

Coverage

Ensuring sustainability by accompanying local CSOs towards autonomy

The experience of PROJEG from 2016 to 2019



Aide et Action logo

Logo PROJEG

ID logo

2nd cover

Foreword

Between 2008 and 2019, Aide et Action supported the Capacity Building Program for Guinean Civil Society and Youth Organizations (PROJEG). Since 2016, in order to anticipate its withdrawal and to sustain the achievements of the program, PROJEG has transformed its intervention modalities to position itself as a support to groups of actors towards autonomy. To do this, PROJEG was itself accompanied by an external pair composed of an employee of the NGO ID and a consultant from AlterVisio.

This experience seemed interesting to document, given the results obtained and the importance of the issue for the international solidarity sector. Once the accompaniment service was over, Aide et Action and ID wanted to look back at this experience together and reflect on what they could learn from it.

This document captures the concrete results of the process, concerning the empowerment of the collectives of actors and their capacity to fulfil their missions, but also concerning the reinforcement of the support capacities of the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG. It draws lessons from this experience in terms of principles, approaches and levers, and models some key elements of the process. In this sense, it is likely to nourish the reflections of the actors of the international solidarity who wish to facilitate the change of positioning of a team, from the management of project towards the accompaniment of actors, and/or to implement an approach of accompaniment of actors towards autonomy.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

EDA	Action for Community Development
ADG	Dorcas Guinea Association
AEA	Aide et Action
AFVDD	Action des Femmes Volontaires pour le Développement Durable
GA	General Assembly
ARSYF	Association of Nationals and Sympathisers of Fria
AVODEPPE	Association of Volunteers for Participatory Development and Environmental Protection
CAFODED	Learning and Training Centre for Sustainable Development in Guinea
CEGUIFED	Guinean Centre for Training and Education for Development
Copil	Steering Committee
FEJED	Women, Children, Youth, Education and Development
FMG	Medical Fraternity of Guinea
GUIDRE	Guinea Rural Development and Environment
ID	Development Initiative
ONAM	National Organisation for the Support of Mutuality in Guinea
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
PCPA	Multi-stakeholder Concerted Programme
PWYP	Publish What You Pay
PIADD	Platform for Information and Action on Debt and Development
PROJEG	Concerted Programme for Capacity Building of Guinean Civil Society and Youth Organisations
SE	Executive Secretariat of PROJEG
VGDR	Guinean Volunteers for Rural Development

General introduction

The PROJEG: a multi-stakeholder concerted programme in Guinea

The PROJEG, **Concerted Programme for Capacity Building of Guinean Civil Society and Youth Organisations**, is a **Multi-actor Concerted Programme (PCPA)**, a funding instrument of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French Development Agency, at the service of civil societies in countries in democratic transition. Its aim is to strengthen civil societies and to promote dialogue between civil society actors and public authorities in the North and South.

Between 2008 and 2019, **PROJEG supported Guinean civil society actors** to contribute to the evolution of public policies and management and the consolidation of democracy and peace. It has carried out local and national actions in various fields: reform of the mining code and management of mining revenues, transparency and management of public resources, restoration of democracy and respect for human rights, citizenship and democratic expression of youth, etc.

The PROJEG was supported by Aide et Action but has set up **its own democratic governance bodies** bringing together more than 150 French and Guinean civil society organizations as well as representatives of the public authorities of both countries: a General Assembly, a Steering Committee, and Regional Colleges in each natural region of Guinea and in Conakry.

In order to generate multi-actor dynamics, one of the modalities of intervention of the PROJEG was the launching of **calls for projects** on various themes to encourage the work in consortium of the Guinean CSOs. Through this mechanism, PROJEG provided financial support but also technical support by playing a leading role in the impetus of projects, the animation of consortia, and the implementation of activities. Over the course of the programme, several hundred CSOs benefited from this technical and financial support and began to build links at local or national level. They have thus played a key role in supporting the dynamics initiated by the PROJEG on mining, transparency and human rights issues.

To perpetuate the dynamics initiated by the programme...

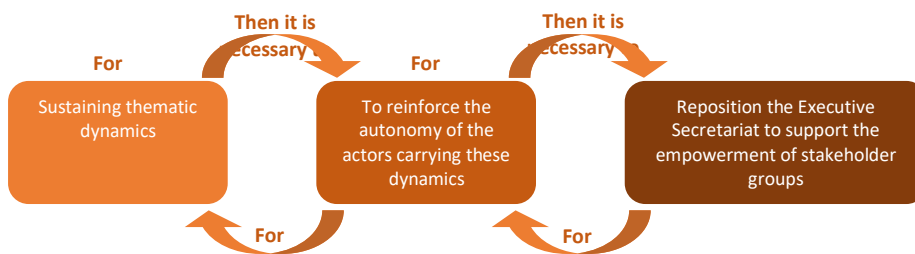
In 2015, after 8 years of existence, an external evaluation underlined the need to rethink the implementation mechanism of the PROJEG in order to **prepare its disengagement and the perpetuation of the dynamics** that it has brought out and supported. The last phase of the PROJEG (2016-2019) was dedicated to this issue.

In order to accompany the change of positioning and strategy of the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG (ES, the project team), **an external resource was recruited**: a pair composed of a coach (Gaëlle Gandema, Head of the Partnership and Stakeholder Strengthening Unit of Initiative Développement) and a supervision expert (Stéphane Montier, Consultant/Coach at AlterVisio).

... by accompanying groups of actors towards autonomy

With the support of this external resource, the PROJEG defined a **sustainability strategy focused on the autonomy of the actors**. Indeed, it quickly appeared that the sustainability of the thematic dynamics had to pass by the autonomy of the actors carrying these dynamics: the organisations which met punctually in the form of consortia had to form more durable and autonomous collectives of local or national actors. Consequently, the Executive Secretariat had to reposition itself by devoting itself less to technical support and the monitoring of activities (to achieve short-term results), and more to the accompaniment of actor collectives in order to reinforce their capacities to work together and increase their chances of sustaining the dynamics after the withdrawal of the PROJEG.

Key methodological point: defining and assuming a sustainability strategy



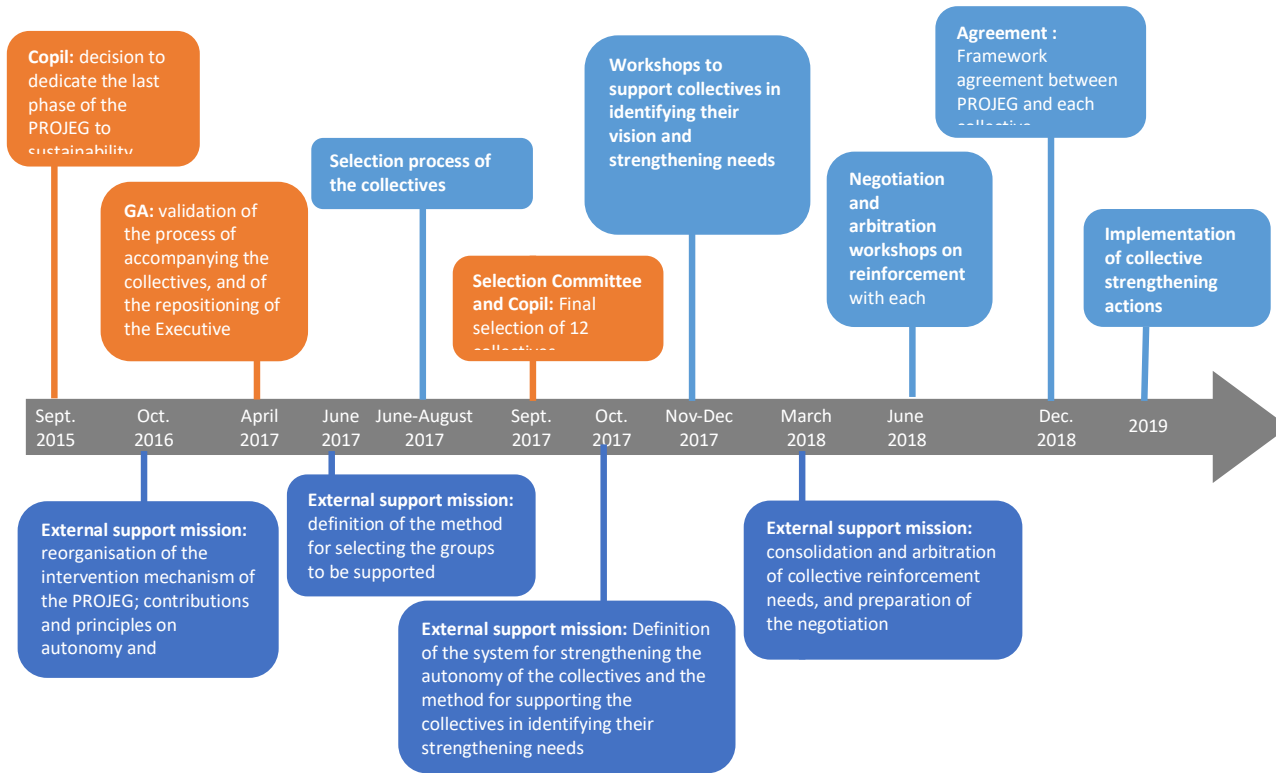
Among the many organisations and consortia that had been supported by the PROJEG, **12 collectives of organisations were accompanied to autonomy**: local or national, they have between 3 and 85 member organisations, come from all regions of Guinea and work on the themes of mining, transparency or human rights (for a more detailed presentation, see p. 33).

Description of the support process and the role of the actors

The self-sufficiency support process took place over a period of just over two years, from October 2016 until the end of the PROJEG in late 2019. The frieze below presents the main stages and the involvement of the four main actors in the process:

1. **The governance bodies of the PROJEG (General Assembly, Copil, Regional Colleges, Selection Committee)** had a role of decision making and validation at key moments, and of monitoring the process.
2. **The Executive Secretariat (ES) of the PROJEG** designed and piloted the overall process of accompaniment, and accompanied the collectives along the way.
3. **The external coaching team** helped the Executive Secretariat to define its coaching process, to review its organisation and to put itself in a coaching position.
4. **The collectives** defined themselves what they wanted to be and do, implemented activities aimed at their autonomy, and carried out their own projects on mining, transparency and human rights issues.

SCHEMA: timeline. Note: the orange/light blue/dark blue colours can be changed at the layout stage but must match the colours of the actors shown above.



The capitalisation process

The process :

The capitalisation process was interested in the two intersecting support dynamics: the support of the collectives by the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG, and the support of the Executive Secretariat by the ID-AlterVisio team. To do this, he developed **three levels of analysis**:

1. **Achieving the goal of group autonomy:** How are they more autonomous? How does autonomy manifest itself? *(part 4)*
2. **Factors that influenced the empowerment of the collectives:** What conditions were favourable? *(part 1)* What levers contributed to this, at the level of support by the Executive Secretariat or at another level? *(parts 3 and 4)*
3. **The repositioning of the Executive Secretariat of PROJEG:** What conditions were favourable? *(part 1)* How did it manifest itself? What allowed it, in the accompaniment by the ID-AlterVisio binomial or outside? *(part 2)*

A qualitative approach was adopted, **based on the changes that occurred at the level of the Executive Secretariat and the collectives**. It sought to bring out **the actors' views on their own changes** and their analysis. This document is therefore based on the actors' verbatims and illustrations of change.

The actors of capitalization :

All the actors in the support cascade contributed to the capitalisation process: the external support worker from ID, the Executive Secretariat team and a sample of groups. Each of them was interviewed both about themselves and about the actors they had accompanied or by whom they had been accompanied, in order to cross-reference their views.

The capitalization was led by Mathieu Cros, Head of Research at Aide et Action, and Gaëlle Gandema, Head of the Partnership and Stakeholder Strengthening Unit at ID (who was also the external coach: as such, she played the role of both facilitator and contributor to the capitalization and took a back seat at certain times).

1. Conditions that facilitated the repositioning of the Executive Secretariat and the autonomy of the collectives

Changes of any kind are the result of a combination of factors, actions, interactions and other 'small' changes that all contribute to a complex and continuous process. It is therefore often difficult to see clearly the role of an external intervention in a change. And in any case, it can only be conceived as a contribution to change at best. It can never take full credit for the change.

In this sense, we have identified a number of conditions that seem to have facilitated the changes that have taken place within the PROJEG and that should be seen as complementary to the actions voluntarily put in place.

Societal culture

Guinean organisations are often in favour of working in networks to be more effective on the ground. Relying on a freedom of association that is also found in other countries (law 013 on associations), civil society played a key role from 1958 onwards, at the time of the dictatorship when political parties were banned. Trade unions and associations took a place in the political arena, developed a certain capacity for action and an awareness of having a "voice". They structured themselves as citizens' organisations, unable to position themselves as service providers because of a strong state that was closed to international aid for many years. This element of the historical context sheds light on the significant capacity of Guinean organisations to mobilise and their maturity with regard to the issue of aid and autonomy.

A framework and an institutional demand

The specific framework of the PCPA explicitly assumes a multi-stakeholder partnership and collective governance that decides on directions. The question is centred on meaning - where are we going together and what are we going to change? - and the executive is positioned under the GA and the steering committee, which predisposes it to be in a position of accompaniment. In addition, there was a political will to empower in order to make the project sustainable, which came out of the evaluation of the second triennium, and this led the steering committee to make sustainability the core of phase 3. This orientation is felt by the Executive Secretariat team to be a strong commitment, materialised by the means devolved.

"At the beginning of the support process, there must be political will. This is what gives the actors the obligation, the legitimacy and the feeling of serving the institution. This then allows the manager and the executive to know that they are carrying out the orientations defined by the governance, and this gives legitimacy to the conduct of this process." **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

An alliance between actors

The 8 years of work and the long-standing support had already laid a solid foundation of trust between PROJEG and the organisations. The collectives had already begun to forge links before the support began. The members knew each other and had habits of working together because of their participation in the PROJEG Regional Colleges, which were spaces for meetings and rapprochement; and because of the calls for proposals launched by PROJEG, which encouraged the formation of consortia around projects. This established confidence facilitated the repositioning of PROJEG and the adhesion of all the actors (governance of PROJEG, Executive Secretariat, collectives and member organisations) to the process.

"Maybe it's because of all the work we've done with them, the trust we've gained over the last eight years? When we offered them the option of working together to prepare for sustainability, it was easy." **Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action**

A culture of innovation

The organizational culture of Aide et Action Guinea and PROJEG has been a fertile ground for innovation. The flexibility allowed by the modalities of action has made new initiatives and new organizations in the work possible. Moreover, the attitude of the PROJEG coordinator has been very favourable to change in the team: he has shown a great openness of mind coupled with a demand for quality, going as far as looking at his practices and going beyond them to do better.

"There is an openness on the part of Aide et Action to new initiatives in the work and an open-mindedness on the part of Moctar [the PROJEG coordinator] who thinks that perhaps we should not remain in old practices, not be satisfied with the results, and go beyond." **Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action**

Individual motivations

The team of the Executive Secretariat was from the beginning in agreement with the finality of the process, with the objective of autonomy of the collectives. The individual motivation of each member of the team to perpetuate the achievements of the PROJEG, together with a remarkable professional conscience, greatly facilitated the change of position.

"The fact that we ourselves knew that our programme was coming to an end prepared us psychologically for the work we would have to do so that everything would not fall apart, so that the gains of 8 years of our efforts would last." **Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action**

2. The change of positioning of the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG towards the accompaniment of actors

"When you are a coordinator, you want the actor to achieve results. But now, as a companion, you want to accompany him where he wants to get to." **Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

"Now it's the collectives that initiate what they want to do, put it together and implement it. The facilitator is available to come and discuss with us, but we ask for it." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

Since the beginning of the PROJEG, the Executive Secretariat (ES) was positioned as coordinator and pilot of actions to mobilise actors on given themes. This positioning favoured the reinforcement of the capacities of the actors on the technical level, on their various fields of intervention. It also created a framework for exchange that fostered trust between actors.

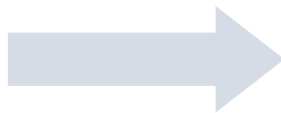
However, this responsibility for the results of the actions did not favour the autonomy of the actors in their capacity to define and carry out their own actions on their themes. To achieve this, a change in positioning was needed to redistribute responsibilities and leadership: transferring responsibility for actions and thematic expertise to the actors, through a new positioning in support and through new working methods and tools.

The ES team therefore transformed its coordination position with regard to the collectives, in order to provide support and encourage their empowerment, in a process that lasted almost a year.

The change in the positioning of the ES has taken place at three complementary levels: institutional, organisational and individual:

1. Institutional: PROJEG has rethought its intervention mechanism:

Support for thematic actions
with short term funding
targeting consortia of
organisations



Support for the definition and
the implementation of support
plans for groups of organisations
with funding geared to structural
needs

2. Organisational: The Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG has been reorganised with a distinction between the functions of accompaniment and monitoring and responsibility for the actions implemented by the collectives. The regional coordinators, positioned on a role of support and follow-up of the activities of their zone, became regional accompaniers, responsible for the accompaniment of the collectives of their zone. A post of monitoring officer was created.

- 1 coordinator Guinea
- 1 coordinator France
- 4 regional coordinators
- 1 financial administrator



- 1 coordinator Guinea
- 1 coordinator France
- 4 regional coaches
- 1 project manager
- 1 financial administrator

3. Individual: The 4 regional coordinators of the PROJEG have become coaches. Their function was rethought so that they could move from a role of leader for their zones, where they were resource persons and responsible for the projects carried out, to a position of neutrality and self-effacement behind the actors accompanied. This required individual awareness and a change in the way they viewed their job.

Thierno Ciré Barry, Aide et Action's Project Monitoring Officer, presents the essential difference between the function of coordinator and that of accompanier:

"The coordinator is a project planner and controller: how the action will be carried out, how each person will play their role. He/she is responsible for meeting deadlines, managing conflicts, communication and relations in order to move the project forward. He acts on the project and not on the actor. »

"Being a mentor is a role of advice, of coaching oriented on the actor, to bring him to where he wants to go at his own pace, to cover his limits and difficulties himself. It is a question of trusting the person, and then making them understand that they are the actors of their own change. We act on the actor and on what can enable him to progress. »

Key methodological point: Focus on accompaniment

In its literal sense, accompaniment can be defined as "joining someone, to go where they are going, together with them"¹. It always aims at empowering the actor, according to his or her request and in line with his or her own objectives.

As a professional practice, coaching can be broken down into different types of complementary support provided to individual or collective actors (organisations) such as

- Contribution of expertise, knowledge
- Targeted advisory support to provide contextualised solutions
- Coaching of individuals and teams
- Group facilitation and facilitation
- Networking of actors
- Mediation between actors

The support is adapted according to the phases of the actor's empowerment process:

- Upstream of the reinforcement process, coaching consists of accompanying the actor in the elaboration of its vision, its objectives, its needs and requests for reinforcement, and then negotiating the reinforcement with partners or third parties;
- During the reinforcement process, the aim is to accompany the change of actors and to support them in steering the reinforcement actions;
- And downstream of the reinforcement process, to support the evaluation of the results achieved, and the learning from the experience.

Holding an accompanying posture requires particular vigilance, to regularly put oneself "in the right place".

¹ Maela Paul, *L'accompagnement, une posture professionnelle spécifique*, L'Harmattan, 2004.

ENCART "Methodological point" Key methodological point: The ownership of change by the actors themselves

A change can only take place in the long term if **the actor who has to change has the desire to do so and is himself the architect of this change**. It is then a matter of (i) making them aware of the need for change, (ii) naming the precise change to be made, (iii) helping them to understand the benefits of change and its risks, (iv) supporting them in deciding to change, (v) giving them the means to organise the implementation of the change, and (vi) steering this implementation. The following pages illustrate how this approach was implemented in the context of the change in the positioning of the ES.

Beforehand, being the bearer of one's own change implies **being aware of the reasons for this change**. The understanding and agreement of the ES on the objective of autonomy of the actors, followed by the awareness of the support as a means of contributing to it, were the essential levers of its change of position. They gave rise to individual and collective motivation of the team.



The team of the Executive Secretariat of PROJEG in Guinea

What actions have promoted this change in positioning?

This part presents actions implemented by the PROJEG and that the members of the Executive Secretariat have identified as having had a direct contribution to their change of positioning. They can inspire any person or organisation that wishes to facilitate the change of positioning of a team from project management to the accompaniment of actors (change of profession).

▪ *Facilitate the support of the approach by the PROJEG bodies*

The last three-year period of the PROJEG being dedicated to the sustainability of the achievements, the intervention strategy evolved towards the ambition to accompany the autonomy of the organisations beyond the PROJEG. The strategic repositioning of PROJEG was the "lever" change of all the others, the political will that was pre-requisite to the change of positioning of the ES. However, it was necessary to **land this sustainability strategy with an awareness of what it implies in terms of approach and change of *modus operandi*.**

How?

By respecting the role of the authorities in validating the system

The validation circuit between the PROJEG bodies was respected from one end to the other: presentations of the approach in the Regional College, validation by the General Assembly, then by the Steering Committee of the complete system (and its calendar), of the reorganisation of the ES and of the conditions of selection of the collectives.

By training the PROJEG bodies on autonomy and accompaniment

To carry, defend and decide, it is necessary to understand. Throughout the process, the General Assembly, the Steering Committee and the Regional Colleges were trained on autonomy and its issues in order to enable them to take consolidated and conscious decisions. Times of popularisation of theoretical elements on the notions of autonomy and accompaniment were associated with open debates on the difference with the role of coordination of projects previously assumed by the PROJEG.

By presenting the approach, the issues and the choices in all transparency

Understanding the methodological process and the choices on which it is based is essential for the authorities to play their decision-making role and maintain trust with the ES team. The process was explained in a very transparent manner concerning the issues at stake and the links with the proposed choices, and was discussed at each stage.

"They had to believe in what we were doing and in the objectivity of the process. The fact that we were transparent was the guarantee of success; when you go from 600 people you work with to 60, you have to show the relevance of your choice and the transparency of your approach. This gave a lot of credibility to our approach." Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action

... This action has had virtuous effects for the team:

- It was a factor of understanding in having to present the process clearly, illustrating it with their own words and images.

"We defined the principles of the accompaniment, we went to a college where we presented it ourselves, we were volunteers but we were not sure to succeed. After that we started to feel what we were getting into." Souleymane Sow, Regional Accompanist Upper Guinea, Aide et Action

- It has allowed to legitimize the approach towards the actors of the PROJEG, and the SE in its change of positioning.

"It has legitimized the work of the team: once it is agreed by the Copil and the General Assembly, we are there to achieve what we have committed ourselves to." Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action

- It has been a motivating factor, through the reassuring agreement with all the actors of the PROJEG around the shared interest for the accompaniment to autonomy (reassures on the meaning of the action).

"In the meetings with the actors at the GA and in the colleges, you could see very clearly that people understood that their reason for being together was no longer money. And it's very motivating that they understand where we want them to go together, and that they accept to leave 80% of the organisations aside to focus on a few." **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

▪ Refocus on and distance yourself from the actors

An essential prerequisite for autonomy support is to have a clear perception of the organisations to be supported, of their needs and then of their requests for support. This makes it possible to clearly distinguish the roles and responsibilities of both parties and to plan the necessary support. Another prerequisite is to distance oneself from the organisations in order to understand them well and later be able to make choices according to objective and transparent criteria (and therefore to give up accompanying everyone). The PROJEG thus carried out a preliminary work of **clarification** then **characterisation** of the targets which allowed the ES to put itself in a position of **neutrality** with regard to them.

Clarifying the target of the support: moving from the "dynamics" to the actors

"We cannot accompany if we do not know what we want to do and with whom we want to do it." **Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

After 8 years of support to organisations grouped in consortium around projects on given themes (human rights, mines, transparency, etc.), PROJEG and all its stakeholders had taken the habit of designating by the term "dynamics" all that it undertook with a broad territorial dimension and which mobilised many actors: in this case, groups of organisations meeting around citizen mobilisations, on a given theme. These dynamics were notably stimulated by calls for projects launched by the PROJEG. The dynamics did not therefore refer to the variable organisations that made them up, and even less to an umbrella-type structure that did not exist.

How?

By questioning the terms and what they cover

The ES team found it difficult to get rid of this construction/image of "dynamics". Clarifying the target, by questioning and challenging the terms used to designate it, led the team to an awareness and then to **a choice: that of addressing groups of organisations and therefore actors, the only possible targets of the support. And therefore to actors, the only possible targets of the support. It was** not a question of empowering dynamics, but of collectives of actors who could then carry these dynamics. This clarification acted as a trigger for the whole ES team, enabling them to understand for the first time what coaching means. The external support greatly facilitated the necessary distance at this stage.

"At first, there was a kind of confusion between the dynamics we created. For me, the fact that we were working on the collectives led us to the organisations. The day we changed the term, it was a changeover. All at the same time." **Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action**

Characterise this target to better understand it

In order to provide good support, it is necessary to know and understand the support target. Once the target has been clarified, trying to characterise it precisely allows for a shared understanding of the characteristics of the groups and, as a result, to project possible needs and relevant support actions.

How?

By identifying the main characteristics of the autonomy of a collective

To specify the target of the accompaniment, the ES identified the main characteristics of the autonomy of a reference collective, organized according to 3 progressive levels of structuring. This work resulted in a tool: **the structuring reference frame of the PROJEG collectives.**

"When we made the reference framework, I saw straight away that I could classify certain organisations. It allowed me to know all the work that needs to be done, that there was a lot to do to accompany them towards autonomy." Souleymane Sow, Regional Accompanist Upper Guinea, Aide et Action

The structuring reference framework of the PROJEG collectives		
EMERGENT (1) <i>Making it happen: building identity and a sense of belonging</i>	INTERMEDIATE (2) <i>Ability to implement and report on collective actions</i>	MATURE (3) <i>Ability to adapt to one's environment and to be recognised</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has a common vision • Is a response to a real need and of general interest • Defines intervention objectives • Has an available, supportive and committed core group • Defines organisational and operational rules, including framework documents (Statutes and Internal Regulations) • Experiences a first collective action/project • Is able to make collective decisions • Has an associative project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadens the base of its dynamics • Mobilises a diversity of actors • Defines clear and shared rules for the management of financial resources (procedures) • Implements collective actions efficiently • Follows its actions collectively • Develops partnerships to implement its project(s) • Mobilises financial resources • Transparent reporting to the funding partner(s) and to its members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates in a relevant and professional manner to the outside world • Communicates regularly with its members • Builds on its practices and experiences • Develops a strategic plan • Defines its business model • Mobilises diversified and more important funding • Influence at sectoral and territorial levels through advocacy and lobbying • Builds a collective position

Put yourself in a position of neutrality with regard to the target

In order to move from the responsibility of regional coordination of activities to that of accompanying groups of actors, neutrality is essential. This began with the choice of the collectives to be accompanied. It was necessary for the coaches to distance themselves from the collectives in their region: it was in this distance that the coaching could find its place, avoiding the risk of the coaches influencing the "chosen" collectives towards what they wanted.

How?

By working in pairs and outside their usual area

The ES members' distancing from the collectives was also based on new working methods. The team members were invited to decentralise, by going to work outside their area and in pairs. This enabled them to look at the collectives objectively. Finally, working and experimenting among peers has united the team in the transformation of its practices.

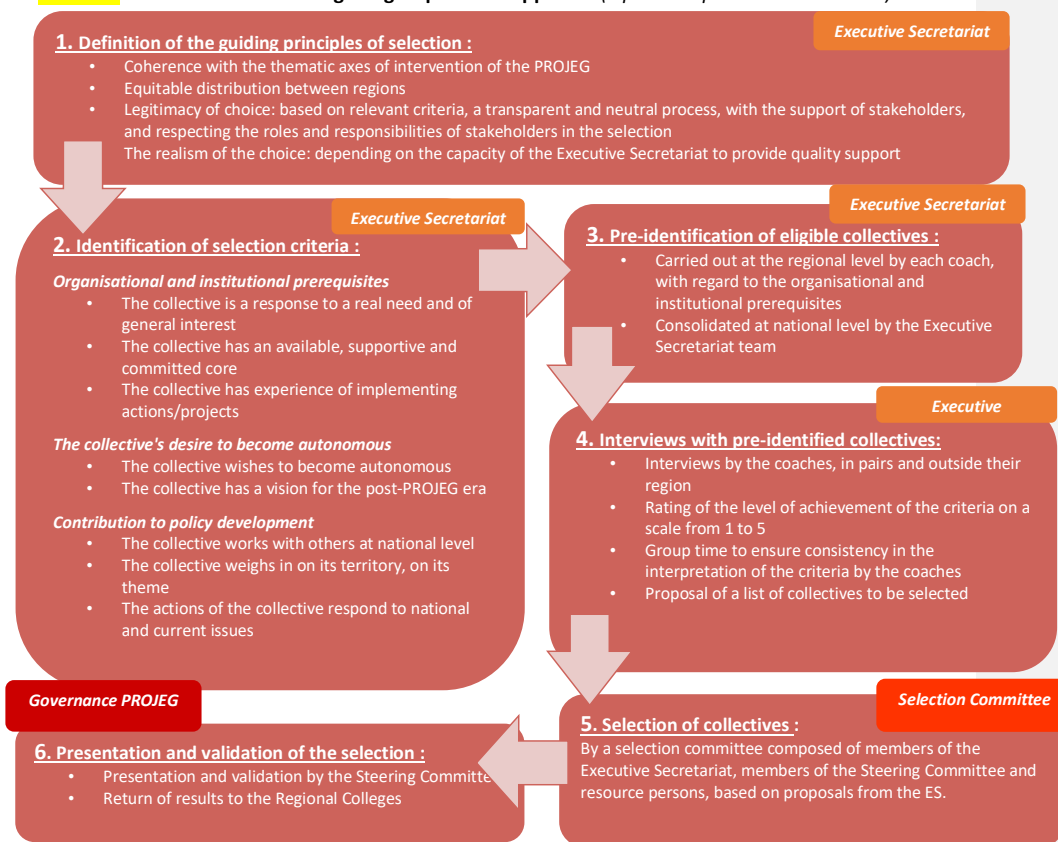
"Going to each other's areas was good because I was neutral on the ground. If I had been left in my region of Upper Guinea, I already had ideas for collectives that I could have proposed, or that I could have made sure were retained when they didn't deserve it. But in neutral territory I was obliged to be transparent in my work. At home, I already had collectives on which I was banking, and one of them failed. When I learned that it had not been selected, I was a little bit against it in my heart, but I knew the transparency and rigour of the work I had done, so I knew that it was the same in my region." Souleymane Sow, Regional Accompanist Upper Guinea, Aide et Action

Based on a transparent and objective method of selecting collectives

"The mine collective that I wanted was not retained and I accepted it. It was done in a transparent way, it protects the actors of the region." **Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

The principle of selecting the groups was imposed on the one hand in relation to the time and support resources available, and on the other hand with the aim of identifying "sustainable" groups, based on organisations with a certain habit of coming together for joint actions and on a coherent territory. But this principle had to be understood and accepted by all the stakeholders, so that no one would feel cheated. It was therefore essential to rely on an objective and transparent selection method that was recognised as legitimate by all stakeholders. This allowed the ES to distance itself from the groups.

SCHEMA The method for selecting the groups to be supported (a process spread over 5 months)



A point of attention to be kept in mind is the difficulty of making choices and prioritising:

For all the coaches, who are in regular contact with sometimes hundreds of organisations, having to make choices about sustainable collectives (and therefore identify non-viable collectives) was a difficult process that did not go without saying. For each of them, the individual process in relation to the actors in "their" region was carried out in close collaboration with their ES colleagues.

"In my region I had more than 100 supported organisations that came to the college more or less regularly. At the beginning my idea was to reach all 100 organisations. It was only when we realised how much work had to be done that we realised that starting with too many organisations would be

complicated. Getting me to refocus my objectives was an important moment for me. If I only have two collectives but they work together and can function without me at the end of the process, then I will have achieved my goals. "Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action

- Clearly distinguish between the functions of support and control of the project

"Since the coaches were no longer to hold the collectives to account, someone else had to do it. There was a change in the organisation of the ES which resulted in the recruitment of a monitoring officer. There is now a clear separation between the two functions. This is important and we should never lose sight of it. "Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action

Key methodological point: Avoiding confusion of roles and responsibilities

Coaching sets itself objectives in terms of means (methodology, positioning, reinforcement actions), but cannot set itself objectives in terms of results concerning what the coached actor must achieve. Having to measure, control and report on the results achieved by an actor prevents the positioning of coaching and the neutrality on which it is based. When the need for control cannot be avoided at the level of a project, it is a good idea to try to clearly dissociate the functions of control and accompaniment within the team.

In order to embody the support strategy in the functional organisation of the ES, it appeared essential to distinguish between the support functions and those of controlling the results produced by the collectives. The main function of regional coordinator (planning, project management, responsibility for the results obtained by the dynamics of the actors) was transformed into a function of actor accompaniment (accompaniment of the collectives towards autonomy, no responsibility for the results produced by the collectives). This change is central because it affects the work of the team and the role that each person played in "his/her" area of intervention. However, like any project, the PROJEG required accountability to the donors and to its internal governance, and the ES could not totally abandon control of the actions carried out. A project monitoring officer was recruited to ensure the monitoring and control function necessary for the steering of the PROJEG and to allow accountability for the results.

How?

Through a triggering work of reviewing the existing organisation

In order to initiate a reflection on the reorganisation of the team, a work on the flattening of what the ES was doing and its current organisation methods was carried out, facilitated by the distance and the questioning of the external coach. This work revealed the link between the support objective and the means to achieve it. From there, a new organisation was conceived, compatible with the objective and the means of the PROJEG (new organisation chart, new job descriptions and a recruitment).

- Transferring responsibility to the actors and taking the right place in support

"When I was a coordinator, I was too much in the thick of things. As an accompanier, I was able to move up and free up space for the collectives to occupy themselves. "Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action

"The FDW must know that we do not stand in front of or behind the person being accompanied, we walk with them in the direction they want to go. "Souleymane Sow, Regional Accompanist Upper Guinea, Aide et Action

The members of the ES were coordinators, knowledgeable about their area, with a leadership role among the actors, supporting them and participating in all their activities as resource persons for these "dynamics". As group leaders, the posture has evolved towards one of stepping back, distancing oneself from the group and listening, sharing analysis and advice, in connection with the empowerment of the groups in their activities. Relationships of authority gave way to partnership and negotiation. For the

coaches, this meant giving up their leadership and detaching themselves from the results, in order to give responsibility to the groups and thus take "the right place in coaching": to accompany an organisation or a person, to move alongside them in the direction they are aiming for, at their own pace and leaving the necessary space for them to become independent. By transferring responsibility to the collectives, the ES has left them free to take the initiative and assume responsibility, while at the same time providing support.

Key methodological point: The modification of roles and responsibilities between mentor and protégé

Empowerment of the actors

The more responsibility for one's own future is given to an actor, the more empowered he or she becomes. Empowerment is both the lever and the goal of autonomy. And the transfer of responsibility is the core of the change of position, the most sincere illustration of a shift to a support position. **For this, it is necessary to consider the actor as capable of doing things himself.**

"A group, as soon as you put it in a position to project itself and build its future, is more capable than you are of drawing the way it projects itself. "Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action

The posture and responsibilities of accompaniment

Taking the right place of accompaniment consists in developing and implementing responsibilities that are complementary to those of the actors being accompanied, and that enable the latter to fully assume their responsibilities.

Responsibilities transferred by the ES to the collectives :

- The choice of whether or not to participate in the autonomy support process
- Definition of the vision and objectives
- The definition and implementation of the actions they wish to take
- The organisation of collective work to carry out these actions
- Identification of external reinforcement needs
- Prioritisation of needs and negotiation with the PROJEG
- The definition and implementation of internal reinforcement actions
- Accountability for their governance
- Communication on their actions
- Internal communication

Additional responsibilities developed by the ES :

- Training, capacity building of collectives on targeted issues, at their request
- Facilitate workshops with methods and tools that allow groups to define their vision, objectives, and strengthening needs
- Helping groups to prioritise their actions and needs
- Questioning the groups, encouraging analysis, raising questions in a neutral manner
- Managing the support
- Support the groups according to their requests as the support progresses
- Helping groups to take a step back from their journey and from the support they receive

A point of caution not to be underestimated: the fear of losing power

This new position of methodological support but neutrality on the content (which is the responsibility of the collectives), centred on the needs and expectations of the collectives and no longer on their actions and projects, was not automatically adopted by the team. It may have been felt as a loss of power.

Even though the basic knowledge on autonomy and accompaniment had been provided during the first

external accompaniment mission, the ES had not yet been able to experiment with the new posture. The team was then faced with the fear of emptiness: fewer responsibilities without being able to clearly identify their new role and their new added value.

In fact, the acceptance of the change of posture, position and organisation can only be achieved through a detailed understanding of what coaching is. This progressive understanding was based on the first concrete experiences of positioning in coaching, according to a process specific to each person.

- *"At the beginning, understanding the posture of a companion, the very acceptance of the idea of accompaniment, was a bit difficult for me, after more than ten years when you were the leader and everything revolved around you, you were the one who facilitated and distributed the word when there was a meeting, you were the one who provided the resources. The posture, the letting go, is a difficulty. The advice I have to give is to be open to change, to say that this posture is a new skill to be acquired which organisations need today. This is how life is, you can't be the centre of the world all the time, sometimes you have to rise up to free up space."* **Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action**
- *"To say, everything we have done since the beginning, if you want it to continue, you have to get out of it, psychologically it's a shock. You have to give up: you have the expertise, the resources and the schedule, if you want your friends to be autonomous you have to give up all that, those prerogatives. At that moment I feel that the team doesn't like it, that it seems to be asking them to give up who they are. Along the way, we tried to see what this implied in terms of approach, how to achieve autonomy. It seemed to show them that they still have a role to play, which is different from the first one but which carries a new challenge, that they can stay and have a new challenge to take up."* **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

How?

Accompanying change within the ES

Any change of role and position in a team and vis-à-vis partners brings with it a natural risk of reluctance, given that people are always more comfortable with what they know, have mastered and are used to than with new activities and new relationships with others. Since people are solely responsible for (and capable of) changing their position, individual and collective change support is particularly relevant. In this particular case, the understanding and progressive implementation by the ES of the necessary change of positioning was accompanied in a flexible and iterative way by an external expertise, relayed and multiplied tenfold by the coordinator of the PROJEG, direct manager.

(1) The added value of external support for change

The recruitment of external expertise to support the team in supporting the actors in their autonomy, through four progressive support missions from 2016 to 2018.

"For me, Gaëlle [the external counsellor] was the person who made it possible to build the mobilisation of a team around a project of which we did not know the outline, the project of accompaniment towards autonomy. And it was because of her rather pedagogical and participative approach, of coming in without prefabrication but to build together, that she was able to build a process of discovery and co-learning (...) There was a moment of doubt and gradually, through the tools, methods, the fact of feeling supported, people saw themselves as valued and experts. This is what made it possible to make it a collective project and to give the team an identity on these subjects." **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

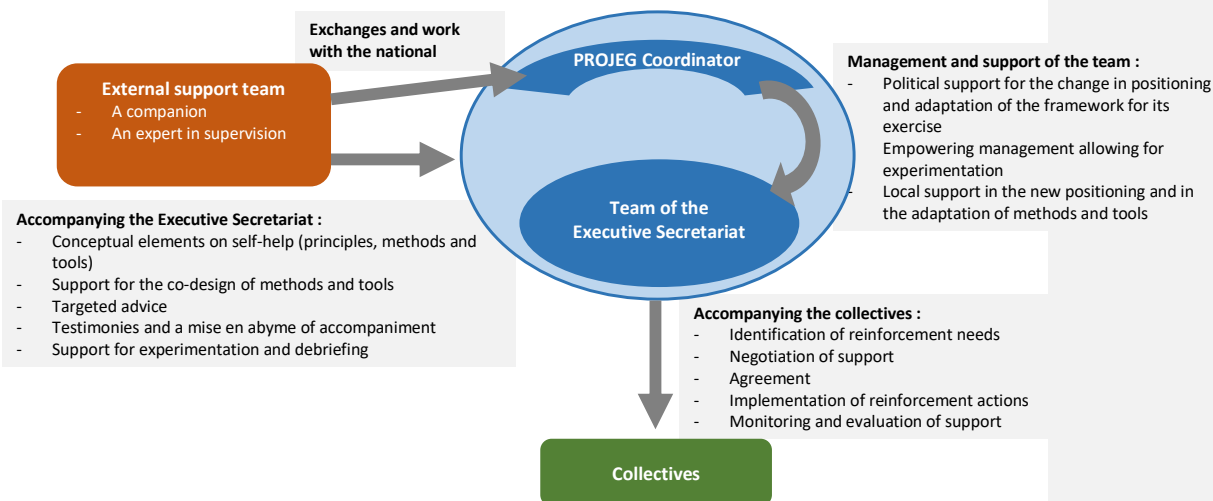
(2) The need for internal "coaching management"

The PROJEG coordinator played a central role in the transformation of the ES. His detailed understanding of the stakes and modalities necessary for the accompaniment to autonomy and his direct managerial function made him the main actor of the accompaniment of change with the team. Outside the missions of the external coach, but in alliance and cohesion with her, he led numerous working and exchange sessions, stimulating debate and ensuring perfect coordination of the process. He made sure that the team was in agreement, asked them how they were experiencing the process, and

systematically questioned their understanding of the approach. His benevolent and empowering management, respecting each person's own rhythm, provided individual support and collective reinforcement throughout the process. Her decision-making role also allowed the necessary adjustments to be made to the project in order to set up the empowerment system.

- *"The accountability and trust of Moctar [the PROJEG coordinator] towards the team members meant that we were fully empowered in the implementation on the ground. Autonomy existed before, but it was reinforced in this phase of accompaniment."* **Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action**
- *"I know that with Gaëlle [the external coach], we have always worked beforehand, we exchange on the content and the method she wants to use. There was a real complicity in this work. It's thanks to this that in the plenary session I'm in a position to comfort the team, I have no doubts about what they're doing, it's something we do together as a pair, each one of us tries to see at what point his or her words are most appropriate. This allowed us to see which part I had to take over or support. This co-sponsorship seems quite important to me."* **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

SCHEMA Cascading support in the PROJEG



One difficulty: Maintaining the support posture over time

For most people, and even more so when it is a new posture, positioning in coaching is not easy to maintain over time. You have to pay attention to yourself, be regularly aware of your positioning so that you don't fall back into providing content, or be able to 'pick yourself up' quickly if you 'slip'. This is not a natural exercise at first.

*"The great difficulty is to know the difference between the position of coordinator and that of accompanier. And you always have to be warned, because when you are used to something it's not easy to stop, the person always has to go back to what he or she is doing, to remember that he or she has changed position, that he or she is in a new approach, that he or she is going with the people and as they want. Always put yourself back in your new position, even though it is difficult. "***Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

There is nothing like regular refocusing, between pairs and sometimes even by the groups themselves, to get back on track!

- *"The fact that we worked in pairs allowed us to keep our positions as companions: when I risked telling people what to do, the other one would guide me and vice versa. "***Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**
- *"In Kankan, the debate was very high, and the participants were in it and demanded this posture of accompaniment from the facilitators: they themselves had integrated the changes. "***Thierno Ciré Barry, Project Monitoring Officer, Aide et Action**

A virtuous effect for the ES: Less stress and pressure to perform

One effect of the coaching position and the transfer of responsibilities from the results to the collectives, together with an effective assumption of responsibilities by the collectives, was a reduction in the stress felt by the team members.

▪ Develop skills, methods and tools for coaching

*"The mastery of the methodological approach to accompaniment and the tools is what really facilitated the process. "***Souleymane Sow, Regional Accompanist Upper Guinea, Aide et Action**

*"I have the feeling that there is a profession of accompaniment that emerges from the acquisition of the methodology: a new expertise. "***Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

Key methodological point: the professionalisation of support

Supporting actors towards autonomy is a profession in its own right, which is well documented in the medico-social sector and little documented in the international solidarity sector. Beyond the change of posture, it requires specific skills, methods and tools. It is a matter of articulating the time and skills of (i) leadership, (ii) training, (iii) advisory support, (iv) coaching, (v) facilitation, and sometimes (vi) mediation, based on the actor's requests and according to his or her progress towards his or her objectives.

Acquire the methods and tools of autonomy support

The development of skills by the ES to support the autonomy of the collectives was essential to its change of positioning. The acquisition of formalised methods and tools provided a reassuring framework. These elements of expertise filled the void left by the transfer of responsibility and "thematic" expertise to the collectives.

The competence was developed through a transfer (conceptual and then applied) of methods and tools of coaching. This is what reassured the team, by concretising both the reality and the specificity of this expertise and by giving them the desire to acquire and develop it.

- *"For me, first of all, it was the discovery of a new working method, with new tools. And it was a real moment of capacity building, with a participatory approach, we were at the heart of the work process."* **Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action**

How?

Creating a supportive learning environment

The PROJEG, by assuming that the objective of accompanying the collectives towards autonomy required a transformation of the practices, positioned the ES team in a situation of assumed learning. This directly induces the notion of test and right to error, the adaptation to the rhythm of each one, and the sharing of an objective of collective and individual progression, which played a considerable role in the acquisition by the ES of new methods and tools and in its repositioning.

This learning was greatly facilitated by the working, collaborative and management conditions within the ES team.

- *"It is really the relationship between people within the PROJEG team: a relationship of trust, support, a working environment that is like a family."* **Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

And beyond that... This perception of learning and freedom in experimentation, linked to the autonomy left by the coordinator, even allowed some to spontaneously and freely reinvest the methodologies in another context, vis-à-vis other organisations and at their request!

By supporting the co-construction of tools in teams

In order for the methods and tools to be truly appropriated by the team, they were co-constructed with the external coach. The challenge of the coaching was to propose fundamental conceptual elements and to accompany the team in the adaptation of the tools, knowing that the positioning in coaching implies a responsibility for the method but that the content belongs to the actor being coached:

- *"What impressed me was that we co-constructed with the coach, she has a methodology but we provided the content. This flexibility in adapting the tools, I experience it as a real learning moment, of theory linked to practice."* **Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action**
- *"She [the coach] did not come with a ready-made method. We can feel that she has a plan in her head, but the different stages are built with the team, she gave the floor to us much more, through follow-up questions, we built things in a collective way."* **Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action**

By carrying out practical simulations in teams

At each stage of the support to the collectives, before being in a position to facilitate the collectives, the team tested the tools and methods internally. For example, for the identification of the vision and the needs for reinforcement of the groups, the team put itself in the place of a group to define a possible vision, then actions to contribute to its achievement and finally external and internal reinforcement needs. This playful time allowed for a clear understanding of the issues at stake at each stage and to raise specific questions which then provided the keys to the right way to support the groups. The simulations also helped to refine the tools: by experimenting, we can see what works and what blocks, and we can improve directly.

"It was an important method in the appropriation: the time we took to simulate, I think that played a determining role. Before the key stages, we used to simulate in the office, we went through the process and we simulated. And we came out with tools/methods that belonged to everyone because they had appropriated them." **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

By experimenting collectively and in a supported way

Following the internal simulations, the first facilitation test with a group was carried out with the entire team and in the presence of the external coach. The four coaches were organised in facilitation pairs: while one pair facilitated, the other pair, the rest of the ES and the external coach were positioned as

observers. Once the workshop was over, a debriefing session allowed everyone to express their feelings and make suggestions for improving the facilitation method. An "on-the-spot" capitalisation table was used to record all the remarks with a view to improvement.

For the workshops to support the collectives in identifying their vision, the pilot workshop was conducted with the CEGUIFED collective and was a highlight for the whole team: the members had understood that they had to be in a support position, but it was from this workshop that they saw how to do it. It was also the first time that the team realised that it was feasible and that it worked!

"Facilitating the workshop was a challenge. At the beginning it was difficult, but I felt like a good companion. The result obtained with the group comforted me and made me want to continue." **Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action**

The importance of formalising and monitoring the support

Formalise the productions

The coach often has the role of formalising the products and tools co-constructed, as it is on this reassuring basis that the actor can develop a good understanding of the process and his or her skills.

"What I appreciated was the fact that at each mission, a summary document retraced the work done, so we had a step by step memory, we knew what we had done, what we had achieved, what tools had been built." **Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action**

Follow up on the support

The coach is also responsible for monitoring the support over time, in order to be able to provide relevant support according to the needs and demands of the supported actor. This follow-up must be based on tools that allow the actor's progress to be seen.

"There were moments of remote calls to advise between missions: on what needed to be done, where we were, what information to bring back and what specific needs." **Thierno Ciré Barry, Project Monitoring Officer, Aide et Action**

The external support of the ES was interrupted after the identification/negotiation of the needs for collective strengthening. However, it would have been interesting if it had continued during the implementation phase of the collective strengthening actions. This would have provided the ES with the tools to manage and monitor the support of the collectives and would have allowed it to step back and take stock of the progress of the collectives towards autonomy.

"There was a lack of support to help them take a step back from their position, to give them additional tools/methods according to their needs, and in particular a tool to monitor the work of the collectives and to allow the collectives to have a look at their progress." **Gaëlle Gandema, External coach, ID**

A point of attention: the articulation with the rest of the work

Accompaniment activities are time-consuming: many meetings and steps to make the groups more responsible. When setting up a support system within a programme, one must be aware that other objectives must be reduced and that it is therefore necessary to resize the other activities. Furthermore, it is necessary to ensure a coherent approach between the coaching approach and the other support activities planned for the same actors: the autonomy coaching approach must be transversal to all activities for the actors being coached, otherwise the results obtained in terms of empowerment, self-awareness and motivation to progress will be invalidated.

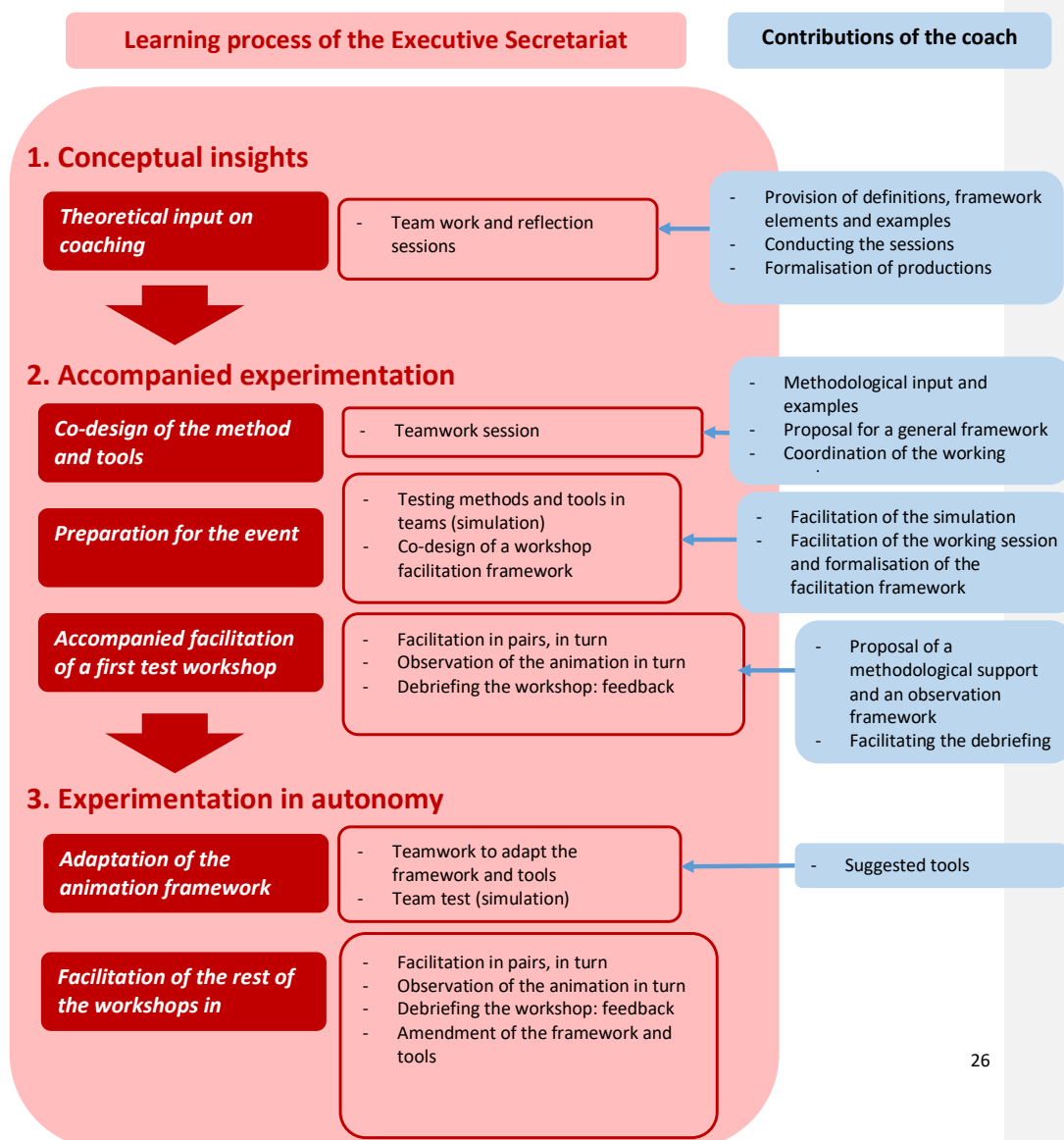
SCHEMA Modelling the learning process by the Executive Secretariat: the example of designing and facilitating workshops with collectives

The process of learning the skills, methods and tools of coaching was based on the following "recipe":

- A lot of teamwork and a collective progression in learning;

- Activities carried out in pairs and outside their traditional area of intervention in order to facilitate distance and peer learning;
- An alternation of theoretical elements and practical application (the more one progresses in the change of posture towards accompaniment, the more the initial questions are enriched, it then becomes necessary to return to the theoretical fundamentals to deepen them).

"What I found good about it was that I was immediately putting into practice the theory I was receiving, it was done at the same time. It is by doing that you really learn, there is a difference between theory and practice. I was confident because I was coached myself and I was learning at the same time as the others." Cheick Mohamed Touré, Regional Accompanist Lower Guinea, Aide et Action



3. Stages in the process of supporting the autonomy of groups

"In other projects, we don't help you to make it sustainable, you have to think for yourself." Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

This part presents the global process of accompaniment of the collectives, which was defined and implemented by the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG with the support of the external accompanier. Six main steps can be identified: they do not constitute a "method" in itself, but they can inspire individuals or teams in the definition of a coaching approach.

1. Definition and validation of the support process

The issues :

- *Agree collectively on a framework and approach to intervention*
- *Informing stakeholders*
- *Legitimise the work of the Executive Secretariat*

How : The approach to supporting the collectives was defined by the ES, with the support of the external coach. It was then presented to the Copil and the GA, which amended and validated it.

Tool: Tools to present the concepts of autonomy and support and to raise awareness of the approach were designed in the form of Power Point material and methodological notes. These tools were each time adapted to their "public".

2. Characterisation of the actor to be supported

The issues :

- *Specify the target of the support*
- *To show the process of gradual structuring of the targets, towards autonomy*

How : The ES defined criteria to qualify an autonomous collective and then organised them according to the level of structuring, with the support of the external coach.

Tool: To define an autonomy support approach, it is necessary to know which actor is being addressed and what his or her stage of maturity is. The **Collective Structuring Reference Guide** (see p. 17) enabled the ES to characterise the initial situation of the collectives, to describe the expected autonomy, and thus to better project itself in the definition of the support approach. It also helped to define the selection criteria for the groups to be supported.

3. Selection of collectives to be supported

The issues :

- *Select a limited number of sustainable groups to ensure quality support*
- *Start questioning their request for support*

How : The selection process for the collectives is presented on page 18. Emphasis was placed on the transparency and objectivity of the choice so that it would be accepted by all stakeholders. In this respect, the governance bodies of the PROJEG played an important role: the selection process and criteria were presented and validated by the Regional Colleges beforehand, the final selection was

Commenté [m1]: pictonext to these 3 recurring points or some other graphic mark to make them easier to spot?

decided by an ad hoc selection committee and by the Copil, and the results were presented to the Regional Colleges.

Tool: The transparency and objectivity of the selection process was facilitated by the definition of **Selection Criteria** (see p. 18). On the basis of these criteria, an **interview format** and a **scoring grid** were developed.

4. Supporting collectives in identifying their vision and strengthening needs

The issues :

- *Enable collectives to define what they want to be and what they want to do*
- *On this basis, allow the collectives to identify their needs and their request for support themselves*
- *Strengthen the understanding of the collectives of what accompaniment is*

How: For each collective, the ES facilitated a three-day workshop for collective members to :

- Define a vision in terms of the collective's mission
- Define a vision in terms of the organisation and functioning of the collective
- Identify actions to be taken, contributing to the achievement of the vision
- Identify needs for reinforcement: two types of reinforcement have been distinguished: internal reinforcement (which can be carried out by the collectives themselves) and external reinforcement (for which the support of the PROJEG is required)

During these workshops, the members of the collectives produced the content themselves. The ES did not intervene in the content and was content with providing methodological support.

5. Arbitration of needs and negotiation of support for groups

The issues :

- *Consolidate the demand for support from collectives*
- *Empowering groups to arbitrate on internal and external reinforcement*
- *Strengthen the understanding of the collectives of what accompaniment is*

How: The arbitration and negotiation process was conducted in four stages, with the support of the external coach:

- As a first step, the ES compiled the reinforcement needs identified by the 12 collectives in order to identify some common needs that could be shared.
- It then made a first arbitration on the external reinforcements. This arbitration was made with regard to the relevance of the actions of reinforcement (compared to the vision of the collective and the referential of structuring of the collectives) and according to the budget and the human means of the PROJEG.
- Workshops were conducted with each collective to negotiate the external reinforcement by the PROJEG and to accompany the collective in the arbitration and prioritisation of its internal actions.
- Finally, PROJEG has contracted internal and external reinforcements with each of the collectives via framework agreements.

Tool: The collectives had identified many needs for reinforcement, so prioritising and arbitrating between these needs was difficult for both the ES and the collectives. Several tools were used to facilitate decision-making. The ES compiled all the reinforcement needs of the collectives in a table that allowed for an overview, the pooling of certain requests from the collectives, and an evaluation of the feasibility in terms of the ES's human resources. During the negotiation workshops with the

collectives, the ES used a tool to classify and prioritise the needs in terms of importance and feasibility.

Tool: The arbitration and negotiations led to the definition of an **empowerment plan** for each collective (see p. 32). This plan recalls the respective responsibilities of PROJEG and the collective in the implementation of actions and reinforcements. It was annexed to the agreements signed between PROJEG and each collective.

Key methodological point: The emergence of a demand as a condition for neutral support

A stakeholder can only be coached if he/she makes a request: this is a guiding principle of coaching and a sign of respect for the stakeholder's autonomy. However, the request often does not emerge on its own and the first (active and complex) task of the coach is to help the actor to make a clear request for reinforcement in line with his or her expectations. Thus, in the case of PROJEG, one of the main challenges was to accompany the emergence of a demand for reinforcement by the collectives. This implied that they had to project themselves in the long term, beyond the carrying out of a simple project in consortium. It was the formalisation of this request that enabled the SE to position itself as a support organisation. The process of accompanying the collectives in the emergence of a request for reinforcement of their autonomy began during the selection stage of the collectives (through interviews encouraging self-analysis), continued through workshops to identify reinforcement needs, and ended during the negotiation of the reinforcement with each collective.

6. Implementation of empowerment plans for collectives

The issues :

- *Strengthen the capacity of collectives through targeted external actions*
- *Monitor and encourage internal group building actions*
- *Enable collectives to experiment with the implementation of initial joint projects*

How : The external strengthening actions were implemented by the ES or by external providers (e.g. advocacy training, archiving training); while the collectives implemented the internal strengthening actions (e.g. setting up governance bodies, defining a procedures manual).

In parallel, the PROJEG financed the implementation of a first project for each collective: the launch of these first common activities served as a ground for putting the reinforcements into practice and played a key role in terms of cohesion and internal dynamics of the collectives.

7. Assessment of the support

The issues :

- *Taking stock of the support*
- *Measure the evolution of the groups and allow them to look at their own evolution*

How : At the time when the capitalisation was carried out, the actions to strengthen the collectives were still in progress and an assessment had not yet been made. However, the follow-up and assessment of the support is important both for the support worker (monitoring of progress and readjustment) and for the person being supported (tracing their progress, becoming aware of it and planning for the future).

TABLE Example of an empowerment plan :

Alliance de la Guinée Forestière pour la Paix et le Développement

Vision: The Alliance of CSOs in Forest Guinea aims to contribute to access to equitable justice for all by promoting and protecting human rights in the region by 2020. It is a recognised collective on human rights issues, respectful of democratic values and principles, working with the effective participation of all its members.

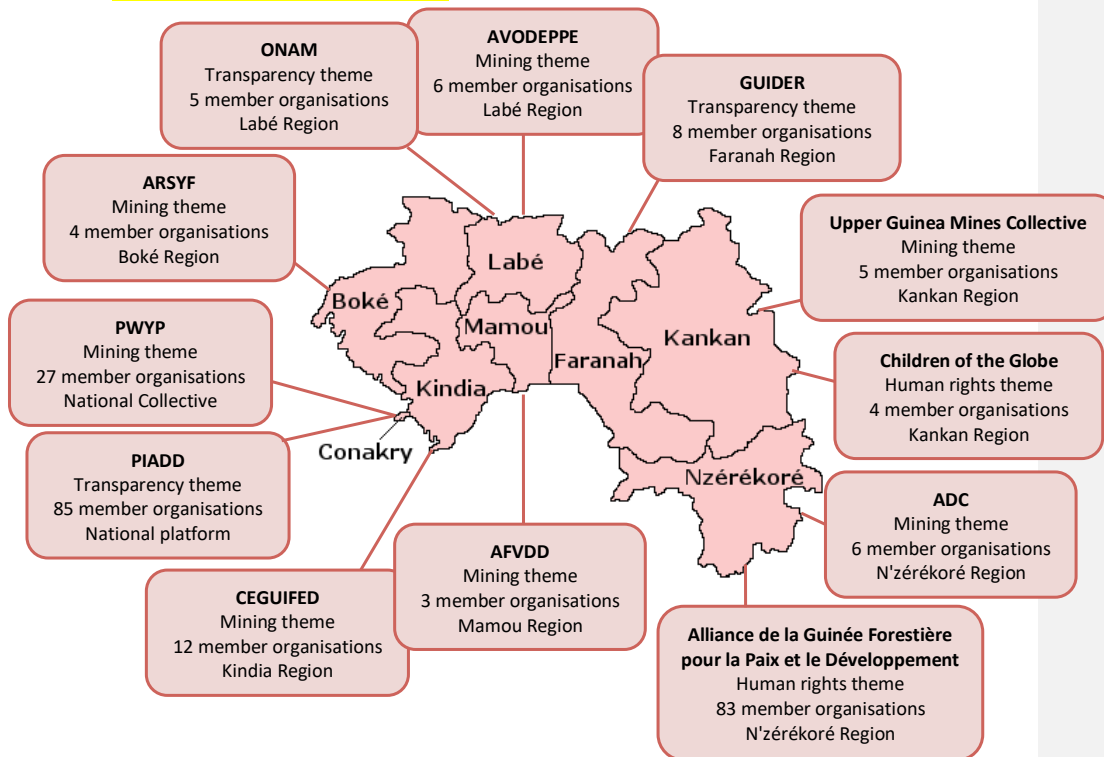
Commitments of the collective (internal reinforcement actions)	Duration and period	Persons responsible	Actions to strengthen the PROJEG (external actions)	Duration and period	Participants
Setting up awareness-raising sessions for citizens on their rights	1 session/ quarter	Mr M. + focal points	Provision of targeted knowledge on human rights law, according to the needs of the groups	5 days (August 2018)	20
Setting up awareness-raising actions on the need to avoid people taking the law into their own hands: training on legal procedures (code of criminal procedure)	March 2019	A. C. and M. T., with financial support from PROJEG	Linking with other relevant actors	Throughout the process	3
			Training in documentary research	3 days	1
			Methodological support for archiving	July 2018	1
Organisation of multi-stakeholder exchange meetings on human rights issues	Monthly	A. K.	Training in communication techniques	3 days	1
			Methodological support for the development of a communication plan	2 days	10
Establishment/reinvigoration of monitoring committees on cases of human rights violations in rural and urban communes	January-February 2019	J-P. L. and G. O.	Support for the implementation of a monitoring and evaluation system (training, development, sharing and implementation)	August-September 2018	20 (training), 3 (development)
			Training in facilitation techniques	3 days	10-15
Drafting of legal documents and operating rules / Charter of the collective	August 2018	MR M.	Training in resource mobilisation techniques	7 days	1
			Support in defining a resource mobilisation plan	3 days (February 2019)	20
Setting up the governance bodies of the collective	August 2018	L. T. and G. O.	Methodological support for the elaboration of a procedures manual and the implementation of a monitoring and verification system for the use of the collective's funds	7 days of training	3
Contacting local authorities and partners to inform about the Alliance's mission	From July 2018	V. K. and S. K. C.	Support for the operationalisation of the procedures manual and orientation of members on the content	October 2018 and followed throughout	20
			Training on advocacy and lobbying techniques	3 days	1
Establishment of an information and communication mechanism on the activities of the Alliance towards its members	July 2018	G. O. and R. H.	Institutional support for the functioning of the collective	At start-up (July 2018)	As required
			Technical support for the implementation of initiatives related to the collective's mission	July 2018 - October 2019	Depending on the realities

4. Changes characterising the empowerment of collectives

Presentation of the collectives accompanied by the PROJEG

Among the hundreds of organisations making up the dozens of consortia that had benefited from PROJEG support, 12 collectives of organisations were selected for the phase of accompaniment towards autonomy. These 12 collectives vary in size (from 3 to 85 member organisations), represent all regions of Guinea, and work on three central themes (mining, transparency and human rights). Most of them were created within the framework of the PROJEG, following projects carried out by their members in consortium.

SCHEMA presenting the 12 collectives



As part of this capitalization work, four groups were met:

The collectives met were chosen according to the diversity of their problems and levels of structuring, their availability, and the travel capacities of the capitalisation mission. The changes identified in these four collectives were put into perspective with the changes that the Executive Secretariat of the PROJEG observed in the other collectives. The results presented below therefore provide a global

panorama in which all the collectives can be found, although each one has its own path and more or less marked degrees of change.

Presentation format of the 4 collectives to be defined with the graphic designer:



CEGUIFED Collective, 12 member organisations, Kindia region

"Our collective contributes to the mobilisation and transparent management of mining royalties for the development of mining areas and the preservation of the environment with the participation of youth and women. It is a citizen collective, responsible, credible, expert and dynamic on mining issues at the regional and national levels that advocates the principles of good governance. »



AFVDD Collective, 3 member organisations, Mamou region

"In 2020, our collective contributes to the respect of mining revenue payments and promotes their transparent management for local development in the Mamou region. We are a reference collective, dynamic, specialist in mining issues in the region and respectful of the rules of good governance."

ONAM Collective, 5 member organisations, Labé region

"By 2020, our collective will contribute to promoting transparent management of public resources by promoting respect for procedures, effective participation of citizens and accountability at all levels in the Middle Guinea region. It is a model collective, recognised, with expertise in the field of Citizen Control of Public Action and respecting the principles of good governance."



PWYP Collective, 27 member organisations, national collective

"In Guinea, our ambition is sustainable, inclusive, accountable mining that respects the legislation and the EITI 2016 standard for the benefit of the people. Our coalition is a reference organisation, leader, competent in mining governance with an exemplary operation."



Analysis of the 7 major changes in the collectives

This section presents the main changes identified by the collectives themselves.

They make it possible to characterise what autonomy represents and what the process of empowerment consisted of for the collectives. They can thus inspire the definition of autonomy frames of reference for people or teams accompanying actors towards autonomy.

For each major change, different levers can be identified, some of which are the result of the support provided by the PROJEG, and others of the actions of the collectives themselves in the space left free by the repositioning of the PROJEG. Any change being the fruit of complex processes, a multitude of other factors have contributed positively or negatively.

Moreover, the changes feed off each other and are closely linked, both in their origins and in their effects.

Visual summary of the 7 major changes:



Commenté [m2]: NOTE FOR THE MAQUETTAGE: the idea is not to present them in a specific order or with a hierarchy, as they are all very related changes. Perhaps a cloud format where the changes touch each other. Some changes are more connected to others, so the proposed layout should be kept.

- Members have developed a sense of unity and belonging to the collectives
- Collectives feel responsible for their actions and structuring
- Collectives have improved their skills and expertise in relation to their mission
- and developed collegiality
- Members of the collectives have given themselves the means to work effectively together
- The collectives have gained in notoriety, legitimacy and influence
- Collectives have developed their capacity to mobilise partners and resources

Through these seven changes, we find the three pillars of autonomy²:

- The ability to self-determine by making decisions and arbitrating between choices;
- The ability to define one's strategy and operating rules, and the competence to implement them;
- Freedom and responsibility in implementing one's choices and in being accountable.

² Stéphanie Desfontaines, Stéphane Montier, *Les clés de l'autonomie. Models and support processes*, Eyrolles, 2012.

▪ ***Members have developed a sense of unity and belonging to the collectives***

"At the beginning, each one pedalled his own bike and followed his personal objectives, then the collective allowed him to raise his head and work towards a collective benefit. "Thierno Hady Bah, FMG, member of the ONAM collective

Under the impetus of PROJEG, the member organisations of the collectives had already worked together in the form of a "consortium" around specific projects. They met on an ad hoc basis, around a funding opportunity or at the instigation of PROJEG, and to work on a limited and circumscribed project. The collective dynamic was limited to the realisation of the activity, and it ceased once the project was completed.

Autonomy coaching has involved organisations that have come together around a common theme, but this time with a longer-term perspective. These organisations began to see themselves as 'collectives', thanks to the coaching process, with a shared long-term vision and objectives. **In doing so, the member organisations have developed a more lasting bond, are more cohesive, and are developing a sense of belonging that did not exist in a simple consortium.**

Mansour Diallo, from the NGO Guinea Solidarity and member of the ONAM collective, explains the difference between a consortium and a collective: *"The difference is that the consortium came together at a given time for a temporary project and then each person returned to their own organisation. The collective is long term, progressively a whole system is put in place around a vision, not just a project. »*

Pre-requisites" insert Pre-requisites for "doing things together

In the case of one of the 12 collectives initially identified, the autonomy support did not succeed and the collective dissolved. The analysis of this case and the wider experience of the PROJEG raises some facilitating conditions for developing a unity and a collective identity:

- The thematic specialisation has made it possible to unify the members around a common purpose.
- The complementary skills and expertise of the members around the theme facilitate cohesion and contribute to the added value of the group.
- The existence of an initial experience of working in consortia allowed for the beginning of links between organisations and served as a "test phase" before forging stronger links.
- Territorial anchoring at the local level: the further away the members are geographically, the more complex the life of the collective becomes, particularly because of travel and the costs involved. On the other hand, a local anchoring favours the knowledge of the territory and the recognition by the institutions. A local dimension therefore seems preferable, at least for the start-up.
- The absence of too strong or too pronounced identities among the members avoids competition.

What contributed to the change?

The definition of a common vision in which all members of the collective can identify

One of the key moments in the autonomy support chosen by the collectives was the participatory definition of a "vision-mission" concerning the mission of the collective and a "vision-organisation" concerning the functioning of the collective. This moment created (or revealed) an identity and was a vector of cohesion because :

- It led the collectives to project themselves into a broader and longer-term "associative project" than a simple project.
- The vision was defined by the members of the collectives without the companions intervening and contributing on the substance.

- Part of the vision concerned the organisation, and therefore the collective itself, leading the members to project themselves into the collective they want.
- Participatory methods were used to get all members on board and to take into account their respective contributions.
- Debating the vision until a consensus was reached created collective ownership of the vision chosen by the group.

"The organisation of the workshop on the vision and mission motivated people and gave them a sense of responsibility and ownership of the collective, of which we feel like full members." **N'fansou Sano, Director of the NGO CEGUIFED, President of the CEGUIFED collective**

The definition of the vision has also helped to develop a sense of trust and cohesion among the members. *"As we have the same objectives, everyone feels really comfortable. We have the same ideas, everyone feels part of the collective."* **Amadou Magahariou Sow, VGDR, member of the AFVDD collective**

Implementation of the first joint projects

The cohesion and sense of belonging to the collective was strengthened by the achievement of initial collective successes. The members had already carried out actions together in the form of a consortium. But the projects carried out as a collective were defined and implemented more autonomously without the close support of the ES: the results obtained generated even more pride and a sense of unity.

"What changes with joint projects is that CSOs are more involved and the collective decides. It is through this work that the collective is built up little by little." **N'fansou Sano, Director of the NGO CEGUIFED, President of the CEGUIFED collective**

Unfinished business" insert Unfinished business: the development of the collectives' own identity

The collectives have not always worked on developing their own identity. They all have a vision, but with a few exceptions they do not have their own name (their name is that of the lead organisation), visual identity, headquarters, etc.

This has not hindered their formation and functioning, but it would seem interesting to accompany the definition of a name and an identity in order to strengthen the feeling of belonging and, in the medium term, to improve the identification and recognition of the collectives by other actors.

▪ **The collectives feel responsible for their actions and their structure**

"The members of the collective now consider it a collective asset to be preserved. The trust placed in us means that we no longer have the right to make mistakes." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

Autonomy is first and foremost the result of a process originating from the actor, and can only be encouraged from the outside. In this sense, it is not given, it is taken. The collectives put themselves in a position of autonomy and responsibility in the perpetuation of the dynamics initiated by the PROJEG.

The collectives feel responsible for their sustainability

The members are aware of the added value of the collective and the role they have to play in the structuring and functioning of the collective.

"We give you a small way to achieve our vision. If we want to do it right: we do it. If we want to do it wrong: we do it and the collective will die. We are aware of this." **N'fansou Sano, Director of the NGO CEGUIFED, President of the CEGUIFED collective**

The collectives initiate and define their own projects

The PROJEG played an important role in stimulating the activities carried out by the consortia: it gave impetus to ideas, proposed terms of reference, brought actors together, etc. The collectives now have the initiative for their own projects and define their content without the support of the ES. The collectives now have the initiative for their own projects and define their content without the support of the ES.

"Instead of us listening to the PROJEG, now we are the ones who speak, who have the floor. "Aïcha Barry, Organiser of the PWYP collective

The collectives are responsible for the conduct of activities and accountable for the results achieved

They implement the activities more autonomously than in the consortia, and the ES only provides support on an ad hoc basis, at their request. They are directly responsible for the results of the projects to the PROJEG, to which they report without going through the coaches.

"The collective is much more responsible for its activities. Before, I always saw the counsellor telling me what to do. Today, planning is more autonomous, we only call the support worker in case of difficulty. "Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective

What contributed to the change?

The fact of having been able to anticipate the disengagement of the PROJEG

The withdrawal of the ES, the autonomy approach, and the roles and responsibilities of each had been clearly set out (see above).

"We were warned and we knew what was going to happen and what role we were going to play, so we prepared for the disengagement of PROJEG. We are not caught off guard. "Lansana Mamakany Camara, President of VGDR, member of the AFVDD collective

Trust and withdrawal from the Executive Secretariat

The counsellors ceased to play a leading role in the definition, implementation and monitoring of the actions carried out by the collectives. At the same time, they showed their confidence in the collectives to play this role themselves, and remained available to support the collectives at their request.

"Before, it was the PROJEG that identified themes, that dictated what we were going to work on. Now, the Executive Secretariat has much more confidence in us than before in the choice of themes, actions, areas: we are free to choose. (...) The PROJEG executive is less present, he comes when he is requested by CEGUIFED. "N'fansou Sano, Director of the NGO CEGUIFED, President of the CEGUIFED collective

The importance of defining negotiated frameworks with reciprocal commitments

An essential materialization of the empowerment of the collectives came through the support agreement. This allowed to define and to recognize jointly the reciprocal commitments in terms of responsibility, an essential clarification in the accompaniment. The PROJEG chose to establish with each accompanied collective framework agreements for the reinforcement of autonomy (commitment according to principles and values) and partnership conventions for the implementation of the capacity building plan. In annex, a capacity building plan specified the external capacity building activities (under the responsibility of PROJEG) and the internal capacity building commitments (under the responsibility of the collectives themselves), with a clear distribution of responsibilities, budgeting and a commitment on results.

- [The collectives have improved their skills and expertise in relation to their mission](#)

One of the most significant changes noted by the collectives is the improvement of their expertise, skills and tools, both in terms of their intervention themes and working methods.

They have strengthened their thematic competencies in relation to their vision and area of intervention: mining, transparency, or human rights.

"Through PROJEG we have really specialised in mining: we have the capacity to carry out activities on the issue of mining, to monitor the miners and to tell them what they have to do to follow up on their legal obligations and to respect the payment of taxes. "Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

They have developed expertise in new areas such as advocacy or citizen monitoring of public action (participatory methods for diagnosing problems, building budgets and monitoring and evaluating public action, setting up citizen juries, etc.).

"The collective now has the capacity to diagnose a health or local development situation, analyse it, and make recommendations for improvement. The collective has thus adopted a new health diagnosis strategy, for example. "Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective

They have improved their skills and tools in project management and administrative management, which makes it easier to work together.

"We now have the capacity to manage a project together, as a team, to mobilise within the collective, and to develop a monitoring and evaluation system within the collective. "Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

[What contributed to the change?](#)

[The capacity building actions carried out by the PROJEG](#)

In addition to the reinforcement actions already carried out throughout the PROJEG, this approach of reinforcement of competences was based on the needs identified by the collectives themselves. Within this framework, the PROJEG has implemented both actions to reinforce existing expertise (e.g. training on the lexicon of the mining code), and actions to develop new skills (e.g. training and tools on the methods of participatory diagnosis and citizen monitoring of public action).

"We found on the ground that regarding the mobilisation of resources between the commune of Kindia and the quarries of Koliady, there was no transparency on the amounts received over the years 2017 and 2018. Between the amount said by the commune and our investigation, we realised that there was a big difference. And we realised that the protocol of agreement did not comply with the mining code. It was thanks to the PROJEG training that we were able to see the errors ourselves and call the authorities. "Fanta Sylla, President of FEJED Guinea, member of the CEGUIFED collective

[The organisation of internal capacity building actions](#)

The collectives played a proactive role in disseminating the training received by certain representatives to other members of the collective. This principle of multiplication was written into the contract between each collective and the PROJEG.

"We often hold feedback workshops for other members who were not able to participate in the training. "Mamadou Pethé Barry, NGO CAFODED Guinea, member of the AFVDD collective

Beyond the simple duplication of the PROJEG trainings, some collectives have organised other internal reinforcement actions between their members.

"Some of us did not have technical skills in setting up, managing and monitoring-evaluating projects. We trained each other to strengthen the internal skills of the collective." **Fanta Sylla, President of FEJED Guinea, member of the CEGUIFED collective**

Doing things together: learning by doing together

By bringing together individuals and organisations with a variety of skills, collective work has made it possible to disseminate and develop skills that are then reused by the members and by the collective.

"The fact that people are in contact with each other broadens the internal reinforcement in an informal way. Through the activity itself, in practice. It is by working together that skills spread." **Thierno Hady Bah, FMG, member of the ONAM collective**

▪ ***The collectives have diversified their leadership and developed collegiality***

The consortia and then the collectives were initially formed around a leading member, the "chef de file", who was the interlocutor of the PROJEG, assumed responsibilities, animated the collective, acted as spokesperson, etc. The chef de file of each collective had to make room for the other members to become more involved. The leader of each collective had to make room for the other members to become more involved.

The collectives have diversified their internal leadership and developed collegiality. While initially the leader played a leading role, new voices have emerged within the collectives and have given rise to internal contradictory debates on the activities to be carried out or the way of working together. These debates have sometimes generated crises and fragility, but they allow each member to express himself or herself, and are a sign that everyone feels equally responsible for the collective. This diversification of leadership has also manifested itself in the development of collegiality in decision-making and in the management of the collective: the leaders no longer take decisions alone but involve the other organisations and seek consensus. For example, in ONAM, although the resources of the collective are hosted by a "leader", they are managed in a collegial manner. Feedback and reports are shared with all members of the collective. And the lead partner must guarantee the traceability of expenditure, with each member able to consult and check the supporting documents.

"The members of the collective are increasingly mastering the notion of collegiate responsibility. It's not a matter of the leader. We are all responsible." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

Three of the four collectives we met had organised a formal or informal distribution of roles and responsibilities, according to the skills of each member. In CEGUIFED, for example, the main positions of responsibility have been divided among the members (presidency, secretariat, communication, resource management, monitoring and evaluation, etc.). The Dorcas Guinea Association, which acts as treasurer, is now in direct contact with PROJEG on financial aspects, without going through the lead partner.

"When the action plan was drawn up, we decided that meetings should rotate, that decision-making should be collective, and we made organisations responsible for certain actions. It is in this sense that we started to think about the materialisation of the statutes so that no one has a monopoly on decision-making." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

What contributed to the change?

Coaching methods that promote collegiality

The ES facilitated the sharing of leadership by bringing its coaching approach and practices into line with its discourse on collegiality and the sharing of responsibilities within the collectives. This has resulted in particular in :

- Continuous awareness of shared responsibility and the idea that everyone has a role to play in the smooth running of the collectives;
- The fact of having several direct contacts within a group, particularly in relation to the responsibilities of each person, so as not to favour one organisation or person;
- Attention paid to ensuring that the support benefits all members and not just the lead partner (representation of the diversity of members in workshops, training, etc.);
- The use of facilitation methods that allow everyone's ideas to be taken into account and valued (use of Post-it notes so that everyone can reflect and express their ideas, follow-up questions to the other members when the leader was the only one to speak, etc.);
- The fact that the ES does not impose anything and that decisions are taken by consensus after negotiation between the PROJEG and the collectives;
- A role in raising awareness among leaders and mediating in case of conflict.

Focus *insert* Sharing leadership: a collective issue

The withdrawal of the ES has left room for the emergence of new "leaders". But the definition of new modes of governance and leadership is beyond the scope of the coach who, in a perspective of empowerment, cannot define them himself or impose them. This issue is therefore the responsibility of the actors themselves.

In some cases, the space vacated by the ES was filled by the one organisation that was the lead organisation in the consortia's time, which often had a better knowledge of the functioning of the PROJEG and greater thematic expertise than the other members of the collective. The habit of operating with a leader in the past sometimes created misunderstandings, with some thinking that everything had to come from them and that they could exert control and influence over the other members and the collectives.

This situation resulted either in the withdrawal of other members of the collective, who tended to hold back and line up behind the leader, or in the emergence of tensions or even crises of leadership and governance. In both cases, this led the collectives to rethink their modes of operation.

According to the collectives, several elements may have contributed to the resolution of these difficulties:

- The growth in the volume of activity of the collectives, which has led the leader to offload some responsibilities and to divide up the activities;
- The establishment of co-management processes and tools at the financial level, which was often a source of tension;
- Formalizing collegial governance modes and procedures;
- The fact that the leader of the lead organisation steps back and hands over the facilitation of the collective to one of his colleagues.

- *The members of the collectives have given themselves the means to work effectively together*

The autonomy support phase enabled the groups to deepen and formalise the skills and mechanisms for organising their work together. Several changes can be identified in this respect:

Information flows more quickly and efficiently within the collectives

Over time, they have put processes in place to ensure that information flows smoothly and transparently. These allow all members to be on the same level of information, to react, to follow activities and to participate more effectively.

What contributed to the change?

The appointment of a communication manager for the collective and the implementation of various communication tools

Most collectives have identified a person or organisation responsible for circulating information within the collective and interfacing with PROJEG. They have set up various communication tools according to their needs (mailing list, WhatsApp group, Facebook page). They have also set up communication and transparency processes: systematic writing and sharing of minutes, minutes of meetings and activity reports, organisation of internal or external feedback on the activities carried out, etc.

"At the beginning, communication was not very manageable, people complained that they were only informed the day before the activity. We have now appointed a communication manager who facilitates the information circuit through the creation of a messaging group, thus enabling all the members of the collective to be informed in good time and at the same moment. He carries all the messages of PROJEG and internal information." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

The collectives have improved their ability to work in teams to identify, plan and carry out activities

This is reflected in regular meetings, collegiality in decision-making, and the distribution of roles. For example, in ONAM, for each activity carried out, the organisation most specialised in the field is made responsible for the coordination and supervision of the activity. In addition, **the four collectives we met have set up or plan to set up internal contribution systems** to finance operating costs and other activities preliminary to obtaining funding (organisation of meetings, project identification and construction, running costs, etc.).

"We have the capacity to schedule and hold meetings, to identify priorities and plan them over time, and to evaluate the level of implementation of activities. These meetings allow us to follow up on the activities we have planned, and we exchange on other issues on this occasion." **Alpha Amadou Diallo, Head of the Mutuality Pole of the NGO ONAM, member of the ONAM collective**

What contributed to the change?

The start of the first joint activities, a key moment

The identification, construction and planning of the collective's projects have pushed the members to work together, share responsibilities and harmonise visions and ways of doing things. These projects provided a framework for establishing new governance of the collectives and setting up habits in terms of communication, meetings and organisation.

"We have developed a new strategy: when we plan an activity to be carried out in an area, we meet and do the planning together. Even if one or the other tends to want to impose, we try to smooth

things out and at the same time we give everyone a role. We discuss and adapt consensual tools.
"Mansour Diallo, NGO Guinea Solidarity, member of the ONAM collective

This was particularly the case during the launch of one of the first projects of the AFVDD collective, a survey on the management and use of quarry revenues in the commune of Soya: "We met after the signing of the agreement to get to know the project we had set up as a team. We analysed things together and decided how to carry out the survey. We drew up the survey forms together, then divided into two teams to go out into the field to meet the authorities, the operators, the transporters, the population and the technical services and ask: Are the revenues from the quarries managed by the commune? Are they used correctly? Is it known by the population?"
"Mariama Bah, Executive Director of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

Unfinished business" insert Unfinished business: the formalisation of internal operating procedures

A minority of collectives have formalised reference documents and processes to govern their functioning and work. This is the case of ONAM, which has a charter (a kind of internal regulation) and plans to put in place a manual of administrative and financial procedures as well as an internal system of contributions. But most of them have not yet thought about the legal basis for their existence and have not institutionalised any rules and procedures. Their organisation remains rather informal, even if it has allowed them to function efficiently so far.

Additional support for the formalisation of reference documents could, however, have been usefully provided at the request of the collectives and over a longer period of support.

▪ ***The collectives have gained notoriety, legitimacy and influence***

Recognition is built over time. The recognition of the collectives had already begun before the autonomy support phase via the activities carried out in consortium, and via certain member organisations of the collectives that already had a certain amount of recognition on an individual basis. But gradually, the collectives have gained their own reputation through their actions. This allows them to be recognised as legitimate actors in their field and to increase their capacity to influence the authorities and other actors.

The collectives have gradually increased their awareness and legitimacy vis-à-vis local and national authorities and other actors

Collectively, the organisations have more weight in the eyes of their interlocutors. Moreover, working as a collective has resulted in a wider geographical spectrum of intervention and a wider range of skills, which makes it possible to increase visibility and to be known by new actors. Recognition as a collective goes beyond the recognition that some member organisations already enjoyed. **In some cases, the collectives have even been directly solicited for their expertise by elected officials or authorities.** These requests are signs of recognition and show that they are identified as "experts" on their issues.

"The collective is recognised by the authorities, it intervenes everywhere in the region on the management of mines and the authorities trust us. As soon as they talk about mines, they already know that it is AFVDD. Lansana Mamakany Camara, President of VGDR, member of the AFVDD collective

The collectives have increased their capacity to influence local and national authorities

The notoriety and legitimacy they have acquired have enabled the collectives to develop a capacity to influence the authorities and impact on public decision-making processes. This influence was

particularly evident in the monitoring of the legal obligations of mining companies, and in the monitoring of public action and the management of public resources.

"In Koliady, we conducted a study on the application of the mining code and on the royalties that mining companies pay to communities. It was following this that we really stood out to the authorities. They contacted us to involve the collective in the activities of distributing mining revenues among the authorities in Kindia, and we made a statement that influenced the decision. We were heard." **Mouloukou Souleymane Kourouma, Coordinator of the Dorcas Guinea Association (ADG), member of the CEGUIFED collective**

"The collective investigated the management and use of quarry revenues in the locality of Soya. We realised that there were no reports to the population, that accountability did not exist. And there was no signing of receipts, although this is obligatory. The collector has to issue a receipt to the person who delivers the money. Following our investigation, the signing of the March-April 2019 receipts was made mandatory. The authorities have produced receipts and have guaranteed to continue. In May, we will go to the field to see if it is done yet." **Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective**

What contributed to the change?

The fact that collectives make their existence known

The collectives were proactive in making themselves known to the authorities (through newsletters about their existence, contact meetings) and in developing external communication about their activities (in particular via social networks, or by organising public presentations of their activities).

"Since we sent our letters to the different regional and prefectural authorities, they have seen that we are doing activities on the ground. These activities allow us to gain the trust and recognition of the authorities." **Fanta Sylla, President of FEJED Guinea, member of the CEGUIFED collective**

Implementing projects and achieving results

The main factor in the recognition and influence of the collectives was the implementation of activities, all the more so when these involved or directly affected local or national authorities: monitoring of the legal obligations of mining companies and payment of royalties, verification of the pricing of medical procedures, monitoring of public action, etc.). The perception of the relevance, quality and results of the projects carried out strongly contributed to the legitimacy of the collectives at the local or even national level.

The fact that the collectives have been able to develop a constructive dialogue approach with the authorities

Initially, some collectives were not well perceived by the authorities. Gradual recognition was facilitated by the fact that the collectives were able to show that their objective was in the general interest, to demonstrate their expertise and to position themselves as contributors and negotiators vis-à-vis the authorities.

"Before 2016, we were recognised but seen as whistleblowers, reactionaries. Now we contribute. The vision that those in power have of PWYP has changed. Now they expect us to make proposals, they ask for our help, we have become an expertise that is needed by the leaders." **Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, President of PWYP**

- ***The collectives have developed their capacity to mobilise partners and resources***

The main challenge identified by all the collectives is their capacity to mobilise other partners, especially financial ones, after the end of a long period of multifaceted support by the PROJEG.

Although financial autonomy is a difficult objective to achieve and one that is constantly pursued, some collectives have developed some initial successful experiences in mobilising partners and resources.

The collectives have developed technical and operational partnerships with other Guinean CSOs and other actors.

In some activities, the collectives have developed operational partnerships with local CSOs that are not members of the collective.

"We have developed new relationships with other CSOs, particularly in the context of a survey on environmental issues that was conducted outside the framework of PROJEG. "N'fansou Sano, Director of the NGO CEGUIFED, President of the CEGUIFED collective

Depending on their needs, they also solicit institutions, elected officials or other actors, thus demonstrating their ability to identify the technical support they need and the partners who can provide it.

"If we don't have the skills in-house, we call on external skills: the commune's technical services, the mining officer. If we need information or training, we call on these people to come and reinforce us. "Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

The collectives have improved their capacity to mobilise resources. They are all aware of the need to diversify their resources and build an economic model for the post-PROJEG period, and feel responsible for this. Funding opportunities are sometimes scarce, but despite the difficulties encountered, their proactivity is a sign of autonomy. Indeed, all are engaged in various processes:

- Pooling of skills in fundraising by identifying certain members or resource persons within the collective;
- Identification of potential financial partners;
- Fundraising and responses to calls for proposals;
- Establishment of a system of internal contributions to finance the operating costs of the collective.

"After the PROJEG, we have the experience that allows us to respond to calls for tender and we know where to look. "Sonna Barry, President of the NGO AFVDD, member of the AFVDD collective

Some collectives have already obtained funding outside the framework of the PROJEG to carry out new projects defined and built without the support of the ES. This is notably the case for two of the collectives we met, PWYP and CEGUIFED. For the latter, obtaining new funding followed activities carried out within the framework of the PROJEG: the collective was identified and co-opted after having been noticed for its work on mining issues: *"We obtained funding on behalf of the collective within the framework of a project financed by UNDP, UNIDO and FAO on the risks linked to environmental degradation. The NGO carrying the project identified partners in each region, and CEGUIFED was co-opted to carry the project in Kindia."* Mouloukou Souleymane Kourouma, Coordinator of the Dorcas Guinea Association (ADG), member of the CEGUIFED collective

***Unfinished business" insert* Unfinished business: the ability to finance oneself, the Gordian knot of autonomy**

The collectives still feel very dependent on the PROJEG financially and are worried about its disengagement. For the most part, they have not yet reached a level of maturity that allows them to build viable economic models.

During the support phase towards autonomy, the collectives had all identified the question of the economic model as a need for strengthening. But the trade-offs between the different needs for reinforcement were not in favour of this point. The PROJEG focused its support on the prerequisites for economic autonomy (cohesion of the collective, strengthening of expertise, implementation of first projects, recognition and reputation of the collectives) and did not have enough time to support the development of economic models.

A leverage role to be played by the leading organisations? Within collectives, not all organisations have the capacity to seek funding. But in all the collectives, there are organisations that have this capacity individually. This situation poses two challenges:

- What is the role of leadership for leading organisations that are able to raise funds? The possibility that certain organisations may carry out fundraising efforts raises the question of potential competition between organisations that are used to seeking funding on their own, and implies a desire to pool funds for the benefit of the group.
- How can fundraising skills be shared and disseminated within the collectives?

"The challenge is not only to mobilise financial resources, but also human resources: there is a pool of skills within the collective that enables us to look for money, to draw up projects and to comply with the specificities of donors. "Thierno Hady Bah, FMG, member of the ONAM collective

To conclude: some cross-cutting learning

Change relies on individual and collective triggers

The change in posture of the members of the Executive Secretariat has come about through individual or collective triggers, a sort of privileged moment that gives a new understanding of a subject and opens up a new perspective in an almost instantaneous manner. Among the main turning points identified by the Executive Secretariat, we find the clarification of the target and the refocusing on the actors (moving from "perpetuating thematic dynamics" to "empowering groups of actors so that they are in a position to carry out dynamics"), or the facilitation of the first workshop with a group, as coaches and not coordinators.

But these moments of change do not happen immediately, they are the result of a series of events that have gradually shaken certainties and created gaps. Making them happen required the members of the Executive Secretariat to have a clear vision of where they were going and to be in intimate agreement with this vision, to feel confident and secure, to acquire theoretical knowledge, to experience practical situations in the coaching profession, to give feedback on these moments, etc.

- *"Facilitating the first workshop with the CEGUIFED collective enabled me to understand that I was not accountable for the content but only managed the process: I was already adopting the position of a facilitator."* Mady Diawando, Regional Accompanist Middle Guinea, Aide et Action

The learning methods necessary for changing professional practice and posture

In projects, any change that affects the values, postures, practices and skills of teams is very profound because it refers to values, ethics (respect for the power of others), and our natural posture towards others. This type of change cannot take place without learning, and presupposes specific modalities that go beyond theory or the framework of training. In the PROJEG experience, three learning modalities have played a key role:

- **Practical experimentation** coupled with debriefing and analysis time (see p. 27);
 - **Collective learning:** working in pairs, taking turns facilitating workshops and observing colleagues, exchanging regularly was stimulating and a source of learning for the members of the Executive Secretariat.
 - **Being accompanied themselves:** the fact of being accompanied by an external person allowed the members of the Executive Secretariat to experience a situation of accompaniment and to observe the practice of an accompanier: this mirror effect produced transformative awareness.
- *"Being accompanied myself is what enabled me to accompany others. When I saw Gaëlle [the external coach] in the first workshop, it was as if nothing had been decided in advance for her, I saw the way she asked the questions, she never took a position, she made sure that we ourselves said what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it. She was distant and at the same time she was with us. This allowed us to think that it could be different, to re-question the ways of doing things."* Djenè Madé Fofana, Regional Accompanist for Forest Guinea, Aide et Action

Articulating learning time, support time and project time

Time is an essential factor to generate deep changes both in terms of the posture of a project-team and in terms of the autonomy of the accompanied actors. The experience of the PROJEG teaches the **necessity to articulate three different and sometimes conflicting times:**

- **Learning time:** For a project team, learning new working methods and postures cannot be done instantaneously and in a linear fashion, but rather through micro-changes which, when added up over time, finally lead to substantial changes. This implies knowing and being able to take time to train the team in an iterative way.
- **Time for coaching:** Accompanying actors in defining their objectives, thinking about their activities and implementing them themselves and at their own pace takes more time than

taking the lead in decisions and activities. However, the pace of the actor is not always that of the project.

- **The time of the project:** The short and limited time of the project is not necessarily that of the accompaniment and the autonomization, a fortiori if the positioning in accompaniment must pass by a time of training and reorganization of the project-team beforehand. Although the PROJEG dedicated its last three-year period to the perpetuation, part of it was dedicated to the recruitment of an external expertise, to the reorganisation and accompaniment of the Executive Secretariat and to the definition of the accompaniment approach. The support activities for the collectives themselves were concentrated on the last 18 months of the programme, and all of the actors emphasised that there was not enough time to bring about more sustainable changes.

More broadly, the project framework implies articulating the achievement of results and progress at the pace of the accompanied actor: one of the successes of the PROJEG was to put the project at the service of the collectives and not the other way around.

- *"We need time, especially for the implementation of strengthening activities that really weld the groups together. The earlier this time comes and the longer it lasts, the easier the process becomes."* **Thierno Ciré Barry, Project Monitoring Officer, Aide et Action**
- *"The frustration that I have is the fact that we do not have the opportunity, given the very limited time, to see how the strengthened skills can significantly and sustainably boost the capacity for initiative-taking and governance of a group."* **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

Empowerment, a complex and iterative process

What makes an actor more autonomous? The experience of the Guinean collectives illustrates that the answers to this question are multiple and never exhaustive. Several elements that play a role in empowerment can be identified, but none of them is responsible on its own:

- **Willingness:** autonomy is not given from the outside, and those who do not want to be autonomous will never be. This implies an awareness, a trigger, which the prospect of disengagement from the PROJEG and the political decision to work towards sustainability have helped to produce.
- **Knowing why:** defining a vision of what they wanted to be and do beyond the framework of the PROJEG, projecting themselves in the medium term, was essential for the collectives to give empowerment a purpose.
- **Assuming leadership and responsibility:** whether the power of decision is given or taken, it was essential for the collectives to exercise their autonomy from the outset: to be responsible for the definition of their objectives but also for the expected results, and to assume the risk that this implies.
- **Defining and steering activities oneself:** the more an actor can implement his vision through concrete activities, the more he can learn from his decisions and capacities. Here, the fact that PROJEG gave up knowing what is good for the other and left the responsibility to the collectives to define and lead their projects played a crucial role.
- **Being accompanied in change:** becoming autonomous implies profound changes: leaving certain reassuring dependencies, taking responsibility and risks, learning new practices, developing new skills, etc. These changes can provoke doubts and resistance that support must be able to hear and resolve, and they involve new learning in a variety of ways.
- **Learning from one's own change:** learning from one's own change processes, re-reading one's experience, capitalising on it to better root it and make it last. In this respect, the workshops conducted with the Executive Secretariat and the collectives during the capitalisation process were real moments for taking a step back and looking at the path taken.

The question of funding, a condition for the sustainability of organisations

The question of funding arises at two levels: the funding of the "coaches" and the work of supporting empowerment on the one hand, and access to funding after the end of the project for the actors supported on the other. This last point is an essential condition for sustainability: without funds, no operations are possible, no actions, no results, no organisations/collectives. This is the main fear expressed by both the Executive Secretariat and the collectives themselves: although they feel much more autonomous in their organisation, leadership and implementation of their actions, the central question remains that of access to funding to continue their work and structuring after PROJEG.

This is a structural difficulty, which is not always easy to address. The support or capacity building activities that can be put in place (in terms of business model and resource mobilisation) are limited by existing funding opportunities.

Moreover, the financial support of the PROJEG was long-term and structuring, giving the collectives a certain amount of leeway to structure themselves and to mature. Existing funding opportunities rarely offer such support: some collectives have been able to establish financial partnerships around specific projects, but have difficulty identifying more structural funding.

- *"We will miss the PROJEG for the implementation of our action plan. There is a scarcity of financial resources. We are working on diversifying partnerships. But we are more worried about our internal members. A structure is never totally autonomous, we always need partners."* **Alpha Abdoulaye Diallo, President of the PWYP collective**
- *It takes about ten years for a collective to be autonomous. What can be made available to the collective by NGOs is very little. Afterwards, endogenous funding is needed to ensure the continuity of activities. We need to liaise between the collectives and the donors, and submit projects in this regard. Through these organisations, the impact of the action over several years is valued. What the PROJEG has produced must be protected. It is money that allows sovereignty."* **Thierno Hady Bah, FMG, member of the ONAM collective**

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"In the project of transformation of our societies, the accompaniment towards autonomy is important. It highlights the limits of classic approaches and makes us move towards the idea that the project is only an inductor, that the important thing is what happens afterwards. We need to question the way in which development projects are financed and the way in which relations between actors are organised." **Moctar Diallo, National Coordinator of PROJEG, Aide et Action**

Commenté [m3]: NOTE FOR THE MAQUETTAGE: this verbatim summarises the general purpose of the booklet, so we would like it to appear on the 4th cover (or 2nd cover, depending on what you think is best graphically). Without the need to put the photo of the person speaking.

Logo PROJEG

AFD logo

Ministry logo