



Community Dynamics and Socioeconomic Development in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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Abstract

The observation underlying this study was based on the problem that correlates with the community dynamics observed in the Mubi region, in the process of improving the living conditions of the population. The objective was to describe the experience of peasant solidarity in this region in terms of development with a view to unraveling the challenges to be met in this regard. The field results revealed that the MWANGAZA Collective, as an associative dynamic in the study environment, organizes activities that preside over the socio-economic development of the members. However, this development remains weak for the latter and for the entire region, because the less these members are trained, the less the mobilization of their resources is insufficient and inappropriate.

Subject Areas

Culture

Keywords

Community Dynamics, Socio-Economic Development, Resources, Solidarity, Sociability

1. Introduction

The issue of community dynamics refers to the question of collectivity, considered a true community thanks to the quality of interaction, communication, and relationships leading to a high degree of solidarity in the pooling of resources. A sense of identity positively fosters this relational quality between individuals and be-

tween community organizations. Indeed, community dynamics generally refers to the social integration of local communities, through various methods, to engage in planned collective action with the aim of tackling social problems by relying on a democratic value system [1].

Furthermore, community organization methods aim for the continuous mobilization of all individual and collective resources present in a given territory in the development of relevant and structuring projects at the social, cultural, and economic levels. It should be noted that the initiation of such a collective process is not necessarily automatic. It often requires a shock or disruption in the territory in question to awaken community feeling. This article draws on the experience of the Mobi region in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to demonstrate the importance of community dynamics in the process of improving local living conditions and the challenges that this region must address for its development to be effective and sustainable. Thus, the community organization of six associations in the region under study, the mobilization and control of their resources, as well as their achievements, essentially constitute the different articulations of this work.

2. Environment and Method

2.1. Study Environment

The Mobi village historically belongs to the Komo, who are believed to have come from Sudan following the migrations that characterized the African continent before the independence of the states. These people are believed to have headed east along the Maiko River, passing through the Lubuya site (Sidu Albert village in Wanie-Rukula). These Komo were later joined by the Baleka, naturally riverside residents, who came from Kabalo [2].

This village takes its name from a river of the same name. Before 1950, its location was on the banks of the Congo River. The current location was primarily a gathering, hunting, and food-gathering site for the current occupants.

The Mobi village is one of the villages that make up the Bakumu-Mandombe sector in the Ubudu territory, Tshopo Province, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Its population's economic activities include agriculture (primarily), fishing (moderately), and extensive livestock and poultry farming. Some shops and small pharmacy stores are located along the village. Residents sell their agricultural and forestry products from their homes. Other products are transported to Kisangani by river via canoes and rafts to the Kikongo market in the commune of Kisangani.

The Mobi community dynamic, called the MWANGAZA Collective, is made up of six local development associations: Zua Idée I, Zua Idée II, Jujukani, Umoja, Muungano, and AJCB (Association of Youth of the Baleka Community). Beyond the specificities of each of the member associations, they all share a single, very specific objective: grassroots self-management. The initiatives of the members, all of whom are farmers, are limited to small-scale activities, particularly in the fields of agriculture, livestock farming, and fish farming.

The oldest of these, founded on September 24, 2001, is the ZUA IDEE I association (a secular, apolitical, and non-profit association). From this association, five other associations were created, and all six eventually formed the MWANGAZA Collective. Given its outstanding activities, the latter has had the support of the NGOs APILAF, CSDFC, FAO, PRAPO, UPDKIS, and COMPAY, all based in Kisangani.

2.2. Method

To conduct this study, the systemic method, as used by David Easton, was used. This method made it possible to identify the types of influences that the community dynamics of Mobi, made up of six local structures, exert on the development of this region and the ways in which the various associations and residents of the village react to these influences. In other words, the systemic analysis made it possible to grasp the issues of the circular dependence between the needs to improve the living conditions of community members, considered as inputs, and the achievements of the dynamics in question in the region, considered as outputs.

The method used was supported by interview and documentary techniques, which respectively allowed for direct contact with the respondents and the collection of information provided by authentic documentation found in the field. A sample of 50 respondents was created using the probabilistic method, using a random sample, and statistical and content analyses were used to process the collected data.

3. Results of the Study

After field investigation, the results obtained are as follows.

3.1. Mobi Community Association Organization (MWANGAZA Collective)

Table 1. Respondents' perception of community associations as a space for development.

N°	Responses from respondents	F	%
01	Positive	45	90
02	Negative	5	10
	TOTAL	50	100

Table 1 shows that community associations constitute spaces for development in the study region (90% of respondents).

Indeed, for the majority of those interviewed, the objectives set by the dynamic are achieved, although this is not the case for some (5% of respondents). In other words, thanks to its activities, the members of the various associative structures that comprise it are satisfied with the level of improvement in their lives compared to many other members of the Mobi community whose situation still remains unsatisfactory.

3.2. Associative Resources

Table 2. Mobilization of resources within the MWANGAZA Collective.

N°	Responses from respondents	F	%
01	Yes	1	2
02	No	49	98
	Total	50	100

Table 2 above reveals that the mobilization of resources in the Mobi region through community dynamics, presiding over socio-economic development, is insufficient and inappropriate (point of view of 98% of respondents). This suggests that the development generated by the organization of the MWANGAZA Collective remains weak and ineffective. Mutatis mutandis for the improvement of the living conditions of its members.

3.3. Prioritization of Mobilized Resources

Table 3. Order of importance of resources that can be mobilized by associations.

N°	Respondents' response	F	%
01	Human resources - material resources - financial resources	15	30
02	Human resources - financial resources - material resources	9	18
03	Material resources - human resources - financial resources	7	14
04	Material resources - financial resources - human resources	6	12
05	Financial resources - human resources - material resources	9	18
06	Financial resources - material resources - financial resources	4	8
	Total	50	100

Table 3 shows that to ensure Mobi's community dynamics effectively contribute to socio-economic development, the resources to be mobilized must follow the order of human resources, material resources, and financial resources (30%).

In total, 48% of respondents admitted that human resources take precedence over all others, with material resources accounting for 26% and financial resources accounting for 26%. Therefore, for the Mobi region, socio-economic development must place people at the center of everything.

3.4. Resource Control Organization

It emerges from **Table 4** that the resource control method used by the MWANGAZA Collective takes into account several variables, namely monitoring, evaluation, observation and external monitoring and evaluation. Certainly, this method of resource control can increasingly guarantee the effectiveness of community dynamics if these are sufficient and adapted.

Table 4. Control of mobilized resources.

N°	Opinion	F	%
01	Monitoring	15	30
02	Evaluation	12	24
03	Observation	12	24
04	External monitoring and evaluation	11	22
Total		50	100

3.5. Activities of the MWANGAZA Collective in the Study Region

Table 5. Achievements of associative activities within the framework of development.

N°	Respondents' response	F	%
01	Fields	10	20
02	Small livestock	9	18
03	Fish ponds	5	10
04	Purchase of bicycles for members	6	12
05	Purchase of a few plots of Land	7	14
06	Construction of a few houses in Kisangani	6	12
Total		50	100

Table 5 shows that there are six types of activities in the Mubi region, as undertaken by the different associations of the MWANGAZA Collective. However, agricultural activities (20%) are relatively the most dominant type, followed by small-scale livestock farming (18%).

4. Discussion of Results

Development, in terms of “modernization,” consists of the rational use of economic factors with the aim of raising the level of the group, leading to an increase in the population’s standard of living, the reduction of inequalities, and the advancement of disadvantaged groups [3]. It is in light of this definition that the assessment of the results obtained from the field investigations is based.

In light of this study, 90% of the grassroots population recognizes the potential for community dynamics to be or become a genuine factor of development. This is evidence of the opportunity they grant to this dynamic, but also acknowledges the fact that denying this possibility is indeed harmful. This requires that the entire Mubi community be mobilized to form community dynamics that prove to be effective means of consolidating both solidarity and sociability favorable to the socioeconomic development of each and every one. Incidentally, Fortin A. [4] argues that a community is composed of networks where bonds are created by shared identities that give rise to solidarities essential to sociability. The term com-

munity therefore refers to various associations, formal and organized ties as opposed to the informal ties also found in the community, such as networks of friends or relatives. In this way, the community or community dynamics becomes a place of regulation as much as of social change.

The results demonstrated that resource mobilization remains insufficient and unsuitable for development in the community. Resource mobilization is the process by which an organization acquires the resources it needs to carry out planned work [5]. These can be human, financial, technical, and material. Although money is one of the key resources that all organizations need to function and carry out their work, the field results revealed that for the MWANGAZA Collective, human resources are more than important. If the resources mobilized are insufficient and inadequate, it is assumed that the members who form the community dynamic in the region are similarly inadequate in their training. It is therefore essential to consider that there is a strong correlation between the quality of those who form a community dynamic and the level and quality of structural resource mobilization.

Furthermore, while the same population claims to achieve the previously assigned objectives, there is nevertheless a clear ambivalence: insufficient resources for achieved objectives. According to information from the field, the statements made by the population also reflect a desire to mobilize other resources more. This also seems to show that without community dynamics in the region, the situation would be worse than one might imagine and that, despite being ineffective, the objectives achieved are more or less satisfactory.

Gathering resources from a local base has a direct impact on the relevance of an organization's purpose. A community willing to support, financially or otherwise, the organization's research efforts indicates that it shares the program's objectives, understands them, and hopes to see them realized. This endorses the mission of a community dynamic and serves as an indicator of the organization's impact on these elements [6].

Developing a support base must therefore be part of the resource development plan of an organization that grants development associations. The task then falls to the organization to identify those in the community who could benefit, find a way to reach them, offer them opportunities for support, and have systems in place to ensure donors that their donations are allocated to the projects for which they were actually intended. Accomplishing the above requires more than technical resource mobilization skills. It involves the complex and delicate task of building relationships with others who share the same values and objectives, and whose support the organization can count on [6].

Is it true that aid triggers development? This debate remains open to this day among authors who have chosen development as their field of scientific investigation. Thus, it is difficult to resolve it today. While respecting the main trend expressed by the grassroots population in the study region, it is necessary to oppose their own considerations, arguing that external contributions do not take into account the needs of the environment. Consequently, this further justifies the

observation of the inadequacy of resources relative to needs, the delay in the allocation of certain goods such as seeds, which depend on growing seasons, etc. This stance must be repressed, as it cultivates a community wait-and-see attitude and undermines the possibilities for establishing self-reliance mechanisms.

Furthermore, the achievements of associations in the development framework are taken into account by the respondents, who mentioned six areas in which the dynamic has produced results. A thorough analysis of these various achievements confirms that they remain solely for the benefit of the members of the associations that make up the MWANGAZA Collective. By inductive reasoning, these must be recognized as development facts, because society as a whole is also better understood through its components. However, by avoiding individualizing development to ensure its community-based meaning, the above-mentioned achievements lead to the assertion that the dynamic under study does not yet work for the general interest, but simply for that of the members alone. From this perspective, the development considered does not sufficiently accommodate the option of community dynamics *per se*.

Despite the achievements already made and to be safeguarded, it is essential to suggest to all Mobi development partners in general, and to the population in particular, that they strengthen this dynamic and direct it toward work not only in the interests of individuals, but also in the interests of the community. Expanding the areas of intervention of the dynamic, strengthening the technical capacities of the members and drawing inspiration from the experiences of others could serve as strategies capable of making socio-economic development in the region effective and sustainable.

Given the diversity of rural environments, there is no single transposable model, but rather specific modalities and actions that must be determined each time based on local particularities and integration into the national and regional economy. Thus, if the associative function is developed in a region, more imagination must be applied to the formation of associations. Actions aimed at meeting local needs, as well as socio-cultural activities, are ways of inducing socio-economic development: through direct or induced employment, but also through the local identity they develop, the sense of belonging to a community, and mutual knowledge of social actors [7]. This is a prerequisite for the emergence of solidarity between social groups, on which all comprehensive development projects are based. This can also attract young people who, living in the region, may consider starting a business there.

While resources remain to be developed, socio-economic development essentially depends on the mobilization of people; hence, the importance of upstream training and information policy. Community dynamics should increasingly be led to equip themselves with development agents (tourism, economic, agricultural, etc.) capable of promoting socio-economic actions. Experience shows that with minimal financial aid but technical support, many micro-projects can emerge [7].

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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