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Endnotes

ⁱⁱ Taken from "Historique,"
http://www.economiesolidaire.ca/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=106&Itemid=72 on July 6, 2007. For the remainder of the document, any material sourced from the Économie solidaire de l'Ontario website on July 6, 2007 will be identified as (ESO).

ⁱⁱ Take from "Our Programme",
http://www.uniterra.org/uniterra/en/our_actions/our_programme.html on July 6, 2007.

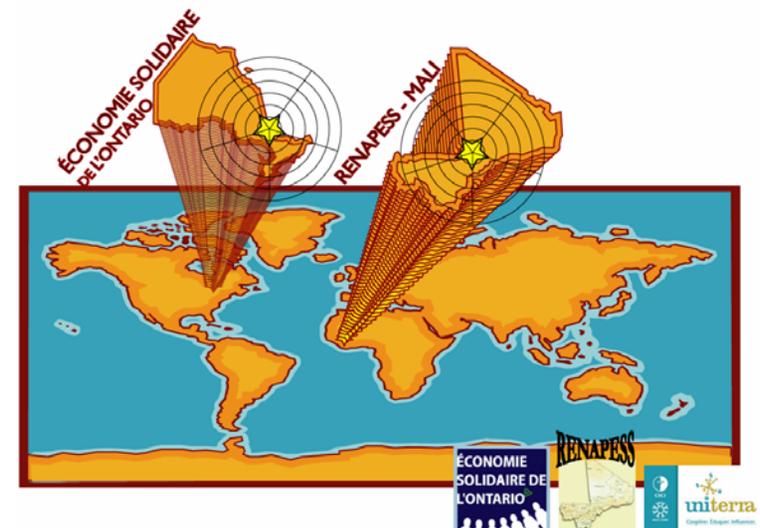
ⁱⁱⁱ Koumaré, Madani, « Note de présentation du RENAPESS Mali », p. 1.

^{iv} Koumaré, Madani, « Note de présentation du RENAPESS Mali », p. 1.



International Partnership in Community Economic Development

Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario & RENAPESS Mali





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"From day one, it was a two-way street."

- Ethel Côté, Présidente, Economie Solidaire de l'Ontario

« Les problématiques de développement économique locale et international ainsi que de la coopération décentralisée et internationale sont telles qu'aujourd'hui qu'il faut globaliser les luttes des mouvements sociaux afin d'influencer les politiques et relations publiques internationales légitimement incriminables. »

- Madani Koumaré, President, RENAPESS

Context

CED and the social economy have a history of over 100 years in francophone Ontario.¹

It is in this rich context that **Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario** was created in 2004 with the mission of networking and

This profile is one of four stories examining international partnership in community economic development (CED). The profiles have been prepared to showcase several examples of effective models of international collaboration and knowledge exchange that distribute contribution, benefit, and risk amongst all involved. They are examples of ends that were made possible because people were working together. For the other profiles and more information on the project, please see the notes at the end of this document or go to our website at www.ccednet-rcdec.ca/en/pages/international.asp.

Contribute to a Global Movement

By giving and receiving support in CED network construction, Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario is including a global solidarity dimension to their work that gives their members added learning, experience and inspiration. Through this form of international networking, Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario is contributing to building a critical mass around CED and is helping to lend credibility to a global movement that is growing in significance and prominence. Through exchanges such as these, Canada's CED sector can play an important role in expanding support for alternative community-based approaches to sustainable development, at home and abroad.

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Many thanks to Ethel Côté & Madani Koumaré for contributing their time, experience, and thoughts to this project.

These initiatives can help to build a stronger, healthier, inclusive Canada.

- *Ethel Côté, Économie solidaire de l'Ontario*

Strengthening CED

What does this story mean for CCEDNet and CED in Canada? This project demonstrates how a local CED organization was able to:

Use International Partnership to Strengthen Local Practice

At the demanding early stages of organizational development, Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario is able to go through the challenging steps of building a network alongside another organization pursuing the same goals. The Ontario network has received direct support from RENAPESS in developing a regional vision for CED and the social economy, catalyzing local debate, and building strategic and operational plans. This facilitation and exchange of lessons learned has helped build a network with clear identity, purpose, and ideals that is better able to support its members and advocate for socioeconomic change.

The partnership has also given Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario's members access to international social enterprise trade opportunities.

This kind of example of learning from and adapting community development practice from international to Canadian community settings offers great potential for other CED organizations and the sector as a whole that CCEDNet and its International Committee can build upon. It also shows the importance of a two way transfer of knowledge and practice amongst CED organizations (not just development aid from Canada to the South!), an important principle that CCEDNet's International Committee is advocating.

supporting members of the movement. (ESO)

RENAPESS Mali (Réseau National d'Appui à la Promotion de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire) is a similarly young and emergent national network of the social and solidarity economy in Mali.

The collaboration and partnership of Économie Solidaire de l'Ontario and RENAPESS is supported and facilitated by Uniterra, a Canadian international cooperation program jointly run by the Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) and World University Service of Canada (WUSC). Through its volunteer cooperation program, a central element of Uniterra's work is to partner Canadian community organizations with

complementary organizations in the global South.ⁱⁱ Incorporated in 2003, RENAPESS continues to promote, educate, and explore best practices in the Malian movement through discussion, exchanges, accompaniment, and advocacy.ⁱⁱⁱ

History

In the days leading up to the **Rencontre africaine de Bamako** in June 2005 – a prelude to the Third International Meeting on the Globalisation of Solidarity – Ethel Côté found herself alongside the organizers, ironing out last minute details before the launch of the event. Though she was officially in Bamako to facilitate a vision-

ECONOMIE SOLIDAIRE DE L'ONTARIO

- Networks, supports, and promotes social economy practitioners & actors in francophone Ontario
- Volunteer run
- Grounded in the importance of mobilization, capacity building, & knowledge sharing around CED & the social economy
- Works to promote the social economy and CED in community, public, and private circles in francophone Ontario, as a viable tool for sustainable development

building exercise, these hectic first days of preparation and cooperation gave her a chance to discuss her work with the Malian practitioners, shedding light on a reality now central to her work with Économie solidaire de l'Ontario: "Being there, I felt I was part of something similar to what was happening in Ontario and Canada...We are all actors on the front lines within our own networks...Sure the context is different, but we are working on the same thing...I was connecting with people who were going through the same steps to build a critical mass in their own communities and developing a sustainable strategy for change...We converge because we are learning and doing at the same time."

At the time, both networks were budding organizations and found themselves to share philosophies, approaches, and definitions. As individuals, Ethel Côté (President, Économie solidaire de l'Ontario) and Madani Koumaré (President, RENAPESS) had decided to follow similar directions in their work. Their capacity to learn from and support each other in this pursuit on both organizational and individual levels became quickly apparent. Économie solidaire de l'Ontario began to share the work of RENAPESS with the people of Ontario through its newsletter.

A few short months later, Ethel Côté was chosen as part of a Uniterra-funded delegation of more than 100 Canadians to attend the Third International Meeting on the Globalisation of Solidarity in Dakar, Senegal. The face-time between Économie solidaire de l'Ontario and RENAPESS, who was also a participant at the

RENAPESS

- Networks and supports the social & solidarity economy in Mali
- Aims to improve living conditions and resource availability of citizens and actors in the social & solidarity economy
- Supports 39 member organizations working in food production, artisan, ethical tourism, and fair trade
- Encourages reflection and education about solutions to socioeconomic injustice and alternatives to global economic dynamics

partnership, is to demonstrate that international development and global change must happen through civil society: that is, CED, the social economy, NGOs, and community action.

« Si nous voulons proposer une autre vision, un autre moyen de construire l'économie, nous devons aussi travailler en réseau. Nous devons nous rapprocher pour faire valoir notre point de vue. »

- Roch Harvey, Uniterra

On Partnership

L'émergence partout dans le monde, et beaucoup plus encore dans les pays du Sud, de forces déterminées et mobilisatrices pour faire du troisième millénaire celui de l'espoir pour tous est perceptible à travers les mouvements sociaux, la dynamique de construction des réseaux, des plates formes de collaboration et de partenariat. Cela est réelle aussi bien dans la société civile qu'entre les organisations de la société civile et le secteur étatique, non seulement concernant les alternatives à la mondialisation ultralibérale, mais aussi et surtout autour des politiques publiques.^{iv}

For many in the CED sector in Canada, resources are scarce and, in Uniterra's recruitment experience, the idea of investing in international partnership often difficult for organizations to justify. So why are they choosing to invest? Leaders of Canadian organizations are seeing an evolving Canada, an increasingly diverse Canada, and a Canada that needs to build its capacity to be inclusive. This model of international cooperation and partnership is one way to build links between Canada and the world, increase our understanding of our own population, and help us live more fully as a country.

A notre sens, le partenariat c'est l'agir en convergence de principes et de pratiques en vue d'atteindre des objectifs partagés, à moyen ou long terme, dans un esprit de collégialité et de synergie quant aux rôles et responsabilités dans le temps et dans l'espace.

- Madani Koumaré, RENAPESS

Both are strongly dedicated to human resource commitment.

Friendship

In addition to strong organizational support, at the centre of this partnership are strong individual relationships.

Facetime

The partners have had several key opportunities to find themselves face-to-face.

The Right Facilitator

As a funder and supporter, Uniterra respects the mission of the partnership, believes in the process of reciprocal collaboration, and gives the partners room to connect directly.

Future Directions

An exciting new direction for the partners is the development of business opportunities for social enterprises in their networks. Économie solidaire de l'Ontario now has a store in Plantagenet, Ontario to facilitate such commercial exchanges. The store features products produced by cooperatives in Canada, Mali, and Niger. The store is now one stop on the francophone tourism tour of Canada and is featured in brochures across the country. Coop 301, an Ottawa non-profit work initiative with francophone immigrant women, is now producing products for the store with certified fair-trade organic cotton from a producer in Mali.

Other goals for the partnership include strengthening the connections between the networks' member organizations with common sectoral focuses; increasing sharing of promotional and networking strategies around CED and the social economy; and recording the story of the partnership.

On their end, Uniterra hopes to increase the number Canadian organizations engaged in similar partnerships with Southern organizations. Their long term goal, as it pertains to this

event, proved fruitful once again; this time the emerging networks walked away with a formal commitment to partnership for mutual support facilitated by Uniterra.

Activities

The partnership itself is a platform on which to compare, contrast, and share.

The backbone of the partnership has been personal exchanges during four missions in Mali and two in Canada. Most of the following activities occurred during these visits.

Participation in Events

To date, the partnership has allowed the participation in the following events:

June 2005, Rencontre africaine à Bamako.

November 2005, Third International Meeting on the Globalisation of Solidarity in Dakar.

November 2006, Le Sommet de l'économie sociale et solidaire in Montreal.

April 2007, National CED Conference in St. John's.

Exchange & Information Sharing

One current focus of the partnership is to create an exchange of members and members' stories between the networks. By building these avenues, the two networks hope to begin an interchange of values, practices, tools, and information that can be borrowed and adapted to their own local contexts.

For example, after the 2007 National CED Conference, the partners continued Madani Koumaré's mission in Canada with a tour of CED organizations and microfinance institutions in Ottawa and Montreal. Firstly, the series of meetings, discussions, and

site visits allowed for an increased understanding of the similarities and differences in challenges, needs, resources, and opportunities between Canada and Mali. More concretely, the exchanges left Mr. Koumaré with a new collection of personal Canadian contacts and a suitcase of annual reports, strategic plans, budgets, and promotional material to explore and adapt with leaders in his own national network.

Information, Debate, and Theoretical Formation with Members

Vision building and debate continue to be an important part of this relationship. Ethel Côté has facilitated successful strategic planning and vision building seminars in Mali around national and continental visions of the social economy. With the importance of these processes driven home through the African experience, Économie solidaire de l'Ontario is now beginning to debate and build its own vision for francophone Ontario and Canada. The president of RENAPESS will continue to facilitate this reflection for the Ontario network.

DEBATE, DIALOGUE, & VISION

I listened to debate and comment that was much deeper and stronger than what we have in our movement in Canada. We organize and administrate, we plan and realize many projects but do we debate deeply? Do we go back to our core values, do we remember the main purpose of our work? In the South, the values, and principles are there: deep, profound, grounded, pertinent, and appropriate to what is going on.

In Africa I saw real debate of key subjects – if the collective survives this, you are so much stronger.

- Ethel Côté, Économie solidaire de l'Ontario

Support

A central element of this partnership is the supporting role of Uniterra: providing a platform on which individuals and organizations can work to complement and support each other's work across borders. Recognizing the global element of the problems facing our communities, Uniterra supports the direct

collaboration of these two networks as a partnership for knowledge exchange and the achievement of common objectives.

In addition to creating the original context for their meeting, the Uniterra project continues to offer financial and logistical support to the partnership.

Outcomes & Evaluation

The development of mechanisms to measure the success of this partnership is ongoing. As a sustainable development project, the partnership is aimed both at short term and long term goals, making many of the impacts difficult to evaluate at this early stage.

Evaluation of the work must be twofold. On one hand is the evaluation of the quality of sharing and adaptation of concepts, values, and tools between Économie solidaire de l'Ontario and RENAPESS. On the other hand is the evaluation of impacts at home; the opportunities that have opened, as a result of this partnership, for members of the CED and social economy communities in Ontario and Mali.

Success Factors & Lessons Learned

While rich in potential benefits, working across cultures is not free of challenges, even with the most carefully chosen partner. The cultural contexts of both these partners feature deep histories of local development, carefully sculpted definitions, and varying voices. This mosaic provides the platform on which shared vision and governance is to be built. Mutual respect is a must.

The Économie solidaire de l'Ontario – RENAPESS partnership owes its success to several key factors:

The Right Partners

The two networks have complementary missions and are at similar stages in their development.

Two ingredients that helped solidify this partnership from the outset?

1. Strong personal relationships
2. Time spent face-to-face