The key role of partnerships in tackling development issues

Coordinated by Grdr (Olivier LE MASSON and Jérémy CASTEUBLE)
Steering committee: Christian LESPINATS (HSF), Marc LEVY (GRET) and Stefano MASON (AVSF)

G*i*'s member civil society organisations and their various partners must adapt to the rapidly changing context in West Africa, and to   new focus on capacities for resilience in development cooperation. Recognising that our efforts were focused on finding joint solutions rather than reflecting on our 'culture of partnership', we felt that it was time to revisit this issue from a different angle, by:

1.   Assessing the situation with our West African partners (14 retained initiatives)

2.   Adopting a deliberately critical approach

3.   Producing a toolbox of 10 methodological tools

4.   Considering partnerships in relation to the development issues in our intervention areas.

This reassessment of our partnerships was a joint exercise, driven by our desire to become stronger by meeting and interacting with our fellow practitioners, opening up to each other within the Groupe initiatives and with our external partners. Reviewing the history of our organisations over *time* and in the context of our *spaces* of intervention enabled us to revisit our practices and to renew our vision of what solidarity really entails as we face up to global issues. Our aim was eminently political: using a procedure that looks forward as well as backwards to overhaul our associative models so that we can identify our common interests and develop genuinely shared strategies around the interdependencies between our respective countries. One of the advantages of this process is that it enables us to constantly reframe our outlooks and actions.

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These acronyms are used throughout this issue of *Traverses* and in the Fact Sheets and Tools in the Annexes

AAPR -GF	Guinea Forest Region fish and rice growers' association
ABERME	Benin rural electrification and energy management agency
AFD	French Development Agency
AMPG	Gorgol association of mayors and MPs
APDRA	Association of fisheries and rural development in humid tropical Africa
ARD	Regional Development Agency
AVSF	Agronomists and Vets without Borders
CARDER	Regional agricultural centre for rural development
CEP	Studies and projects unit
CIEDEL	International centre for the study of local development
CRIPS -Togo	Togo centre for research and information on health
CRK	Kayes regional council
CRM	Matam regional council
CSO	Civil society organisation
CSR	Corporate social and environmental responsibility
CUN	Urban Community of Nouakchott
DADL	Local development support mechanism
DI	Development initiative
EIC	Economic interest group
ENDA GRAF	Environment and development in poor countries – Action-research and training group
ESSOR	NGO providing 'Support - Training – Implementation'
EU	European Union
FISONG	Sectorial Innovation Facility for NGOs
FKF	Kurukan Fugan Forum
FRIO	Institutional and Organisational Support Fund
FUPROCAT	Federation of Togolese coffee and cocoa producers
GERES	Renewable energies, environment and solidarity group
G*i*	Groupe *initiatives - initiatives* Group
GRAIND	Research and support for new development initiatives group
GRDR	Rural development research and implementation group
GRET	Research and technical exchange group
HSF	Water without Borders

ICD	Initiatives – Advice – Development
Iram	Institute for research and application of development methods
JJT	Jang Jup Tekki
LG	Local government
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPDC	Nord Pas de Calais region
PAIDEL -CT	Support programme for local development and territorial cooperation initiatives
PAMOC	Community and communal works management support programme
PDERP	Programme to develop sustainable renewable electricity for rural production and domestic needs
PDRP -GF	Guinea Forest region rice and fisheries development project,
PLWHA	People living with HIV/AIDS
PSMP	Project to secure pastoral livestock rearing
RAIL	Local initiatives support network
RIF	Ile-de-France region
RRA	Rhône-Alpes region
SAB	Sœurs de l'Annonciation de Bobo-Dioulasso
SADL	Local development support services
SC	Steering committee
SETUP	Energy and technical services for productive uses
SPM	Commercial public services
UGPCC	Coffee and cocoa producers' union

DARING TO QUESTION OUR CONVICTIONS

In 1999 the Groupe *initiatives* (G*i*) published a brochure setting out our views on the need for renewed commitment to cooperative development. It presented our analysis of the situation and described the issues around which we have built a common identity and joint projects. We returned to this theme fifteen years later, with a year-long process of reflection on our practical experiences, and candid discussions within the group and with our partner African institutions. We chose partnership practices as the overarching theme in order to consider GI's contribution to the current general debate on cooperation policies.

> **Seven pledges and proposals formulated by the GROUPE *INITIATIVES* in order to renew partnerships and tackle the issues in our intervention areas**

This theme allowed us to look at the realities of cooperation relations between European and West African associations, which have changed considerably in recent years and therefore require our critical attention. **Partnerships also revolve around the identity of the individual organisations** concerned, and this exercise shed some useful light on the way we need to think about this form of collaboration. As this is not a new topic of debate there was the danger of repeating previous discussions (something we did our best to avoid). However, we still believe it was a worthwhile endeavour – not just because of its topicality, but because **partnerships are central to our development approach.**

We knew that limiting ourselves to collaborations with West Africa would leave other regions out of the picture, and with them all the rich relationships we have developed in very different realities in parts of South America, the Caribbean, Asia, and Portuguese- and English-speaking African countries. While this means that **our conclusions are not of universal value, they will be of general interest** due to the diverse situations we did consider and the comparative analysis of our respective experiences. This broad range of experiences enabled us to avoid getting too bogged down in the specificities and weighty history of European-African relations, while not denying their existence and the particular record of France and West Africa.

When we talk about linking our thinking on partnerships with '**territorial issues**', we mean the geographical and political entities in our intervention areas: the villages, neighbourhoods, towns, communes, nations, sub-regions, watersheds, irrigated areas, livestock routes and migratory trails within these spaces, and their less physical aspects – the families, social groups, institutions and even ideas and beliefs in a particular area. Given the changing nature of the world in general and of 'development cooperation' in particular, we believe that it is important to look beyond the borders of the countries where our intervention areas are located and to consider the interdependencies between these nations and European countries.

Several points are worth noting here:

1. The general consensus on the meaning of the word 'partnership' tends to overlook the fact that in reality, partnerships operate in very diverse situations (which merit more distinctive approaches) and are often **much less balanced** than the term suggests.

2. While members of G*i* have developed many meaningful and productive relationships, **we do not claim to set ourselves up as teachers** in this field, as some of our partnerships have been more evenly balanced than others.

3. **The responsibilities for these imbalances are both highly complex and shared**: all actors involved in European-African cooperation contribute to them in one way or another.

4. The successes that have been achieved far outweigh the challenges and constraints that inevitably arise in joint endeavours. Therefore, we reaffirm that partnerships as we understand them are absolutely central to our approach, as they **reflect our desire to practice and promote solidarity at the international level**.

To shed light on how this might be done, we present the following <u>seven points and recommendations</u>:

❶ MORE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships vary, depending on whether they involve professional organisations, intermediary associations, local governments, companies, administrations or government corporations. We engage in these different types of relationships without a normative model to promote, and will continue to do so in order to benefit from the various missions undertaken by each kind of actor. We also recognise the many advantages of the more pragmatic 'project' partnerships that enable us to seize a particular opportunity to take action or catch an opening; not least the fact that this kind of partnership can constitute a trial period or step towards a closer collaborative relationship.

*However, we should not restrict ourselves to 'project management', since we are committed to developing long-term partnerships between West African, European and international partners as **part of a joint political project**. This kind of partnership could be seen as a form of **strategic alliance**, as the actions taken are intended to produce results that can respond to **territorial issues**, contribute to **dynamics of change** for greater justice, equity and sustainability, proposals for public policies at the national and even supra-national level, and strengthen **multi-actor regulatory agencies**.*

❷ REVIEWING OUR IDEAS ABOUT 'THE NORTH' AND 'THE SOUTH'

The assumption that solidarity automatically involves 'the North' helping 'the South' no longer holds true: the 'North/South' dichotomy has been turned on its head as certain emerging economies have become global leaders. But this does not mean that the world has become homogenous, or that all countries have the same capacities. Poverty and inequality are powerful indicators of differences between and (increasingly) within countries. Realities in 'the North' and 'the South' are certainly very different, but both need to tackle issues of poverty and inequality – and the human and financial resources in West Africa belie any easy assertion about the lack of capacity and resources in this region.

*We pledge to make our partnerships more equal in terms of distribution of responsibilities, remuneration and financial contributions. This will involve joint decisions, co-funding, a shared commitment to greater **responsibility** and **accountability**, and fostering **complementarities** in order to redress the imbalances that still exist in too many partnerships.*

❸ OUR CAPACITIES ARE COMPLEMENTARY AND MUTUALLY REINFORCING

Our view of partnerships recognises that our partners have their own capacities; we should not assume that they will always have weaknesses that need to be strengthened. It also recognises the importance of identifying and combining individual, collective, technical and institutional capacities. The latter are vitally important if we want to be 'agents of change' and act as facilitators for multiple actors helping to improve the quality of relations between the State and society, rather than operators that simply deal with the shortcomings of public policies. The different networks (professional, scientific, trade, academic, political, etc.) that we can tap into are a good example of our complementary capacities.

*But this does not mean that we cling to an idealised egalitarian vision which ignores the fact that certain actors do lack capacity. Partnerships will sometimes be unequal, or start off that way, before we have synergised our **complementarities** and **strengthened** capacities – both our own and those of our partners. Contractual frameworks should help determine which capacities complement each other and which ones need to be strengthened.*

❹ CONTRACTUAL FRAMEWORKS AND THE POSSIBLE BENEFITS OF CONFLICT

Our vision of partnerships is based on a certain 'shared destiny and common vision'. This common vision is a necessary precondition for fruitful partnerships, but may not be immediately obvious and will often take quite a long time to emerge. This happens through a process of building shared values as partners assess the situation, decide on a plan of action, agree to the rules of the game, identify the respective capacities required, determine the risks that need to be taken and decide how they will be shared, etc. All this should be done within a contractual framework.

*We will strive to develop **contractual frameworks** that encourage **dialogue, sharing** and reciprocal commitments, rather than simply provide a monitoring mechanism.*

Building this kind of relationship requires balance, stability and greater transparency on both sides. We are not naïve enough to expect contractual frameworks to prevent problems arising (as they inevitably will, given the responsibilities and risks that have to be taken), but they should help to resolve difficulties rather than create them.

*Rather than rejecting **conflicts**, we will endeavour to make it a factor in regulating – and thus building – partnerships, by seeking to resolve healthy differences of position and interest through compromise.*

❺ MODES OF FUNDING THAT MATCH THE RHETORIC

The quest for 'effective aid' has led to increasingly and excessively rigorous (if not to say nit-picking) international cooperation funding contracts, along with requirements for intervening agencies to show that they uphold the other principles of the Paris Declaration (harmonisation and appropriation). This has an unfortunate tendency to reduce partnerships to little more than funding opportunities. The contradiction between the rhetoric promoting partnerships (especially from certain financial 'partners') and the contractual obligations they impose is deeply unhelpful, as it sometimes places our partners under our administrative control or sets us up as guarantors against their supposed shortcomings.

The kind of partnerships that we support goes through stages: they take time to build, nurture, evaluate and develop. As a result, they incur costs that are not always recognised as eligible expenditure in development cooperation operating budgets.

*We believe that partnerships are valuable enough to warrant special **funding** mechanisms. We recommend the establishment of **specific funds** in Europe and West Africa to help structure organisations, and propose that the costs of partnerships are included as **direct costs** in operating contracts rather than administrative costs, in order to finance this essential element of successful partnerships.*

❻ STRENGTHENING PARTNERS' LEGITIMACY AND SOVEREIGNTY

Our partnerships and the international efforts they serve work across borders while recognising each country's national characteristics and the authority of the public powers that have been mandated to run it. Yet substitution and excessive reliance on European actors is still a common feature in too many so-called 'partnerships'. While we recognise our position as a direct agent, we affirm our empathy, proximity and connection with our partners, and are very careful to ensure that people from the countries with which we cooperate are actively involved in our structures. We believe that this gives our interventions certain legitimacy.

*We will make every effort to (1) ensure that the **political leadership** of our partnerships goes to actors with strong ties to the intervention zone; that is to say, those who will be responsible for sustaining the actions in the long term, who often take more, or at least different, risks than us; (2) use the advantage of being a European agency to play a more **detached** role, strengthen our partners' legitimacy and leadership, and open up to other territories.*

❼ PROMOTING COMMON ISSUES AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Our approach to solidarity has also been affected by the increased interdependencies created by the new global geopolitical landscape. Different societies are facing a number of issues that have become global concerns, problems that affect both 'the North' and 'the South' despite all their differences. It is not easy to for a single country to find solutions within its national borders, even if the State does have room to manoeuvre (something that varies from one country to the other). Partnerships can strengthen our strategic responses to these common issues, drawing us out of our European and West African borders and into solidarity efforts that are as global as the issues they aim to address.

*We will do all we can to strengthen our duty of solidarity and broaden our focus on others' development by acting on common problems that also affect us on 'our territory'. This is what we mean by **'cross-border cooperation'**, which is understood in both a broad physical sense and in different forms of cooperation (State, decentralised, inter-community, inter-professional, etc.).*

The **common issues** that enable us to build partnerships based on this kind of 'shared destiny and common vision' include poverty and inequality, global warming and its practical consequences, access to basic healthcare and social services, the spread of diseases from animals to humans, demands for citizenship and democracy, funding for State budgets and taxation, managing human mobility, under-employment, declining working conditions (decent jobs), matching training to employment, food quality and sovereignty, corporate social and environmental responsibility, and equitable trade relations. These issues will be prioritised at a later date.

These seven points and proposals will help us to question and change our economic models, our governance systems and our practices. We will share this position paper as widely as possible through the different networks in which we are involved, and are open to any form of alliance that strengthens the power of the collective voice that we need for cooperation and international solidarity to change in step with the world.

Ouagadougou **and** *Paris***, 25th October and 12th November 2013,**

On behalf of members of the Groupe *initiatives*
President, Christian LESPINATS

Part 1: Presentation of the learning procedure – building on our experience

1.1 Summary of the framework document

The Groupe *initiatives* (G*i*), which is financially supported by the French Development Agency (AFD), ran a programme meant to build on its experiences entitled '*Strengthening associative development practitioners by sharing knowledge and methods'*. This programme, which ran from 2011 to 2014, had two objectives:

1. To strengthen the capacities of NGOs in the Groupe *initiatives* and of their partners by building on their experiences, sharing knowledge and developing joint strategies and methods based on practices in the field.

2. To disseminate and broaden discussions on the lessons learnt by G*i* members and their partners in various fields.

In 2013 (the second year of the programme), the process of running the 'Study and learning days' was transposed to West Africa for the first time. Over the course of nearly a year, a **steering committee[1]** (SC) made up of representatives of five members of G*i* met 11 times (see 1.4: *Timetable*). These meetings aimed at preparing and running the **three stages of the procedure**, at overseeing the circulation of information and at ensuring that everyone understood the tools produced during the process (see 1.2: *Three-stage methodology: designing the procedural and learning tools*).

Brief review of the context and overarching theme of partnerships

The West African context is changing rapidly. Along with our partners in each intervention zone, we NGOs in the Groupe *initiatives* need to show our endless capacity for resilience, speed and accuracy. While we are under increasing pressure to find joint solutions, we have no time to develop a mature **culture of partnership**.

At the end of 2012 we decided to focus our attention on this **issue of partnerships** in order to (i) see how our partnerships have developed at the individual and organisational level over the varying timescales of our shared history; (ii) analyse and pool our capacities (see <u>Annex 3</u>, Tool Worksheet N°9: *Glossary*); and (iii) consider our partnerships in the evolving context of our intervention areas in order to determine how they link into the issues in these territories.

These 'Study days' are an opportunity for our field teams and partners in Africa to meet and get to know each other, to discuss of their experiences and to work together so as to build on what has been learnt. **Discussing the issue of partnerships is a unifying theme,** as all NGOs develop partnership practices but do not always manage to talk about them (analytical tools), assess them (retrospective analysis) or project them into the future (forward planning).

This process enabled us to go beyond Gi's mandatory involvement in our teams and practices in Africa. Having the time to talk and sharing experiences allowed us to learn from each other and discuss possible ways and means of **nurturing sustainable partnerships in order to address the particular issues** in our intervention areas.

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[1] **The Steering Committee (SC)** for the Africa Study Days was composed of Christian LESPINATS (HSF, President of G*i*), Marc LEVY (GRET), Stefano MASON (AVSF), Olivier LE MASSON and Jérémy CASTEUBLE (GRDR).

Objectives and outputs: 'The key role of partnerships in tackling development issues in the intervention area'

This **crosscutting work on specific 'initiatives' had three objectives**:

1. **Joint analysis of our partnerships in West Africa:** together with our partners we developed an *analytical framework* for assessing partnerships (see initiatives logic, opposite).

2. **Focus on the issues and emerging new actors in the territory:** analysis of these diverse partnerships revealed the emergence of certain local government actors (elected officials, technicians) in the territorial dynamics of (joint) development.

3. **Raise the profile of GI actions and open dialogue** between our partners and teams, and ultimately with institutional actors (AFD, EU, ECOWAS, central and local governments…).

Initiatives:

Each NGO in GI identified a project, an action and a process undertaken with one or more specific partners (local government, CSO, cooperative, EIG/entrepreneur, migrants' association) in a particular intervention area that they hoped to analyse in depth (see analysis sheet) and discuss with the agreement of the stakeholders (*three 'Tea and talk sessions', final workshop, Ouagadougou*).

The final outputs of the process at the end of 2013 included:

1. **A framework for analysis** that can still be improved, but which helps us to build shared knowledge about the strengths and weaknesses of our various partnerships – many of which have a shared ambition to 'move things forward' in the intervention area (see box below).

2. **A participant's handbook for the study days in Africa** containing the fact sheets and crosscutting analyses from the 'Tea and talk' sessions, and presenting the issues discussed at the final workshop.

3. *Traverses*, **the proceedings of the workshop in Africa,** which describes the methodology, tools and fact sheets (available in the annexes and in electronic form on the GI website: http://www.groupe-initiatives.org/Traverses-no42.html), summarises the plenary sessions and workshop debates, and develops the recommendations formulated at this event. It opens with the position paper, which is a real road map for the Groupe *initiatives* validated by each of its members.

How can we *jointly* 'move things forward' in our intervention areas?

In a changing context where territories have to adapt to multiple crises, these efforts of learning from experience with our partners open up several areas of analysis. There is a growing recognition of our **interdependencies,** which often reveal imbalances resulting from marked **inequalities;** but these can also be seen as **complementarities** – sources of **innovative partnerships** that can enable us citizen actors to **develop lasting bonds of solidarity**.

1.2 The three-stage methodology: developing facilitation and learning tools

We used a **collective action-research procedure** to build on the lessons learnt from experience, closely based on the 'Study days' that G*i* has held in France over the last few years. This involved setting up a **steering committee**, developing, testing and validating **tools** (sheets, see Methodological toolkit in Annex 3) and holding a series of **debates** that were reported in the preparatory and summary papers that fed into this latest issue of ***Traverses***.

An active steering committee: its composition, role and functioning

After the eight-page framework paper summarised above was validated by the G*i* Management Board (22 November 2012), **a steering committee (SC)** composed of representatives from five of Gi's member associations was set up. It met 11 times in the space of ten months.

Its role was to:
- Define the main guidelines for the process (to be submitted to the management board),
- Explore each member's expectations before the process began,
- Systematically research the added value of the procedure for participants,
- Oversee the mobilization of the teams and partners identified in each 'initiative',
- Develop the learning tools (sheets analysing the initiatives),
- Contribute to thinking on the facilitation techniques and materials,
- Jointly organise the timing of the debates ('Tea and talk' sessions) and the final workshop in Ouagadougou.
- Act as the editorial committee for the latest issue of *Traverses* (SC meeting N°11).

The agenda for each steering committee meeting was shared in advance, and meetings were systematically timed to record the discussions and disseminate decisions to other G*i* members.

A three-stage learning process

The framework paper outlined the different facilitation techniques that would be used at various stages of the process.

a. STAGE N°1: Preparatory work (January-May): *four working hypotheses*

In the initial proposal to the 10 members of G, the steering committee suggested presentations of up to **three 'initiatives** (case studies) in order to provide a reasonably broad sample of experiences, make some general observations about our partnership practices, and facilitate the learning process. Participating partners agreed to follow the three stages, but limited the number of case studies to one or two initiatives.

The SC developed four deliberately provocative **working hypotheses**:

Hypothesis N°1: *Unbalanced* **partnerships**

Imbalances are much worse than is admitted, largely as a result of contractual frameworks.

Hypothesis N°2: *Lack of capacity* **of one of the partners**

The European partner's position is often justified in terms of their African partner's 'lack of capacity', which the Europeans pride themselves on 'strengthening' in technical and financial terms. **This attitude** and the term 'lack' affect the nature of the relationship and the way that each actor sees it. It **distorts the partnership and masks the real capacities of the partner in Africa**.

Hypothesis N°3: From the principle of '*sovereignty*'…

Certain partnerships do not respect the sovereignty of the African partner and thus claim their necessary *political leadership* (sometimes in the name of a 'borderless' logic). **Their legitimacy is usurped by the contractual leader's position, which may reinforce a tendency for the partner in Europe to design projects without properly consulting their partner in Africa.**

Hypothesis N°4: *… to the principle of 'solidarity' between actors <u>and</u> between territories!*

Solidarity enables actors to take an interest in matters occurring beyond their 'home territory', and creates links that can make them feel closer to their 'distant' colleagues than to their neighbours at home. International **solidarity** is not only about our contribution in terms of financial and technical support, it **can/should also complement or even replace the 'principle of sovereignty' and 'crossing' borders, enabling us to 'think and act together'** <u>at home and abroad</u>.

This **'critical position'** seemed to have several advantages, as it was a means of (i) ensuring more in-depth debates about supposed *imbalances*, and (ii) avoiding a much easier 'virtuous position' that would have been satisfied with a benign look at our partnership relations, glossing over all the misunderstandings, frustrations and conflicts that inevitably occur along the way.

These four hypotheses led to the elaboration of a **questionnaire to gather information on the initiatives** under consideration (key actors, history, geography, partners' characteristics and respective perceptions of the experience, tipping points in the partnership, retrospective assessment and prospective strategy, issues and levers for change … see Tool sheet N°1 in <u>Annex 3</u>). The next step was to adapt and appropriate the **analytical frameworks** developed by GRDR (see Tool sheets N°4, 5a-5b and 6 in <u>Annex 3</u>), which will probably be used to facilitate *comparisons* and *sequencing*, and possibly even to establish a *typology* of partnerships.

The partners involved in each initiative then met to **discuss their respective analyses, compare their views** (see Tool sheets N°2 and 3 in <u>Annex 3</u>) and to think about the possibilities of planning for the future … together!

10 operational tools

The individual elements of the **'tool kit'** (sheets) that members of the steering committee had helped produce were distributed as they were completed:

Sheet N°1 –   <u>Gathering</u> descriptive information (to be completed by each partner)

Sheet N°2 –   Framework for facilitation – Meeting between partners involved (<u>4 hypotheses</u>)

Sheet N°3 –   Template to take notes (to facilitate the <u>fact sheet</u>)

Sheet N°4 –   Crosscutting partnership evaluation sheet (<u>radar diagram)</u>

Sheet N°5a – <u>Diagram</u> of relations between partners over time (CSO/CSO)

Sheet N°5b – <u>Diagram</u> of relations between partners over time (CSO/LG)

Sheet N°6 –   Retrospective and prospective <u>diagram</u>: what do we want to do together?

Sheet N°7 –   Central theme in the '<u>Tea and talk' sessions</u>

Sheet N°8 –   Organising the final workshop: <u>3 issues</u> to be debated

Sheet N°9 –   <u>Glossary</u> of terms used.

In the end, **14 fact sheets** were developed to ensure that no important information was lost, and to give each initiative an immediately visible and readable identity.

b. **STAGE N°2**: **'Tea and talk' sessions (June) – three joint facilitation initiatives in Africa**

In June, representatives of each of the partners involved in 13 of the 14 initiatives met in Saint-Louis (Senegal), Bamako (Mali) and Lomé (Togo) to **present** their initiative, **discuss** the initial observations made during the first stage, and **exchange** their views on the four working hypotheses (see Tool sheet N°7in Annex 3). The two-day meetings in each site were facilitated by two members of the steering committee, who created a convivial atmosphere to encourage the groups of 10-20 participants to:

- **Identify** and candidly discuss the problems they had encountered, assuming that a critical approach can generate the most useful discussions.

- Start **sharing** their individual experiences in order to try to understand what they reveal about the partnerships concerned.

At the end of each session key observations and criticisms of the partnerships were summarised, along with the recommendations arising from the discussions.

The **summary of the analyses** validated by participants is presented in Section 1.6 of this issue of *Traverses* (Overview of the three 'Tea and talk' sessions).

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c. **STAGE N°3**: **The final workshop (October) – moving towards a collective position?**

The 'Tea and talk' sessions were an opportunity for in-depth discussions about the added value and limitations of our partnership practices. The **critical observations** that emerged from the debates **around the four hypotheses** developed at the start of the process and the 14 fact sheets led to the **identification of three issues** to be discussed at the final workshop (see Tool sheet N°8 in Annex 3, and Part 2).

In September 2013 we also started thinking about how the four hypotheses would be **disseminated and discussed in each of our respective structures**, what tools would be needed, and the key issues that emerged as we considered our practices in light of these three main concerns.

In order to do this, GRET set aside Tuesday 8th October 2013 to prepare for the final workshop. Teams from GRET and AVSF and members of HSF, IRAM and GRDR attended a *'Bistro'2*, where the procedure was summarised. Two speakers from GRDR and AVSF made presentations on what they had learnt from the process and on their views on the hypotheses and issues under discussion.

The idea for all the organisations within G*i* and their partners was to hold this kind of one-day event, to prepare the final workshop and to help build a collective voice that would also show the diversity of our experiences and partnership practices.

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2 Since 2000, Gret has organised monthly 'Gret Bistros' where participants discussed development questions and debated topical issues. These meetings are based on concrete examples – missions, projects, publications, lessons learnt – presented by partners, experts from Gret or other structures.

1.3 An innovative learning process … the complexities of putting an interesting concept into practice

Initiating a participatory learning process that involves about 50 people working for 24 organisations based in 9 countries is a very complex business! It involved (i) coordinating actions between G*i* members; (ii) coordinating actions between the headquarters of each member organisation and their representatives in West Africa; and (iii) working with each partner to determine how to incorporate adapt and sometimes modify the procedure as it progressed. The whole process was further complicated by the fact that it was remotely organised by the Steering Committee, which sometimes had to tread very carefully to ensure that it ran smoothly. The reasons for this are explained below.

How to ensure that actors are fully involved in the process?

Learning from experience entails questioning, discussing and even criticising what has gone before. Members of G*i* and various external agencies were being asked to participate in a challenging introspection exercise, which required a certain distance to ensure that the process was one of constructive criticism rather than negative judgement. This difficulty was exacerbated by the fact that the procedure was initiated by members of G*i* rather than individual stakeholders in the process[3]. This meant the support of the whole process (identifying hotspots in relations, taking a frank and constructive approach to the debates) from the outset by all the actors concerned (project directors, national coordinators or directors of West African structures) had to be ensured. At the same time, the fitness for purpose of the proposed analytical tools and the participants' understanding of how to use them had to be ensured.

"What is the Groupe *initiatives? And why are you so interested in our partnership?"*

We soon realised that our teams in West Africa did not know much about G*i*, and that our partners knew even less. As an 'anonymous' organisation, it was not easy to mobilize teams in a long process of constructive criticism that placed everyone's practices in the spotlight. The task was further complicated by the complex, hierarchical network of channels circulating information between the steering committee and the person directly involved on the ground. **[SC ⇨ NGO/G*i* head office ⇨ Africa/country manager ⇨ Project Director ⇨ Partner].** Fortunately, people embraced the procedure once they understood what it entailed and once the tools had circulated and been adopted.

How to take account and mitigate the 'effects of distance'?

The objective of the first stage (internal meeting between partners) was to use the four hypotheses to elicit some initial critical observations about our partnership relations. Thus, it was very important to ensure that the analytical tools were relevant and able to reflect the participants' positions. The steering committee members who had developed the process not being present in the intervention areas when this work was done, the tools were directly tested, with varying degrees of success. People's understanding of the questions, the functionality of the tools (form and content), level of analysis and capacity to stand back and take stock were key factors in their being able to appropriate the tools. Therefore, the next stages of the process were organised in order to bring everyone together as much as possible, with more time to explain the process and run the discussion forums.

"Your tools are hard to use!"

Some people found the first stage of the learning process (internal analysis between partners) difficult because it was remotely run. Work sessions with partners had to be organised and the

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[3] NB: several 'initiatives' by each GI member organisation were initially proposed as a reference point. The national coordinators were then asked for their views, and identified the person responsible for running the analysis of their 'initiative' with their partner, in conjunction with the steering committee.

methodology and tools had to be appropriated in order to provide useful outcomes for the second stage of the process. This was a particularly delicate exercise as participants had to be able to visualise the proposed 'outcomes' for the next stage (crosscutting 'Tea and talk' sessions) and the fact sheets. Tool sheets N°2 and N°3 were developed and the first finalised fact sheet was widely distributed in order to facilitate this process.

How to raise tricky questions without causing offence?

The very engaging and effective process used to develop the sheets on interview techniques (see Tool sheets N°2 and N°3 in <u>Annex 3</u>) generated in-depth reflection on partnership relations and raised questions rarely discussed by partners, or only on implicitly. People rarely talk about the **main sequences and tipping points in a partnership** (contracts, evaluations, opportunities), of the **resources and tools for partnerships, sources of conflict, levers for change or the medium- and long-term prospects for the partnership**, because these are often seen as risky or even taboo topics. Here too, it was the joint discussions (the 'Tea and talk' sessions, which could only succeed in a convivial and trusting atmosphere) that encouraged people to talk freely and give specific feedback on particular issues.

"Are we going to be taught how to work in partnerships?"
The fact that some participants raised this question reflects a certain lack of understanding about the procedure, as the idea was to learn from their individual experiences and practices rather than to impose a framework for good partnership practices on them. The aim was to adopt a procedure, to question everyone's practices in order to learn from them, and to combine these lessons with the ones learnt from the 13 other initiatives.

How do the costs of partnership stand the test of time?

From the outset, the steering committee was aware that participants were to have a certain level of motivation to be prepared to invest their time in this process. There was always the risk that teams who were already overstretched by their own activities would not make this reflective exercise a priority, and would not take the time to think about their practices (initially on their own, then with their partners) or to understand the proposed tools for facilitating dialogue. In the end, everyone realised that time spent on the process would undoubtedly pay off in years to come, as the proposed theme was central to issues that will certainly arise in the near future, if they have not already done so.

"I don't have time to do this work"
Mobilizing the teams was a time-consuming process. The first stage involved working with the tool kit. Although this could have been done in half a day, the 'apparent complexity' of the tools led people to think that understanding and using them would add considerably to their daily workload. The second and third stages ('Tea and talk' sessions and final workshop) both involved 8 days of work for the teams (2x2 days for the workshop and up to 2x2 days for some participants to make the return journey). Hence, engaging with the process required considerable effort and a genuine desire to discuss our respective practices.

Observing the immediate effects on participants' attitudes and positions

We noticed that the actors' attitudes towards the exercise changed rapidly once it got under way. This can be ascribed to key motivating factors such as the way that the questions were formulated, the frankness of the discussions, the process of exchanging experiences, and people's growing awareness that other initiatives experienced similar partnership problems. The evaluation conducted several weeks after the final workshop in Ouagadougou also showed that many participants felt that this exercise had impacted their own conversations with their partners, and had shaped the practices they hoped to develop in the future.

Example of the tools for analysing partnerships   (see Annex 3, Tool sheets N°4, 5a-5b and 6)
### Radar 'partnership assessment' diagram

What does the tool serve for?
This tool aims at synthesising each partner's assessment of their partnership. It consists of **5 branches** representing **5 evaluation criteria** designed to show the **strengths and weaknesses** of the relationship and ways in which it could be improved.

How to use it
Each partner ranks the five criteria on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) and plots the scores on the radar. This done, the partners **compare** and discuss their **radars** in order to reach an **agreement on the scoring**. This tool is a **subjective representation** that can be supplemented with additional questions for more detailed scores.
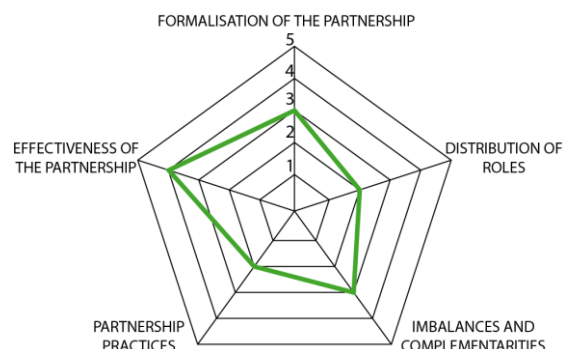
GRET - ENDA GRAF Partnership radar

### Diagrams showing how the partnership has evolved over time
(partnerships between CSOs or between CSOs and LGs/public authorities)

What does the tool serve for?
This tool shows the history of the partnership dynamic, from its creation to the medium or long term. The **horizontal axis** represents **the field of the collaboration,** and the **vertical axis** represents the **logic of the collaboration.**

How to use it
Each partner marks **three points on the grill** representing the relationship between partners at the **outset**, as it is **now** and what it is **ultimately** expected to be. The partners then compare and discuss the curves, and ideally reach a consensus on them. **Differences of opinion are interesting** because they show the image that each party has of himself and of their partner.
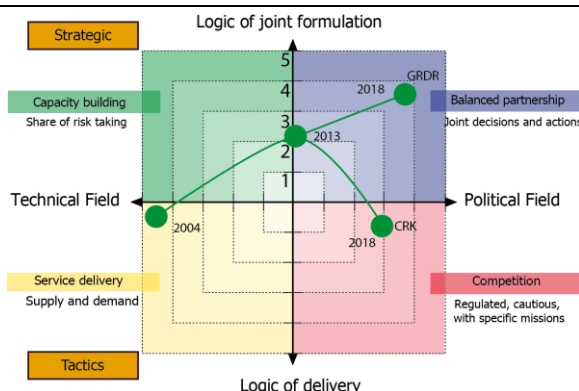
GRDR – CRK partnership diagram

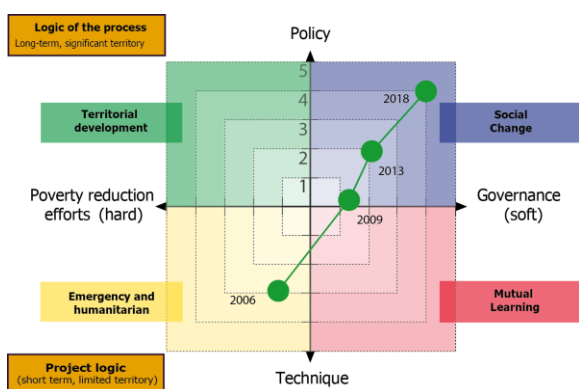### Diagram "What do we want to do together?"

What does the tool serve for?
This tool aims at representing the **issues in the intervention area** and **how the partnership needs to frame its ambitions in order to address them**. The horizontal axis represents the impacts of the partnership in the territory, and the vertical axis represents the logic of the partnership.

How to use it
Each partner marks **three points on the grid** representing the **original, current and ultimate objectives** of the partnership. The partners then compare and discuss the curves in order to try to harmonise their ambitions. **Differences in vision** are interesting because they highlight each stakeholder's different strategic reading of the partnership's past, present and future.

AVSF – ICD partnership diagram

NB: These sheets can be completed **very quickly** (1 hour maximum). They are designed to provide **food for thought** and **facilitate analytical sessions** between partners. It is important to identify the people (or groups) that will use these tools so that the results obtained reflect the vision of the organisation rather than that of a single individual. And because relations between partners are dynamic and constantly evolving, it is essential to **revisit these tools at different stages of the partnership** in order to assess and update the shared strategy.
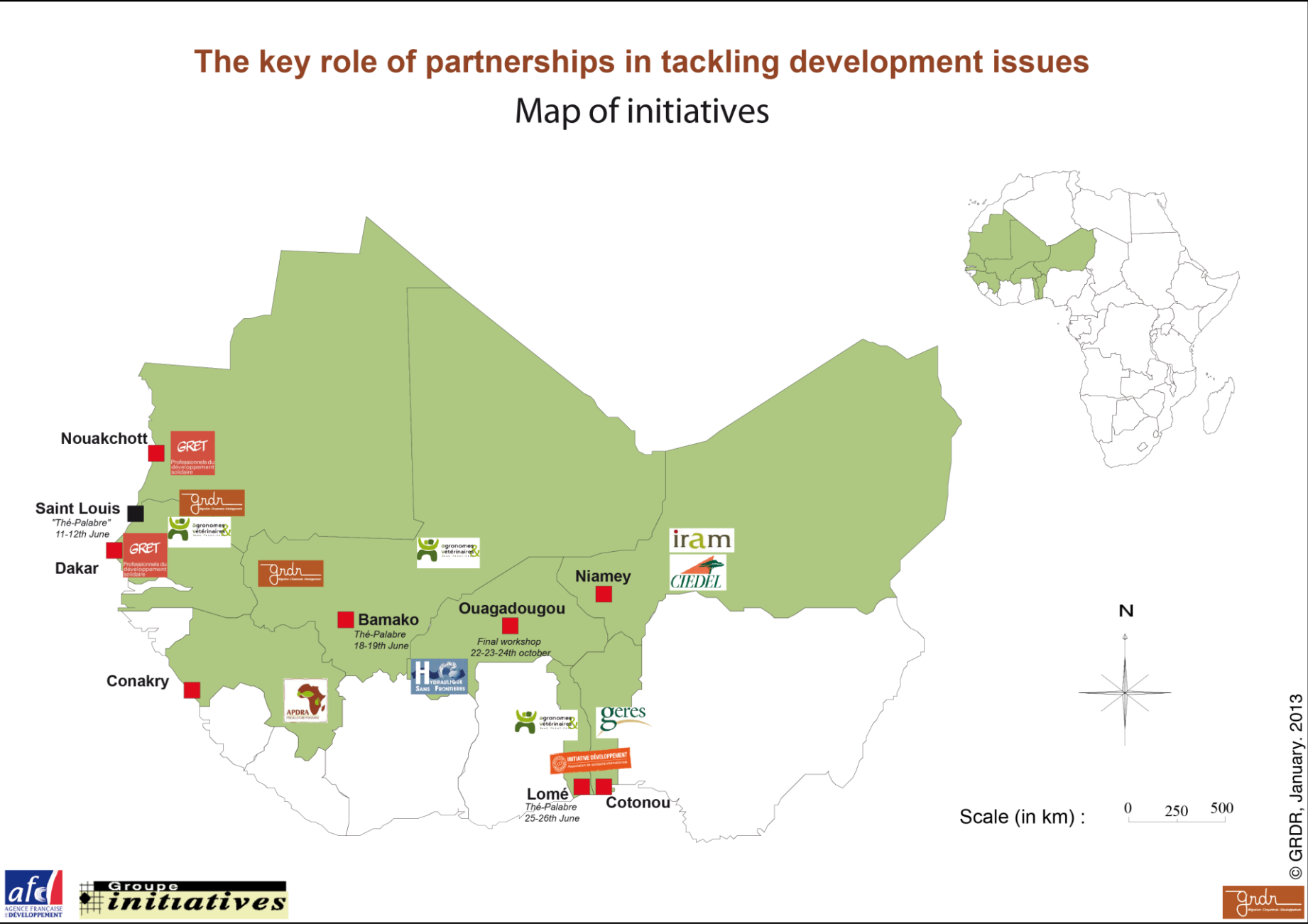
1.4 Timetable for the process: constant dialogue between 'here' and 'there'

Process for the study days in Africa
The key role of partnerships in tackling development issues in the intervention area

April 2012

5th June: G*i* board

27th September: G*i* board

Framework paper (V1)

November 2012 22nd November: G*i* board

Framework paper (FV)

14th January: SC N°1

Develop the 4 hypotheses

January 2013 25th January: G*i* board

6th February: SC N°2

14th March: G*i* board

18th March: SC N°3

Stage 1: Comparative analysis between actors

Identification of initiatives
Territories and partners

April 2013

16th - 24th April: SC N°4

15th May: SC N°5

May 2013 17th May: G*i* board

4th June: SC N°6

Stage 1: Collective debates on our initiatives

Fact sheets (PV)

June 2013

RC Tea and talk sessions

2nd July: SC N°7

July 2013 4th July: G*i* GM

Mid-term review

30th July: SC N°8

Summary of 'Tea and talk' sessions

September 2013 12th September: G*i* board

10th September: SC N°9

Fact sheets (FV)

Stage 3: Synthesis workshop and recommendations

7th October: SC N°10

October 2013 **Synthesis workshop – Debate – Perspectives**
(22nd -24th October, Ouagadougou)

Participant's handbook

November 2013 12th November: G*i* board

8th November: SC N°11

Position paper (FV)

December 2013

Proceedings – *Traverses*

1.6 Overview of the three 'Tea and talk' sessions

The partners' first joint analysis of each initiative was followed by the **second stage of the learning process,** the three 'Tea and talk' sessions held in Saint-Louis (Senegal), Bamako (Mali) and Lomé (Togo) in June 2013. The overall feedback was very positive: partners reported that these participatory exercises were **highly rewarding** and **convivial** events where **people felt able to speak freely and honestly about their experiences**. These three workshops gave everyone the opportunity to question the basis of each party's practices in their partnership, and take the time to look forward as well as backwards. Participants reported that these discussions helped them clarify and renew their ideas.

13 partnership experiences (of the 14 initiatives initially retained[4]) were discussed and used in this huge, wide-ranging reflective exercise. Participants validated the content of this synthesis, which served as the basis for the final workshop in Ouagadougou. The main objectives were to (i) compare our partnership practices and histories, and (ii) do as much as we could to develop analytical tools and possible ways and means of improving them.

For the NGOs belonging to G*i*, the third objective of this process was to develop a clear position on this issue that would enable them to try to influence institutional and donor practices in conjunction with their respective partners.

After this second stage, comparative analysis of the initiatives confirmed the hypothesis that:

1. NGOs in G*i* are no better than others in terms of having balanced partnership relations.

2. The concept of partnership needs to be constantly questioned and reviewed.

3. Situations are very complex, especially regarding the responsibilities, which are necessarily shared (including bringing other actors into the bilateral relationships).

Once they had been discussed and validated, it was decided to organise the discussions around the **four hypotheses** proposed in the preparatory framework (see Methodology). A number of useful questions that emerged were revisited during the final workshop, such as:

☞ Are partnerships a *means* of action (linked to projects) or an *end* in themselves (an objective)?

☞ Partnerships carry a *cost*: what are them and how can they be covered?

☞ Do partnerships vary according to the nature of the partners? If so, what are the particular characteristics of partnerships between NGOs and public authorities, and is there a *typology* of such partnerships?

☞ As partnerships are supposedly based on a '*shared vision*', how can we renew our vision of solidarity in order to build partnerships that evolve and continue beyond a single operational action?

Several participants made a **connexion between renewed international solidarity** and **the changing global context:**

☞ The term 'emerging countries' has come replace the commonly used label 'Southern countries' as certain nations have gained economic and political powers. Therefore, it is time to recognise that so-called 'deficiencies' and needs for 'strengthening' are changing along with **the emergence of competencies and capacities in partner countries**.

☞ Global problems such as climate change, tax evasion, the governance of global public goods and even the management of migratory flows **increase the interdependencies** between countries. All countries are **agents of change**, those in 'the *South*' just as much

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[4] It was not possible to discuss the joint initiative led by CIEDEL and IRAM with RAIL in Niger during the 'Tea and talk' sessions, but it was presented and discussed at the final workshop in Ouagadougou.

as those in 'the *North*', even though these common labels do not really apply to the European and West African countries involved in this exercise. It is not only territories in 'the *South*' that are concerned, as actors in 'the *North*' also need to take action in their own territories.

☞ These **new global issues** are part of the reason why certain actors want to influence public policies and ensure that 'projects' better articulate with the objectives of 'change'. This means that they should primarily be designed as 'tools for change' (rather than for producing tangible, short-term results) along with other tools (see lobbying tools).

I. Imbalances in partnership relations

Imbalances certainly exist ... however,

✓ Their extent and effects vary. Some participants regard particular imbalances as more important than others, especially those relating to people's desire to be agents of change, or 'co-producers' of change in their society. In this case, the imbalances have more to do with **processes of change** than with project management, so it is important to **take the time to identify and share** common visions and aims. 5

✓ These imbalances are not necessarily between actors of 'the North' and those of 'the South'. It is important to determine **the level concerned**, as there are unequal power relations in all social orders (family, village, neighbourhood, etc.).

✓ While **balance** and stability are certainly needed to build relationships, **conflictual relations can also contribute to progress**.

✓ Some imbalances need to be maintained to help under-resourced actors – just as we talk about 'positive discrimination', we can also talk about **positive imbalances**.

Participants made the following proposals to **reduce imbalances in 'North/South' relations in both directions**, by:

Systematising the way that partnerships are regulated

✓ Taking account of the donor's responsibilities and duty to monitor the way that the partnership is regulated.

✓ Using the framework agreement: setting aside time to formulate, monitor and evaluate it so as to enable different interests to be openly expressed, and to enable the way that the collaboration operates to be adjusted according to each party's strengths and limitations.

✓ Including donors in certain work sessions/meetings to improve their awareness of potential problems in the partnership.

Affirming the principle of mutual commitment

✓ Discussing the **allocation of roles** and **adjusting each partner's levels of responsibility** (especially with regard to the donors) according to the activities that they implement. For example, it was suggested that partners in Africa could be responsible for the technical and financial management of the programme, while European partners would provide technical support for project implementation (and are only funded for this activity).

✓ Ensuring that donors recognise each partner's responsibility for the activities that they lead.

✓ Taking account of these responsibilities when granting funding.

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5 Terms that are underlined are explained in the Glossary in the Participant's handbook (as indicative definitions designed to aid understanding).

Moving towards partnerships that are enjoyed rather than endured

- ✓ We need to increase the number of partnerships in order to reduce imbalances." Some participants believe that partnerships are more balanced if **organisations can multiply their partnerships, thereby reducing their** technical and financial **dependency** on their partners. This '**emancipation**' encourages collaborations that take account of each party's real <u>capacities</u> and wishes. **Identifying** and **acknowledging** the **vision**, **specific qualities** and **added value** that each party brings into the partnership paves the way for partnerships that are enjoyed rather than endured.

Making the operating model flexible and progressive by calling for projects that introduce a bias into partnership relations

- ✓ Some partnerships are established in response to **funding opportunities**, before the partners have defined a shared strategy for collaboration.
- ✓ Partnerships should **evolve** and be **flexible**. The initially 'opportunistic' nature of collaboration could be one stage in the development of a 'more balanced partnership'.
- ✓ The **preconditions** for creating partnerships could contribute to more balanced relationships if:
- ✓ Organisations **know about each other** before they enter into a partnership
- ✓ Individuals in each organisation have **previously collaborated** on a project.

Prioritising funding imbalances

- ✓ Structures in sub-Saharan Africa report that they find it difficult to obtain co-funding for projects, and that this creates other imbalances in terms of:
  - o Securing funding for their operating costs, which helps consolidate their overall finances and enables them to function autonomously.
  - o Playing a meaningful role in the <u>joint project design</u>.
- ✓ However, there are certain funding mechanisms that can help reduce financial imbalances:
  - o Acquiring equipment at the end of the project can increase self-funding capacities (EU procedures).
  - o Shifting responsibility for financial management from the European organisation to the African partner (project budget lines for investment, human resources, etc.).
  - o Increasing project calls for organisations in the South, which can then position themselves as leaders and potentially reverse the imbalance.
- ✓ Establish transparent joint financial management processes. The fact that partners "are not equal in terms of operating costs" generates a financial imbalance. This needs to be clarified so that both parties better understand the origins of the imbalance. For example, if the partner in the North is responsible for the administrative and financial management of the project, the partner in the South should be made aware of the activities and costs that this entails (producing narrative reports, etc.).
- ✓ Co-funding can be seen as a means of revaluating the parties concerned, of linking expectations with resources and of justifying the right to oversight. Therefore, it should become obligatory, with public funds mobilized in both partner countries. This means that their respective authorities can no longer oppose the argument saying they 'don't have the money' for such initiatives. Increasing the State's financial resources can be an incentive to address tax-related issues (broadening the tax base, citizen control, national equalisation mechanisms, tax evasion and exemption, etc.), especially at the local government level – but this should be done by trying to support negotiations, to increase transfers from central government and to improve local government resources rather than criticising them. **Raising and resolving these kinds of questions also requires joint 'North/South' processes and alliances**.

II. Lack of capacity

There is a clear link between imbalanced partnerships and lack of capacity, which in turn can also lead to conflicting visions. The question "What capacities will enable you to see how I see?" varies according to the way the partnership is seen: as a **means** of achieving a common objective through the planned actions, and consequently ending with the project; or as an **end** in itself, in which case capacity building will be a more central activity. This can take a variety of **changing forms**, and will also end when the desired capacities are acquired.

In order to avoid thinking in terms of 'lack of capacity', we aim at promoting an approach that focuses on partners' strengths rather than their supposed weaknesses

> ✓ **Technical capacities in Africa are proved and recognised**

Over the last 80 years, organisations in Africa have developed sufficient expertise to position themselves as effective operators, and now sometimes finding themselves in competition with colleagues in European NGOs.

> ✓ **However, partnerships may fall short of expectations (failure to achieve projected results, unfulfilled commitments, etc.).**

Short **trial partnerships** can be useful. If this is not possible, conflict management should enable partners to fine-tune their collaboration (see **regulating** partnerships).

> ✓ **Certain organisational capacities that may need strengthening should be dealt with sensitively**

Since 'people make organisations', it is good to have the (financial) opportunity to retain senior staff. But organisations also need the institutional capacity to ensure that they are not weakened when staff leave or are replaced. Facilitative capacities (to 'get things moving' or 'synergise actors') that come from team dynamics rather than individual skills are also important; as are the organisation's 'political' capacities, since they enable more actors to become agents of change (discussing and helping develop rules for communal life).

It is important for partnerships to be able to develop, so we need to remember that

> ✓ C**onflict** can be a positive source of change if it is well managed.
> ✓ The **end of a cycle** represents an opportunity (end of a project or programme, change of direction, turnover in elected officials, etc.).
> ✓ Designing a **new project** is also an opportunity, although having to act quickly is not necessarily a help here: projects (and their identification phase) have different timescales than institutions.
> ✓ It is important to set aside **time for evaluation** (of the partnership as well as the project) and for broader reflection in order to avoid being slaves to the competition for contracts. **Time for reflection** (such as the sessions that G*i* organised with this process) helps relieve pressure, creates space to step back from reality and to **build shared visions**.
> ✓ **Understanding the new concepts and instruments needed for innovation** (to respond to climate change, mobilize new funding, etc.) helps develop **complementarities** and renew **alliances** between actors.
> ✓ Finally, are the donors that promote partnerships willing to finance their management (review meetings, conflict management, time for information, communication and reflection, etc.)? Bearing in mind that this is not necessarily impossible under current agreements, the two following recommendations were formulated:
> > o Provide for a budget line for consultations between partners,
> > o Include an evaluation of the partnership in the terms of reference for the evaluation of the project/programme.

III. The principle of sovereignty

Participants in the 'Tea and talk' sessions had different views and levels of understanding of **sovereignty**, which is a **key element of partnership relations** in the numerous collaborations between NGOs and the public authorities. At the very least it involves designing projects/programmes that take account of the development strategies pursued by both central and decentralised public authorities. It also applies to associative actors, especially when they want to **intervene in processes of change**.

The question of sovereignty arises in relation with risk-taking and responsibilities:

In this regard, the following actors are **sovereign**:

- ✓ the party that always takes risks,
- ✓ or suffers the consequences of the processes of change that they have instigated,
- ✓ or lives in the territory concerned,
- ✓ or will feel the long-term effects of public policy reforms,
- ✓ or acts in a 'national organisation'.

Therefore, there is a difference in sovereignty between national and foreign organisations. This is true even if external agencies have authorisation, a headquarters agreement or are staffed by nationals from the country in which they are operating. There is a similar difference in sovereignty over decisions to be taken with regard to funding from 'the North'.

Visibility as a guarantee of sovereignty

In this respect, European structures have a '**duty to stand back'.** It is important that they do not assume control, take all the credit for actions or are 'obstructive – they should give their African partners room to interact with the authorities and users. Many European partners already recognise this, saying that they respect this 'obvious' obligation, and some claim that they can also help 'consolidate their partner's sovereignty'. However, there is still a considerable gap between what is said and what is done.

Sovereignty does not preclude the 'right of scrutiny'

This debate on sovereignty is closely linked with the donors' **financial regulations**, which call for a responsible 'Northern' organisation to be involved in the partnership. The restrictive technical and financial frameworks imposed by donors require 'Northern' partners to interfere in their 'Southern' partners' work in order to guarantee their credibility. This **can cause conflict to arise**. Since they place such emphasis on partnerships, donors should also recognise that they involve shared commitments and accept jointly signed contracts.

"Co-funding does not exclude monitoring": partners could have a **reciprocal right of scrutiny**. Each party should be able to use the different consultative spaces that exist to regulate partnerships and protect themselves against the various risks to which they are exposed. Thus foreign organisations, whose legitimacy derives from the partners' shared values, from their own technical expertise and from their proximity to agents of change, but do not have the same political legitimacy as the 'sovereign' partner, also have a '**right of scrutiny' over the dynamics of change** provided they behave graciously and do not frustrate or challenge the other partner on their territory. The same applies to 'Southern' organisations regarding the financial management (see differences in sovereignty, above).

Affirmation of respect for sovereignty is also affected by the dynamics of the partnership and the development of competencies. Respect for sovereignty develops **throughout the partnership** as skills are acquired, and through regular interaction (dialogue, consultation). Speaking from experience, some participants noted the risk of '**self-interested solidarity**', i.e. using sovereignty to obtain certain advantages without actually being able to assume the rights and responsibilities it brings.

IV. The principle of solidarity

This principle allows actors to go beyond strictly national frameworks in the name of a certain '<u>shared destiny</u>' **that transcends their membership of different communities**, and which could be expressed in the **renewed argument for international solidarity**.

This 'shared destiny' takes account of particular **values** (such as equity in the face of inequality), **visions** (decentralisation, democratic governance, promoting equal rights) and **objectives** (reducing inequalities, redistributing wealth, pooling knowledge, regulating migration) that would then be explicitly shared in the same way as other commitments.

This kind of **shared political and ethical commitment**, which is an expression of solidarity, gives 'Northern' organisations a right to question and intervene (interfere?) in the triangular relations between the State/population/intermediary operators (associations), while obliging them to think about the aims of the partnership and its **impacts in terms of making similar changes in 'the North'**.

Solidarity involves sharing risks

✓ Financial risks: taken by the organisation in order to contribute to their partner's financial stability and ultimately enable them to participate in co-funding.

✓ Political risks: local government projects that have negative impacts on the intervention area could damage their relations with the citizens in their constituency.

✓ Technical risks: because projects and organisations operate on different timescales, the project leader assumes technical responsibility for project management (duration and quality of outputs).

✓ **Principle of reciprocity** or **shared responsibility**: there should be consultation and reciprocal information sharing over these kinds of shared risks in order to improve dialogue between partners and strengthen each party's sovereignty.

Recommendations for new forms of partnership and greater solidarity

✓ Support the emergence of **associations** of powerful actors.

✓ Strengthen complementarities with **lobbying** actions in the 'North' and 'South'.

✓ Promote **complementary actions and sharing of experiences** between actors in the 'South' and 'North'.

✓ Value the role of **migrants as links in the chain of solidarity** between different territories.

✓ Develop a **map of expertises** in Africa to **encourage crosscutting exchanges**, by:
  o Giving structures plenty of room to grow when developing new solidarity projects/programmes.
  o Encouraging the emergence of new economic models, and establishing specific funds for partners in the South by mobilizing them on project evaluations, technical assistance and other actions.
  o Strengthening the expertise of these partners and their recognition by new actors.
  o Providing a visible forum for exchange on the G*i* website.

✓ Develop the capacity to **forge partnerships with the private sector** in Africa.

✓ Talk about partners and <u>partnerships</u> when there is a **certain quality to the relationship** between the parties concerned, and about allies and <u>alliances</u> when they have **shared ambitions for political change**. Although the two terms are complementary, alliances are stronger than partnerships as it is assumed that the parties share (i) a geopolitical understanding at the local, national and international levels, (ii) a common strategy, and (iii) operational implementation.

Part 2: The study days in Ouagadougou: what lessons can be learnt from our partnership practices?

2.1 Presentation of the procedure for Stage 3, the 'Ouagadougou workshop'

The third and final stage of the learning process was the study days in Ouagadougou. These were attended by most of the actors that had been involved in the first two stages of the process, and by senior staff and members of NGOs in the Groupe *initiatives* (a total of 37 participants). Several questions had to be dealt with before this wide-ranging meeting was held. They are summarised below.

Reflective and prospective work around three issues

Our objective was to extend the joint analysis and suggest how we can make our partnerships more meaningful, improve their content, tools and pace, and how we can improve our ability to address key common issues in the territories where we live and work.

The workshop programme (see <u>Annex 1</u>) was designed so that we could (i) focus on the feedback on the 'Tea and talk' sessions (see <u>Part 1.6</u>) and (ii) hold **plenary sessions and workshops** in order to facilitate debate on the **three** following **issues**:

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1. **"Are joint commitments an integral element of partnerships?"** *Sharing responsibilities and funding*

2. **Partnerships and issues arising from change:** *Do we have the capacity to fulfil our ambitions?*

3. **Rethinking 'North/South' relations:** *Renewing partnerships calls for a different vision of international solidarity*

The main headings and different stages of the learning process were formulated as **questions** in order to generate debate about the 'Tea and talk' sessions and **build collective reflection**.

How can we broaden our thinking from specific cases to more general issues?

In order to avoid a repetition between this workshop and the earlier stages of the process, we wanted the former to look at the **general issues** that emerged from the 'Tea-and-talk' sessions. We also wanted to see what we could **learn** from the **diverse situations** and experiences these sessions covered, despite the obvious limitations of a sample of 14 initiatives. Recognising that each participant came with his own realities, we asked them to listen to other people's views so that we could move from specific situations and **consider more general subjects and shared issues,** taking a single path in order to build our solidarities.

The <u>Participant's handbook</u> suggested that we allow ourselves to make bold assertions, even if this led to some over-generalisation. We decided not to invite our institutional partners or networks to this third stage of the process, but to keep the discussions between ourselves so that we could extend this rare chance to **speak freely** without worrying about hidden agendas, and **develop our practices in relation to the issues around us**.

How can we build a collective discourse that revisits the question of partnerships within our frameworks for cooperation?

The Ouagadougou workshop alternated plenary debates (1st morning, 2nd day) **with workshop sessions** (1st afternoon) to give everyone the time and opportunity to express their views.

Each issue was discussed in a half-day workshop attended by a limited number of participants (10 to 15). These workshops were structured in such a way that participants could propose a **framework for the critical analysis** that would contribute to the process of joint reflection (see boxes below summarising the issues, sub-questions, expected outcomes and key words).

The results of the discussions of each workshop were presented for debate in a plenary session (Day 2) in order to identify common positions and shared recommendations.

2.2 Workshop 1: Are joint commitments an integral element of partnerships? Sharing responsibilities and funding

Issue N°1

Are joint commitments an integral element of partnerships?
Sharing responsibilities and funding

Experience has shown that there are major imbalances in our partnerships (both visible and invisible), despite our clear (unrealistic?) desire to quickly build sustainable, balanced 'win-win' relationships with our European and African partners. Can we have an honest look on our partnerships and the way that they work?

It is not easy to find a balance in affirming our own knowledge/skills/experiences, deciding which competences we need to mobilize to identify the issues we aim to address, and ensuring that our partners have and are able to implement these skills. Does the answer lie in the 'principle of joint commitment', meaning shared responsibilities and fairer budgetary mechanisms, such as co-funding based on more systematic mobilization of national funds?

Sub-questions:
- Does sharing responsibilities according to each party's skills helps reduce imbalances?
- Can joint work on taxation facilitate contributions from '*Southern*' governments (national and local) and CSOs to fund projects?
- What (witting or unwitting) role do donors play in these imbalances (conditionalities, procedures)?
- Will multiplied partnerships (i) reduce the risk of dependence among 'Southern' organisations or (ii) increase the chances of marshalling all the capacities needed to identify the challenges and address the issues that need to be tackled?

Expected results: Typology (and characteristics) of partnerships – Joint strategy for mobilizing co-funding.

Key words: Imbalances, competition, complementarities, joint commitment, co-funding, interference, right of scrutiny, responsibilities, financial mechanism, taxation.

Results of plenary debates on the presentation

Methodology

The working group focused on the issue of joint commitment in terms of reducing imbalances. It did this by identifying a series of objectives and corresponding recommendations for each type of actor (NGOs, public authorities, donors).

1. NGOs

Objective: Develop more 'beneficial' collaborations around complementarities identified and defined according to the objectives to be achieved

"*We need more partnerships in order to reduce imbalances*". The capacity to diversify their partnerships will help actors build 'beneficial' partnerships based on the **added value and expertise that each party brings to the collaboration**. This position encourages the **development of complementarities** while aiming to strengthen and professionalise each party's capacities. It emphasises the **qualitative** aspects of partnerships, these being then **evaluated in the light of a qualitative criteria: the extent to which they achieve pre-determined objectives**, including *reducing imbalances* that have been identified and seeking *complementarities* between partners.

The working group made the following recommendations on this point:
- Diversify interventions in order to increase the number of partnerships for NGOs (North-South, South-South, North-North).

- Share technical and financial responsibilities according to each party's expertise and mission, and include this in donor contracts.

- Develop synergies and open up opportunities for cross-cutting exchanges between partners to make the most of each party's expertise (in feasibility studies, project evaluations, etc.).

- Identify the expected results of the partnership, with dedicated budget lines.

- Plan the stages for monitoring and evaluating the setup of the partnership.

Objective: Making financial resources a central element of thinking partnerships

The distribution of operating resources allocated by donors is a contentious issue as it creates imbalances in partnerships. Although operating costs differ in the 'North' and 'South', we need to **act on our objective to reduce the financial imbalances** in budget design. Demands to increase the resources allocated to cover the administrative costs of projects, which resources enable implementing structures to do their job properly, should be jointly discussed and promoted with different donor agencies.

Participants recommended several measures to achieve this objective:
- Organise a working group composed of GI members and their partners to discuss operating costs and the distribution of administrative costs.

- Collectively ask donors to recognise the real administrative costs borne by development NGOs and ask them to allocate sufficient resources to cover them.

- Develop joint strategies for fundraising and co-funding.

Objective: NGOs defining graduated partnerships that can adapt to the way that their partners change

The question of imbalances in the relationship between partners generally assumes that there will be some sort of capacity building to enable one of the partners (Northern or Southern) to assume new responsibilities. Increasing their capacity can generate new '**power relations**' in the collaboration, sometimes to the point where partners **compete** over a particular theme or given territory. Therefore, partners need to develop a **medium/long-term strategy** to prepare for such changes in their relationship and organise new modes of collaboration.

> **The working group suggested two scenarios:**
> - Define an exit strategy for the Northern NGO, which has to accept that it will 'lose some of its market share'.
> - Implement a support process that evolves with the partnership (changing the scale of the intervention, broadening the intervention sectors) and facilitates the transfer of certain responsibilities.

Objective: Southern NGOs addressing the challenge of increasing their financial capacities in order to fulfil their joint commitments

Certain funding mechanisms impose a **contractual framework that creates financial imbalances** (assuming that 'the North' will take the lead). Partners may see this as an imposition if it is hard for them to meet their responsibility to co-fund activities. There are a few local and international funding mechanisms for 'Southern' NGOs (such as delegated EU funds), but there are not many of them and they are hard to access. **NGOs need to fulfil their joint commitments by influencing the relevant public authorities for** making the funding requirements and procedures less onerous.

> **The working group recommended several measures to achieve this objective:**
> - Improve transparency and increase confidence in potential donors (share financial and technical reports, quantitative results, annual audits, etc.).
> - Form networks and platforms to increase CSOs' lobbying capacity and ability to influence public policies.
> - Work together to create a national taxation system that favours local associations.

2. Public authorities (the State, local governments)

Objective: Determining where public authorities in the South fit into the principle of joint commitment

Public authorities are also responsible for helping reduce financial imbalances between civil society actors. They can enable CSOs to increase their capacity to help co-fund activities by:

1. Putting in place local funding mechanisms (taxation, involving every administrative level, etc.),
2. Encouraging civil society actors to structure and strengthen their associations and institutions (identity, mission),
3. Increasing their role in the implementation of regional development plans.

> **The following recommendations could help implement these proposals:**
> - Improve access to local funding for national NGOs and create funds to strengthen the structure of civil society organisations.
> - Develop a culture where citizens contribute to local development (encourage the private for-profit sector to develop CSR policies, etc.).
> - Introduce fairer taxation for foreign and offshore companies.
> - Increase local government investment capacities.
> - Put in place multi-actor frameworks for consultation that will allow civil society platforms and networks to become more involved, and improve coordination with State actions (harmonise approaches, etc.).

3. 'Northern' donors

Objective: Donors reviewing their funding models in order to encourage "Southern" actors' initiatives

Each stakeholder has to understand and respect the multiple procedures and conditions associated with different funding mechanisms. This means that donors play a key role in determining how partnerships between CSOs play out, especially those between 'Northern' and 'Southern' CSOs. Our observations and analysis show that donors urgently need to (i) develop forms of funding that are more accessible to actors in 'the South' so that they have more say in the partnership logic and greater capacity to take risks; (ii) open up opportunities for CSOs in 'the South' to increase their responsibilities, and for their partners in 'the North' to stop acting as auditors, this inevitably creating imbalances.

This could be done if donors act on the following recommendations:

- Take action with the public authorities in order to:

    o Increase the financial capacities of Southern actors through more effective taxation.

    o Provide specific funding for institutional capacity building for CSOs in 'the North' and 'the South' (such as FRIO, the institutional and organisational support fund in France).

    o Redistribute bi- and multi-lateral public funds received by States in favour of local NGOs.

- Increase funding opportunities for 'Southern' NGOs, and assist them in project design and management.

    o Be open to the possibility of several partners signing joint grant agreements, with (i) shared legal, budgetary and technical responsibility for the whole project, and (ii) each partner being responsible for different components (technical and financial reports, justification, audits, etc.).

- Increase opportunities to fund skill transfers and establish learning processes in both 'the South' and 'the North'.

- Persuade central governments to introduce tax exemptions for intellectual services provided by Northern NGOs.

2.3 Workshop 2: Partnerships and dealing with change: do we have the capacity to fulfil our ambitions?

Issue N°2

Partnerships and dealing with change
Do we have the capacity to fulfil our ambitions?

Partnerships rarely address the (political) issues that arise with change as they are (too?) often driven by project management imperatives. Because 'opportunistic partnerships' are often based on necessity, partners do not have the time to get to know each other (and to form 'beneficial' partnerships) or to consider the capacities needed to address the organisational and institutional issues that are thrown up by change.

So what competencies/capacities do we need to go beyond project logics and become real 'agents of change'? Partnerships also need to be *flexible* and *evolve*. G*i*'s experience has shown that partnerships follow certain 'pathways' – so what tools and reference points do we need to monitor and evaluate our progress on this journey?

Sub-questions:
- Is the partnership a means to an end (that of achieving an objective) or an end in itself?
- Do partnerships between CSOs, CSOs and LGs and CSOs and public authorities have particular characteristics?
- What are the capacities each party must have to be an 'agent of change'?
- How can we move from 'opportunistic' partnerships (project management) to 'strategic' partnerships (social change)?
- What are the consequences of the costs and financial setup of the partnership?

Expected results: Identify capacity of change, sequenced in 10 stages of the partnership cycle (with concepts of geographic and temporal scales). Table of indicators (ratchet effects, key principles ...).

Keywords : Capacities, competences, sequencing, timescale, territorial scale, duty to withdraw, right of scrutiny, agent of change, conflict, monitoring and evaluation in order to evolve...

Results of plenary debates on the presentation

Methodology

1. Round table presentation of each participant's expectations of the workshop.

2. Round table discussion of understanding of the terminology used to discuss the issues.

3. Definition of the expected outcomes at the end of the workshop: group work generated two tools for analysing partnerships: 'cycles' and 'key points in the life of the partnership'.

"Partnerships are strategic when they are part of a political project for the territory"

Partnerships acquire a 'strategic' dimension when they fit into a territory and reflect one or more clearly identified issues that they claim to address. Participants affirmed that **partnerships should focus on a political project for the territory as soon as possible in order to generate sustainable change**. However, partnerships are not necessarily 'strategic' – they are **often pragmatic** and have to reflect the logic of the project concerned. This could be a **preparatory stage** (pilot phase testing shared values) for more strategic partnerships.

Partnerships that stand the test of time: the capacity to evolve

Partnerships work according to two timescales: that of the partners as they build their relationship (through their first joint actions, agreements, reviews, conflicts, etc.), and that of the

territory in which they operate. Because the issues in a particular area evolve over time, partnerships need to be dynamic in order to deal with these changes and developments.

The aim of the workshop was to identify the **cycles** in a partnership (Figure 1) and to **list the main recurrent 'key points'** (Table 1), especially **tipping points** that shape the partnership (agreements, charters, founding texts, evaluations, etc.). Another aim was to test the partners and their values (conflicts, breakdowns).

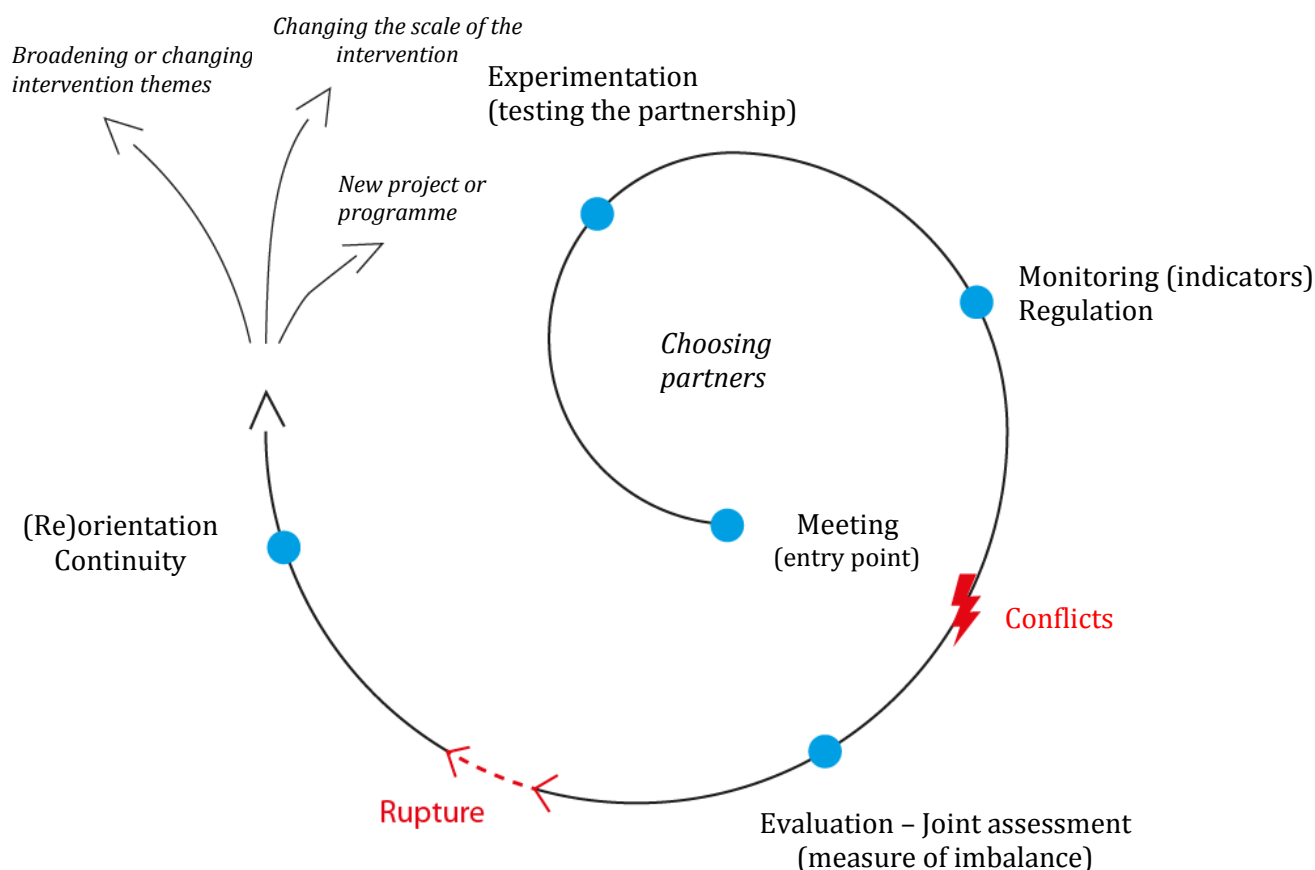**Figure 1: Do partnerships follow cycles?**

Figure 1 above and Table 1 below were developed during Workshop n°2, then discussed and validated in the plenary sessions. However, we need to be aware of **the pitfalls of overly prescriptive diagrams!**

There is no recipe for a 'good partnership': key points are progressive but rarely linear, and therefore do not occur chronologically: several projects may be implemented before a programme is developed, and disagreements can arise at any time ... Partners have to be able to show that they have the **capacity** and **tools** to deal with each key point **in time** and in the **specific arena** in which they act together (see columns 2 to 5 in Table 1 below).

1+1 = 3: Being able to develop complementarities in order to build new competences

While 'strategic' partnerships are necessary to address particular issues in the intervention area, partners also need to **develop complementarities** so that they can be genuine '**agents of change**'.

This **complementarity** should progressively redress the balance in the partnership, an imbalance all too often masking each partner's real capabilities. Capacity building (technical, financial and organisational support, networking, etc.) is important for us and for our partners, but each partner also needs to **define his own particular capacity** to assist the territory. Both

parties should **work on identifying** their skills (partners' diagnosis) so that they can develop and make use of their respective competences.

Complementarity can take **several forms**: it may be (i) technical (expertise in different areas), (ii) geographic (ability to target common issues in different territories) or (iii) political (mobilizing respective networks, lobbying at the national and international levels, etc.).

Ultimately, partnerships can be a lever for **creating new competencies** that none of the organisations would have if they acted alone. In turn, these new competencies enable them to respond to issues in their intervention area in an innovative way. Then **the partnership becomes strategic**.

"Evaluating partnerships in light of their impact on an area"

As partnerships aim to address particular issues in the intervention area, they should also be evaluated on the basis of their impact in that area. It is impossible to establish pre-determined indicators for these impacts because of the diverse situations concerned. A table of indicators is needed to take account of complex dynamics that may span several different timescales, spaces (local, regional, national, sub-regional, etc.) and possibly sectors.

Are donor funding mechanisms appropriate for partnership practices?

The 'key points' of the partnership **shape and determine the quality of the partnership**, and thus the pace of change in the intervention area.

The first key points – the initial meeting, choice of partner, building projects (identification study, project design, etc.), working out how things will be done together – are **the first steps in preparing a collaboration. This one** may start off as merely 'pragmatic', but can rapidly become 'strategic'.

Partners need to be able to identify and plan key points in the partnership (meetings, expertise, evaluations), which generate **costs** that have to be covered. These costs could be included in the joint projects' budgets, since donors often (rightly but clumsily) require partners to take responsibility for these costs.

From 'enforced' to 'desirable' partnerships: an alliance of values!

Participants stressed the importance of knowing how to sequence the 'life-stories' of their partnerships: "*Sequencing enables us to move forward!*"

Similarly, increasing the number of partnerships (see Workshop n°1) gives us more room to manoeuvre and makes us less susceptible to crises: it enables us to *make better choices* and *choose better partners*.

Participants also observed that partnerships are not necessarily limited to planning actions. Certain joint activities do not necessarily need funding. This is true for the activities limited to sharing positions and exchanging ideas. When this happens we can start talking about '*strategic alliances*'.

Table 1: *What are the key points in the life of a partnership?*

	Key points	Capacities	Time	Context Territory	Tools Indicators
1	**The initial meeting**	Curiosity Openness	Opportunity	Local: actions on the same territory National / international: meeting in shared networks	Founding texts / Charter Position papers Good understanding (essential)
2	**Choosing partners**	Partners' diagnosis Honesty Vigilance	Short term: call for project proposals Long term: through activities undertaken in the same territory	On one or other's territory	Analytical framework (to be formalised)
3	**First action**	Analysis of the context/actors	Short term	Small area (village, development area)	Technical and financial agreements Terms and conditions
4	**Joint assessment**	Knowing how to talk/listen Knowing how to accept criticism Trust	Taking the time required for the task	Small area (village, development area))	To be prepared (ToR, objectives, criteria, facilitation)
5	**Designing and implementing a programme or process**	Express own values Define shared missions Potential for change Technical and geographic complementarities Networks (Co)funding	Long-term Allocating specific times	Interaction between levels	Assessment of the reference situation Framework agreement, values Strategic plan for co-funding Openness to multiple actors
6	**Conflict / Crisis**	Regulation Empathy Two-way listening (self before the other) Competition => complementarities	Time for discussion	Leave territory to settle the conflict	Test of shared values Space for dialogue Intervention by a mediator
7	**Rupture**	Say 'No' Courage Taking risks	Specific timeframe	LG elections Change of direction	Formalisation (in writing)
8	**Common issues/interests** (joint development)	Identify common issues Manage interdependencies	Mission in two spaces Exchange visits	Several territories 'Over here and over there'	See tools, diagrams, shared strategy
9	**Learning process**	Measuring change (measuring imbalances)	Throughout the partnership (along the way)	Starting point	Partner's fact sheet (history) Table of indicators for results and effects
10	**External evaluation**	Retrospective and prospective assessment	Specific timeframe	Space where the partnership plays out	Shared ToR Table of indicators

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2.4 Workshop 3: Rethinking 'North/South' relations: renewing partnerships calls for a different vision of international solidarity

Issue N°3

Rethinking 'North/South' relations

Renewing partnerships calls for a different vision of international solidarity

Since partnerships are supposed to involve 'sharing a common vision', we should be able to remodel our partnerships by working together on a new shared vision that is more relevant to the changing context of international solidarity.

The geopolitical landscape is changing as we shift from MDGs for 'developing countries' to SDGs that involve every country on the planet (managing climatic disturbances and global public goods, promoting and protecting equal rights, decentralisation and governance, democracy and citizen control, decent jobs, tax optimization, tax havens, etc.).

The 'butterfly effects' of certain mechanisms not only demonstrate the principles of cause and effect, but also highlight our interdependencies and complementarities. We European 'developers' who apply our expertise abroad also need to look at what we are doing in our own countries.

If we want to affirm that citizens share 'common issues' and can create 'shared destinies' in the melting pot of decentralised civil society co-operation initiatives, we must clarify what we mean by these 'shared visions/destinies' before re-writing the justification for (international) solidarity. This will add a political dimension to our partnerships, and help them develop into alliances.

Sub-questions:

- Can partnerships find a balance through shared geopolitical thinking?

- What is our solidarity built upon? What are our common issues? How can solidarity change the reality of social relations within our intervention areas (strategic partnerships, logics of alliance)?

- Can we transcend borders and look beyond questions of sovereignty in order to develop our solidarity (points of disagreement and tension ... but also ground for new ideas)?

- How can partnerships between actors in decentralised cooperation act as levers for joint local development processes? What place and role is there for migrants, citizens of our own and other territories, in these innovative dynamics?

Expected results: Methodology for adapting partnerships to the issues in the intervention area(s). "X key principles" of a strategic partnership with multiple political and geographic dimensions.

Keywords: Sovereignty, legitimacy, communitarianism, values, geopolitical vision, alliance, interdependencies, MDG/SDG and post 2015, 'South and North?', 'at home and abroad', (decentralised) cooperation, joint development, strategic partnerships (= 'alliance').

☞ **Results of the plenary debates on the presentation**

Methodology

1. Cross-cutting discussion of the theme, with debates on the proposed sub-questions.

2. Analysis of these questions in relation to the expected results.

3. Proposal and analysis of cross-cutting questions on the issue.

North – South: a shifting and flexible border

"*Where is 'the South'? South of the Sahara, the Mediterranean, the northern outskirts of Marseille?*" These were some of the questions raised in the plenary session. They were meant to show that international solidarity is an issue at various levels in every territory, as poverty is becoming a more pressing and visible problem in the North. Inequality is worsening as economic crises develop and deepen, and other global issues (democracy, strengthening citizenship, climate change, etc.) spill over the borders of our national territories.

Our partnerships and solidarity values need to span the 'North-South' division and be open to the shared issues that bring us together around a single vision and a shared society model.

"What do you want to do in our country?"

The desire to build partnerships between our territories and work together informs on our thinking and answers many of the questions raised during the plenary sessions, including the issue of "*What do you want to do here?*" and "*What makes the North interested in the South?*"

We have seen that the notions of 'North' and 'South' are ambiguous. The combination of this ambiguity and the history of North-South relations can lead to joint actions being presented as one-sided (some even raised the question of hidden agendas). Hence our interest in the **notion of '*alliances*'**, as it reframes our desire of working **together on common issues by developing technical and political complementarities**.

Partnerships need to adapt to the changing world. So how can we reframe them in order to address common issues?

(i)   Building better partnerships starts with a common geopolitical view that becomes the centre of shared concerns

In a changing and more **interdependent** world (mobility, means of communication, growing inequalities) organisations need to be **able to change, adapt** and work together to meet the **skills challenge**. We have to agree on the same point of view in order to resolve the global issues that affect us all. This requires **collective awareness** of the potential advantages of working with diverse actors, provided our efforts are fuelled by a strong desire to focus on common concerns and issues that can be (better) resolved together.

In order to do this:

- There needs to be active commitment at the community level, reflecting the geographic and political situation of each group.

- Different viewpoints need to be recognised and developed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

- Our responses require a critical mass in order to impact on the mechanisms that are causing problems in our societies (at home and abroad).

(ii)   Reframing partnerships calls for new information systems and forms of contact

There is no room for one-sided partnerships (those that are only wanted by one of the actors concerned). What is needed are **strategic partnerships** with **scale effects that can be translated into structuring effects,** and different intervention procedures based on better documented data (given the general weakness of certain statistical systems).

Our way of working needs to change in order to develop and maintain **balanced relationships** between different actors (joint thinking before, during and after the project/action) and to **build on each party's strengths** (technical, financial and networking capacities; see Table 1 from Workshop N°2).

(iii) Breaking down the barriers presented by funding mechanisms

This mainly involves making it easier for CSOs in the South to obtain direct access to donor funding lines (as with certain calls for EU projects). Breaking down these barriers would help putting an end to the stereotypes that maintain the North-South division, which stereotypes need to be deconstructed in order to ease access to funding.

(iv) What kind of sovereignty are we talking about in increasingly multi-cultural organisations that operate in several territories, sometimes both 'at home and abroad'?

The members of our teams are increasingly drawn from **diverse cultures** (in both 'the North' and 'the South'). This encourages **skill sharing**, and could provide concrete solutions to jointly identified problems.

The working group recognises that sovereignty depends on the type of relationship concerned

Certain state actors (especially decentralised local governments in 'the South') do not have a good grasp of the technological tools and steps involved in proposing and designing programmes. This **undermines their sovereignty** because it means that they need intermediaries to obtain financial support.

CSOs also need to **promote efforts to strengthen the authority of the State**, in other words, initiatives that **enable the State to** play its role and **to assume its responsibilities in representing the general interest**. This is an issue in relations between the State and civil society.

Exercising sovereignty requires certain skills. Capacity building in this respect should:

- Not be limited to administrative procedures, but should be **open to more functional** and operational **issues**.
- Focus on acquiring a strategic combination of skills by working on common issues to bring about change within a given society, while **maintaining each actor's respective degree of sovereignty**.
- Ensure that actors know how to **distinguish** between matters of solidarity and sovereignty.

(v) Building alliances around common issues

Broadening the **network of actors** (CSOs, LGs, etc.) in 'the North' and 'the South' helps promoting a common global vision, thereby encouraging actors to set aside their differences and competitiveness in order to **better develop complementarities**.

(vi) Related questions: Legitimacy, complementarity and positioning

Three aspects of international solidarity need to be considered:

- **Legitimacy**: who is the (most) legitimate actor to develop a given activity in one or more territories?
- **Complementarity**: before starting any action, project or programme, it is important to know how to identify and make the most of the different players' technical, financial and political complementarities…
- **A strategic position** defining the common issues in this new vision of 'North-South' relations. Formulating this position is a challenge, and requires **more thought** to help reframe our partnerships through a different vision of solidarity.

Conclusion: Building a collective voice in order to create a genuine culture of partnership and change our practices

Having started with our diverse specific experiences and practices, the final workshop in Ouagadougou enabled us to move on to generalities and **develop a collective voice** that is summarised in the _position paper_ in the introduction to this issue of _Traverses_.

At the end of this **innovative learning process**, the Groupe _initiatives_ asked what we could expect this workshop to produce in terms of concrete results. Using the 2012 framework paper to define the objectives helped us to tackle three issues:

- **Joint analysis of partnerships:** G_i_ members and their partners have **jointly developed an analytical framework** for partnerships ('initiatives' logic).

- **Put a spotlight on shared territorial issues and emerging new actors:** we were able to produce new analytical frameworks to help review the question of partnerships and look at partnerships as **innovative levers to '_get things moving on the ground_'**.

- **Raise the profile of G_i_ actions** and **open dialogue** between our teams, partners and institutional actors in West Africa (AFD, EU, States, etc.). The tools that were developed will help to promote G_i_'s main guiding lines (exchanging experiences and sharing knowledge) and build on its members' experience.

The Groupe _initiatives_ does not pretend to have developed normative models and thinking that are applicable to every context or actor. What it has done is to encourage participants in the learning process so as to **change the practices** of their organisations and partners. Participants now need to consider how to best share the knowledge they have acquired through this learning process, how to spread the word through their organisations, and how to start building a **real culture of partnership** based on all the experiences that were discussed.

The documents produced during this process provide an **interesting basis for knowledge production**. The work now needs to be continued within each organisation. Each of them must appropriate these materials so that they can incorporate them into their partnership practices or **translate them into strategic documents**. For _Gi_, this work is one of the **cornerstones of its identity and its political position** on the issue.

One of the explicit objectives of this learning programme was to incorporate the results of the process into a **new cycle of thinking** that goes beyond the G_i_ and its partners. If this exercise has created some added value for the protagonists and organisations involved, its recommendations should be submitted to networks of French, European and African actors as soon as possible. **The position paper in the introduction of this issue of _Traverses_ will be the main medium for doing this**.

Annexes

Annex 1: Programme for the study days

---------------------------------Tuesday 22nd October---------------------------------

09 h 00:	Welcome session for participants	**Facilitators**
09 h 30:	Presentation of the programme for the study days	*C. Lespinats*
	Review of previous stages [see <u>Participant's handbook</u>]	*J. Casteuble*
	Points of order (Keynote speech)	*J. Casteuble*

10 h 00 – Coffee/tea break

10 h 30:	Presentation of the three issues to be addressed in the workshops	*O. Le Masson*
	Plenary debates (why/for whom? reactions? understanding?)	*M. Lévy*
	Divide into workshop groups	

12 h 30 – Lunch break

14 h 00:	Group work [issue-based – see presentation of issues].	
	Group 1: Joint commitment and partnerships	*S. Mason and C. Lespinats*
	Group 2: Partnerships and problems associated with change	*O. Le Masson and J. Casteuble*
	Group 3: Breaking down the North-South divide	*M. Lévy*

15 h 30 – Coffee/tea break

17 h 30:	End of group work	

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19 h 00 - Invitation to the Groupe *initiatives* social evening- 22 h 00
With partners from Burkina Faso

---------------------------------Wednesday 23rd October---------------------------------

09 h 00:	Presentation of work by Group 1 and plenary debates	*S. Mason and C. Lespinats*
	Proposed recommendations	**Rapporteur:** *Mathilde Bullot*

10 h 30 - Coffee/tea break

11 h 00:	Presentation of work by Group 2 and plenary debates	*O. Le Masson and J. Casteuble*
	Proposed recommendations	**Rapporteur:** *Philippe Martel*

12 h 30 – Lunch break

14 h 00:	Presentation of work by Group 3 and plenary debates	*M. Lévy*
	Proposed recommandations	**Rapporteur:** *Dodji Kossi Apedo*

15 h 30 - Coffee/tea break

16 h 00:	Free expression: Observation by the keynote speaker (30')	*Eric Bologo*
	Summary and overview of works (30')	*M. Lévy [for the SC]*
	Closing speech	*C. Lespinats*
17 h 30:	End of the day	

19 h 00 – Dinner at the hotel / Free evening

---------------------------------Thursday 24th October---------------------------------

09 h 30:	Formulation of the *Groupe initiatives* position paper	*GI members*

12 h 30 – Lunch break

Annex 2: List of participants in each workshop

Workshop 1:   *Are joint commitments an integral element of partnerships?*
Sharing responsibilities and funding

Facilitators: C. LESPINATS and S. MASON		Rapporteur: M. BULLOT
Plagnimpe AYEKOELE	UGPCC ATSEMAWOE	Togo
Abou BASS	GRDR	Mauritania
Mathilde BULLOT	ESSOR	Guinea-Bissau
Malick DIALLO	ICD	Mali
Atoumane KANE	AVSF	Senegal
Michel KPOYIN	GRAIND	Benin
Ludovic LANTONKPODE	CARDER-ZC	Benin
Antoine LENO	AAPR-GF	Guinea
Benoît-Xavier LORIDON	ID	France
Mariam MAGUIRAGA	GRDR	Mali
Géraldine PALLIERE	GERES	Benin
G.Appolinaire RAGOUNANDEA	AVSF	Mali
Founéké SISSOKO	CRK	Mali

Workshop 2:   *Partnerships and issues arising from change*
Do we have the capacities to fulfil our ambitions?

Facilitators: O. LE MASSON and J. CASTEUBLE		Rapporteur: P. MARTEL
Anthony AHO	CRIPS-Togo	Togo
Frédéric APOLLIN	AVSF	France
Raymond AZOKPOTA	GERES	Benin
Georgette BARRO	SAB	Burkina Faso
Guillaume BASTARD	GRET	Senegal
Gaëlle GANDEMA	ID	France
Philippe MARTEL	APDRA	Guinea
Bruno REMONT	HSF	France

Workshop 3:   *Rethinking 'North/South' relations*
Renewing partnerships calls for a different vision of international solidarity

Facilitator: M. LEVY		Rapporteur: D.K. APEDO
Mahaman ADAMOU	RAIL	Niger
Dodji Kossi APEDO	AVSF	Togo
Todéman ASSAN	ABERME	Benin
Olivier BRUYERON	GRET	France
G. Christian HOUENOU	GERES	Benin
Bakary KOITA	AMPG	Mauritanie
Yvan Le COQ	GRDR	Senegal
Emmanuel NDIONE	ENDA GRAF Sahel	Senegal
Cécile PATAT	IRAM	France
Saidou TALL	CUN	Mauritania

NB: Zaynah GUINGANI, Angèle KOROGHO and Stella KAFANDO took notes during the workshop and plenary sessions.

Eric BOLOGO, the Inter-Réseaux representative from Burkina Faso, participated in the three workshops as a 'Key Witness' of the study days.

Annex 3: Methodological toolbox

1. Sheet N°1 –   <u>Collecting</u> descriptive information (to be completed by each partner / initiative)
2. Sheet N°2 –   Framework for facilitating meetings between partners in the initiative (<u>4 hypotheses)</u>.
3. Sheet N°3 –   Framework for note-taking (to facilitate the <u>fact sheet</u>).
4. Sheet N°4 –   Crosscutting assessment of the partnership [<u>radar</u> diagram].
5. Sheet N°5a – <u>Diagram</u> showing the development of the partnership over time (SCO/SCO).
6. Sheet N°5b – <u>Diagram</u> showing the development of the partnership over time (SCO/LG).
7. Sheet N°6 –   'Retrospective and prospective <u>diagram</u>: What do we want to do together? (Issues).
8. Sheet N°7 –   Thematic thread of the '<u>Tea and talk' sessions</u>.
9. Sheet N°8 –   Organising the final workshop: <u>3 issues</u> to be debated.
10.   Sheet N°9 –   <u>Glossary</u> of terms used.

These sheets are available on the G*i* website: www.**groupe-initiatives**.org/

	Initiative	French partner	African partner	Other partners	Themes	Territories	Start of partnership
1	From a group of motivated employees to the implementation of joint actions to develop rice and fisheries	APDRA	AAPR-GF Guinea Forest Region fish and rice growers' association	-	Rice - fisheries	Guinea forest region, Liberia, Cameroon, Madagascar	2008
2	Develop an area through concerted action to revitalise the cocoa supply chain in Akébou	AVSF	UGPCC ATSEMAWOE Akébou coffee and cocoa producers' union	Fuprocat Federation of Togolese coffee and cocoa producers	Equitable supply chain for organic cocoa	Akébou Prefecture (Togo)	2009
3	What type of public/private partnerships are needed to sustain development projects in the long term?	Geres	CARDER Regional agricultural centre for rural development	-	Biofuels supply chain	Department of Zou (Benin)	2008
4	Public/private partnerships on access to energy in rural areas	Geres	ABERME Benin rural electrification and energy management agency	-	Rural electrification	Departments of Zou-collines, Mono-Couffo and Ouéme-plateau (Benin)	2008
5	Acting together to improve living conditions in our intervention areas at home and abroad	Grdr	AMPG Gorgol association of mayors and MPs	Région Centre	Local development, decentralisation, migration	Gorgol Region (Mauritania), Central Region (France)	2006
6	Promoting inter-regional joint development dynamics for citizens at home and abroad	Grdr	CRK Kayes Regional Council	Région Ile-de-France CADERKAF (Coordination of Development Associations in the Region of Kayes)	Migration, local and rural economic development	Kayes Region (Mali), Ile-de-France Region (France)	2000

	Initiative	French partner	African partner	Other partners	Themes	Territories	Start of partnership
7	Long-term mentoring	Gret	Enda Graf Sahel Action-research training group	-	Education, public policy, agri-food, natural resource management	Senegal	1990
8	Promoting the emergence of a strong healthcare actor in Togo	ID	CRIPS-Togo Centre for research and information to promote health in Togo	-	Healthcare, prevention and psychological care for PLWHA	Lomé (Togo)	2008
9	Sovereignty in partnership relations between Northern and Southern NGOs	ID	GRAIND Research and support for new development initiatives group	Mayors of Toffo, Zè and Kpomassé	Local development, water and sanitation	Atlantique Department (Benin)	*1999*
10	Strengthening food security in Mali	AVSF	ICD Initiatives - Advice - Development	-	Livestock rearing, agriculture, supply chain	Timbuktu, Mopti, Sikasso, Kayes (Mali)	2001
11	A super garden in a marginal area	HSF	SAB Sœurs de l'annonciation de Bobo-Dioulasso	Pro Natura International	Water, market gardening, training	Lena Department (Burkina Faso)	2011
12	NGOs and LGs: how do solidarity objectives equate with political expectations?	Gret	CUN Urban Community of Nouakchott	-	Waste management, water and sanitation	Urban Community of Nouakchott (Mauritanie)	2002
13	Supporting innovation in local governance and decentralised cooperation	Iram - Ciedel	RAIL Local initiatives support network	Picardie Region	Local development, decentralisation	Departments of Konni and Madaoua (Niger)	2005
14	Support for joint pastoral resource management in the Ferlo	AVSF	RRA Rhône Alpes Region	Matam Region	Pastoral resource management and climate change	Inter-regional understanding on the Ferlo (Senegal)	2007

The GROUPE *initiatives*

The Groupe *initiatives* (G*i*) was created in November 1993 when a collective of 10 international solidarity and development support associations came together to share their experiences and knowledge: APDRA pisciculture paysanne, AVSF, CIEDEL, ESSOR, GERES, Grdr Migration - Citoyenneté - développement, GRET, HSF, ID and IRAM. G*i* is a member of Coordination SUD.

The Groupe *initiatives* formulates proposals for cooperation and development services and innovations. Its members work with actors in the South, with a particular focus on ensuring that citizens' dignity is respected during aid interventions, strengthening local capacities to replace external actors, contributing to public policies in order to revise inappropriate models, and working with political and economic sectors to overcome the unproductive opposition between them.

▪▪

How do we ensure that people have access to sustainable services? How can we develop and perpetuate effective support mechanisms that respond to local needs? What is the best way of assisting local organisations and technical operators without smothering them? What kinds of intervention are needed to turn the rhetoric about people-centred development into reality?

The institutional aspects of development were long neglected due to a focus on achieving concrete results, but are now regarded as a key issue. The idyllic image of consensual development has given way to the realisation that development operations involve complex interactions between different actors, and therefore require careful consideration at various levels. We need to look beyond speeches and principles, and discuss the 'chemistry' of interventions, how their constituent elements react with each other. The *Traverses* series uses a crosscutting, multi-disciplinary approach to contribute to strategic and methodological debate on these matters. Aimed at development practitioners, it includes working papers, grey literature and articles that build on experience in the field in order to contribute to our knowledge, analysis and understanding of development methods and strategies.

The *Traverses* series is edited by the Groupe *initiatives*, an organisation composed of ten French international cooperation agencies that use action-research and institutional capacity building to promote development that genuinely meets local people's needs.

Every issue of *Traverses* can be downloaded free of charge from the Groupe *initiatives* website (www.groupe-initiatives.org). Some are also available on the Agronomes et Vétérinaires sans frontiers (www.avsf.org), Gret (www.gret.org) and Iram (www.iram-fr.org) websites.