent

53,4%

of total employment



Job distribution



"THE IMPORTANT THING IS NOT HAVING RIGHTS, BUT HAVING THEM APPLIED"

INTERVIEW WITH **JEAN-PIERRE KIMBUYA**, GENERAL SECRETARY
OF THE TRADE UNION COUNCIL OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SERVICES (COSSEP)

What are the main issues regarding the working conditions of Congolese workers?

Jean-Pierre Kimbuya: There is a long list of workers' rights that are not respected. I will focus on two main issues: wages and social protection. The precariousness of salaries in the public administration means that most civil servants cannot make ends meet. Many public companies (the SCPT [Congolese Post and Telecommunications Company], SONAS [National insurance company], Gécamines [General Quarrying and Mining Company]...) are several months in arrears in their wage payments. Postal and telecoms employees had to strike again at the start of this year to demand payment of more than four months' wages! In the private sector, but also in some public companies, the minimum wage is not applied.

"This is the major challenge: obtaining the measures to implement the texts on social security and family allowances"

The majority of workers do not enjoy social protection, except for teachers in Kinshasa, Lubumbashi and Mbandaka who have a mutual health mutual scheme (MESP) and compulsory health insurance. Some officials in Kinshasa can access the *Lisungi* health mutual scheme and voluntarily contribute to a health mutual scheme that is difficult to resist. Apart from that, despite the creation of the National social security fund for civil servants (CNSSAP), public officials do not yet have access to social protection, health coverage or the right to a pension.

This is the major challenge: obtaining the measures to implement the texts on social security and family allowances. And the situation is even more difficult in the informal economy, where low and irregular incomes are the rule and no social insurance exists.

What role could the social and solidarity economy (SSE) sector play? Can it contribute to Decent Work?

The SSE plays a role in Congolese society insofar as it allows citizens to access certain services which are not offered by the formal economy, in particular through the creation of cooperatives bringing together certain categories of professions. It can only contribute to Decent Work if the workers in the informal sector organise and link up with trade unions or other representative organisations interested in their cause. That way, they can participate and strengthen collective action and bargaining.

How do workers organise themselves to defend their rights?

In the formal sector, they are organised into trade unions or professional corporations. Workers in the informal sector sporadically organise into associations, as is the case, for example, with the Drivers Association of Congo (ACCO). The main demands revolve around the minimum wage and social security for public and private companies governed by the Labour Code and, as regards public administrations, around the pay scales negotiated in the joint committees.

How is consultation with the government and employers organised?

For the private sector and all workers governed by the Labour Code, this takes place at the level of the National Labour Council (CNT), a tripartite body bringing together employers, workers' representative organisations and the government (Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Security). In the public service, it is through joint government-trade union committees.

"AN ECONOMY OF RESISTANCE AGAINST UNFAIR POLICIES AND LAWS"

INTERVIEW WITH **MASUDI WAKILONGO KISALE**, PERMANENT SECRETARY
OF THE NETWORK FOR THE PROMOTION OF DEMOCRACY AND ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS (PRODDDES)

62 What types of economic initiatives can be described as social and solidarity in the DRC?

Masudi Wakilongo Kisale: Congolese society has many solidarity traditions in the social and economic field: for happy or unfortunate events, for births, wedding celebrations, in the event of illness or death, and country work. Most local societies have their practices of collective work and mutual assistance among peasants or to help people in situations of fragility (*esale* in Bembe, *burhabale* in Mashi in South Kivu), based on the culture of *Ujamaa* [Swahili term put forward by former Tanzanian president Julius Nyerere, to designate an African path to socialism, based on the links between the individual and society and the community].

Shortly after independence, other initiatives emerged, including *moziki* and *likelemba* in Kinshasa. The *Moziki* often bring together women who are involved in the same trade, who meet and contribute in such a way that, if one of them faces an unexpected cost, she can come and borrow from the common fund. The *likelemba* operate on the same principle, except that the amount raised at each meeting is allocated to the members in turn.

These tontine practices proliferated in the 1990s, contributing to discussions on regulating micro-finance institutions (IMF). In South Kivu, the 2000s saw the development of mutual solidarity companies (MUSO) and village savings and credit associations (AVEC). It is in this context that the social and solidarity economy (SSE) in Congo is embedded. All these dynamics, which came about from popular resistance initiatives in the informal sector, without any legal or legal basis, are its breeding ground.

After these came all kinds of other popular economic activities: agricultural cooperatives – market gardening, livestock and service cooperatives –, artisanal mining cooperatives, the fishmongers' synergy, the *quados* (roadside tyre repairs), cutting and sewing workshops, beauty, hairdressing and beauty salons, brick making companies, mutual health health mutuals, *techno-malewa*, i.e. makeshift restaurants, neighbourhood or village-based mutual insurance schemes, hotel workers' unions, urban market committees, etc.

Isn't there a risk of confusing the informal economy with the SSE? What makes them different?

Solidarity is people coming together to solve a common problem or carry out a collective project. They all have the same rights and duties, and benefit equally from the activity. That is the difference. For our part, at PRODDDES, with the organisations we support, we have drawn up a charter setting out the principles of the SSE: fair sharing of income, democratic and transparent functioning, solidarity, autonomy and integration into the rationale of a social movement.

Now, the challenge is formalisation. There is no legal framework for the SSE. To strengthen themselves, to move towards the principles of the SSE, organisations need to formalise themselves, integrate these principles, pay a minimum wage to their workers, provide minimum conditions such as an employment contract, job security and a basis for social protection. This also requires registration in the register for businesses and property loans. But ideally, we need to obtain an appropriate legal framework.

"All these dynamics, which came about from popular resistance initiatives in the informal sector, without any legal or legal basis, are its breeding ground"

Are you not afraid that formalisation will ultimately stifle SSE initiatives, through excessive standards, bureaucracy, tax payments or "hassle"?

It is a serious problem. When there is formalisation, you are assigned a tax number, you are immediately obliged to pay the tax. A second problem is the plethora of tax regimes: the register for businesses, SME patent, all that that represents in terms of daily, monthly taxes that entrepreneurs need to pay to the town hall, the municipality, the province, the state. Entrepreneurs often prefer to remain in the informal sector or just pay the patent rather than formalise and find themselves with the tax number that exposes them to a lot of hassle [requests for money from public and private agents to "facilitate" activities].

What should they do then?

This is what all the lobbying we do with town halls, municipalities or provincial assemblies is about, to obtain facilities or incentives for SSE initiatives, so that they are not treated as profit-making enterprises. We explain that these are people who have come together on low incomes to solve their life problems. Some authorities are receptive when we have lobbied together with other civil society organisations, finding appropriate channels to reach those responsible and get the right decision from them.

For example, in Bukavu, police officers sealed the depots of the Urban Market Committees (CMU) on the grounds that they did not pay certain taxes. The CMUs took steps and managed to include their demand in the specifications of civil society. They were received by the mayor. They managed to obtain a decision asking the Ministry for the Economy to respect the rules and not to “invent” taxes, and told the police to no longer seal the depots. Since then, they have not had any more police harassment.

More broadly, it is a question of political vision. We do not have many politicians with a social and solidarity ideology. The change of presidency gives us hope in that respect, that the SSE will be part of government policy. The new president and his party have progressive tendencies, this is an opportunity that we need to seize.

Is the SSE a valid alternative to the informal economy?

A significant proportion of business and money transactions circulate in the informal economy, which involves nearly three-quarters of the population. If it were well-structured, this sector could be a source of hope. The SSE is a preferred way to do this. Unfortunately, most of these transactions do not benefit from a legal framework that favours and promotes, through incentives (a national support fund, technical assistance, etc.), tax facilities (an appropriate nomenclature, exemptions from dumping and unfair competition from multinationals), so as to encourage entrepreneurs in this sector to formalise themselves, in accordance with ILO Recommendation 204 on the transition from the informal to the formal sector. The SSE provides a framework for this formalisation, provided that it has the appropriate legal instruments to do so.



How does the SSE contribute to dignified/Decent Work?

Masudi Wakilongo Kisale: The SSE is undoubtedly a lever for social, economic and financial inclusion. Many women entrepreneurs in the SSE testify that their activities have enabled them to acquire social status (consideration), to benefit from assistance during a happy or unfortunate family event, to buy land, to cultivate their fields or to pay their monthly rent... All things that are not guaranteed by work in the formal economy, which is traditionally capitalist, with little attention paid to workers, their working and living conditions. For working class households, the SSE is an economy of resistance against unfair and unrealistic policies and laws.

64 In the SSE companies which we support, we look after various aspects of Decent Work. We are involved in the political project of universal health coverage. We ensure that half of the amount of the contribution to a mutual health mutual scheme is included in the wages of workers in the SSE. We work on management and production methods to improve working conditions. We are in the process of developing standard employment contracts that guarantee a minimum number of rights for workers in the SSE. The SSE therefore contributes to the implementation of the ILO conventions on Decent Work: minimum wage, safety at work, extension of social protection to the most vulnerable people working in the informal economy.

What is the place of women in the SSE?

Women, who every day are looking for ways to supplement their income and that of the household, are the backbone of the SSE. In various areas such as market gardening, food processing or access to energy (wood and embers), they are very entrepreneurial. The constant expansion of the outskirts of cities offers a promising and constantly developing market for these initiatives.

In companies in the SSE, women also play an important role in management and decision-making. In most cases, internal regulations provide for gender quotas for participation in bodies. However, strengthening the role, *empowerment* and capacities of women remains a priority in the face of cultural constraints. In addition to women, we also need to highlight the role of young people – women and men – in the SSE. They represent a pool of potential entrepreneurs thanks to their strength and energy. All it takes is to provide them with sufficient resources to achieve this! There are business incubators that pool funds, space and capacity to support youth entrepreneurship.

How are companies in the SSE organised?

They are organised into urban federations and local networks. A networking experiment is underway between actors in the SSE active in agricultural production, food processing and the energy sector. At the national level, there is not yet a SSE movement per se. We are working on this with the dissemination of the SSE Charter and by setting up an *ad hoc* working group within civil society.

We look for links with trade unions, NGOs and social actors who have a vision of social change, who resist and create movements to find answers to the various demands of civil society, including the fight against youth unemployment, improving incomes, creating solidarity jobs, the financial inclusion of women, access to quality health care, energy, etc.

“The SSE is an economy of resistance against unfair and unrealistic policies and laws”

Are these movements an important force in Congolese society?

The role and work of CSOs is well established! The emergence and convergence of citizen movements is an essential entry point. We have already asked the new president about improving the living conditions of the Congolese people, about a necessary social change. Our principal demands are binary in nature: firstly, political, for a genuine democratic changeover, a guarantee of courageous social policies and civic renewal; and secondly, socio-economic, to improve the social conditions of the Congolese people. The alliance of civil society actors, citizen movements, rural organisations, trade unions, associations, NGOs, companies in the SSE... is the key to this change.



SENEGAL

M. u. l'Épargne et de
Aprofes/Teranga
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Agrément : KL 1.99.00159 du 26-11-1999



THE CHALLENGE OF AN EMERGING SOCIAL PROTECTION SYSTEM

The African Union, as well as other international bodies, has in recent years made various commitments to the socio-economic transformation of the continent, with the common factor of extending and strengthening social protection. Within this, access to health is paramount. In this sense, the challenge made by the Senegalese State is symbolic.

Senegal, the most stable state in West Africa with regularly held elections, no longer hesitates to present itself as a future emerging country. But poverty remains high, formal employment is scarce (less than 40% of non-agricultural jobs), demographic growth is significant (62% of the population is under 25 years of age), gender inequalities are high (more than one in four women has suffered physical violence, according to the latest continuous demographic and health survey), and access to rights is limited. These are all challenges regarding the implementation of social protection for all.

In 2013, an ambitious programme to set up Universal Health Coverage (CMU) was launched. The objective is to guarantee, in the long term, access to care, including for the most vulnerable, by allowing them to receive free treatment. To achieve this, the State relies on civil society organisations and a vast network of mutual health health mutuals, which are expected to align with each other and expand, to cover every municipality in the country. If this challenge is successful, it would be a revolution for Senegal. And a benchmark for other governments in the region.

The programme envisaged that 75% of the population would be covered by 2017. But slightly less than one Senegalese in two currently has health insurance. On top of the constraints inherent in the process, there are structural problems: the scale of the informal sector, territorial inequalities (Dakar, which represents 0.3% of the country's territory and accounts for 80% of its economic activities), the limits of the already highly indebted State budget, etc. In addition, this CMU programme highlights the discrepancies and contradictions in the development strategy.

Attracting investment, creating a favourable business climate, boosting growth... all objectives at the heart of the *Plan Sénégal Émergent* (*Emerging Senegal Plan*), which used tired neo-liberal precepts and tended to reproduce a non-inclusive economic policy. This is evidenced by the focus on the mining and hydrocarbon sector. However, although this represents more than a third of exports, it only covers 0.3% of total employment! On the other hand, Senegalese agriculture in the broadest sense, which is primarily family-based, employs 60% of the working population.

Social protection for all Senegalese means tackling not only employment and poverty problems, but also those of food insecurity, the degradation of natural resources, inequalities and the country's dependence on the international market, and, consequently, focusing first on the dynamics, demands and proposals of social organisations and movements.

Together with these two Senegalese partners, the Environmental research and study group (GREEN) and the network of health mutuals in the Kaolack region, Oyofal Paj, Solsoc works to extend social protection and improve the rights of workers, particularly young people and women, in the informal economy and in the rural environment. To this end, the programme aims to strengthen mutual health health mutuals, as well as their regional structures, networks of social and solidarity economy initiatives and youth movements. The challenge is that they constitute a representative mobilising force, able to promote and ensure the extension of their social, political and economic rights.

THE DUAL CHALLENGE OF EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

INTERVIEW WITH **IBRAHIMA FALL**, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR FOR GREEN IN SENEGAL



68 What is the situation regarding youth employment and the informal sector in Senegal?

Ibrahima Fall: Youth employment is a key issue, with which we have been confronted for years. The politicians have not yet found the necessary solution to this social problem. All these young people who come to look for work, and who don't find any, are a cause for concern for the State, for their families and for the city.

For us, youth employment today is a problem that needs to be tackled at the level of the central government, the private sector and support organisations such as ours. I think that the private sector in Senegal does not have enough resources or opportunities to take care of most of these young workers. It needs to be supported more to generate more jobs.

The informal sector is characterised by its precariousness. Precariousness in the sense that it is not well structured or organised. Policy should be more oriented towards a better formalisation of employment frameworks, better care for people in the informal sector, and better social protection. The new programmes that are focused on health, with Universal Health Coverage (CMU), should have been further strengthened compared to the informal sector, so that most of the people in it are well cared for, at least from a health perspective. They must also be able to put money aside, so that after retirement they at least have a minimum income to survive. But everything depends on the framework in place, and the strategies developed by the public authorities. The first steps are being taken....

Do you have a positive assessment of social protection policy so far?

Yes, there is a good social protection policy, but it is slow to take off, because the programme is still facing difficulties, and from a monetary point of view, it has a real cost. But there is a good symbiosis between the central State, local communities and civil society organisations, because it is a major challenge, which is felt by all the different actors.

How are workers organised and what are their demands?

At the worker level, the most widespread model is the union model. It is for the formal sector and, in some cases, for informal networks. But it is a very small fringe compared to the overall mass of workers. Informal workers are in associations and groups which are not yet well structured. But the trade union centres have far more resources, are much more structured, and also have a direct dialogue with the public authorities. The demands are first and foremost about improving the employment framework. It is also about the link between salary and standard of living. With the inflation of living costs – sugar, milk, oil or rice –, transport, housing, etc. – wages do not allow workers to live a decent life.

“The basic right is parental authority. And, in general, the parental authority is the man”

What about gender inequalities in Senegal?

A working man can take care of his wife and children, from a medical perspective. If my wife is ill, there are facilities provided by the health system. I can bring her in for hospitalisation; she will be taken care of. But a woman can't do the same for her husband. These discriminations can have repercussions on salaries, family conditions, etc.

It is even more pronounced in terms of rights with the family code. The basic right is parental authority. And, in general, the parental authority is the man. There have been many demonstrations in recent years to review this family code, which gives priority to men. But there are many obstacles, religious, social, etc., that make the State reluctant to reform the family code.

It is true that in the new Constitution, there are new rights. But the difference is more pronounced in the family code, in terms of care, representativeness, non-recognition and the family workload borne by women.

What are the main challenges for the 2019 elections? Employment? Social protection? Other issues?

Civil society organisations have worked hard to ensure that the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) policy is institutionalised. This was an initiative of the President of the Republic, and we do not want a change of regime to call into question this approach. We want it to be institutionalised by a law, which I think will soon be passed. That's the first challenge: to ensure institutionalisation.

The CMU is a policy that is praised, but it is far from perfect. There are many questions, to further strengthen it and be able to make the necessary adjustments. We need to think about ways and means of finding additional funding channels to inject more money, for example, into community-based health mutuals, to make them more reliable.

“That's the first challenge: to ensure institutionalisation”

There is plenty of debate about the strategies to be pursued to increase youth employment. I think that it is a challenge, alongside environmental protection, controlling inflation and agriculture, that will centralise the debate. The political actors are well aware that there are two important segments of the electorate: young people and women. Young people make up more than 30% of the population, and more than half of the population are women. So whoever wins over these young people and women is sure to win the elections!

What kind of actions do you initiate regarding these issues and the election campaign?

Our action, in general, is more focused on training, awareness-raising, support and integration of young people or women in local decision-making spaces, so that the position of organisations is heard by local decision-makers. That is the first aspect. The second aspect is everything related to following up these actions, because they are actions that are intended to get these decision-makers to make commitments. We want to be able to develop strategies to better follow up these commitments and public policies in the fields of education, health, social protection and agriculture.

In the Thiès region, we have started to build the foundations of civil society, a process that is also taking place at the national level. We have identified concerns, which we highlight. And the main concern is youth employment. The second is everything related to women's access to factors of production – whether land, fertilisers, seeds, processing tools, etc. – that can lead to greater empowerment.

These foundations of civil society are a process taking place at the regional and national levels. All civil society actors are brought together at the level of each region to plan the work and identify the different strands. In our region, seven priority areas have been identified: employment, taking women's needs into account, agriculture, environment, fisheries, mining, quarrying and mining management. Before the presidential elections, civil society organisations will present a comprehensive document; this will be their contribution to the elections.



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

INTERVIEW WITH **LOBÉ CISSOKHO**, COORDINATOR OF THE OYOFAL PAJ NETWORK OF MUTUAL HEALTH HEALTH MUTUALS IN THE KAOLACK REGION



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What is the situation of access to health care in Senegal?

Lobé Cissokho: We should remember the context... 80% of the Senegalese population works in the informal and rural sector. And these 80% had no medical care, no money to pay for health services. We needed to organise ourselves to take charge of the health expenses of our populations. This is where the mutual health health mutuals were set up, with very low contributory participation. Today, a large part of the population has joined the mutual health mutuals schemes, contributes and, thanks to certain values, solidarity and mutual aid, manages to get care.

“All over the world, health is said to be a right. Where is this right? Is this right for the rich and not for the poor?”

But poverty is an obstacle. Some people want to join a mutual health mutual, but they do not have the means; especially women and young people in rural areas. There is also the socio-cultural factor. When someone is sick, they are sent to the healer or they medicate themselves, because it is cheaper. But that also means the State has not played its role. All over the world, health is said to be a right. Where is this right? Is this right for the rich and not for the poor? Mutual health health mutuals provide a solution, but not a comprehensive solution; a timid solution in a way. The State needs to take charge of the informal and rural sector, offering truly comprehensive coverage to this population.

Are mutual health health mutuals dispersed or connected to each other? Are they aligned with public policy?

In the past, mutual health health mutuals were not aligned, and there was not a very efficient system of organisation and operation. But today, they are aligned, and there is a strong political will in Senegal for equity in terms of care, and to ensure decentralisation: health mutuals are organised and operate from the basic level, in each municipality, to the national level.

“With the commitment of the State, with the redistribution of resources, we can really achieve widespread coverage”

What is the penetration rate of these mutual health health mutuals today?

Previously, the rate was around 20%, but today, it is 46%. And if I take the example of our region, Kaolack, we are at 52%. These are some pretty significant leaps! When people are informed, along with incentives, they can join. The State pays 50% of the contribution. And for those who cannot contribute, the State covers the full amount of affiliation and the contributions. This is what has boosted the increase in the number of members of mutual health health mutuals. That's why I say that with strong political will, with the commitment of the State, with the redistribution of resources, we can really achieve widespread coverage.

What is your assessment?

To prevent maternal and infant mortality, the State has implemented a policy of free access for children aged 0 to 5 years (also for persons over 60 years old; caesarean sections for women, etc.), which enables these children not only to have a birth certificate, to be registered in the civil registry – this is a condition for free access to health care – but also to be vaccinated. So, it is a *package* that makes it possible to say that in Senegal, we will achieve an effective CMU (Universal Sickness Coverage).

We can therefore say that the assessment is positive. But, there is always a “but”: health mutuals commit themselves, but they have to wait a year for the government to pay them the subsidy, and no-one from the informal sector has joined the mutual health health mutuals. There is a lack of information. Health staff should inform people, but they don't. When people arrive, because they do not have a birth certificate or vaccination certificate, instead of telling them that there are well-defined criteria for being able to benefit for free, they are told to pay. We need to improve communication, so that the whole population is informed.



THE CHALLENGE OF YOUTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT

INTERVIEW WITH **VORÉ GANA SECK**, DIRECTOR OF GREEN SENEGAL

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In Senegal, what specific challenges are young people facing?

Voré Gana Seck: Of the 14 million inhabitants, half are under 18 years of age. Every year, 300,000 young people enter the labour market. They are often without qualifications, and do small jobs. Or they prefer to go to Spain, Libya, etc. We realised that, in the villages where we work, it is often women who stay; young people prefer to migrate to the cities, to be street vendors, or to leave the country. How can we retain them?

The first challenge is therefore youth employment. How can we ensure that the State provides more support for education? It has made efforts and set up large-scale programmes; the most recent was the Delegation for Rapid Employment (DER). But we have reservations because it's too politicised; if you're in the party, you're more likely to have access to it... There are also scholarships for families; giving money every three months is good, but it is not a solution.

“A country where the young people leave is a country where hope leaves”

In *Green Senegal*, a “youth” programme has been set up. The first step is to train them and build their capacities, with priority given to promising sectors: agriculture, fisheries, livestock, etc. But for us, it's no longer just a question of working in agriculture for three months a year; that's not a sector. We need to invest in the hydraulic sector, so that farmers have access to water to grow all year round. We need to control the factors of production – land, energy, inputs and water – and have added value, in order to redirect young people towards employment, so that they can find agricultural professions, and not just agricultural activities.

We could invest in these promising sectors. Rice, for example. This is an imported commodity. We have a programme that provides for self-sufficiency in rice. But do we have the infrastructure to be able to process it, to be able to organise the whole sector? No. We continue to import rice from Thailand or elsewhere, whereas the value of local rice should be appreciated!

In this context, what role can the social and solidarity economy play?

For us, the social and solidarity economy (SSE) is of crucial importance because it makes it possible to fight poverty and keep young people here. A country where the young people leave is a country where hope leaves. And we want the young people to stay. If we want to reverse the trend, we need to focus on young people.

But the SSE cannot develop if there is desertification, decreases in rainfall, etc. The SSE can only be based on a healthy environment. We need to produce and, to do this, our soils need to be protected and fertile. That's why we opted for agro-ecology at the outset. And we want underground resources – for example, oil – to go back to the people.

We want to invest in agriculture; in the “green economy” (environmental protection, the fight against global warming, local production, etc.) and in the “blue economy” (seas, fisheries, integrated coastal management, etc.). We opted for the environment a long time ago. At the beginning, we were told that it was all to do with “whites”, whereas the environment is our survival!

SUMMARY OF THE SOLSOC PROGRAM

PARTNERS AS A LEVER FOR CHANGE

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IN THE NORTH

Solsoc has joined forces with two organisations that share the same values: FOS (Fonds voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking), which is the Flemish counterpart of Solsoc, and IFSI/ISVI, the Institut de Formation Syndicale Internationale (International Trade Union Training Institute) of the FGTB (General Federation of Belgian Labour, a Belgian union affiliated to the socialist movement).

In addition, Solsoc works in partnership with Solidaris and the entire network of socialist health mutuals to promote universal health coverage and access to health for all in Solsoc's partner countries. It also provides these countries with the support and commitment of the FGTB, which is reflected in strategies to strengthen trade union organisations and promote workers' rights.

IN THE SOUTH

Solsoc differentiates between two categories of Southern partners in its programme: associate partners, of which there are currently 24, directly supported through funding, joint work at the thematic, methodological and strategic level and boundary partners or target groups of the programme benefitting from the support, guidance and financing of the programme by the associate partners. The boundary partners are associations, groups, cooperatives, networks of health mutuals, trade unions, etc... identified by the associated partners as actors of social change. Together, the associate partners and boundary partners will mobilise around the issues of the programme.

A third category of partners, strategic partners, collaborate within the programme or share its objectives.

BOLIVIA

AYNI (Civil Association) is an NGO working to improve the situation of rural producers in Bolivia. AYNi seeks to build the capacity of local communities, by intervening within the communities themselves, including by providing its workforce, equipment, or by participating in capacity building and monitoring events.

ayni.org.bo

FUNDASUR (Southern Development Foundation) aims to strengthen trade unions at the individual and collective level in the food and hotel sector and rural producers' organisations, so that they can fully exercise their social and economic rights, enjoy better working and living conditions and access to social protection.

PASOS (Foundation for Participation and Sustainability) is a Social Development Foundation that develops proposals for sustainable and inclusive development at local and regional levels. As such, PASOS seeks to address the problems of poverty, inequality, climate change and the rights of the most vulnerable populations.

pasosbolivia.org

REMTE (Bolivian Network of Women Transforming the Economy) is a network of social organisations that fight for the economic empowerment of women (especially the most excluded and disadvantaged), thereby aiming at the appropriation of certain sectors of the economy by women and the construction of more humane, equitable and sustainable economic alternatives.

remte-bolivia.org

BURKINA FASO

ASMADE (Association Songui Manegré/Development Aid) is an NGO working for the development of Burkina Faso. It works to promote social rights (health, education, food security, etc.) and supports grassroots organisations in translating their initiatives into concrete projects. It is primarily involved in health promotion, by setting up mutual health health mutuals, in reproductive health and the fight against women's poverty. ongasmade.org/new/index.php

UMUSAC (Union of Health Mutuals in the Central Region) is a network of mutual health health mutuals that contributes, through technical, material and financial support, to the development of health mutuals and their awareness-raising activities.

UCRB (Union of Lorry Drivers of Burkina Faso) is a trade union federation that contributes to the recognition and respect of the rights of lorry drivers and fights against child trafficking in this sector. The organisation also works with the federations of bakers, the environment, tourism and hotels, and the agri-food sector to jointly create a trade union platform that actively defends workers' rights.

BURUNDI

ADISCO (Support for Integral Development and Solidarity in the Hills) is a Burundian NGO whose mission is to support the emergence and development of a genuine national social movement to benefit the poorer sections of the population. ADISCO therefore carries out actions to support the self-promotion of rural workers, mutual health insurance, or the strengthening of civil society. adisco.org/adisco

CNAC-MURIMA W'ISANGI (National Confederation of Coffee Growers' Associations of Burundi) is a Burundian non-profit organisation, whose members are small-scale producers operating plantations ranging from 100 to 5.000 coffee trees. The CNAC represents, lobbies for and defends the interests of coffee growers. It also develops relations of solidarity, exchange and technology transfer between coffee growers' associations.

FEBUTRA (Burundian Federation of Food Industry Workers) is a federation of trade unions in the formal and informal agri-food sector whose mission is to defend the interests of Burundian workers in the agri-food and related sectors.

PAMUSAB (Platform of Mutual Health Insurance Actors in Burundi) brings together Burundian NGOs and mutual health health mutuals. The objective of PAMUSAB is to promote, professionalise and defend mutual health health mutuals in Burundi so that all segments of the population have access to quality health care. pamusab.org

COLOMBIA

ATI (Interdisciplinary Work Association) is an NGO fighting for the respect of human rights, social justice and the strengthening of democracy. The ATI works in particular on the issues of food sovereignty and autonomy, the right to food and the SSE for the agri-food sector, the environment, territories and human rights. ati.org.co

IPC (Popular Training Institute) is an institute investigating human rights issues, providing support to victims of conflict, training and legal assistance to enable victims of violations to assert their rights. It also carries out important political advocacy work. Today, the IPC focuses its activities on the post-conflict context, through issues of respect for democracy, human rights and peacekeeping. ipc.org.co

Sinaltrainal (National union of food industry workers) is a national union working to defend economic, social, cultural and labour rights in the agri-food sector. Sinaltrainal is a "boundary partner" of Solsoc.

MOROCCO

AFAQ (Women of the Neighbourhood Associations of Greater Casablanca Initiative) supports and accompanies local structures and dynamics within the working class districts of Casablanca. It organises the advocacy process at regional, national and international levels around gender and SSE issues. Its mission is to create women leaders in the neighbourhoods and raise public awareness, particularly on the issue of gender equality.

AJR (Regional Young People from Neighbourhood Associations Initiative) supports and accompanies local organisations and young people belonging to various progressive political sensitivities, and strengthens their associations. AJR accompanies them within social forums and participates in debate forums of civil society and dialogue forums with public authorities on issues related to youth, the associative movement and the social and solidarity economy.

Chhiwate Bladi is a food cooperative which came about through long-term work and collaboration between IFAAP and Khotwa (Casablanca Neighbourhood Association). It allows young women in need to be trained in the fields of pastry, catering and marketing of traditional Moroccan products. Chhiwate Bladi is a "boundary partner".

IFAAP (Training and Support Institute for Local Associations) supports and trains the management staff of associations, as well as neighbourhood associations working in the community in Casablanca and Morocco. It ensures coordination between the various partners of the Morocco programme.

REMESS (Moroccan Network of the Social and Solidarity Economy) is the leading Moroccan network open to the different components of the SSE (cooperatives, associations, health mutuals, foundations, economic interest groups and professional unions). REMESS is a “strategic partner” of Solsoc.
remess.ma

PALESTINE

MA'AN Development Centre is a development and training NGO. It works in the poorest and most marginalised regions to improve people's quality of life and strengthen their ability to manage the development of their communities. MA'AN also implements various projects in agriculture and food security, women and youth empowerment, community development and the environment.

mann-ctr.org

PAC (Popular Art Centre) is an NGO seeking to create a cultural environment which is conducive to creating a close link between art, culture on the one hand, and the Palestinian population on the other. The PAC therefore seeks to consolidate Palestinian citizenship and identity through art.

popularartcentre.org

PGFTU is the main union in Palestine. It organises awareness-raising/training workshops on the Labour Code, and occupational health and safety measures, and trains specialists in the sector. In addition, it carries out political actions to improve respect for workers' rights.

DR CONGO

CENADEP (National Centre for Development Support and Popular Participation) is a development NGO that helps organise the most disadvantaged populations, in urban and rural working class areas, in order to strengthen their political weight. CENADEP supports community projects that promote social change, sustainable self-promotion and reduce dependency, but also democracy through the participation of broader segments of the population.

cenadepasbl.org

COSSEP (Trade Union Council of Public and Private Services) is a trade union centre bringing together trade unions of teachers, professional and managerial staff, the press and judges, with more than 30,000 full members. COSSEP is a partner of IFSI, and a “strategic partner” of Solsoc.

CRAFOP (Committee for the Resurgence and Support of Rural Workers) supports communities to improve their living conditions. CRAFOP supports the establishment of a mutual health mutual scheme whose main beneficiaries are peasants and underprivileged populations in its area of action.

DIOBASS (Approach for Interaction between Grassroots Organisations and Other Sources of Knowledge) is a network of peasant organisations, research groups focused on peasant action, research centres, NGOs, educational institutions and experts aimed at strengthening the social dynamics of rural and urban areas, by creating citizen spaces for exchange and conducting actions in the field.

diobasskivu.org

PRODDDES (Network for the Promotion of Democracy and Economic and Social Rights) aims to strengthen civil society organisations in order to participate in the social, political and economic change of the DRC. Among other things, PRODDDES co-leads the Citizen Observatory of Governance and Socio-economic Rights. It works in partnership with various national and international organisations on issues of social protection, universal health coverage and the social and solidarity economy. PRODDDES is a “boundary partner” of Solsoc.

SENEGAL

Green Senegal is a research and development organisation that supports grassroots community peasant organisations in the social and solidarity economy and environment sector. Its objective is to contribute to food security and fight poverty by strengthening social and solidarity economy initiatives. In addition, it carries out awareness-raising activities among young Senegalese people.

Oyofal Pajis is a network of health mutuals located in Kaolack that includes more than twenty community-based health mutuals, three departmental unions and the Kaolack Regional Union.

Solsoc would like to thank its various partners, from both the North and South, for their participation in this publication. Solsoc would like to thank FOS and IFSI, the FGTB and Solidaris in particular for their combined efforts to promote Decent Work. Their technical and political support has been both an exceptional opportunity and a necessity in an increasingly globalised, financialised and liberalised world, where social actors and workers often struggle to make their voices heard.

Solsoc also thanks its Palestinian, South American and African partners who helped to produce this publication through their participation. Whether they are trade unionists or health mutuals, NGOs or associations, committed to the defence of workers, human rights, gender equality, or the promotion of universal access to health, Solsoc wishes to thank each of them for their commitment to promoting a more just, equitable and dignified world, a world in which everyone has the right to Decent Work.

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To mark the 100th anniversary of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Belgian NGO Solsoc wanted to question the social and solidarity economy (SSE), which is at the heart of its strategy to promote Decent Work. In effect, various studies have highlighted the SSE as the best tool for promoting Decent Work. The ILO shares the view that “the social and solidarity economy contributes to the four dimensions of the ILO’s overall objective of Decent Work”.

But how can we ensure that the SSE is the driving force behind the spread of Decent Work and its four pillars, namely job creation, the right to work, social protection and social dialogue? How can it both “create a movement” and connect with other social movements, including trade unions and women’s movements? Under what conditions can it not only help meet needs, but also represent a transformative power and, beyond that, an alternative to the economic model?

These questions, strategies and challenges are examined here on the basis of analyses, expertise and experience from the South, by giving a voice to organisations, health mutuals, trade unions and Solsoc’s partners, who are all actors in this transformation and alternative on a daily basis.

