

Making Rural Development Work

Cultural Hybridization of Farmers' Organizations



The Adja Case in Benin

Simplice Dano VODOUHE

Propositions

1. When people are stimulated and inspired, they are capable of engaging in cooperative behaviour and on a sustained basis, assuming they are not coerced, directed, or co-opted by outside forces.
2. The aim of egalitarian development is to facilitate a balance interdependence in which the weaker participants can be on a par with the stronger. Farmers should be given power to influence development agencies with respect to development purposes but they cannot have all the power. There is a need for a search of power balance between interveners and farmers organizations.
3. Let people enjoy their work. The feeling: 'we have done it ourselves' is a motivation for carrying out much more important activities. Therefore, as intervener, one must limit his interference in the activities of farmers. As such, an intervener must go to farmers, live with them, start with what they have and engage in a joint learning process and build on what they know. This is also valid in the relations between field agents and his superiors.
4. A development project which aim is to establish farmers organizations will end up with organizations in which influential people will develop strategies to achieve their own objectives and will keep the organization as a camouflage for getting help. Project must aim at technical activities and the need for organization will come later (this dissertation).
5. An organization cannot be separated from its purposes. A mistake maybe to work automatically with an organization said effective. One must investigate why it is effective and what is its purpose before deciding on the possibility to improve its capability or to use it for the purpose of the project (this dissertation).
6. An organization is effective if opportunities are given to all members to achieve their goals without harming others (this dissertation).
7. For development purposes, an organization which characteristics are both understandable by members and development agencies is likely to be more successful and sustainable than the one which is understandable either by development agency of by farmers (this dissertation).
8. A farmer organization cannot be isolated from its context. In trying to do so and to export a successful organization from one place to another may lead to a failure.
9. We appreciate things much better when we lack them. The best season for people coming from tropical countries to visit Europe is the winter time. They will value more their home weather.

10. Organizations without members are useless. The fear to loose the members of his organization may make leader to control his behaviour and to act for collective interests. Thus, the existence in the areas of opportunities for members to join or to create new organizations is an incentive for a good management.

11. People participate in an organization when their interests are guaranteed and when they are fully involved in decision making about the organization (this dissertation).

12. When you want to promote activities of marginalized people, be aware of the potential opposition of other groups. Work in such a way that this opposition can find its interests in the work you are doing so that it can join some of your activities. This is a key for success.

13. Every leader of whatsoever qualities is able to behave in the collective interests if he is working in an environment which prevents him from behaving otherwise. He may show his best qualities if he is given a chance to do so.

14. Trying to improve checks and balances at a farmer organization's level alone is not sufficient, this must be done at other levels so they can mutually reinforce each other.

15. The destination of most organizations imposed from above without the contentment and without taking into account the culture and local practices is most of the time a failure (this dissertation).

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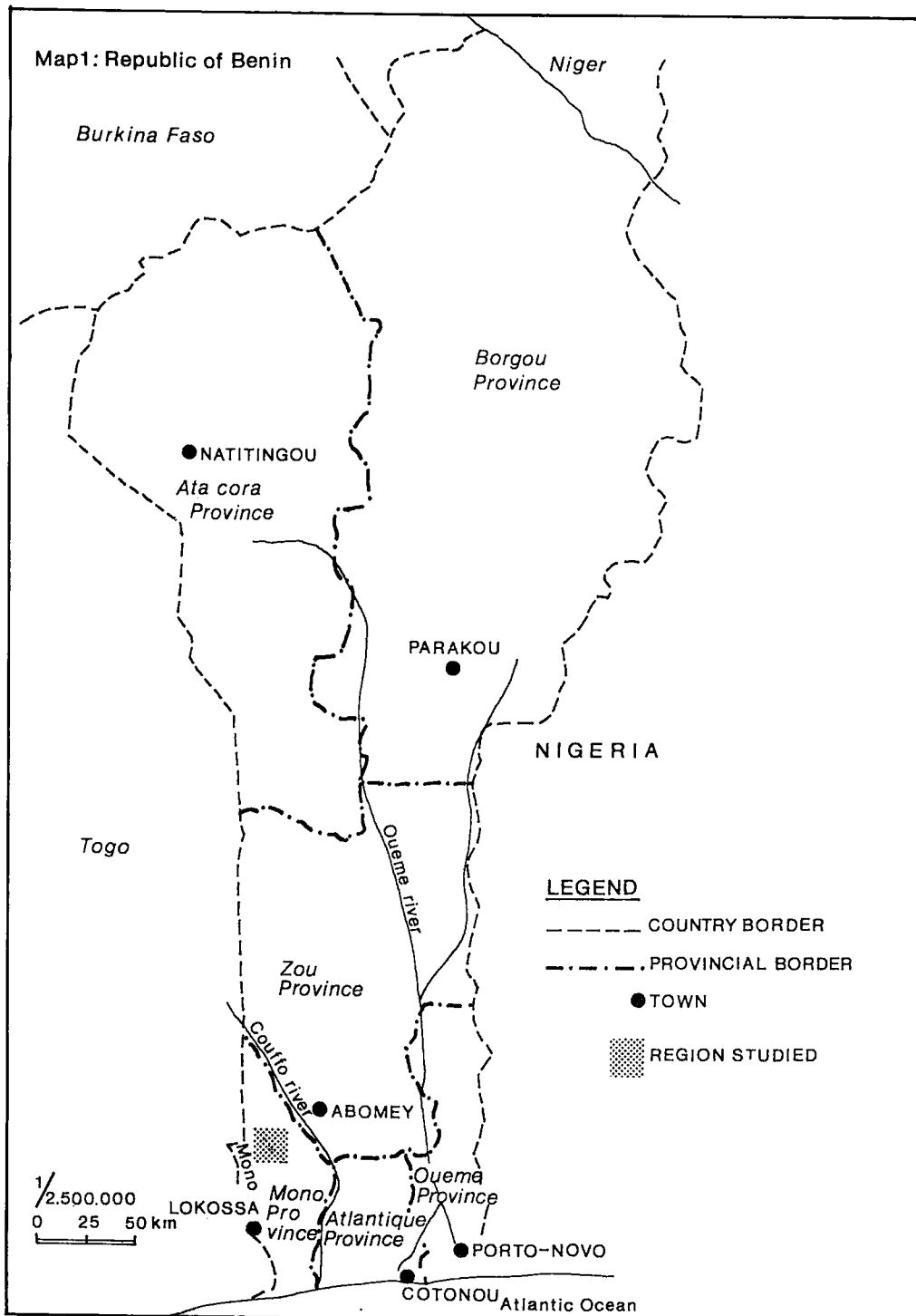
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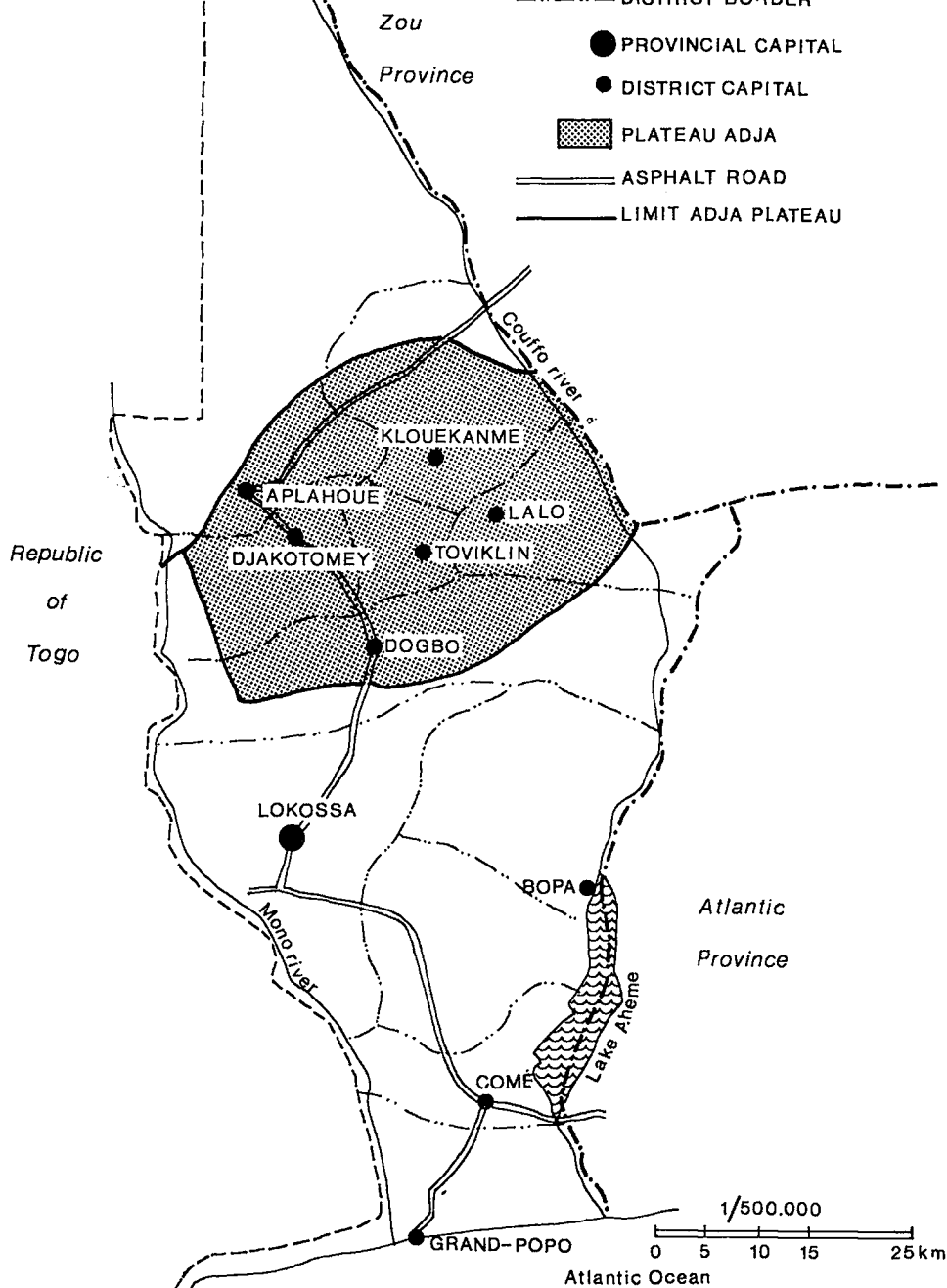


Map 1: Republic of Benin

Map 2: Mono Province
(Shaded part:
Adja plateau)

LEGEND

- STATE BORDER
- . - . - . PROVINCIAL BORDER
- - - - - DISTRICT BORDER
- PROVINCIAL CAPITAL
- DISTRICT CAPITAL
- ▨ PLATEAU ADJA
- ===== ASPHALT ROAD
- ===== LIMIT ADJA PLATEAU



Map 2: Mono Province

1 Farmers' organizations and accountability

The objective of this chapter is to introduce the reader to the main focus of this book: the extent to which accountability mechanisms contribute to the effectiveness of farmers' organizations in Benin, and the extent to which external development agencies can contribute to building viable accountability mechanisms into these organizations for development purposes. Parallel to this focus are the following questions: how farmers' organizations undertake collective action in situations where possibilities for free-riding abound, how farmers' organizations establish rules and ensure the compliance of all members, and how development agencies can contribute to the inducing mechanisms which enhance the promotion of equitable development.

1.1 Introduction

This book addresses an issue that is essential to sustainable farmer organization: accountability. I refer to accountability as the extent to which individuals are made responsible for their behaviour in response to the pressure of others. The accountability mechanism is the process through which individuals are forced to comply with the established rules of organizations. In other words, the issue is related to the question: What are the accountability mechanisms in farmer organizations and what mechanisms are most conducive to greater effectiveness of farmer organization in the African context?

The importance of farmer organization for bringing change in rural areas has been stressed by many scholars (Sene 1995:21-28). Many roles are expected from farmer organizations. Pressures from various sources motivate development agencies to share their activities with farmers. Development agencies would like to involve farmers in their activities for cost-effectiveness and sustainability. But without sound accountability mechanisms, agents would not be responsible for their behaviour to farmers, and neither would leaders to their organizations.

Rural communities are not homogenous and there are many groups of farmers with different interests. The most powerful (groups) may take over the boards of farmers' organizations and get all the benefits obtained from interaction with the development agencies. Little will reach small farmers. Effective accountability mechanisms are important to make development agencies accountable to farmers' organizations and to make the leaders of these organizations accountable to their

members. The limited success of most farmers' organizations may be attributed to the lack or poor functioning of these mechanisms.

The following illustration points out the need for mechanisms to make people accountable in order to build a sustainable organization. I take this example from a village in the Province of Mono (not among those studied for this book). Here is the story:

A group of thirteen men and eight women came together and established an association to engage in petty trade. Some of the activities were carried out together while others were done on an individual basis. For individual activities, members decided to grant the same amount of money to all members so that they would be able to carry out their activities. Every month the money is granted at the beginning of the month and payment is made at the end of the month. Members pay back the credit plus interest. During the course of their activities, the group has found that some of the leaders do not bring their share as other people do. Members asked these leaders to act like everybody else. But they could not, and they did not explain the problem to members. After three months of claims on these leaders, members decided to go to their compounds and to sing sad songs and to play drums specific for sad situations. They did this during two successive days: each time for one hour. The third day the leaders came to reimburse their debts.

The leaders wanted to behave like those in other organizations who misuse the funds of the organization, but unfortunately for them the group was aware of the situation and used a local mechanism to force them to pay. After exerting this pressure on some of the leaders to make them pay, all the other members became conscious of the need to follow the rules they had established themselves. This illustration indicates the importance of accountability mechanisms to make leaders accountable to their organizations, and the effects of shared paradigms.

In order to point out the relations between effective farmers' organizations and the effectiveness of development agencies, Röling (1995:9) states that:

'the best way to increase the effectiveness of extension services is not only to give them more cars, training and so on, but specially to increase the countervailing power of farmers to influence them.' He notices that *'good extension did not generate good farmers; good farmers generated good extension!'*

The questions of this book are addressed by analyzing the mechanisms of accountability within farmers' organizations and between farmers' organizations and development agencies. This analysis is done with the intention of pointing out the strengths and weaknesses of the different types of mechanisms found, in order to understand the functioning of the organization and to propose ways to improve it. This has involved an analysis of power relations, of the effects of traditions on accountability, of the history of the organizations and of the establishment of rules, their enforcement, of the access to benefit and of the capability of members to influence decisions related to the management of the organization.

In this book, I argue that effective accountability mechanisms are important for the promotion of synergy among actors (individuals or organizations) involved in

development. The existence of accountability within the society may help organizations to be more effective, i.e. to fulfil expected roles which are developed in the next section. Through the analysis of accountability mechanisms in organizations, I would like to address also the issue of social dilemmas. People in an organization are in a position to choose between their individual and collective interests or to combine them. They would like to choose both but this is not always possible.

Different theories have been developed to analyze social dilemmas, and different approaches to deal with them have involved the role of the state, privatization, the institutional approach to common goods and the importance of norms and conscience.

In this book I argue that accountability mechanisms are a crucial factor for a sustainable organization and for linking members to the outside world. The existence of effective accountability mechanisms within farmers' organizations themselves, and between them and development agencies, would contribute to the improvement of farmers' claims and the improvement of the services agencies can deliver. Effective accountability mechanisms are therefore important for an improvement of the living conditions of members of the organizations and would contribute to the sustainability of these organizations.

Another argument developed in this book deals with the advantages and limitations of indigenous accountability mechanisms. Leaders and members of organizations have to manage at the same time their loyalty to kin/lineages and their loyalty to the formal rules of their organization.

This research concerns organizations belonging to three types: farmers' organizations established by government agencies, those established by non-government organizations, and organizations initiated by farmers themselves. The research was done in Mono Province, in Benin. The rest of this introductory chapter deals with the expected roles of farmers' organizations, the history of farmers' organizations in Benin, and the problem statement.

1.2 Farmers' organizations: links between farmers and the outside world

This section aims at underlining the reasons for choosing the use of farmers' organizations, and at elaborating on social dilemma situations related to farmers' organizations. But before proceeding further I would like to define farmers' organizations in order to situate the present discussion.

Farmers' organizations defined

It is useful to define farmers' organizations¹, since many people assume that they are all the same while in fact there are many types in rural areas. Some people when talking about local organizations refer to Non-Governmental Organizations while others refer to farmers' organizations. Non-Governmental Organizations may establish farmers' organizations. Uphoff (1982) ranks local organizations into three types: local development associations, cooperatives, and interest associations.

Local development associations are area-based and bring together most of the people within a community, area or region to promote its development by direct self-help or other means.

In cooperatives, members pool their resources: capital (savings societies), labour (rotating work group), land (production cooperatives), purchasing power (consumer/input supply cooperatives) or products (marketing cooperatives). This classification does not take into account organizations initiated by farmers themselves.

Seibel and Massing (1974) define a cooperative as a voluntary, open, and permanent association of equalitarian structure in interests through communal self-help. The important point here is the openness of the association. By openness they refer to the fact that membership is not necessarily limited to kinship groups, to one village or one tribe. But the voting power in a cooperative may depend on the amount of business the member does with the cooperative.

In interest associations, people come together to engage in a particular activity like water management or public health protection, or to promote common interests based on some personal characteristic like sex, ethnicity, religion or economic status, sport, entertainment.

These definitions do not consider the initiators of the organizations. The nature and the performance of the organizations may depend on those who created them. This distinction is important in analyzing farmers' organizations in Benin, as many organizations have been recently created by external interventions or by local elites living outside the community.

Considering the diversity of definitions and the aim of this book I will refer to two main types of farmers' organizations: the indigenous and the induced organizations. In the induced organizations I distinguish two types: the traditional organizations which have existed for generations, and modern organizations.

Indigenous farmers' organizations are organizations initiated and managed by farmers themselves without external intervention. Bebbington *et al.* (1994:4) refer to relationships to customary or indigenous organizations, these organizations that have long been the basis of social organization and include kinship, networks, tenure rules, local ideas of 'the community,' the rules governing gender relationships, local criteria determining who has authority and how decisions get made. Some indigenous organizations are not limited to kinships groups and not to a village and a tribe. They are established by farmers to solve particular problems felt by the members. They may adopt certain rules which are usually established for induced organizations (Gentil 1986, 1988). As an example I will discuss the *Kugbè* which is a saving society, self-initiated and self-managed by farmers. It aims at giving help to bereaved farmers but only in the case of lost parents in-law (see chapter 3).

Induced farmers' organizations comprise those organizations promoted by outside interveners, be it government agencies or non-governmental organizations. Rules are established according to Western norms, for example one man, one vote and the openness of the organization. These organizations are usually under the control of the initiators who are outside the organization. They decide upon the rules to apply

in the organization. These organizations are dependent on the creators but some may become independent and exert some influence on the creators. They may form federations which can be real partners of development agencies and will be able to influence the agendas of interveners (See the case of Mali described by Collion 1994).

The 'indigenization' of these organizations might make them behave like indigenous organizations. The *Groupeement Villageois* (GV) and the Functional Groups (FG) are the induced organizations studied in this book. The GV are farmers' organizations established by the CARDER (*Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural*). The FG (Functional Groups) are promoted by the PADES-Mono (*Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-préfectures*). I will come back to these organizations in chapters 4 and 5.

I try to make a categorization of farmers' organizations and distinguish two main groups. I am aware of the fact that each type of organization is influenced by the characteristics of the other. The classification into indigenous or induced depends on the importance of 'modern' or 'traditional' characteristics. I can consider farmers' organizations as on a continuum which is as follows:

Pure indigenous organizations	_____	pure induced organizations
----------------------------------	-------	-------------------------------

Between the two types of organizations are the hybrid farmers' organizations. It is difficult to find a pure indigenous organization or a pure induced organization. It is a matter of degree as Kosko (1992) and Uphoff (1992) like to point out when talking about opposites.

Expected roles of farmers' organizations

In this section I would like to focus on the people's expectations related to the creation of farmers' organizations. The achievement of these expectations is dependent on the functioning of farmers' organizations. Farmers' decisions to join organizations for the accomplishment of the different functions/roles are dependent on a number of factors, among which is the extent to which the benefits and the costs are shared among members.

The main roles attributed to farmers' organizations (see Esman & Uphoff 1982; Uphoff 1992; Röling 1988, 1995; Van den Ban 1996 for more elaboration on the issue) may be summarized as follows:

- the provision of public services, mutual assistance and resource mobilization;
- better expression of members' needs;
- contribution to the education of farmers by organizing meetings and courses;
- organization of the input supply, the commercialization and the processing of farm products, the organization of credit supply;
- the management of common property;
- the formulation of common goals, the mobilization for collective action and the defence of collective interests of members;

- as user constituency. Röling states that if poor farmers have to benefit from research and extension there is a need that they pull down resources and exert pressure on these institutions, so that the contents and the direction of research can be influenced and oriented to their needs. The output of these institutions in such conditions is expected to be more adapted to the client's needs. The failure of research and extension to address the needs of poor farmers may be due not only to the inadequate feedback from farmers but also to the non-existence of any mechanism through which they are accountable to farmers. Farmers, well organized, can delegate representatives to participate in the research agenda setting and influence the direction and the content of the research and extension institutions. Representatives can express the needs of poor farmers (see the example of Mali described by Collion 1994). But one problem at this level is related to the accountability within farmers' organization itself. A strong farmers' organization will express the felt needs of farmers if there exist well functioning accountability mechanisms. I will come back to this aspect in chapter 2.
- farmers' organization can perform active roles in the generation and in the dissemination of agricultural technologies in programmes that they control and administer themselves. Bebbington (1993) reports that there is evidence of farmers' organizations that already have their own adaptive research programmes, and their own programmes of technical assistance.

In other words, farmers' organizations are useful to pull down research and extension services (Röling 1988; Bebbington *et al.* 1993). They will provide an interface between a broader world (research, extension, commercial firms etc.) and villagers. They will ease the use of indigenous knowledge, will give the possibility to enhance the communication between interveners.

To carry out these roles and functions, farmers delegate some of their fellow farmers to represent them in discussions with the outside world and to organize collective activities for the benefit of the communities. But the problem arises with the needs expressed to the outside world and with the beneficiaries of the collective actions. Because there are very often different groups of farmers with different needs and some groups are more powerful than others. Without a control, the benefit of such collective activities will be for the leaders or for powerful groups.

This book reports on a study which examines accountability mechanisms in farmers' organizations. It was inspired by the conviction that the checks and balances they provide are a necessary condition for effectiveness and equity in rural development.

The following will give an overview of farmers' organizations in Benin, the problem of accountability within these organizations and within development agencies, and the links between development agencies and farmers' organizations.

1.3 Overview of farmers' organizations in Benin

This section focuses on the overview of the development of farmers' organizations during three main periods:

- the colonial period because of the domination of the colonizers and their willingness to establish organizations for export products;
- from 1960 to 1990: this period which starts from the political independence of the country runs through the multi-party system to the marxist-leninist regime; and
- the period from 1990 which is characterized by the restructuring of agricultural services. In this period an environment was created within which there has been a rapid development of non-governmental organizations and of farmers' organizations. The development of non-governmental organizations started during the preceding period but became very important after 1990.

Comments on the activities related to farmers' organizations in Benin will end the section. This paragraph discusses activities related to the promotion of farmers' organizations and their output with regard to the involvement of farmers in these activities.

The colonial period

Since 1910, there have been many attempts to organize farmers for involvement in agricultural activities. The first attempts were related to the efforts to introduce cash crops in rural areas and the actions of development agents (Mondjanagni 1984; Pfeiffer 1988; GAO 1994). Cash crops were introduced in order to contribute to the supply of industries of the colonial country. Related to the introduction of cash crops was the need to organize farmers. These attempts to organize farmers went through the *Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance* (SIP) created in 1910, the *Sociétés Mutuelles de Production Rurale* (SMPR) created in 1953 and the *Sociétés Mutuelles de Développement Rural* (SMDR) created in 1956 (GAO 1994).

The formal aims of the SIP were complemented by objectives such as:

- the establishment of grain storage for members;
- the provision of agricultural tools;
- the facilities offered to sick or injured members; and
- insurance of members against natural disasters.

Apparently, these objectives are in favour of farmers, but they are more in the interests of outsiders whose objectives were to have more easy access to the labour force of the members of the SIP for the production of export products.

The formal aims of the SMPR were to favour more participation of farmers in decision making and to focus more on economic aspects than on prudence aspects, i.e. provision against hunger, sickness etc.

The aims of the SMDR were to promote the joint management (as in SMPR) of the organizations. Some members of the board were elected by the organization members. Other members were nominated by the administration. Therefore, there was involvement of government in the management of farmers' organizations.

None of these organizations could satisfy the needs of farmers because of the types of power relations between the colonial authority and farmers. The main

decision makers in these organizations were people nominated by the colonial power or people who favoured their policies.

These organizations and their objectives, and the reasons for change, are summarized in table 1. In all these organizations, the Public Administration has much influence on their functioning as it has the power to nominate some members of the executive committees. Nominated people in these organizations took the main decisions about the organizations. They were members of the administration and as such they got instructions from superiors. During this period, farmers' organizations were a continuation of the colonial administration, and farmers did not have a voice to express their needs. One of the main common characteristics of these organizations during the colonial time was the upwards accountability which was valued, while there was no control from members. This was the case in the colonial administration and in the farmers' organizations.

From 1960 till 1990

Before talking about the review of farmers' organizations during this period it is useful to recall the main political events which occurred. From 1960 to 1972, Dahomey (called at present Benin) became politically independent but was characterized by political instability with many military overthrows of government. In 1972, a military regime came to power again but claimed to be marxist-leninist oriented. It led the country until 1989 when the *National Conference des Forces Vives de la Nation* took place and the country started the multi-party regime. Democratic elections took place and different institutions allowing checks and balances were installed in order to control the activities of the government. The installation of accountability mechanisms at the national level was expected to have some effects at the local levels.

The political events contributed to the development of farmers' organizations because of the effects on the organizational structure and the objectives the government would like them to attain. This will be elaborated in the following.

After independence, development institutions continued to organize the rural population for involvement in development activities. The state was the main actor in the creation of these farmers' organizations. Many farmers' organizations have been established since independence in a top-down way. They are the *champs collectifs* (GAO 1994), the *Cooperatives d'Aménagement Rural* (see also Mondjanagni 1984) and other *précoopératives* and the *Associations de Développement*.

The *Cooperatives d'Aménagement Rural* (CAR) were promoted by the *Société Nationale de Développement Rural* (SONADER) which was created in January 1962 and was a public agency. Its president was the Minister of Agriculture. There were 16 CAR in the Ouémé Province, 17 in the Atlantic Province and one in the Mono Province.

There were two types of CAR members:

- the owners of the land on which the CAR was established and who were employed by the CAR as unskilled workers; and
- the owners of land of the CAR but who were not employed by the CAR.

Table 1 Evolution of organizations created during the colonial period

Names	Date of creation	Objectives	Assessment of its accountability to members	Reasons for change
SIP	1910	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop grain storage for members; • to provide agricultural tools to members; • to help sick or injured members; and • to insure members against natural disasters 	administration was mainly responsible for decision making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor achievement of objectives • lack of involvement of farmers
SMPR	1953	to favour more participation of farmers in the management of the organizations and to focus more on economic aspects than on <i>Prévoyance</i>	involvement of administration is too high	to get more participation of farmers
SMDR	1956	same objectives as in SMPR	involvement of the administration is still very high	

Source: After GAO 1994.

There was a steering committee with a chairman nominated by the Ministry of Agriculture. The chairman was paid by the cooperative. The main decisions of the cooperatives were taken by the Director of SONADER. SONADER faced a number of problems in involving farmers in activities initiated by the agency, and farmers could not find their interests in these activities. The most important problems encountered by SONADER were related to the maintenance of the palm oil plantations and to robbery of the products of the plantations (see Gosselin 1978; Pfeiffer 1988). This situation was mainly due to the lack of the involvement of members of the different cooperatives. The failure has led to the dissolution of SONADER (which, meanwhile, became SOBEPALH). It transferred its activities to two agencies: the CARDER and SONICOG.

From 1969, many other organizations have been created for the participation of farmers in development activities. The GV, the ACOODER, the *Groupements Révolutionnaires à Vocation Coopérative* (GRVC), the *Coopératives Agricoles Expérimentales de Type Socialiste* (CAETS), the *Coopératives Agricoles de Type Socialiste* (CATS), the Club 4D, the network of the *Caisses locales et régionales de crédit agricole* were initiated. These organizations and their objectives are summarized in table 2.

Most of these organizations were established following western principles of democracy (one man one vote, a system for the control of accounts, a general assembly, an executive committee etc.) which were transferred to the African

context. In African societies decisions were mainly taken on the basis of consensus, and the principle of one man, one vote was difficult to apply in such circumstances.

The *Associations de développement* were created because of the incapacity of the marxist-leninist regime to carry out sound development policy taking into account the interests of the majority. But unfortunately, as argued by Daane and Mongbo (1991), the *Associations de développement* were not able to help farmers to influence government policy at local level, because these associations were created by civil servants who were born in the commune but continued to live in urban areas. These associations did not address the real needs of the majority of farmers. In effect, farmers were not associated with the initiation of these associations which civil servants claimed to represent the interests of the farmers. Their initiators lived in towns and pursued mainly their own interests. These associations yielded them some power which they used very often for political goals.

Table 2 indicates the desire of the government to structure the rural population in order to involve villagers in development activities. It shows also that in most organizations created, the state had a great influence. Objectives were set by development agencies, and the involvement of farmers' organizations in such decisions was nil. Development agencies anticipated the problems of farmers and provided alternative solutions and the objectives and methods for solving problems.

Furthermore, most of these organizations had the following organs which were not effective:

- the constitutive assembly for the creation of the organization;
- the general assembly to define the policy of the organization;
- the steering committee for the day-to-day operations between assemblies.
- the control committee, especially for checking accounts.

From 1972, with the marxist-leninist regime, there was strong government influence on the development of farmers' organizations. But the failure to promote effective organizations which respond to the real needs of farmers led to the creation of many *Associations de développement* after 1985.

Period from 1990: The 'Projet de Restructuration des Services Agricoles' (PRSA) of Benin and the GV

Due the failure of the marxist-leninist regime which had been characterized by the domination of the government in economic and political activities, drastic measures were imposed in order to increase the state's income and to decrease its expenses. These were some of the measures of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP). They have some implications for the reorganization of public institutions. Many activities of the public sector were transferred to the private sector or farmers' organizations. Many agents were sacked from the public sector. These drastic measures were taken under the pressure of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. The aim of the restructuring programs was to create new types of relationships between the public and the private sector. This change in policy led to an increase in the number of Non-Governmental Organizations created.

Table 2 List of types of farmers' organizations created in Benin by the state

Farmers' organizations*	Date of creation of the organization	Objectives
<i>Blocs de culture</i>	1957/58	To bring together many farmers in order to be able to give advice to a group of farmers and to supply improved tools.
<i>Champs Collectifs</i>	1962 by a decree n° 62/239/PR/MDRC	To create at village level a common farm which aims to supply the village with funds for common achievements.
<i>Coopératives d'Aménagement Rural</i>	1962 by the SONADER	To solve the land problem in the southern part of the country. To develop economic activities. To facilitate the settlement of farmers in a region and to constitute a permanent labour force for the maintenance of the plantations of oil palm trees.
<i>Groupements Villageois</i>	1969	Economic objectives and technical objectives: primary collection of agricultural products of members, supply of members with manufactured products. To constitute a solidarity engagement for credit, etc.
<i>Association Coopérative de Développement Rural (ACOODER)</i>	1971	The same functions as the GV.
<i>Groupements de production et de service GV, GRVC, CAETS, CATS</i>	1977	Primary collection of agricultural products, jointly responsible for guarantee, mobilization of the rural saving, improvement of production techniques; Progressive attempts for joint activities by putting together means.
<i>Women's organizations</i>	1980	To better involve women farmers in agricultural activities.
<i>Clubs of young farmers or Clubs 4D</i>	1967	To train young villagers from 10 to 17 years old in modern agricultural practices.
<i>Network of Caisses locales et régionales de Crédit Agricole Mutuel (CLCAM, CRCAM)</i>	1977	To mobilize rural savings and to grant credit to members.

Source: Field study and GAO (1994)

* There are many other organizations which are not mentioned here. These organizations are not recorded by the administration. They are created by NGOs and by farmers on their own initiatives.

This restructuring had an important effect on the restructuring of the agricultural services. This project is known as the *Projet de Restructuration des Services Agricoles*. One of the main effects of this project has been the review of the relations between agricultural institutions and farmers. Some activities were transferred to farmers' organizations. The main activities transferred to farmers were the primary collection of agricultural products, the supply of inputs and the distribution of credit. These activities were transferred from the CARDER to farmers' organizations, the GV and to private traders.

The transfer of these important activities was to give more responsibility to farmers and to free them from the CARDER for such activities. The control of these activities by farmers' organizations was to empower them and enable them to claim some services from development institutions. Farmers' organizations would get some countervailing power which would make development institutions more accountable to them.

The role and functions of GVs have been modified since the implementation of the restructuring of agricultural institutions project. To give responsibility to a GV implies some costs and some advantages. Some of the advantages obtained are the refunds² and the *plus-value* which are attributed to the community as a whole.

Another aspect of the restructuring was the review of the balance between government and the private sector. The private sector was given more responsibilities. An implication of this was the freedom of Non-Governmental Organizations to operate in rural areas without the prior acceptance of the government development institutions. There was an introduction of more participatory approaches to development.

Different organizations created during this period are summarized in table 3. I must add that the previous farmers' organizations continued to exist.

Summing up, farmers' organizations were characterized:

- during the colonial period by a heavy involvement of the political administration in the functioning of these structures. The first structures were characterized by provident activity (see the *Sociétés Indigènes de Prévoyance*). Later on, the focus was more on the economic aspect with the establishment of the SMPR. During this period, the colonial authority had great influence on the various leading organs of farmers' organizations; the administrative authority could nominate some board members. The organizations were created in a top-down way.
- the period from the 1960 till 1990 was characterized by the continuation of the practices of the colonial period till the beginning of marxist-leninist role which was described as the period of the promotion of various forms of farmers' organizations. During this period there was also a dominant involvement of the political administration in the functioning of farmers' organizations;
- from 1990 with the *Renouveau Démocratique*, and the adoption of the Structural Adjustment Programm (SAP), the role of the government has been redefined and there is a progressive disengagement of the state from certain functions, and farmers' organizations are getting some responsibilities in the management of their agricultural activities. The suppression of the monopoly of the CARDER in intervening in rural areas and the creation of more checks and balances at the national level during this period are relevant for this study, as they potentially have a great impact on the functioning of accountability mechanisms at local level and the level of farmers' organizations.

Table 3 Farmers' organizations created from 1989 onwards

Farmers' organizations	Date of creation	Objectives
<i>Caisses Rurales d'Épargne et de Prêt (CREP)</i>	1992	To contribute to mobilization of rural savings and to grant credit to members. Established because of the limited area covered by the CLCAM
<i>Groupements d'Intérêts économiques (GIE)</i>	1989 in the Ouémé Department 1990 in the Atlantique Department 1991 in the Mono Department	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to grant inputs, tools and credit to members; • to ensure the commercialization of the products; • to ensure the technical training of members; • to start activities for the improvement of the living conditions of members and of the villages.

Source: Fieldwork (1992) and GAO (1994)

Comments

The different farmers' organizations which have been created over time have in common the following features:

- they have been initiated by outsiders who decided beforehand the problems of the members of the different organizations;
- their initiators were aware of the necessity to involve members in the process of decision making, but they could not succeed because the application of a participatory approach would have required a change in the whole organization in charge of these activities;
- they have been established according to western criteria which may be in conflict with the culture and existing structures of the people involved in the process.

With respect to the poor participation of farmers in these organizations, changes occurred and new organizations were established, without stopping the activities of the earlier organizations. Some earlier organizations might continue their activities, and others not because of the ending of financial support. The search for a better farmers' organization led the government and the international partners to decide to give more responsibility to farmers through the *Programme de Restructuration des Services Agricoles*. The implication of this policy was to make the extension service more accountable to farmers through their organizations, the GV. The GV would get more responsibility in the area from which extension agents used to derive their bargaining power. The supply of inputs was one of the most important sources of power of extension agents, who used it in daily relations with farmers (for more information, see Von den Luhe 1993). A policy which aims to give farmers' organizations the responsibility for such activities aims implicitly at making the extension service as a whole more accountable to farmers. As such, policy makers were aware of the need to make development agencies accountable to farmers. In Mali the efforts went further, and farmers' organizations have their Labour Union, to discuss matters with development agencies, to participate in setting the agenda of research

and extension, and to join the activities of these organizations. Accountability is a fundamental issue for sustainable farmers' organizations. The next section explains the focus of this book.

1.4 Lack of accountability as the main problem for collective action

The preceding section gave an overview of farmers' organizations in the Beninese context and introduced the importance of accountability. The present section elaborates on the enthusiasm of interveners about the expected roles of farmers' organizations, and the disappointment with regard to the achievements. I raise the issue of the lack of accountability as the likely factor which prevents these farmers' organization from being effective.

The problem

Rural areas in Benin are rich in farmers' organizations: induced organizations and indigenous organizations. But the involvement of farmers in establishing the organization, in setting the rules, in enforcing the rules or in taking decisions about the use of the benefit accrued from the organization, has not yet been achieved. The policy of giving more responsibility to farmers aims, as I said earlier, to make development agencies accountable to farmers.

In farmers' organizations there are different groups of people with different objectives and some groups are more powerful than others. Powerful groups are very often the ones who take over the executive committees of farmers' organizations. The relations between committees and the general body of members are very often in favour of the committee members. This raises the issue of the functioning of the different organs established for the effectiveness of the organization. As claimed by the review GAO (1994), the main problem of farmers' organizations in Benin lies with the functioning of executive committees and control committees (level and quality of functioning, respect for rules, and the participation of members). This is an indication that the problem encountered by farmers' organizations in Benin is the problem of accountability.

The established accountability mechanisms do not function as expected, and most farmers are excluded from decision making about activities, and from the benefit of collective action, even though they contribute to its achievement. Few people derive advantage from the positive results of establishing farmers' organizations.

An agent in charge of the supply of inputs to farmers' organizations said *'these organizations are managed by two or three people in the village and other members do not know anything about what is going on in the organization. Most members are excluded and the benefits derived from the activities are for the few leading members.'*

He added stating that only a few organizations are effective. Similarly, another agent complained about the differences he observed between villages: some of them have effective organizations while others do not. His conclusion was that leaders are not accountable to the members of the organizations, and that members are not able to

compel their leaders to report and to be accountable to them. The main implication from these statements is that it is the lack of accountability which causes the poor performance or the inability of farmers' organizations to achieve established goals. Another implication is the absence of checks and balances which can prevent the misuse of common goods. Another observation derived from the above statements is the variation in the performance of villages. In some villages, the diversion of collective goods is effectively prevented.

Further observations are important to mention. The behaviour of development agents indicates that they are accountable to their hierarchical superiors and not responsible for their behaviour to farmers with whom they work (Vodouhê 1990). As one development agent points out:

'my promotion and my salary depend on the approval of my chiefs and not on farmers. Therefore I have to satisfy first the instructions coming from above. Furthermore, farmers listen to what I tell them.'

The above discussions point to the lack of accountability within farmers' organizations, and within development agencies, and to the lack of good links between farmers' organizations and development agencies. They point out also the importance of the society's norms in explaining the effectiveness of farmers' organizations.

The failure of the induced farmers' organizations is partly due to the lack of accountability of leaders to their constituencies and the lack of accountability of agents to farmers.

To get a full understanding of the accountability mechanism in *Adja* rural areas (Benin), this study looks at the different types of accountability mechanisms operating in these areas. I will examine indigenous accountability mechanisms and those newly introduced. The former are related to the traditional patterns of power existing in rural areas, while the second are related to control mechanisms introduced by development agencies. This analysis will be done at different levels: within the organization, and between the organization and the development agencies.

With regard to the relationship between the collective achievement of farmers' organizations and the patterns of accountability, the main focus of this book is:

'the extent to which accountability mechanisms contribute to the effectiveness of farmers' organizations in Benin and the extent to which external development agencies can contribute to the building of viable accountability mechanisms in these organizations for development purposes.'

This is addressed by investigating accountability mechanisms and their impact on the effectiveness of farmers' organizations. The book explores also how indigenous accountability mechanisms affect accountability mechanisms induced by development agencies, and *vice versa*.

Parallel to this central focus are the following questions:

- Why are farmers' organizations established? To determine the reasons for setting them up, the composition of the organizations should be understood as well as the various objectives of the different actors involved in the organizations.

- How are representatives of farmers in organizations' committees nominated or elected by members of the organization? To explain the behaviour of different members of the committee, their origin and their networks should be understood: this will help to understand the different interests groups which are represented in the committee and those which are not.
- What are the differences between induced organizations based on indigenous organizations and those which are not?
- What are the accountability mechanisms used in induced organizations as compared to indigenous farmers' organizations?
- To what extent do farmers' organizations fulfil their functions (formal and informal)?
- To what extent can research and extension institutions contribute to the building of strong farmers' organizations?
- What are the implications of strong farmers' organizations for research and extension institutions?

In summary, this book deals with accountability mechanisms (induced and indigenous) within farmers' organization and between them and development agencies.

The objectives of the research

The main objective of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of the functioning of farmers' organizations for the sake of better linkages between farmers and development agencies. It will contribute to a better understanding of the participation of farmers in development activities. The derived objectives of this research are:

- 1 the description of the indigenous and induced organizations in rural areas and the understanding of their differences in organization and management;
- 2 the description and the analysis of accountability mechanisms for both indigenous and induced organizations;
- 3 the examination of the extent to which the basis for western democracy (one person, one vote) can be effectively applied in farmers' organizations in the African context;
- 4 the examination of the effects of strategies aiming at establishing countervailing power. This derived objective analyses the achievements of various organizations in helping people to have a voice and economic power in order to exert claims on research and extension institutions;
- 5 the examination of the usefulness of theories on knowledge processes and social dilemmas for the analysis of accountability mechanisms;
- 6 the contribution to a better functioning of farmers' organizations in an African context, and the contribution of these organizations to economic and social development.

1.5 Organization of the book

The book contains six chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the main focus of the book: accountability mechanisms as an important aspect of effective farmers' organization. Discussing the issue of accountability mechanisms, the chapter gives an overview of the development of farmers' organizations in Benin and emphasises the issue of accountability as one of the main factors preventing the sustainability of farmers' organizations. The main question addressed by the chapter concerns the effect of accountability mechanisms on the effectiveness of farmers' organizations and the extent to which intervention can improve the situation.

Chapter 2 gives an overview of the concepts used for understanding accountability mechanisms within farmers' organizations, especially, that is, the accountability of leaders to their constituencies. The chapter focuses on the Agricultural knowledge and Information system, the problem of power, the problems of social dilemmas and the effects of cultural context on accountability. Furthermore, I describe the qualitative methodology used. Through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, cases studies and key informants, data have been collected on the main aspects related to the issues discussed in this book. In this chapter I explain also the role of myself as a researcher and my awareness of the effects the position of the researcher may have on the results. I argue that the results can be considered trustworthy.

Chapter 3 focuses on the first case study: the rotating credit and saving association aiming at helping people mourning the death of their parents in-law. This organization is initiated by farmers themselves to solve a specific problem. The analysis of this first case aims at describing the accountability mechanisms within the association and at understanding the reasons for the success of this type of association. It shows also the potential of these organizations as well as their limits, and analyzes ways to improve their effectiveness. This chapter points out the effectiveness of indigenous organization when the problems addressed are social problems and when the group size is small.

Chapter 4 discusses the second case study, which is of a farmers' organization induced by a government agency. The analysis focuses on the functioning of accountability mechanisms in this type of organizations. Two types of accountability mechanisms have been found: formal accountability mechanisms set up by the government agency, and loyalty to lineages. The different types of accountability mechanism are described and discussed in order to point out causes for their effectiveness or non-effectiveness. The objective is seeking ways of intervening in order to improve the situation of these organizations which, if effective, can play more important roles in improving the living conditions of their members. The effectiveness of farmers' organizations in this case is mainly due to competition between villages and cohesion within villages.

Chapter 5 addresses the third case study and aims at analyzing the accountability mechanisms within farmers' organizations induced by an NGO which aspires at building local capacity. Chapter 5 analyzes these organizations to understand the effects of a more participatory approach on accountability mechanisms in farmers'

organizations. The NGO develops a number of knowledge and information activities in order to improve the functioning of farmers' organizations. The chapter analyzes the extent to which these activities could improve the accountability of leaders to their constituencies, and the accountability of the development institutions to farmers through their organizations. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to draw lessons for improving the effectiveness of farmers' organizations. An important point of this chapter lies in the fact that interveners leave space for villagers to choose the structural arrangement most suitable for solving their problems. Their interventions are related to facilitation roles for better effectiveness of the organization.

Chapter 6 compares the different cases in order to draw conclusions about the most important strengths and weaknesses of the different types of organization. Thus, it compares these mechanisms and discusses the different findings with respect to different theoretical perspectives.

Notes

1 An organization is a stable system of individuals who work together to achieve common goals through a hierarchy of ranks and of division of labour (Rogers 1983:348-9 quoted by Brouwers, 1993:34).

2 Refund is a fund which returns to the village for community achievements. It is a sort of tax on seed cotton sold in the village.

2 Initial concepts and a methodology for analyzing accountability mechanisms

This chapter aims to introduce the reader to the initial concepts used for understanding accountability procedures in farmers' organizations and their linkages with other levels. The initial perspectives used are the agricultural knowledge system, the social dilemmas, the power patterns, the loyalty to lineages in an african context, and accountability. The second aim of this chapter is to introduce to the reasons for choosing qualitative methods for collecting data. It introduce the three case studies.

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical perspectives used to understand the functioning of farmers' organizations. For this discussion I start from the fact that farmers' organizations aim at collective action and as such face social dilemmas. I introduce the notion of accountability mechanism. Two main forms of social dilemmas have been discussed: the common dilemmas, and public good dilemmas. We consider next the concept of power and the dilemma of leaders standing at the intersection of formal accountability and loyalty to kin and ethnic groups. Then, the AKIS perspective, the methodology and the setting constitute the last parts of this chapter.

A free-riders problem arises in a situation where nobody can be excluded from advantages emanating from collective action. An accountability mechanism would prevent the free-riding from occurring. The mechanism of accountability deals with power relationships, and the source, patterns and bases of power may account for the functioning or malfunctioning of the accountability systems. The source of power may lie outside the organization and the community. Organization members and non-members may yield power to the committee members, but the absence of a favourable institutional and economic environment would impede collective action profitable to most farmers.

The last part of this chapter comprises the methodology and the setting.

2.1 Accountability

The present section considers the basic conditions for accountability at the organization level. But before enumerating these conditions it is useful to define accountability.

Laban (1994) defines accountability as *taking responsibility of one's own behaviour, at the same time being able to account for the effects of such behaviour*. He adds that it is

not restricted to the mere financial meaning as in bookkeeping. He defines four basic conditions for accountability at the local level with respect to the sustainable management of natural resources. These conditions are:

- the benefits from the behaviour;
- empowerment to engage in the behaviour;
- the rights of access to or control over the resources involved;
- the knowledge, skills and other capacity required.

According to Laban, each of these four conditions can be targeted by intervention.

This definition of accountability does not indicate how, to whom and for what, people will become accountable. Furthermore, the above definition deals with sustainable management of natural resources. In this work, I am dealing with farmers' organizations which can be considered as a second-order dilemma with respect to sustainable management of natural resources. Sustainable resource management and sustainable farmers' organizations are linked.

A sustainable farmers' organization is perceived as one in which members realize the objectives for which they become members of the organization, as one which is financially and organizationally independent, and as one which can adapt itself to changes in the environment. As a means to this end, democracy in such organizations enables most members to participate in the decision-making process. The participation of members implies their involvement in making the rules of the organization and the enforcement of these rules, and in the sharing of costs and benefits. Participating in all these processes implies mechanisms which prevent people on the committees from misusing the power which members yield to them. These mechanisms should be established in such a way that members delegate a power to committee members and are able to take it back if they are not satisfied. I call these the accountability mechanisms. I will distinguish two types of accountability: formal and informal. The formal accountability mechanisms are those set up during the establishment of the organization: for example a control committee to check the activities of board members in regular meetings at which committee members report their activities to members. Interveners can contribute to the improvement of such mechanisms. In addition to these formal mechanisms, informal ones emerge as a consequence of the different sources of power.

Different methods have been proposed for improved management of farmers' organizations. All of them refer to the participation¹ of farmers in the management of the collective good. They refer to accountability as a key issue in promoting viable farmers' organizations. Some of the authors who have been concerned about ways to promote accountability within an organization and between organizations are Howell (1981), Röling (1988), Uphoff (1986), Richards (1990), Kaimowitz (1990), Israel (1990) and Pretty (1993).

They make the following suggestions: Grassroots Farming Systems Research and Extension for the landless and near-landless will, according to Odell (1981), help to identify clearly the problems, priorities, resources and institutional/social structures within which the poorest carry out their quest for survival. This will allow for a policy to develop and strengthen indigenous/traditional institutions, instead of exploiting the local chief, headman, or council members. Odell stresses the necessity to shift from the 'prescriptive' approach to an adaptive approach that involves

errors and helps local communities (in which all categories of farmers participate) to learn from their mistakes. To ensure that poor farmers will direct and control the development process, there is a need to empower the powerless. To reach this end, specific skills are needed:

'Facilitation, and group process skills for supporting groups rather than directing or manipulating them; management, goal-setting, decision-making, negotiation, and meeting skills for members, and procedures for maximizing membership participation. To embark on such a strategy is an organizational process (not radical) based on efficiency, effectiveness and equity. This is nothing more than the expansion of democratic decision-making and pluralism.' (Odell 1981)

A constructive extension process designed to confront the issue of power directly, and to help the communities and farmers' groups around the world take charge of their own development, is a healthy antidote to the pervasive prison of poverty, and the frustrations, anger, violence, and despair that it breeds.

Röling (1988) has proposed the functional group approach to promote the development of a countervailing power of farmers. This approach comprises five elements: mobilization/sensibilization, organization, training, tangible benefits and system management. This approach will enable farmers to gain power so that they will be able to negotiate with development agencies for the improvement of their wellbeing. This approach is used by an NGO, the PADES. It will be discussed in chapter 5.

2.2 Farmers' organizations and social dilemmas

In establishing farmers' organizations, the wish is to achieve collective action. Individuals in such organizations may experience a conflict in choosing between their individual interests and collective interests. The dilemma situations described raise the issues of common dilemma and the public good. The section discusses their strengths and weaknesses as well as strategies for overcoming these dilemmas.

I would like to introduce the discussion on rational behaviour by reporting a conversation I had one day with the chairman of one rotating credit association, the *Kugbè*. He is perceived in the area as an '*Agbèto lolo enyi*', meaning a trustworthy person with whom people can deal without fear of loss. His organization is well known and well esteemed by members and non-members because of its effectiveness while others in the surrounding area are not. Talking about his organization the chairman said:

'When we established this organization, our objectives were to help grieving members to make an appropriate material and financial contribution to the funeral ceremonies of their parents in-law. In other words to avoid a shameful situation for our members. Such shameful situations affect the credibility of an individual in our area. To attain this end, rules were established and all members had to comply to them, even myself. People complied with these rules because of the sanctions, but also because of another factor which is very important. Funeral ceremonies are intended for the ascension of the soul of the deceased person. Unfinished ceremonies may cause a delay in the ascension of the

soul, and this delay causes harm to the person responsible. I still remember a story my eldest brother told me about one of his friends who was in charge of burying people. The friend was said to have taken one of the cloths of a deceased person who was going to be buried with that cloth. On his way back home, he heard behind him the voice of the deceased person asking about his cloth because it was getting very cold for him. The burier threw the cloth away and ran off until the voice ceased to call him. He carried out many ceremonies for himself or he would not have survived. This small story I tell you is the reality, and anybody who fails to contribute to the effectiveness of the organization would be solely responsible for what happens to him. This is one of the main reasons why our organization is functioning very well.'

To make their organization effective people sustain the fear of action by a deceased person on those who fail to assist the ascension of his soul. This situation calls for a discussion of rational behaviour on which many decisions are based.

In addition to this story, I would like to say that decisions in the Adja plateau are taken according to many factors which go beyond common sense. Another example is related to my assistant who arranged with a farmer to visit his farm. When my assistant went to him for the visit, the farmer said that he was not able to go to his farm that day. Investigation later showed that many ceremonies had been carried out in the village because the farmer had dreamt during the night and had seen his deceased father very angry with him. The farm was given to him by his father and it was advisable for him to avoid it until the ceremonies. Which he did, and my assistant was able to visit his farm on another day. This story indicates that many other factors contribute to the decisions of farmers. Sometimes, it is difficult to understand why people are take particular decisions in the village. The following case illustrates how decisions are taken.

A wife of one of our informants was sick and had a high temperature. The dispensary was not far from the village and they were able to meet the expenses. But the husband did not bring her to the health assistant. When he was asked why he did not bring his wife to the dispensary, he replied because of lack of money to meet the expenses. We knew that he had his income from cotton and we asked why he did not want to spend it. He had no reply to that, but he still did not bring his wife the dispensary. Investigation in the village has shown that he (the husband) went to the local healer and was told that the sickness was not for the dispensary and that she might die if she went there. That is why he kept his wife at home; many ceremonies were carried out and she took some medicines based on plants. Fortunately his wife could be healed. Was she healed by the plants or delivered by the ceremonies? Were the decisions of the farmer rational or not?

After this introduction the context in which decisions are made by farmers, I would like to discuss rational behaviour.

Economic and political theories are based on the principles of rational behaviour. By rationality I mean

'that individuals evaluate the possible outcomes associated with their choices in accordance with their preferences and values.... they make a choice which they believe will maximize their expected utility' (Popkin 1979:31).

Rational behaviour is a behaviour consistent with some system of thought (Theodorson and Theodorson 1969 quoted by Van Dusseldorp 1991:7):

'The system of logical thought depends on the cultural environment of an individual and his explanation of the way the world around him/her is functioning.'

Rationality is based on self-motives and an individual calculates what is in his best interests and acts accordingly (Douglas 1987). Many people equate rationality and self-interested behaviour.

With respect to rational behaviour, it is expected that individuals in organizations, be they farmers or government or non-governmental organizations, adopt impersonal behaviour and give their loyalty to their organizations. A person should not use the power of his position to strengthen other social entities, for example his or her family or clan (Dusseldorp 1991:27). It is expected that there will be universalistic behaviour. This logic is the basis for the distinction between corporate groups and associations or cooperatives. In associations it is expected that individuals adopt universalistic behaviour.

Various authors have written about how people are essentially selfish and individualistic and how individual self-interest can undermine the effectiveness of voluntary organization or community natural-resource management (Olson 1965, Hardin 1968, Orbell & Dawes 1981, Uphoff *et al.* 1990).

2.2.1 The classic prisoners' dilemma

The classic prisoners' dilemma is a non zero-sum game, attributed to A.W. Tucker (see also Orbell & Dawes 1981:52; de Vries 1991:11). According to Luce and Raiffa (1957:95):

'Two suspects are taken into custody and separated. The District attorney is certain that they are guilty of a specific crime, but he does not have adequate evidence to convict them at a trial. He points out to each prisoner that each has two alternatives: to confess the crime to the police which are sure they have done, or not to confess. If they both do not confess, then the District attorney states he will book them on some minor trumped-up charge such as petty larceny and illegal possession of a weapon, and they will both receive minor punishment; if they both confess they will be prosecuted, but he will recommend less than the most severe sentence; but if one confesses and the other does not, then the confessor will receive lenient treatment for turning state's evidence whereas the latter will get 'the book' slapped at him.'

The problem of each prisoner is whether to confess or not. This game is a non-cooperative variety.

Looking at farmers for example in situations where they have to choose between 'restricted production' or 'full production,' one may find the same dilemma as in the prisoners' dilemma. If all farmers restrict their production, they will all get a better price for their products, but if they all use full production they will get a lower price and fare poorly.

'The strategies of a given farmer, however, do not significantly affect the price level – this is an assumption of a competitive market – so that no matter the strategies of the

other farmers, he is better off in all circumstances with full production' (Luce & Raiffa 1957:95).

They continue by pointing out that, in real life, farmers may enter into collusion as they do not play the game only once. In addition many other factors such as the government, norms and conscience may influence the outcome of the game.

Game theory developed on the basis of the prisoners' dilemma and other classic situations explains how individual self-interest can undermine collective action. It draws our attention to the fact that an organization is established for a purpose and as such involves collective decision-making, and that individual social actors can choose between cooperation and defecting. The typical nature of the social dilemmas is that, in the short term, the defective choice is the most beneficial from the individual's point of view, even though everyone would be better off in the longer term if all made the cooperation choice. The prisoners' dilemma and the game theory based on it are important as they suggest a payoff structure which is identical to that in some farmers' organizations where there are no mechanisms which prevent people from opting for the defecting choice.

2.2.2 The tragedy of the commons

Using similar assumptions, Hardin (1968) came to similar conclusions. In his 'tragedy of the commons' (Hardin 1968), grazing land is common property and everybody has access to it. People can make maximum profit by adding additional cattle without supporting the costs. One conclusion of Hardin's is that

'each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit. Ruin is the destination toward which all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a common brings ruin to all.'

This is an unhappy model and it also suggests pessimistic scenarios about the possibilities for collective action and equitable natural-resource management. It points out the need for regulation, which serves the collective interests. Therefore, Hardin proposes coercion mutually agreed on by most of the people affected.

In the situations described by Hardin, people do not act altruistically. Members of organizations also do not altruistically perform services for the society at large but instead act in an egoistic and often opportunistic manner (Schmale 1993). The tragedy of the commons assumes that users are selfish, unrestricted by the social norms of the community, try to maximize short-term gains, and have perfect information. The model fails to recognize the social structure of common property.

2.2.3 The logic of collective action

Olson (1965) challenges the claim that if individual and group interests overlap, the group interest will be accepted by all members of the group and they will work for that end. He argues that it is not evident that people will join in collective action even if their interests and those of the group overlap or coincide. Individual

rationality is not enough for ensuring collective rationality. Collective action will occur, according to him, only when the group size is small or when there is coercion or some other special device to make people act in the common interest. He also raises the problem of free-riders: persons benefiting from others' investment in collective action without contributing their own share of the costs. The sucker is a person who contributes to the costs while others do not. He points out that the existence of free-riders is a kind of sword of Damocles over voluntary organizations. If some people are free-riders, the others may be discouraged and activities will not be done. Thus, the organization may cease to exist.

In such situations, one may expect that organizations will not be created because everybody may wait for the others to create the organization and to bear the costs of its establishment. Uphoff (1992:328-330) referring to Olson, states that such outcomes can be avoided a) if the organization is sufficiently small, so that free-riding can be deterred because it is more easily detected and group sanctions can be invoked effectively against it, or b) if the organization offers certain benefits valued by potential members that can be withheld, such as side-payments which may induce beneficiaries to disavow free-riding and contribute to organizational maintenance. Otherwise, coercive authority would play a role. The discovery of free-riders in a small group may be easy but taking action against them may be difficult. This depends on the social status of the free-riders.

The prisoners' dilemma, the tragedy of the commons and the logic of collective action address organizational issue of the society. Each from different aspects. They raise the following questions (Orbell & Dawes 1981:41):

- *how might a society of self-interested individuals be organized so that they can coexist together in mutually profitable way?*
- *for the tragedy of the commons, the question is: how might a society of self-interested individuals be organized so that ecological disaster can be avoided?*
- *in the case of the logic of collective goods and collective bads: if exclusion from the benefits is not possible, how might a society be organized to ensure that the goods it generally wants are provided?*

The issues raised by the prisoners' dilemma, the tragedy of the commons and the logic of collective action, have generated a great deal of interest in social dilemmas (e.g. Ostrom 1992). It is generally agreed that the types of situations discussed above can be summarized under two main forms of social dilemma (Koelen and Rölöng 1994).

The first form is the common dilemma, in which the defecting choice always brings higher benefits, irrespective of what others do, but if all make the defective choice, all would have worse outcomes than if all made the cooperative choice. Solving common dilemmas requires individuals to take less.

The second form is the public goods dilemma, in which the defecting choice is also the dominant one, but its benefit is only greater than the cooperating choice if sufficient numbers of others make a cooperating choice (e.g., purchase a train ticket instead of free-riding). Again, if all make the defecting choice, all are worse off. Solving public goods dilemma requires individuals to give more.

In this book I describe the different social dilemma situations in farmers' organizations and explore the ways people act in order to contribute to collective action. The models describe what happens if the conditions assumed by the different writers are met. But in the real life situation, these conditions may be different and people can cooperate for collective action. For example, Widner (1994a) found in Ivory Coast that there is a rise in the number of horizontal organizations where theorists would expect the domination of self-interest. Many people have joined these horizontal organizations for reasons which have to do with:

- the possession of plantations which represent long term investments;
- the settlement of young children who return from schools; and
- the habit to cooperate.

There are therefore many situations where people can be expected to behave in favour of group action.

In response to the defecting choices predicted by social dilemma theory, different approaches have been proposed to ensure a different outcome.

2.3 Alternative solutions of social dilemmas

2.3.1 *The role of the State*

It has been suggested that the state has the means to avoid social dilemmas as it can reward or punish people's behaviour. Specialists are paid by the community to carry out the tasks of punishment and reward and control is centralized. The fear of being punished by the state may discourage defecting behaviour.

However, an analysis of bureaucracies has shown that very often 'bureaucrats maximize, not the welfare of the society, but their own welfare and that of their bureau' (Niskanen 1971). The intervention of the government would lead many people to adjust their costs and benefit calculations to be in harmony with the achievement of collective goods. However, the government cannot have access to all the information needed to enforce rules because it is an outsider in the area. Hence, some people may be sanctioned more severely than necessary, or the opposite. The role of the state alone is insufficient to enforce rules for collective action. There is a need for other mechanisms to complement the role of the state.

2.3.2 *Privatization*

Some writers suggest that the only way to avoid the tragedy of the commons is to privatize collective goods by giving people private property rights. Through this, users will be able to manage the property efficiently. Privatization assumes the homogeneity of the goods, for example, the herd. If the herd is divided among users, each user *will be playing the game against nature in a small terrain rather than the game against another player* (Ostrom 1990:12). Privatization does not solve the problem of sustainability of the whole common. Furthermore, not all goods can be privatized, e.g. ocean fisheries may not be or as in the case of farmers' organizations in which social dilemmas occur, it may not be possible to privatize certain assets of the

organizations. These strategies do not solve the problem of social dilemmas and do not guarantee the sustainable use of common property. Other alternatives to deal with social dilemmas are norms, altruism and conscience and new institutionalism.

2.3.3 Altruism

This is an alternative which may contribute to the effective use of the common property. It can be defined as *behaviour of an individual that benefits someone else or the group as a whole no matter what the costs are for himself* (de Vries 1991).

Altruism leads to a positive-sum outcome. Uphoff (1992), after his study of the irrigation scheme in Gal Oya, has observed the evolution of cooperation among members and found that the positive outcome is due partly to altruistic persons. Communication among members and organizational conditions are some of the enabling factors which favour altruistic action. Effective leadership (organization conditions) seems likely to facilitate the expression of altruistic acts. The behaviour of leaders and members in some farmers' organizations has some of the characteristics of altruism. I will discuss this issue using some concrete cases later on.

Normative systems

Norms can be defined as statements about the way group members are expected to behave (Homans 1974:1, 96). Norms are codes or rules of behaviour. They are the expression of values which derive from the cognitive orientations of the society.

Two main types of norms can be found which differ in origin. The first derives from the *fact that most members of a group tend under certain circumstances to behave in a particular way 'naturally'*, which can give rise to norms. The second type of norms call upon all persons in certain circumstances to behave in a certain way.

Normative systems are also other forms of solutions that can lead people to respect the norms of the society or the groups. Norms have been developed by the society. The control system of the norms is decentralized, and the costs are supported by individuals.

Normative systems have some shortcomings. One of them is the potential free-riding expressed in the form of *'who will support the cost of applying the norms?* Some people would like others to support these costs.

Normative systems have some advantages over the state, as the financial and material costs are lower with normative systems. Moreover, norms are developed by a community and as such are accepted by this community, but there is no guarantee that they will be accepted by other communities. Common property may involve more than one community and the enforcement of norms may then be difficult.

Norms are very important in this study as people are still in close relationships with their families, kin and lineages. Members of a kin-group may yield power to one of their number who may be a member of the organization committee. He may respect these norms and also the norms of the organization (I will refer to an organization's norms as internal norms). I will return to the issue of norms when discussing loyalty to kin.

2.3.5 *Conscience*

Conscience is *the inner voice that warns us that someone may be looking* (Cooke 1955: 231 reported by Orbell & Dawes 1981:49). Individuals bring rewards and punishments to bear on their own cost-benefit calculations, by influencing the directions of their own behaviour. Altruism and conscience act in different ways. The altruist says: 'I am acting in conformity with social goals because I am interested in the welfare of others'. But the other will say 'I am acting in conformity with social goals because, in the end, I feel like a better person for doing so' (Orbell & Dawes 1981:49).

Conscience has a great advantage over the state and centralized legal systems in that it avoids many administrative costs, and over normative systems, in that it avoids the free-rider problems associated with decentralized enforcement. But it is a concept difficult to handle. There is a link between norms, conscience and beliefs. I will come back later to beliefs.

Table 4 Design principles for self-governing organizations

<i>A Agreed-upon principles by most scholars in the field of institutional arrangement</i>	
1	A supportive policy, regulatory and legal environment, preferably recognizing rights and ownership of infrastructure by the community;
2	Capacity to mobilize resources adequate to meet the cost of operations and maintenance, including emergency repairs;
3	Benefits exceed costs of participation, with proportional equivalence between benefits and costs for each members;
4	Effective collective choice arrangement by members which will have normally the following characteristics;
a	Organizational autonomy, with clearly defined boundaries (area and membership), in which officials derive their legitimacy and authority from members and are accountable to members;
b	Financial autonomy;
c	Single organizational entity manages single infrastructural system;
d	Maintenance and conflict resolution are tightly connected to the capture and allocation of resource;
e	Transparent performance monitoring arrangements;
f	Nested or federated organizational structure;
<i>B Other principles:</i>	
	• Graduated sanctions;
	• Maintenance of written accounts and records;
	• General assembly;
	• Use of specialized paid staff for regular maintenance;
	• Local recruitment of staff;
	• Leadership.

Source: after Ostrom (1990:90) and Merrey (1995:4)

The most satisfactory situation for the society is to have the legal systems, normative systems and conscience all working in the same direction and reinforcing each

other's directives. A society in which these three mechanisms are at odds with each other can certainly expect trouble. But government and normative systems (e.g., religion) can be used to the selfish advantage of the few and obviously the few, may also be quite capable of influencing the rewards and punishments of conscience to that end (Orbell and Dawes 1981).

2.3.6 'New' Institutionalism

The previous strategies did not look at the institutional design which facilitates success in the management of collective goods. Scholars have been fascinated by the success of self-governing systems in the management of common property, and have identified principles characterizing successful self-governing systems (Ostrom 1990, Uphoff 1992; Widner 1994b; Merrey 1995; Laban 1994). Table 4 sketches these principles while not all these principles are always present in effective organizations, there is some relationship between the presence of these principles and the effectiveness of organizations.

The problems are those of gaining compliance to the rules no matter what their origin. The enforcement of rules by an external force is costly, but enforcing the rules by members themselves may also be problematic: who will bear the costs of enforcement. In the following chapters I analyze the way the rules are established and enforced in three different types of organizations, with reference to the accountability mechanism, its existence and its functioning. The next section discusses the theoretical aspects of accountability mechanisms.

2.4 The power issues in accountability mechanisms

As stated by Engel (1995:49), interventions are necessarily tied into power structures. Interventions affect the power relationships in the society and one should be aware of them when intervening in rural areas. I look at leadership and power in farmers' organizations. The following discusses power and the accountability mechanisms.

Weber (1957:152), in the *International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, defines 'power' as *the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, no matter the basis² on which this probability rests*. This definition of power is equivalent to tyranny. Tyranny is achieved when there is no solidarity and one person has all the power (Bailey 1971:15).³

In this book I will refer to authority instead of tyranny when I talk about power. Concepts related to power are influence, authority, persuasion, dissuasion, inducement, coercion, compulsion, force.

In modern social science, power terms refer to *subsets of relations among social units such that the behaviours of one or more units depend in some circumstances on the behaviour of other units* (Dahl 1961). Power of A over B is the capacity of A to obtain, in his relations with B, exchanges in terms favourable to him (Bernoux 1985). Power is the mobilization by actors of relevant areas that are under their control in a given situation and in relation and negotiation with other actors.

Bernoux (1985) views power as the room for manoeuvre of individuals or groups of individuals with regard to others. Concretely it is the possibility individuals have to reject or to negotiate what they were asked to do, or to obtain something, or to make good their demand to be very highly remunerated. People seek to preserve room for manoeuvre. They protect the domain in which they are the main and sole experts and for which their behaviour cannot be predicted by others. *Power is integral to the functioning of any human system from the family, to the corporation, to the community* (Rossing and Howard 1994).

In an organization many types of power sources can be distinguished (Bernoux 1985):

- *Expertise* can be a source of power if one is in a stable situation and the expertise is recognized by others in the organization. Expert persons might propose things, the achievement of which depends on others in the organization. The latter may accept, adapt or reject them.
- *Control over information about the environment* of the organization. In effect, control of relations with the environment creates the opportunity to master uncertainty areas which others in the organization need to perform their tasks: organizations are affected by changes in environment.
- *Internal communication*. The life of the organization depends among other factors on the quality of communication.
- *The ability to use the organizational rules*. The better one knows the rules of the organization the better he or she masters the uncertainty areas to his/her profit.

Coercive power stems from the ability of the agent to mediate punishment.

Reward power results from the ability of the agent to mediate rewards.

Legitimate power stems from the internalized values in a member of the audience, values which dictate that the source has a legitimate right and that the audience has an obligation to accept his influence.

Referent power: when a person uses another person or group as a frame of reference, as a background or as a yardstick against which to evaluate some aspects of himself.

Crozier and Friedberg (1977), in their book '*L'acteur et le système*' consider that power can be found only in the relations between people and does not exist as such in its own right. They go further by saying that no change can occur without transforming the power system. The transformation of the power system is therefore one important step in any attempt to bring about change. Power does not exist in fixed quantities which the holder loses when he shares it with another person. When a holder of power shares it with another person, the power of the latter will increase and that of the initial holder may increase too.

People may get their power from different sources, be they formal or informal. Leaders in an organization may get their power from their position as leaders but also because of their networks. The power yielded by these networks may be more important than that deriving from the formal position, because of the importance of these networks which may extend beyond the community, the village and the region. Furthermore, power depends on what people value.

2.5 Loyalty to the kin and ethnic group in an African context, and accountability

The behaviour of individuals in social dilemma situations is also influenced by the institutional and social contexts, in terms of the value people give to different forms of behaviour and in terms of how sanctions and rewards are distributed within a given society. The following section will analyze the African context with regard to power patterns and loyalty to kinship groups or to communities.

This section introduces also multiple membership in organizations and the derived power and accountability. It also discusses the potential conflicts between powers (power derived from the informal network and the power derived from the formal position one occupies).

In rural African societies, people identify themselves with their ethnic groups, their ancestors and their relatives. As pointed out by Cockcroft (1990), African people associate the past, the present and the future, i.e., they identify themselves with their living relatives, their dead ancestors and the unborn children. They do not yet attach much importance to class. African people owe some loyalty to their lineage although this is nowadays balanced by loyalty to God. The development of religions (Christianity, Islam) in Africa is counterbalancing the loyalty to lineage.

Loyalty to kin is important in many respects. According to Hyden (1983), people's attachment to kin has the purpose of mutual help for informal credit, equipment, and construction. He summarized these under basic survival, social maintenance and development. He remarks that people are poor, and without help from others they would not be able to survive. Some people share a small part of their wealth with the poor through gifts, or through help for people in need or staying in the villages. Hyden (1983) calls this type of economy the 'economy of affection' which resembles the 'moral economy' discussed by Popkin (1979). The 'economy of affection' is perceived as a network of supports, communication and interaction among structurally defined groups connected by blood, kin, community or other affinity. This network may go from village to town and beyond. This network is sometimes strong and maintained and is materialized by links which keep people in contact with their kin.

People in town or in a good position should support several members of their extended family. The public good is easily taken as the clan good. This is described by Cockcroft as the *frequent absence of a sense of the public good, of a sense of the welfare of the society as a whole*. The use of public goods for the lineage or kin welfare is becoming common in urban areas and is a 'corruption' which is accepted as a norm. The following example is an illustration of this situation.

A decision was taken by the President of the Republic stating that administrative cars could not be used during the week-end. A reply of an important minister at that time was: *'if cars could not be used during the week-end, will we walk to go to the funeral ceremonies of relatives or of members of our lineages?'* I must add that usually funeral ceremonies take place during the week-end to enable people working in the administration to attend them. The illustration implies that the cars for administrative purposes, i.e., the collective, are perceived as goods which should be used for individual purposes for the satisfaction of clan expectations.

Coming back to African society and accountability, I would like to mention the following. People in induced or indigenous organizations are also in kin networks which involve power and accountability. They can gain power from belonging to the network. The more powerful the members of your network, the better the position you occupy in induced organizations. Similarly, members should support people in the network in order to benefit from their support. A member elected in a bureau faces the accountability related to his loyalty to his kin and lineage, or village, as well as the accountability related to his formal position. A committee member therefore faces many types of accountability to which he should respond. I discuss the indigenous accountability mechanism in the following paragraph.

As I said earlier, African people believe in ancestors. The ancestors are perceived as the guardians of the welfare of the kin and as the link with the Gods. As such, the belief in ancestors is present in the everyday life of most people, although it is weakened somewhat with the introduction of modernization and the new religions. But this belief is still present. Ancestors guarantee the welfare of members of the family and lineage, and rules are established to ensure the lineage benefits from the favors of the ancestors. Elders are more close to these ancestors than young people, and as such they are guardians of the rules. They reward and sanction people who follow or break the rules of the kin group. In any circumstance, when they invoke ancestors or the fetishes of the family, people should rectify their behaviour in order to honour the traditions for people are frightened by the invocation of the ancestors.

In African societies, it is believed that every event has more than one cause. For example, a death is caused by illness but this can be caused by bad behaviour of the individual or can be inflicted by others. Not complying with the rules of society may cause the offender some harm. People, sometimes, use sorcery or '*juju*' to maintain order. The traditions do not only have negative effects on people, but can contribute to the maintenance of good management of the public good through social pressure. For example, in a village where it is forbidden to steal or to misuse village property, it is easy to find that committee members take proper care of the public goods entrusted to them. The fear of being sanctioned by the community makes them accountable to the elders and to the society.

In summary, reference to the 'traditional' society leads us to consider the positive and negative effects of the indigenous accountability mechanisms. The negative aspects relate to common goods which can be diverted and accepted by the community if they are perceived as government goods and provided it is for the families, the lineage. The 'traditions' are not always in favour of young people and women. But in other respects, the indigenous patterns of power may help to prevent people from misusing the common good and this from the point of view of the organization. Social pressure contributes to avoiding the misuse of goods which are perceived as those of the community. People may be cursed if they are found guilty. This accountability mechanism does not stand alone, and it is necessary to analyze the other types of accountability.

2.6 The Agricultural Knowledge and Information system perspective

To understand the effectiveness of farmers' organization, one needs a holistic view, i.e., to see farmers' organizations as sets of actors, each of whom contributes to the functioning of the whole. A diagnostic framework which takes this into account will allow a better understanding of the weaknesses and the strengths of their relationships.

Checkland & Scholes (1990) state that a *'system'* can be taken as something which actually exists, or as a perspective, a concept or theoretical construct we use to study a real life situation. Checkland (1981) distinguishes the hard system and the soft system. The hard system is believed to have clear and objectively defined boundaries, a built-in purpose, and clear feedback loops and mechanism to allow goal attainment (Röling 1994). It is based on the positivist paradigm and assumes that variables can be measurable and the relationships between causes and effects are consistent, and that they may be discovered by empirical, analytical and experimental methods (Hamilton 1995).

Soft system thinking, consistent with the constructivist approach, accepts that a system does not exist but is constructed. It has arbitrary boundaries, agreed-upon goals, feedback loops, and goal seeking mechanisms. AKIS is a soft system.

Röling (1995) defines the AKIS as *the articulated network of actors (individuals or organizations) expected to work synergically to support innovation in a given domain of human activity*. Innovation is the emergent property of the system. In the AKIS thinking, there is a common goal each actor works for, each contributing to the attainment of this common goal. Actors are supposed to work synergically. The performance of the system is expected to be greater than the sum of individual contributions.

Accountability and AKIS

Farmers' organization is perceived as one of the components of the Agricultural Knowledge and Information System dealing with development activities in the area. Its performance depends partly on the functioning of the accountability of its leaders to members and partly on the accountability of development agencies to farmers' organization. The effectiveness of farmers' organizations depends also on the cooperation among development agencies and among farmers' organizations. The effectiveness of farmers' organizations may contribute to inducing effective synergy between various components of the system. The effectiveness of accountability mechanisms at one level, i.e., in farmers' organizations, cannot be understood without taking into account the effectiveness of other components of the system. In effect, the output of one component is the input of the other components. A weak accountability mechanism in one component may endanger the accountability mechanism in other components. For example, a field agent who negotiates with leaders of farmers' organization to turn aside a part of the revenue of the organization contributes to jeopardizing the accountability mechanisms in this organization. But, conversely, when the agent compels leaders to report activities (e.g., information about opportunities in the environment to which they, as leaders, have access)

to members, then he contributes to enhancing the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms.

With respect to this, the analysis of the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms should be viewed from a system perspective. The AKIS perspective will be useful for finding the strengths and the weaknesses of the system in order to identify where intervention is necessary.

2.7 The methodology

This section aims at describing the methodology used to collect the data for this study. It first recalls the focus of this book and the initial concepts. It continues by justifying the method chosen.

The understanding involved an iterative approach: data were collected and analyzed, going further when the analysis indicated that there was a need for more specific data or when some information led to in-depth discussion. Consequently, the outcomes of the discussions with different people were not known in advance and it was difficult to make predictions about the end results. For such a situation, a grounded theory approach was suitable. Strauss and Corbin (1994) describe this approach as: a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically collected and analyzed'. They argue that this theory is useful to:

- '(1) create theory from the data collected and analyzed , and/or
- (2) confirm, elaborate and modify theories that are currently in existence (grounded) by comparing the 'goodness-of-fit' with data as it is collected and analyzed.'

In qualitative enquiry, the multiple perspective should be systematically sought. For example the triangulation by multiple sources, methods and investigators: *la triangulation triangulée*. This allows cross-checking of information and increasing the range of different people's realities which is encountered.

On the same lines, Moris and Copestake (1993) state that collaborative observations from 'fuzzy' sources, all obtained qualitatively, gave more firm results than might have been obtained from a major data-collecting exercise of a conventional nature.

2.7.1 The choice of qualitative methods

I will compare the qualitative form of enquiry with the quantitative form of enquiry. I will borrow from Moris and Copestake (1993). They argue that qualitative methods require intelligence rather than applied research, indicators rather than coefficients, and key informants rather than respondents.

Firstly, the qualitative enquiry draws on multiple sources of varying quality, judges information not only on its content but also in terms of the credibility of its source, and adjusts the depth of the information-gathering effort to suit changing strategic concerns. Secondly, the real situation is not well known and it is difficult to get exact measurements. As such the qualitative enquiry focuses upon certain crucial indicators instead of looking at coefficients which are difficult to get in a

complex situation. Thirdly, in a typical socio-economic survey, a respondent is treated as the object of the study. Information recorded carries value for analysts because it was acquired as part of a sampling plan, and hence can be aggregated into a composite statistical picture. There is less interest in the holder of the information. In the qualitative enquiry, informants are considered as the subjects of the research, the key informants, and what may be 'anecdotal' or 'incidental' to the analysts become critical data because of the value of the source. The researcher and the researched interact and refine the construction.

2.7.2 About the quality of the results of qualitative enquiry

Conventional researchers use four criteria to persuade their audience that the findings of their enquiry can be trusted (Lincoln & Guba 1985). These criteria are:

- Internal validity: how can we be confident about the truth of the findings ?
- External validity: can we apply these findings to other contexts or with other groups of people ?
- Reliability: would the findings be repeated if the enquiry were replicated with the same or similar subjects in the same or similar context ?
- Objectivity: how can we be certain that the findings have been determined by the subjects and contexts of the enquiry, rather than by the biases, motivations and perspectives of the investigators ?

All these criteria are based on the conventional research paradigm.

Other criteria used for judging the quality of qualitative enquiries are trustworthiness and 'authenticity'. Trustworthiness and 'authenticity' are suggested as criteria by which to judge whether or not any given qualitative enquiry is methodologically sound (Lincoln 1990 cited by Pretty & Vodouhê 1995). Trustworthiness is defined in terms of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Authenticity is defined in terms of fairness, ontological authenticity, educational authenticity, catalytic and tactical authenticity. In other words: Have people been changed by the process? Have they a heightened sense of their own constructed realities? Do they have an increased awareness and appreciation of the constructions of other stakeholders? To what extent did the investigation prompt action? The trustworthiness and authenticity criteria will be used in chapters 3, 4 and 5.

To do my qualitative research and to gather information and analyze it systematically, I chose to do in-depth studies of some cases and to proceed with participant observation, semi-structural interviews, etc., to collect data.

The following discusses the advantages and inconvenience of using the different methods I employed.

2.7.3 The case studies

In order to get in-depth information about the behaviour of people in farmers' organizations I chose to study some appropriate cases. These cases are presented later. As Nichols (1991) said, a case study looks in-depth at a 'typical case' and provides valuable insights but it does not give generalized statistical data. For the present work I chose three different types of cases for in-depth investigation:

- self-initiated and self-managed farmers' organizations: organizations falling within this type are compared to each other;
- induced organizations formed by the state development agency using a top-down approach: farmers' organizations falling within this type are compared to one another;
- induced farmers' organizations formed by a non-governmental organization: I compare also farmers' organizations falling within this type.

I finally compare the different types of organizations among them.

The case studies are summarized in table 5. Two *Kugbè*, three GV and three functional groups have been chosen in three villages.

2.7.4 *Key informants*

I used key informants to collect information, and the same information is cross-checked with at least two or three different sources. The key informants are most reliable on factual matters such as the services and facilities available to the community (Nichols 1991). Discussions and semi-interviews took place with key informants (members of various committees, members of the community, foreigners living in the area and who know about the village). Discussions and interviews with key informants dealt with the history of the creation of the organization, its objectives, the patterns and sources of power in the village, the capacity of members to share the benefits accrued from collective action, activities performed in organizations to increase the capacity of members, the number of meetings, how decisions are taken, and on specific events during which members could exert pressure on the leaders to change decisions. The items are not limited and sometimes the person interviewed suggested some of the subjects we discussed.

2.7.5 *Participant observation*

In order to engage in participant observation, my assistant and I lived for more than one year in the rural community. My assistant lived continuously in villages. We interchanged villages during our stay in the field. This was done to enable both of us to have similar exposure to all villages. We participated in the life of the village,⁴ and were able to see and hear. During our stay, we combined observations with discussions and semi-structured interviews with villagers.

Participant observation was necessary for us to get an insight into some events which could not be obtained through interviews. Participant observation took place during our stay in the village and also during meetings and discussions among members.

We tried to gain the confidence of the villagers because they knew me already from my previous stay in the area for research I carried out for my Msc, and from being involved in development activities within the CARDER. My assistant and I were involved in many activities (sometimes without our will): meetings of the steering committee of the village school, negotiations with projects to restore the village school. We became part of the village. We gained the confidence of the villagers and were accepted by them as one of theirs.

2.7.6 Data collected

Inventory of farmers' organizations

The research started with an inventory of farmers' organizations/associations and groups in the village. This demonstrated that many farmers' organizations had been established for different purposes. Organizations induced by outside interveners were distinguished by farmers from those initiated by themselves. The history of the establishment of these organizations was gathered in order to get insight into the reasons for their creation, their objectives, their evolution and the characteristics of their members.

Identification of activities

Activities carried out by members and by the organizations have been identified. The main objective of this identification was to find out the relevancy, the conflict or complementarity between members' activities and those of the organizations.

Identification of initiators of the organization

This aimed at determining the initiators of the organizations, the objectives for their creation, the initial members and the relations among them. It aimed also at knowing the election and renewal mode of the members of the committee if any. This helped to gain insight into the source and patterns of power in the village. To complement this aspect the following step was carried out.

Identification of different social statuses of members of the organizations

Data on this subject were collected in order to understand the relationships between members and to identify the source from which people derive their power. It was also useful to gain insight into what people valued and did not value.

Inventory of development agencies working in the village and their relations

The inventory was carried out, and the relations assessed between interveners and between interveners and villagers.

Relations between farmers' organizations

Activities have been identified to evaluate their effectiveness on the functioning of individual organizations. These data allowed insight into the importance of these activities on the promotion of accountability within each organization, between organizations and between villagers and development agencies.

Inventory of activities for the promotion of checks and balances

This was done by following daily activities and the exchange of information between members of the same organizations, between members of different organizations and among farmers and development agencies.

Semi-structured interviews, participant observations and group discussions were mainly used.

About the group discussions I would like to mention that there were group discussions organized by my assistant and myself, i.e., we provoked the meeting to

discuss subjects we brought to farmers. There were also group discussions organized by farmers themselves to discuss their activities, and we could attend these meetings.

Through these different activities we could cover the objectives for setting up farmers' organizations, the accountability mechanisms within farmers' organizations and those between farmers' organizations and the development agencies. Some data were collected on the accountability mechanism within development agencies.

2.7.7 Relationships of the researcher with the actors in the case studies

The case studies are the *Groupements Villageois* (GV), the Functional Groups (FG) and the *Kugbè*, a saving organization. The first is induced by the CARDER while the second is promoted by an NGO, the PADES-Mono (*Projet de Développement des Sous-Préfecture du Mono*). The third organization was initiated by farmers themselves. I recall this in order to clarify my relationships with the farmers' organizations and development agencies involved.

The CARDER

I worked in the CARDER as a District Extension Officer for five years. As a District Extension Officer, I was involved in the creation of many types of farmers' organizations (GRVC, club 4D, GF, GV) in order to pave the way for development. During my stay in the CARDER, the process of giving responsibility to farmers for the marketing of cotton started. One of the GV discussed in this book is one of the first GVs which got more responsibility for carrying out its own purchasing of cotton seed. I decided to give this GV this responsibility because of various initiatives they had taken to build their village which had involved carrying out collective action. I was pleased with them and proposed to my superiors to grant the village more responsibility. The proposal was accepted and they became responsible for purchasing their cotton. People in the village still perceived me as the promoter of giving them more responsibility and of giving them the opportunity to express their opinions. I left the CARDER one year after this experience.

The PADES (ex-PEMR)

When I joined the University as a junior lecturer, a bilateral project was being carried out between the National University of Benin and the Wageningen Agricultural University of the Netherlands. I was involved in the project. One of its activities was research carried out in the Mono Department. One of the implications of this research was the formulation and the implementation of a project using the functional group approach in Mono. I was identified as the person who would follow the project from the university's point of view. The project, the PADES, was hosted by the CARDER, an hierarchical development agency.⁵ Due to the distance between the two types of approach, there were regular conflicts between the team of the PADES and the CARDER staff. I was perceived by both sides as the problem solver as both complained to me when problems arose. This function enabled me

to keep in contact with most of the Functional Groups which are studied in this book.

The Kugbè

I started my fieldwork in 1990 with a system perspective and was recording all the institutions and organizations operating in the area. One day, after finishing a discussion with a farmer, he told me that 'you may need to know a little bit about our own organizations'. I replied 'of course'. He then said that in these areas there were many types of organizations which farmers had initiated for solving particular problems, but usually they were not taken into account for development. 'But I can tell you that they play an important role in our village. Without one of them many people would have got divorced or abandoned by their wives or got cursed.'

I became interested to know more about such organizations and to compare them with the ones induced by development agencies.

Looking back on the relationships my assistant and I had with farmers and with the PADES and CARDER staff, it became clear that they have different perceptions of the roles we were playing and we cannot know all they think about us. But some students who stayed in some of the villages reported some statements of farmers: they believe that we contribute to the development of their activities and that we helped them to be in contact with development agencies because our stay in the different villages helped them to gain some confidence to approach development agents and to get some results. This is perhaps some exaggeration, but we think that we contributed unknowingly to the improvement of the living conditions of big and small farmers in some villages.

I am aware of the effects of the perceptions of the informants on responses; therefore they were always cross-checked with other sources.

In summary, three types of farmers' organizations have been studied:

- 1 two self-initiated and self-managed farmers' organizations
- 2 three farmers' organizations induced by the CARDER, a governmental development agency;
- 3 three farmers' organizations induced by the PADES, a non-government organization.

In total, eight farmers' organizations have been studied in three villages. In one of the villages there was not the same type of indigenous farmers' organization (*Kugbè*), therefore I could not study three indigenous farmers' organizations. Various reasons have been given for the non-existence of *Kugbè* in the third village. The main one was that there many other *tontines* in the village and they thought that problems arising from the death of parents-in-law could easily be solved with ordinary *tontines* and the help of fellow villagers. In this particular village, villagers developed a kind of financial help for people who lost relatives. The amount of the financial help depends on the relationships with the deceased person and with the mourners.

The three villages were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- outsiders are intervening in the village;
- existence of some degree of social pressure; and

- capability of farmers to take initiatives to deal with problems encountered.
- Table 5 shows the repartition of the farmers' organizations according to villages

Table 5 Selected villages and organizations

Organizations	Kugbè	GV	FG
villages			
Ekponté	1	1	1
Soukpodagni	1	1	1
Gbècogblé	0	1	1

The data used in this work derived from primary and secondary sources.

2.8 The setting: General characteristics of the areas

Mono Province is indicated on the map of Benin (see the maps of Benin and of the Province in the annexes).

About Benin

Benin is a former French colony in West Africa which became politically independent in 1960. It is surrounded by Nigeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Togo and the Atlantic ocean. Its territory is 112,600 square kilometres and its population is about five million. The average income per person was about \$ US 420 in 1993 (UNICEF 1995) while the average for subsaharan countries is about \$ US 340 per person. Agriculture is the main activity enabling the country to earn foreign currency. Agriculture contributes about 70 percent of the GNDP, and 67 percent of the active population is employed in the agricultural sector. Cotton is the main crop which contributes to the GNDP. The following figures give an idea of the contribution of cotton to exports. The percentage of people who are not able to read or to write is very high, mainly among women. These percentages are 71 percent average for Benin and 81 percent for women.

About Mono Province

The Mono Province is surrounded by the Republic of Togo and the Province of Zou in the Nord, the Atlantic Ocean and the Province of Atlantic in the South, the Republic of Togo in the west and the Provinces of Zou and of Atlantic in the East. It covers 3800 square kilometres.

It benefits from two rainy seasons and two dry seasons. The average rainfall per year varies between 1100 and 850 millimetres. The pressure on the land is very high compared to other Provinces in Benin. The period of fallow is getting very short and the degradation of land is serious. Due to scarcity of land and low yields⁶ per hectare in agriculture, many people migrate from the area to cities or to areas more

favourable to agricultural activities. Migrants are young people who look for jobs outside the areas and outside agriculture. They leave the village in order to liberate themselves from the obligation to family and to get more money which could not be obtained in the agricultural sector. The last type of migration poses the problem of labour in the area which is discussed by den Ouden (1995).

Many ethnic groups can be found in the Province of Mono. They are: Adja-Ehoué, the most important group, Adja-Tchikpé, Adja-Dogbo, Adja-Sè, Ouatchi, Sahouè, Tchi, Houéda, Houla, Guin or Mina, Fon, Kotafon and the Aïzo.

Table 6 Contribution of the cotton to the total export of Benin

Years	Exports		%
	Total	Cotton	
	Millions FCFA	Millions FCFA	
1978	6140	1377	22
1979	9773	2329	24
1980	13272	1424	11
1981	9141	1501	16
1982	7837	5269	67
1983	25351	12231	48
1984	72822	17470	24
1985	67824	11316	17
1986	36013	16282	45
1987	34266	6808	20
1988	20995	18545	88
1989	50295	21991	44
1990	78200	26047	33
1991	92800	36240	39
1992	95900	24930	26
1993	94200	65926	70
	714829	269686	38

Source: MDR (1995)

Table 4 shows that cotton alone contributes about 38 percent of the total exports of Benin.

Concluding the section, I would like to say that the methodology described was used in the case studies. We got more information from people when we visited them during the week-end or when we followed them to their farms and contributed to their daily life. People were willing to talk with us when we shared their daily problems with them and accepted to carry some activities for them in the towns.

Notes

1 According to Pretty and Vodouh  (1994), one can distinguish: passive participation, participation by information given, participation by consultation, participation for material incentives, functional participation, interactive participation and self-mobilization.

- 2 • Rossing and Howard (1994) indicate that individuals derive their power from several bases. These are: finance (money and credit), personnel (control over jobs), information (control over information available to others), popularity (esteem, charisma), social standing (class and status), expertness (knowledge and skill), legality (constitutionality, position/authority), solidarity (extent of agreement on values and goals), numbers (supporters and the right to vote), relationships (access to decision-makers) and physical force (usually legitimized by the state).
- Morgan (1986), talking about power in an organization, lists a number of sources which overlap the list of Rossing and Howard. According to him the main sources of power in an organization are the formal authority, the control of scarce resources, the use of organizational structure, rules, and regulations; control of decision processes; the control of knowledge and information; control of boundaries; the ability to cope with uncertainty; the control of technology; the interpersonal alliances, networks and control of 'informal organization'; the control of counter-organizations; the symbolism and the management of meaning; gender and the management of gender relations; the structural factors that define the stage of action; and the power one already has. He adds that *these sources of power provide organizational members with a variety of means for enhancing their interests and resolving or perpetuating organizational conflict.*

3 Trust is achieved when power is low and solidarity high. There is rivalry when power is high and solidarity low. Authority is the state in which power is low and solidarity low (Bailey 1971:15).

4 We attended various ceremonies, feasts, marriages, meetings in the village. We went to help farmers in their farms and were given a farm to crop. We were sometimes involved in delegations to meet other farmers or officials of development agencies. We expected that our behaviour would help to build confidence between us.

5 In 1987, the CARDER had the monopoly of agricultural development in Mono. All agricultural initiatives in favour of farmers should go through the CARDER. PADES was put under the responsibility of CARDER. We had a project using participatory approach under an hierarchical development agency. One can anticipate conflicts during the implementation in such a situation. We will see it in chapter five.

6 The yields per hectare on the Adja plateau are becoming lower and lower although they are still higher than those on the Abomey plateau. For example the cotton yield per hectare is ?? while the average for Benin is ?. I took the case of the cotton because it is possible to get more reliable data on that crop than on others.

3 The *Kugbè*: An Adja indigenous organization for saving

Women and land are the main causes of conflicts on the Adja plateau. The most important problems the gendarmes in the area deal with are land and women. Therefore when you get into trouble with villagers about women you will find yourself before the court, and husbands are prepared to spend all their wealth to get back their wives.

Stories of a retired government agent giving advice to a young agent who was going to work in the Adja region.

The focus of this chapter is on the analysis of an indigenous organization dealing with credit and saving to help members affected by the death of a parent-in-law. It analyzes the strengths and weaknesses of such organizations in the promotion of agricultural development. The chapter aims at drawing wider lessons from the accountability mechanisms at work in such organizations. Data used in this analysis are collected from interviews, participant observation and discussions with members and non-members.

3.1 Introduction: Importance of funeral ceremonies: the *Kugbè* as a farmers' strategy to deal with exceptional expenditures

3.1.1 Introduction

The present chapter discusses the functioning of a *Kugbè*, which is a type of grouping somewhat between a 'corporate group' and an 'association' (Service 1966). The *Kugbè* is a rotating credit and saving society¹ oriented to help members of the organization in distress. Members get their share when they lose a parent-in-law. The son-in-law has a duty to carry out a number of ceremonies for his parents in-law when these people die. To carry out these ceremonies, which are costly, he needs support, which can be obtained through the *Kugbè*. Sons-in-law are not alone in carrying out funeral ceremonies. Children of the dead person are also concerned in these ceremonies.

The chapter analyzes the functioning of this type of indigenous organizations to find out the reasons for its effectiveness. It will point out the strengths and weaknesses of such organizations, and ways of potential intervention to improve their functioning. The chapter aims also at drawing lessons for externally initiated from this type of organization.

3.1.2 *Trust and ancestors*

With respect to the degree of solidarity and power, Bailey (1971) distinguishes four basic ways of categorizing political interactions: trust, rivalry, leadership and tyranny. He further states that an individual is in concentric trust circles made up of the people of his family, and his parents-in-law. He is the centre of the circle. With people in his family an individual does not expect conflicts. People beyond these trust circles are strangers who are not trustworthy people. But in certain circumstances, for example for labour, artificial kinship relations can be constructed in order to get and to give service. Artificial kin are more reliable than strangers but less so than real kin. Kinship is the best type of long-term moral relationship (Bloch 1973:77). Freeman (1973) discussing Fortes says that kinship is binding and creates inescapable claims and obligations and is related to the 'axiom of amity', i.e., 'mutual support'. A member of a kin group should help another, and can expect help and assistance from other kinsmen. The essence of kinship is morality 'sharing without reckoning' (Fortes 1969:238 cited by Bloch 1973:76). The mutual obligation made kinsmen the ideal people with whom to cooperate. An actor is forced into imbalanced relationships by the morality of kinship, and the effect is a long-term reciprocity. An actor may develop strategies in order to reach some short-term objectives, and relationships developed in such circumstances can be qualified as shorter-term than those classified as kinship relations. Short-term relations may be political, or those of neighbourhood or friendship, they are less moral than those of kinship. The combination of all these relationships of various moralities explains social life. People who fail in kinship obligation are the opposite of moral beings. In kinship, there is a permanence of a relationship. This permanence cannot be assured by contract, for jural reciprocity is terminated by the counter-prestation. 'Sharing without reckoning' implies a prescriptive altruism (Pitt-Rivers 1973:99) which excludes immediate reciprocity.

As Pitt-Rivers (op. cit) pointed out, the reciprocity alternates down the chains of generations, assuring that the grandparental generation will be repaid in the persons of the grandchildren to whom they are linked. People in the study area, sacrifice themselves for their children, expecting that in time they will do the same for their own children, and will also support their parents when they are not capable of supporting themselves. This is one of the reasons for which it is common to have many generations living in the same compound: They help each other.

In Benin, the belief in the role of *Mawu* (God), *Vodjou* (fetishes), ancestors, elders or the representatives of the unseen world on earth, are the main elements which support the activities of the society and through which power are obtained. The following will discuss their different roles in the daily lives of people.

Mawu and Vodjou

Adja people believe in a God whom they call *Mawu*. There are two complementary ways to reach him: the *Boconon* and the *Vodjou* (Agbo 1991:112-121).

The *Boconon* is the expert in interpreting the signs revealed by the *Afan* which is a divine science. This science helps humans, the Adja people, to consult the unseen

world. The *Boconon* through the *Afan* can tell of the will of the *Mawu*, the ancestors and the *Vodjou*. The *Afan* is composed of sixteen (16) principal divine signs called *Edjou*. But the whole system is built up of two hundred and fifty six (256) *kpoli* or alternatives. The *Boconon* interprets these alternatives and signs to the people, and prescribe, ceremonies to perform to the *Vodjou*, the ancestors or the 'twins'.² He may carry out some of the ceremonies such as the *Vossa*, the *Ara*, the *Azongnigni* or *Minonou*. Each of these is a specific ceremony and has a specific objective. For example the *Azongnigni* is a ceremony aiming at getting rid of sickness from one person or from the community. Some other ceremonies are carried out by the priests or *Vodjounon* of the fetishes (*Vodjou*).

The *Boconon* through his science predicts what is going to happen, good or bad, to individuals or to the family or to the community. He intervenes at the birth of a child and can predict his future. On this occasion some ceremonies may be necessary. He intervenes also in marriage: he is called for in order to predict if the marriage will be blessed by *Mawu*, ancestors or *Vodjou*. He intervenes also in economic activities to predict, for example, the outcome of the rainy season, or of a business a person would like to do. He intervenes also in political affairs, as many politicians refer to him in order to know and to improve their political situation.

He is present in all activities of these kinds carried out in the village, this position allows him to increase his power in the society. The same person can be *Boconon*, priest and elder in the village, concentrating much power. The *Boconon* work in close contact with the elders of the village and with the priests of the fetishes.

In addition to the *Boconon*, there are people called *Vodjounon* or *Hodjouno* (priest of the *Vodjou*), most of them over the age of fifty. The power of these people derives from their knowledge of useful plants to heal sickness. As a priest of the *Vodjou* he leads the adepts of the fetish. This activity yields him some power and his power increases with the number of adepts. Periodically he carries out ceremonies to which all adepts contribute (physically, financially and materially). Adepts of his *Vodjou* yield him some power and have little opportunity to withdraw it. Adepts have allegiance to the fetish and each fetish has its own adepts and priest. The *Vodjounon* works with the *Boconon*, and like him intervenes in various fields: marriage, birth, economic and political activities.

The *Tachinon* or *Tachi* has a moral role in the society. She is very often the aunt (father's sister) of many people and as such has some influence on them. She is initiated and works for the *hennu*. She is an expert in prayers. Her prayers are perceived as more powerful than the prayers of other people in society and through prayers she communicates the wishes of the community to *Mawu* and ancestors. She is also the intermediary between villagers and the 'twins'. The *Tachi* is respected because of her role as intermediary between this world and the unseen world.

The elders of the *hennu* coordinate the activities of these different intermediaries; I will come back to their role when discussing loyalty to elders.

There are many *Vodjou* in Adja region. Some of them are common to many villages while others have been recently imported by some villages. There is a syncretism among the *Vodjou*. In this book I discuss the most important *Vodjou* because of their importance in the daily life of people, there are five important *Vodjou*: Each having its specific role in the society.

- *Hebiosso*, the thunder *Vodjou*, intercedes before *Mawu* for rain, and ceremonies are carried out in order to plead to *Mawu* through *Hebiosso*. General belief in the area indicates that this fetish is the intermediary between this world and *Mawu* with respect to rain. This *Vodjou* is important for Adja people, as farmers rely on rain for growing their crops.
- *Sakpata*: its spiritual force is linked to land and it is feared because it is responsible for infectious diseases. *Sakpata* is responsible for land and people believe in its powerful capacity to help people to have good agricultural products. It has many adepts to worship it, and ceremonies are carried out to implore its favour. Poor yields during the season may be an indication of its anger. Ceremonies are carried out in its honour, and a kind of feast is organized for worship. Its adepts come together to carry out the ceremonies and to dance for many days.
- *Tohossou*, is an intermediary between god and human beings and promotes peace on the earth. It intercedes before *Mawu* for people with respect to peace and prosperity. The spirits of people who are born with some congenital malformations constitute the world of the *Vodjou Tohossou*. Ceremonies are carried out in order to ask for their protection.
- *Edan* is an intermediary for obtaining wealth. It helps people who worship it to improve their economic situation, and it is also perceived as being able to cause misfortune. As such people carry out activities in order to avoid its anger.
- *Gù* is called upon in the use of metal tools. It helps people avoid accidents and injury during agricultural activities; and
- *Lissa* which is the symbol of the human race and is the first of all intermediaries between god and human beings. It promotes peace but can make people blind when offended.

Ancestors

People believe that deceased people are very important and intervene on behalf of the community. The ancestors are dead people who still have some important roles to play in this actual world; they are mainly the founders of the village. They are close to *Mawu*, or sometimes they are *Mawu* or *Vodjou*. People venerate them, they are the reference group of the society. They contribute to the cohesion of the village and to the maintenance of cohesion within the society. Common ancestors contribute to building trust among kinsmen. People may disagree among themselves, but reference to the same ancestors unites them.

Elders or representatives on earth of the unseen world

The people who are closest to the ancestors are the elders, or the people nominated as representatives: Young people, appointed after the *Boconon* has consulted the ancestors and God, who get respect from the whole community. They are accepted and act accordingly. They are the guardians of the sacred goods of the community, contributing to the maintenance of the cohesion of the community. To make contact with the unseen world, the leaders perform a number of ceremonies and use certain

intermediaries which will be discussed later. Various *Vodjou* and secret societies contribute to the cohesion of the society.

People refer also to the ancestors when they have activities to carry out. The chiefs of the *hennu* are the intermediaries between the ancestors and people living in this world; mostly they are the elders in the family, but it can happen that young people become chiefs after the *Boconon*'s consultation with the God.

People still believe in God and accept the people and fetishes described above as intermediaries between them and God. As such, the actual chiefs are supposed to have influence on society, their power deriving from their contact with the unknown world. The reference to the unknown world is important in solving certain problems in villages where the belief in God is very high.

An illustration of the belief in a second cause of misfortune or sickness or death is the following:

In the village Soukpodagni we witnessed the death of the third wife of one of the teachers of the primary school of the village. Villagers perceived her death as a consequence of her refusal to carry out correctly the funeral ceremonies of her mother who died fifty days earlier. It was said that after her refusal to continue the ceremony due to her conversion to Christianity, she met her dead mother on the road back home. Her dead mother was very angry with her for not completing the rest of the ceremonies. The daughter did not speak of this till a few hours before her death. In the village there was no doubt that she died because she refused to carry out the traditional ceremonies for her mother.

This illustration stresses the importance people must give to those who have died and to the ceremonies which need to be done. Thus the behaviour of individuals in this context cannot be understood without a reference to the ancestors and God, even if people do not declare openly that they believe in them.

In relation to the people's belief in the existence and the influence of *Mawu*, *Vodjou*, and ancestors, many sources of power can be identified. These are the power of the *Boconon*, the *Vodjounon*, the *Tachinon*, and the elders' power. The following will deal with the power of elders which brings them the loyalty of others.

Loyalty to elders

This study concerns the Adja-éhoué ethnic group. On the Adja plateau, labour is becoming a problem, and two different strategies have developed: keeping one's own children as family labour, or the recruitment of hired labour. In the first case, children stay with their parents even if they are adults. The father is in charge of the main expenses of the family. He pays the bridewealth for the first wife of his sons. He is also in charge of the health care of the nuclear family of his children. After some time, he can liberate the children and give them land to plough. The more the child stays with his father, better chance he has to get extra land by inheritance after the father dies. After the death of the father, the land is distributed among male children (see den Ouden 1995); the male children who stay longer with the father get extra land. When a son decides not to stay with his father, the father is not under an obligation to provide him with his first wife. Many children, eager to get their own wealth and to equip themselves, prefer to migrate to towns to look for jobs. But there are some consequences for children who leave their father. An early

departure without the agreement of the father is perceived as disobedience to the father and is punished. Punishment may be a sickness which can end in death. As a young villager told me:

'I decided to leave the village because I could stay no longer with my father. He does not have enough land from which I can get what I need to equip myself and get married. He did not want me to leave him, but thinking about my future I decided to go. After I left my father was very angry and my uncle with him. If I had not left the village I would have got sick.'

This example is an illustration of what many migrants think about leaving parents. People in the area believe in *Juju* practice. Den Ouden (1990 1995) describes many cases in which a person died and death was attributed to his or her brother. On the Adja plateau, all events have more than one cause.

People derive their power from their membership of secret societies, their wealth, their number of children and, more recently, the quality of relationships they have with the administration. The source of power may go beyond the area and depend on wider networks. Age is a source of respect.

In the village Gbècogblé, situated at 11 kilometres from two towns, farmers are in contact with many who are involved in external interventions. Many compounds can be found in the village, but the cohesion among villagers is not strong. Many young people migrate to towns and come back home with valued goods claiming to have some power. The power of the elders is challenged by people who have travelled or who have been to school. Sorcery and witchcraft exist in people's minds, but due to the effects of imported religions young people doubt their reality.

Loyalty to the village as an entity is not evident; rather individuals are accountable to their own small extended families. Respect for elders has decreased, as is illustrated by the following statement from a young farmer. During discussions about the management of the health centre of the village, he said:

'old people cannot be respected as before, because they are ceasing to play their role in conflict resolution and peace promotion, and they have become a source of problems in the village. I think they are no longer like the old people who used to be respected in the village.'

Consequently, young people are often found challenging, advice of the elders, and they do not consult them before engaging the village in activities. The village has lost its credibility as a collective and self-enrichment is becoming important in this village.

Soukpodagni is a small village with less than a thousand inhabitants. The village is run by the families of the two men who founded the village although some other people have migrated to it. The two families administrator the village alternatively. In case of elections, these two families are more or less equitably represented on the committee. Therefore members of any committee feel accountable to their lineage, and any attempt to condemn one person on the committee means that the whole lineage is condemned. Problems in the village are solved before the elders although there is a village council. The elected chief of the village participates in decision-making but the main actors are the two elders representing the two main lineages

of the village. There is an apparent consensus among elders in the village, who plan the development of the village and negotiate with outside interveners.

In fact, there is conflict between the two big *hennus*, and one of the elders is accused of causing the death of his successors as chief in the village. The first who became chief after him died a few months after the election. Then the second became sick and could not run the village. The elder was accused of causing the misfortune of his successors.

Apart from this situation which we could not investigate, there is an apparent consensus about the development of the village, and all committee members are held accountable to the community. The two main elders seem to run the village assisted by the leaders of the various committees in the village.

The village Ekponté is not far from one the biggest markets in Mono Province. Its population is less than 500 people; it is a satellite of another large village and was created by a farmer who left his previous village because of the successive death of his children. He was joined by another brother and, the two lineages of descendants today constitute the main social actors of the village. Responsibility is acquired through age and through inheritance. The observed transfer of responsibilities indicates that when the founder of the village became old, he passed the responsibility of leading the village to his junior brother. When this man became old he passed the responsibility to his younger brother, that is a lateral succession. When farmers' organizations were created with formal committees with different posts such as chairman, secretary and treasurer, the actual leader of the village became the chairman of any organization formed in the village. His nephew was automatically the secretary and the eldest son in the other lineage became the treasurer. The actual leader is already preparing to transfer his responsibility to his nephew while the secretary is training his nephew to become the secretary of all farmers' organizations in the village. The same operation is taking place with the treasurer, who did not pass his tasks to the deputy treasurer when he became ill and was forced to leave the village for about one year. During his absence, all financial activities were conducted by his nephew and not by the deputy treasurer.

The village succeeded in gaining posts in some committees of formal institutions. For example, the chairman of the farmers' organizations in this village is the chairman of the steering committee of the formal network of saving and credit of the District. The secretary was nominated to the same committee as a controller. The informal is linked to the formal. All conflicts in the village are handled by the committee led by the chairman. Villagers are held accountable to the community, and references to God or ancestors are very often made. Some rules have been established for the village and nobody is allowed to transgress them.

3.1.3 Importance of funeral ceremonies in Adja region

It is common in the southern part of Benin that a son-in-law carries out funeral ceremonies³ for his parent-in-law. Depending on the area, and on the social position of the parents-in-law and the wealth of the sons-in-law, the expense of these ceremonies can be very significant. Many people fail to carry out such ceremonies. In such cases, a man may lose his dignity and sometimes his wife. Because of cultural

beliefs, death is very important in the Adja region where the study took place. A death occasions many ceremonies, decreased which should be carried out in order to ease the ascent of the soul of the deceased to the world of ancestors. There are three main ceremonies:

- the ceremonies of the first day;
- the ceremonies of the fifth day called *edujeje* and
- the ceremonies of the ninth day called *ablisi* and *azanvovo*.

To each of these ceremonies are attached different expenses which the sons-in-law should bear. The following table is an illustration of the expenses for the funeral ceremonies of parents in-law.

Table 7 Breakdown of typical expenses for funeral ceremonies for an average family in the Adja region

items	first day (in CFA)	fifth day (in CFA)	ninth day (in CFA)
drums	12000		
<i>sodabi</i> *	9450	1900	1900
beer	3000		
<i>youki</i> **	2400		
gun powder	2000		
maize		3000	
yam		1800	
cloth		3000	
gift to wife		1100	12000
<i>ablisi</i> ***			6000
food for visitors			12000
total	28850	10800	31900

The total amount of money spent is about 71550 FCFA (1 FF = 100 FCFA). This amount represents about three months salary for a local worker.

* *Sodabi* is a drink distilled from palm wine which is used during most ceremonies

** *Youki* is a sweet drink

*** *Ablisi* is a kind of specific material needed for the ceremonies

Source: field study (1995)

These are the obligatory expenses. But the ceremonies are occasions to demonstrate one's ability to spend money and to demonstrate the extent to which the wife is loved. The more one spends during the ceremonies, the more one loves one's wife.

Polygynous men have to spend a similar amount of money for each of their wives.⁴ Most men have more than one wife and must therefore support the funeral ceremonies many times: twice if he has only one wife, four times if he has two wives and so on. Men have to bear the expense also for the funeral ceremonies for their own parents.

Failing to conduct these ceremonies may create unfavourable conditions for the ascent of the soul of the deceased person and can also occasion many curses. When the ceremonies are not performed, the affected family is considered as being under a curse. Many things can happen to such a family (sicknesses attributed to the non-performance). The son-in-law is not alone in bearing the consequences of refusal to carry out the ceremonies, but also his nuclear family and his wife's family are at risk. The example given in 2.9.2, about the death of a woman because of the failure to carry out all the ceremonies for her dead mother, is an illustration. In fact the funeral ceremonies are occasions for some people to earn money and to get food and drink.⁵ With respect to the benefits people may get from the funeral ceremonies, it is possible that they contribute to sanctioning rebellious people by cursing them. Refusal to carry out such ceremonies is perceived as an offense to the lineage and an offense to people in charge of enforcing norms. The sons-in-law are those who have the principal duty to carry out these ceremonies for their parents-in-law. Therefore, in the study zone, the most important ceremony for the people is that which takes place at the death of the parents-in-law. This is an occasion to display the material and financial capacity of the son-in-law. After the ceremonies many people run out of money and their agricultural activities decrease.

It is a shame for a son-in-law and his family if the ceremonies for the parents-in-law are not successful. Another consequence of this incapacity may be a divorce, for your wife can be given to another man who is supposed to be richer. Many divorces have been caused by the incapacity of the son-in-law to perform his duties to his parents-in-law. It is common to hear people insulting each other by referring to the opponent, inability to carry out the funeral ceremonies for parents-in-law. People are sometimes accused of causing a delay in the rains because they failed to conduct proper funeral ceremonies for one person or another.

To avoid shame or a divorce, a saving organization was set up aimed at helping members to carry out the ceremonies for the parent-in-law.

The Kugbè, a rotating saving and credit organization which can be compared to the *fonds de malheur* of the Bamileké in Cameroon (see Geschiere & Konings 1993). The present chapter examines the functioning of these indigenous organizations and points out lessons for organizations set up by external agencies. The objectives of this chapter are therefore to analyze and to understand the current situation of an indigenous organization, the Kugbè, to describe and to understand the accountability mechanisms in the Kugbè, and to understand the potential contribution of these mechanisms in establishing a new organization.

3.2 Historical and contextual overview of farmers' organizations in an Adja village

On the basis of my own experience and the results of this study, the Adja region can be seen as hosting many types of organizations. The case of Ekponté is an interesting example for the description of farmers' organizations on the Adja plateau. The small village of Ekponté is representative of the other villages studied. The large number of organizations operating in the area is remarkable. Table 10 presents the different types of farmers' organizations operating in Ekponté. In Ekponté there are:

- The *Kugbè* which provides assistance to those in mourning. Parents and friends also give material, financial and moral help. Many strategies are developed to cope with the problems but most of them are unorganized. In Ekponté village there are two organizations to assist those bereaved by a death: one mainly for men and one mainly for women.

In the *Kugbè* of men, there are three women because they have argued that they have similar responsibilities to men. They are also wives of leaders of the men's *Kugbè*. In the *Kugbè* of women, a few men are members because they are acting in the place of their wives who left the area. The main differences between the two *Kugbè* are summarized in table 8.

Table 8 Differences between men's *Kugbè* and women's *Kugbè*

Characteristics	Objectives	Period	Size	Residence of members
Men's <i>Kugbè</i>	to help members whose parents-in-law have died	the share is monthly and the share is given to a member only when he loses one of his parents-in-law	For this third cycle there are 82 members	in the village and surrounding villages
Women's <i>Kugbè</i>	To help members whose parent died (own parent and parent-in-law)	only when a member loses a parent. The amount is not fixed	34	All members are married women of the village

Source: Fieldwork 1995

- The *Groupeement Villageois* (GV) which comprises men and women was established in 1976 with 25 members. This organization deals mainly with cotton production. The objective of the GV is to involve farmers in various development activities. Among these activities are activities related to cotton production (input supply and primary collection of cotton seed).

The GV of Ekponté was created after people observed that there was corruption in the GV of Soukpodagni to which Ekponté farmers previously belonged. The split was also due to the desire of some leaders of Ekponté to get moneys refunded to invest in their own village (see chapter 4).

Many people from other villages are members of this organization which has many achievements to its credit: the construction of the warehouse of the village,

the obtaining of tap water in the village, the construction of a school building and the building of a road connecting the village to the main road of the area – the road Azovè-Klouékammè. At first the GV of Ekponté was not approved by CARDER officials because CARDER would like to have the GV at the village level not at hamlet level. The villagers of Soukpodagni were unhappy about the withdrawal of farmers of Ekponté because their contribution to refunds was very important but that could not prevent it.

The GV is growing and currently numbers 111 members coming from 10 hamlets up to five kilometres distance from Ekponté.

- The *Kplégnon* I, a women's organization which deals with activities such as the production of *gari*, a product obtained from cassava and much appreciated in West Africa. On the initiative of the secretary of the GV and *Kugbè*, this organization was founded in 1990. The secretary took the example from women's organizations he saw in other villages. It was an organization for both of the villages Ekponté and Toléhouè, but in 1992 the group was divided into *Kplégnon* I and II. The division occurred because of mutual accusations (laziness and meagre contribution to collective action) between women of the two villages forming the organization. *Kplégnon* has 27 members. This organization is supported by the secretary of the GV, it has many rules for better performance of the organization. These rules were established by members themselves to avoid the misuse of collective goods.

- A health group which deals with how to take care of the health of villagers. This organization was established on the lines of those established in neighbouring villages with the help of an NGO, the *Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-Préfectures du Mono* (PADES Mono). The main activity carried out by this group so far is the construction of 29 latrines for all villagers, members and non-members of the group. This group comprises twenty members.

- Many other small indigenous farmers' organizations, the *tontine*,⁶ are initiated by farmers themselves to tackle specific problems. There are many types of *tontines* in the village according to the sex and according to the duration of the *tontines*. There are *tontines* which share their saving every six months, while others share every market day. The objectives of the *tontines* are many: for example *tontines* for buying a bicycle, for building a house or for saving for the marriage paymentst for a wife.

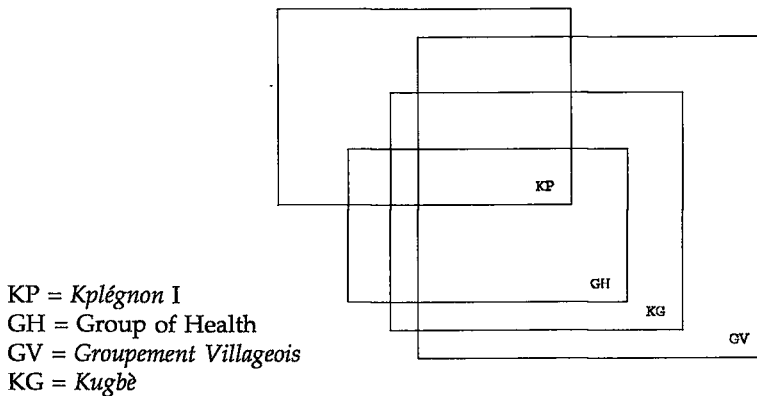
The large number of farmers' organizations in the village of Ekponté is not unique, it is almost the same in most villages of Mono Province and in Benin in general. Studies carried out by students of the Faculty of Agricultural Science have shown that each village contains many organizations, indigenous and introduced. Their studies were conducted in six villages all of which have an amazing landscape of farmers' organizations (see students' reports MAIR⁷ 1995). This is not peculiar to the Adja region. Mongbo (1995) reports a similar situation in Zou Province where he found many farmers' organizations in each of his villages. Thus the situation described for the village of Ekponté is not specific and can be taken as typical for the whole Adja plateau.

All these organizations keep close to each other and there are multiple membership of villagers in organizations: The same person can be a member of two or three organizations. This is especially the case with the leaders. For example the chairman

of the *Kugbè* is the chairman of the GV, and the secretary of the *Kugbè* is the secretary of the GV, the counsellor of the *Kplégnon* I and the chairman of the health group (see schema 1).

There are close relationships between the various organizations operating in the area. It is difficult to draw a clear line between indigenous organizations and introduced organizations as the same persons are everywhere. However, indigenous organizations are older than introduced organizations and play an important role in the performance of the introduced organizations. I will come back later to the relations between both types of organizations and how indigenous organizations contribute to the effectiveness of introduced organizations.

Schema 1 Relations between organizations



Source: Field work (1995)

Comments

This schema indicates how an individual may belong to more than one organization. As people know one another, a person who falls short in one organization cannot apply to become a member of another organization. Behaviours are constantly assessed through these organizations, and people gain trust from belonging to them and encountering acceptable behaviour in them. Another important aspect of the multiple membership is the mutual influence exerted by organizations on one another. The effectiveness of one organization may contribute to the effectiveness of the other organizations because of the overlapping membership.

Despite the importance of all these organizations I would like to concentrate on the *Kugbè* in this chapter because of its importance in Adja society. The other organizations are the subjects of other chapters. I will take the example of the *Kugbè* of the village of Ekponté. As there are many other *Kugbè* in the villages I shall briefly mention a few *Kugbè* organizations with their characteristics.

Table 9 *Kugbè* in some villages of the Adja plateau

Villages/villages	Date of creation	Number of members	Monthly share
Hounsa	1975	204	1000
Dogbo	1965	87	500
Ekponté	1951*	82	1000

* The initial *Kugbè* organization began in Ekponté in 1951 but the new cycle started in 1975.

Source: Field study (1995)

The discussion of the historical development of the *Kugbè* is based on material gathered in the village of Ekponté, in which an intensive study has been carried out since 1990.

3.3 Historical development of the *Kugbè* in Ekponté

This study focuses on the historical and contextual factors shaping the men's *Kugbè* and on what explains the effectiveness of this organization. The historical development of the *Kugbè* in Ekponté falls into four main periods.

First cycle of the Kugbè

The *Kugbè* in the village of Ekponté was started in 1951 by the eldest son of the founder of the village. He started the *Kugbè* because of the difficulties he encountered in dealing with the ceremonies for one of his mothers-in-law. When his mother-in-law died, it was difficult for him to meet the expenses of the ceremonies, and he got the help of his parents and friends. The individual contribution was 25 FCFA. This financial and material assistance helped him to deal with these ceremonies, and to save his honour and that of his family and of the village.

This suggested the need to set up a savings organization which could help in such circumstances. The savings organization was called *Kugbè*, meaning *saving for death*. It can be compared to a life-insurance. The first experiment started with 20 people but had a limited success as only two people could get their share. People preferred an ordinary saving group instead of a saving for death group. The poor management of the funds was the main cause of misunderstanding between members, and led to the collapse of the first *Kugbè* experiment.

In the *Kugbè*, there was no differentiation in the functions performed. The eldest son of the founder was the collector, the treasurer and the secretary. The money was kept at home. It was an early form of *Kugbè*. There were no specific relations with other organizations and one person did everything. People did not trust him as he was the only one who kept everything.

The first trial failed through lack of mutual trust as the money was kept at home till somebody lost a parent-in-law. This seems to be the reason why people preferred an ordinary *tontine* where money is shared on a regular basis.

The second cycle of Kugbè

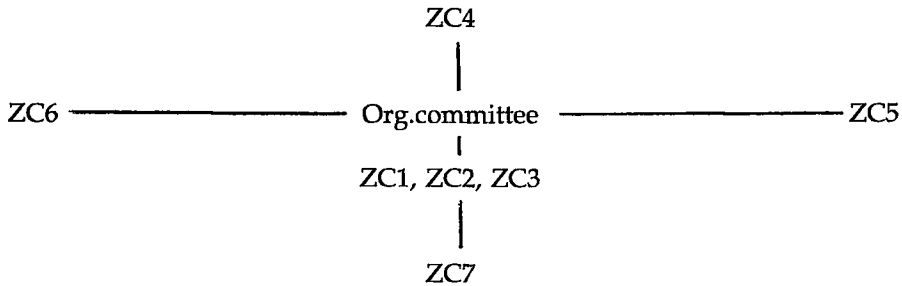
The second cycle of *Kugbè* started in 1975 and was initiated by the younger brother of the initiator of the first experiment. He found that it was necessary to revive such a *tontine* to prevent difficulties over funeral ceremonies. Many people in the village had experienced difficulties in dealing with the funeral ceremonies of parents-in-law. He called a meeting of parents and friends. During the meeting the initiator of the second experiment explained the advantages of this *tontine* and invited them to start a new organization to cope with difficulties related to funerals of parents-in-law. Participants at the meeting agreed with him and the organization was created. The initiator became the chairman of the organization and his eldest brother the treasurer. There was no vote⁸ and they were chosen on the basis of consensus. People attending the meeting decided that the initiator was in a good position to lead the organization. He became the chairman but asked his elder brother to take over the office of treasurer. The chairman was the one who moved from place to place to collect the shares which were on a monthly basis. He was willing to bear the costs of collecting funds. The treasurer took care of the cash as there was no trustworthy bank known to them where they could save their money. This experiment started with 30 members and the individual share was 300 FCFA per month. Thus, the total amount of the *tontine* fund was 9000 FCFA per month. It was this *tontine* which allowed the for example chairman to cope with the ceremonies after the death of the mother of his first wife. The second experience with the *Kugbè* in Ekponté was much approved by the members, for every member could get his turn without difficulties it was decided to start a new experience. The success of the second experience was illustrated by the fact that only a few old members have decided not to join the third experience of *Kugbè* in the village. The end of a trial corresponds to the moment everybody receives his share. People get their share either when they lose a parent-in-law or at the end of the cycle. A new cycle starts when the previous cycle is finished.

The third and fourth cycles of Kugbè

At the renewal in 1984, many people were interested and the number of members of the third experiment grew to 56. The monthly share also changed and became 1000 FCFA. Members of the third experiment were parents, brothers, sisters and also parents-in-law and friends. Not all members lived in Ekponté but they could be found in the neighbouring districts such as Djakotomey, Klouekamey, Lalo and also in other villages and hamlets of Toviklin (see map of the Province). To become a member, one needed to have two witnesses who would certify that the applicant is a trustworthy person. The candidates were first admitted by the zonal collector⁹ before being admitted by the organization committee. When a member failed the two people who had guaranteed his honesty and his capability were expected to replace him and perform his duty within the organization.

Seven people (the committee members included) were chosen as zonal collectors. The chairman trusted the six people. Each trusted person (zonal collector) collected the share from the members who came to the organization through him. Members

reported to their zonal collector who in turn reported to the organization committee. The organization can be viewed as follows:



The committee is composed of three members. Each of them is responsible for a zone. Each of the seven zonal collectors collects funds from their members and reports it to the chairman. The secretary is the one who brings the money to the bank *Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuel* (CLCAM).¹⁰

The distribution of members per zone is summarized in the following table 10. Table 10 notes that zone collectors are friends or parents of committee members. The secretary is the nephew of the chairman.

The *tontine* funds were saved at CLCAM, which is a bank for agricultural producers. The organization committee has been modified through the influence of the introduced organizations in which the committee consists of a chairman, a treasurer, the secretary and other members. The *Kugbè* committee adapted to their own organization the committee structure of an introduced organization. The treasurer of the second trial was too old to continue to play an effective role. So he was replaced in the committee by his son who became the secretary of the organization. The same person as before was continued as chairman. The chairman and the secretary were from Ekponté while the treasurer was from the neighbouring village, Tolehoué.

This experiment ended well and the fourth experiment started in 1989.

The size of the organization grew to 82 but the monthly share remained 1000 FCFA. They are in their fourth cycle after the success of the second and the third cycles.

The evolution of *Kugbè* in the village of Ekponté is summarized in table 12.

Table 10 Farmers' organizations in Ekpote

Name of the organization	Date of creation	Objectives	Farmers' initiatives or governmental initiative	Achievements and/or common goods
<i>Kugbè</i> of - men	1975	to help men with the funeral ceremonies for parents-in-law.	farmers' initiatives	Many people could be saved from shame and could keep their wives. People could pursue their activities after the funeral ceremonies because a part of the <i>Kugbè</i> could be saved for resuming agricultural activities
- women	after that of men	to help for funeral ceremonies	farmers' initiatives	Cohesion among women farmers
GV	1976	involvement of farmers in development activities	GV is an introduced organization but its creation in Ekpote was on the initiative of farmers	GV facilitates the construction of a school building, the warehouse, and the obtaining of tap water in the village
Kplégnon I	1992	The improvement of the living conditions of women	During his activities of the literacy training, a man of Ekpote has noticed that living conditions of women farmers in a number of villages improved through associations	group cohesion
others (health group included)	different dates	various objectives	individuals	achievements in relation to the objective

Source: Field study 1995

Table 11 Distribution of members per zone

Zones	Numbers of members	Relation of the responsible person to committee members
1	11	chairman
2	11	the treasurer and friend
3	18	the secretary and nephew*
4	13	friend of the secretary
5	16	friend of the chairman
6	7	friend of the chairman
7	6	brother-in-law of the chairman

When I refer to a nephew, I mean the son of one's brother or sister.

Source: field data

Table 12 shows that there is an increase in size over the years as well as an increase in the money share. The structure has also changed from one person dealing with all the activities to a structure of three persons who are helped by zonal collectors. These changes are due to internal as well as external factors. The changes in the economic environment have obliged members of the organization to adapt the structure and the amount of money paid to the new conditions. Also the size increase has necessitated zonal collectors in order to maintain confidence among members.

Concluding this section on the historical development of *Kugbè*, I observe that the fourth cycle benefited from the lessons learnt from the previous cycles. There was a joint learning by members of the organization. To achieve a better performance and because of the increase in the size of the organization there was a modification of its structure. There was an increase in the number of members of the committee which rose from one person to three members plus four zonal collectors in the third cycle. The historical evolution has also shown that committee members were parents and friends of other members. Furthermore there was lineal succession (the case of the secretary who replaced his father in the committee). The historical development of the *Kugbè* is important for understanding the effectiveness of the organization. It is built up slowly and adapts the organizational structure to changes in the environment; the organization shows flexibility. In this it differs from the formal credit institutions where rules are imposed on members who cannot influence them.

Table 12 The evolution of the *Kugbè* of Ekponté

Year of creation	Form	Main objective	Number of committee members	Number of members
Before 1951	Primitive forms First form: voluntary help Second form: individual contribution known before the ceremonies	To help and to be helped later Mutual help but more organized	There is an organization led by one person	On an individual basis
1951	Beginning of the first cycle of <i>Kugbè</i>	To organize help the bereaved	One person	20
1975	The beginning of the second cycle of <i>Kugbè</i> in Ekponté	To help the bereaved member during the funeral ceremonies of parents-in-law	Two persons: the chairman and the treasurer	30
1984	Third cycle of <i>Kugbè</i>	The same objective as in the second cycle	Three persons: the chairman, the treasurer, the secretary and zonal collectors	56
1989	Fourth cycle	The same objective as in the third cycle	The same structure as in the third cycle	82

Table 12 Continued

Secondary activities	Share	Period	Causes of changes
No secondary activities	Depends on the level of relationships	Whenever a friend or parent becomes bereaved Every time when there was a funeral	These forms are hazardous and nobody is responsible The aim of the <i>Kugbè</i> was not well understood by most people. The first cycle failed to reach its objective
No	25 FCFA	-	
No	300 FCFA	Monthly share	Everybody could get his share and people found the <i>Kugbè</i> useful for helping them to afford their funeral ceremonies and to save their honour. The <i>Kugbè</i> was successful.
Part of the <i>tontine</i> was used by members for funeral expenses and some part for economic activities and investment in private infrastructure	1000 FCFA	Monthly share	Good management and everybody could get his share.
Part of the <i>tontine</i> used for funeral expenses and part for economic and social investment (investment in agriculture, in building) The <i>Kugbè</i> is also a supplier of leaders to introduced organizations and has some effects on the development policy of the area.	1000 FCFA	Monthly share	Good management and already 76 people have already benefited from the <i>Kugbè</i> in this cycle

Source: Fieldwork (1995)

The historical development of the *Kugbè* has shown that people in the area have learnt to cooperate, and this has some influence on the performance of the fourth cycle of the *Kugbè* in the area. The following sections focus on the fourth cycle and analyze the aspects which can explain performance in it.

3.4 Internal factors explaining the functioning of the organization

Kugbè is an organization which has existed in Ekponté since about 1951. This organization is renewed whenever every member has received his share. Its functioning may be explained by some internal factors presented below.

The membership essentially consists of Adja people. While membership is not conditioned upon age, every member has to be married or about to get married. In the present *Kugbè*, the age distribution of the members was: 6 percent of the members were from 20 to 30 years old, 37 percent were from 30 to 45 years old while 57 percent were over 45 years old.

The *Kugbè* is run by a committee consisting of three people. The secretary is less than 45 years old, while the chairman is about 70 years old, and the treasurer is about 60 years old. This committee is helped by zonal collectors whose roles were described earlier.

Why did farmers see the opportunity to form this organization? what are the factors which explain the performance of the *Kugbè*?

According to Ostrom (1990) and Hardin (1969), people generally prefer to wait till somebody else decides to organize them and bears the costs of organizing. People like to benefit from the results without contributing to the costs (free-riders). Participants in the *Kugbè* come from distant villages, and there is a need to spend time, money and energy to cover all these villages. To lead such an organization entails some costs. Furthermore, members perform different activities and are from different social classes. Who will bear the costs of organizing people to carry out activities which will profit all members? Likewise who will guarantee that all members will get their shares and prevent people from benefiting the collective goods without assuming their complete responsibilities?

The *Kugbè* is an example in which some leaders have taken the responsibility to establish and to lead the organization and to help members to solve a particular problem. In this case, it was the problem of expenses during the funeral ceremonies of parents-in-law. The following sections will discuss the functioning of such an organization; the main points dealt with are the selection mode of the members of the organization and the committee members, the accountability system and the relations with other organizations. I draw conclusions on the place of the *Kugbè* in the dissemination of information in the area.

3.4.1 *Membership criteria and election mode in the present form of Kugbè*

Membership criteria

To be a member of the organization one has to be married or planning to get married. This is very important because of the fact that the organization is estab-

lished for solving problems related to the death of parents in-law. Indeed, the *tontine* fund is given to a member only when one of his parents-in-law dies or for economic or social investment. Another criterion for membership is that you work in the area and are not away for long periods.

Other criteria for becoming a member are that the person should be well known in the area and by his zonal collector or by the secretary or the chairman. A candidate is assessed on a number of criteria: he should be a good worker and should not be a killer, a thief or a rapist. The abilities of potential members are assessed through their performance in other groups of which they have been members.

I should add that there is no sex discrimination though in the *Kugbè* studied there are only three women. This is mainly due to the fact that these women are wives of the members of the committee. They argue that in their villages women and men have the same duty when parents-in-law die;¹¹ hence they face the same problems as men do and they need to save as men do to resolve financial problems related to the funeral ceremonies of parents-in-law.

There are many reasons for which people become member of the *Kugbè*. The first is a social and cultural reason. We have seen that the funeral ceremonies for parents-in-law are very important for the son-in-law, and that the failure to carry out these ceremonies decently undermines one's credibility in the area. Therefore people are ready to explore all the possibilities to honour these obligations. The second reason for becoming a member of the *Kugbè* is linked to security and economic considerations. People are allowed to collect their funds at the end of the cycle if they had no parent-in-law who deceased before the end. The *Kugbè* is recognized as effective as a person can be sure to get his money back.¹² This aspect maybe one of the reasons why women become members of the *Kugbè* of men. An additional reason is that the position of women is improving in the area; and women are becoming owners of land if they can afford to buy it. Women are making their voices heard and can ask for certain things as such belonging to some associations which were previously the exclusive domain of men; I mean associations such as *Kugbè* and GV.

Election of officials

The objective here is to analyze how members of the committee and the zonal collectors are chosen. The selection of officials may have some impact on the functioning of the organization. The main question here is about the recognition of officials as representatives of the interests of farmers. Do members recognize whether the officials are defending their interests or their own (officials,) interests?

In the *Kugbè*, people are chosen by consensus. After the first meeting which established the organization, one person proposed the founder to lead the organization and everybody agreed. The chairman proposed his senior brother to take care of the money and everybody agreed. The leading committee was formed. At the end of the second cycle there was a meeting during which it was decided that they should continue the *tontine*. The chairman was chosen again to lead the activities of the *Kugbè*. As the treasurer was too old to continue his work, the chairman asked the son of the treasurer to become a member of the committee and appointed another person as a treasurer. The chairman also appointed the zonal collectors. The chairman's decision is very important as he bears most of the risks. The way

persons are nominated depends also on the different families living in the area. This explains why the present secretary became a member of the committee; his father was the founder of the first *Kugbè* and he was accepted in the committee because of his father and his own personal qualities. He did not become a treasurer of the organization; rather, he became secretary because of his ability to read and write and there was a need for a person who could keep the records. In effect he fills the roles of both secretary and treasurer. The main roles in the organization are in fact played by the chairman and the secretary. The money is kept at the bank and this is done either by the chairman or the secretary.

People in the *Kugbè* recognize the committee members as their leaders and believe that their interests are well defended by them. The following is an illustration of what many members have said about their committee members.

'I trust my zonal collector. I have known him for many years and he is an honest person. He is well known in our region. When he asked me to join the organization, I didn't hesitate. I accepted it. I agree with the various decisions of the committee because they save our money and I get, like my friends, my money back when I need it. I trust the committee and we don't need to vote to appoint people to office. There is no division among us.'

The above illustration indicates that a voting system is not appropriate for this group, and that appointment to office is based on consensus and succession. Nobody complains about it. I will discuss later the way they avoid corruption and diversion of the collective funds. During each term, the total amount of money managed is about 6,724,000 FCFA, which is a significant sum of money in our rural area.

Mode of remuneration of the committee members

In a normal situation, a member who loses his parent-in-law informs his zonal collector and the committee about the death. The bereaved member gets all the share minus 6,000 FCFA even he has not completed paying his share. The total amount of money is given to him before the committee members and his witnesses. All this is done after confirmation by other members of the committee. When a member gets the money and cannot continue the *tontine*, he is replaced by one of the witnesses or he is put into jail.

The process of getting the share is as follows. Although the *Kugbè* members are in many *sous-préfectures*, all of them can be contacted very easily and information disseminated. When a member loses his parent-in-law for instance, he goes and contacts his zonal collector and the chairman with 1000 FCFA and one litre of *sodabi*.¹³ He explains the problem. The chairman takes this gift and tells the bereaved member to go back home. Then he contacts two or three members (especially the secretary) who are close to him. These people are sent to verify if the member's request is justified: They check if the member has lost a parent-in-law and if the parent is really his parent-in-law. If this investigation confirms that it is so, the chairman tries to get in touch with the zonal collectors to tell them told to contact their members and inform them about the event. Further, the chairman, the secretary and the treasurer go to the CLCAM to take out the necessary funds (82,000

FCFA). The bereaved member is given 76,000 FCFA while 6,000 FCFA are kept by the chairman for management purposes.

In the case of the death of a member, there are two possibilities. The first is that the member has already collected the *tontine*. In this case, the witnesses take over the *tontine* in order to support the costs of the situation. The second case is that he did not receive his share before dying. One of his sons may take over the *tontine* and continue if he wants to, or if not he gets back the share of his father. In the case of a member who does not lose a parent-in-law before the end of the turn, he is given the total amount of money he saved, that is 76,000 FCFA. He can do what he wants with it.

The committee members keep 6,000 FCFA¹⁴ from each share for operational costs. This is a kind of remuneration of the committee members. It amounts to 504,000 FCFA per cycle and is mainly kept by the chairman of the committee. Members were not happy with the deduction of so much money, nor with its use. This is indicated by the following statements.

'The amount deducted from each share is considerable. We would have liked it reduced because expenses for funeral ceremonies were increasing and the chairman did not do any particular activity which justified such a deduction for him. People in my zone complained about this deduction and we were planning to raise the issue during the next meeting of the Kugbè.'

Another point of view came from a member of the committee who said:

'I think that it is important to discuss the issue related to the amount of the sum deducted and its use. I did not know why it was so high and how it was used. We did not use it for our transportation or buying anything for the bereaved member. I did not have anything from this before collecting and visiting the bereaved. The chairman kept this money for his own interests. He is my uncle but I will raise the subject lest we lose our credibility. Many people have already come to me to complain about this. I have discussed the issue already the issue with another uncle who gave me his advice, and I am waiting for a favourable occasion to introduce the problem. The renewal period will be the favourable occasion to discuss the issue with him. Another issue I am planning to raise is related to the interest generated by our funds which we saved in the bank (meaning the CLCAM). The chairman was the only person to benefit from it. It should also be clear to members how it was used since they all know that funds saved in the bank generate interest.'

These statements indicate that members did not always approve of the management strategy of the chairman and they complained about it. He was accused of misusing some part of the collective funds for his own concerns (the interest generated by funds saved in the bank). He was also accused of not using correctly the amount deducted from each share.

When we asked the chairman about the interest generated by saving money in the bank, he claimed that it was too insignificant to discuss. He argued that the *Kugbè* funds did not stay long in the bank and thus did not generate significant interest. His claim may be questionable since funds could be collected for months before a member's parent-in-law died. His behaviour with respect to the *souvi* and

the interest is an illustration of his choice between his individual interests and the collective interests.

3.4.2 *Vision and objectives of Kugbè*

The *Kugbè* is a truly socio-cultural organization of which the objectives are the following:

- immediate financial assistance

Generally a death comes up when we expect it the least and or when we have finished spending all our savings on the illness. The *tontine* fund is given to the bereaved member when he has informed the chairman that his parent-in-law has died. This fund allows him to cover immediately expenses linked to the funeral ceremonies, instead of borrowing money reimbursable with illegal interest or selling his assets (palm trees, land, bicycles). This rapid reaction characterizes the *Kugbè*. These men indeed, pay a monthly share of 1,000 FCFA and the fund is deposited in the CLCAM or left in their cash desk at home, so there is ready cash at anytime. If a member loses his parent-in-law, the organization satisfies him immediately. In the women's *Kugbè* on the contrary, there is no monthly share. If a woman member loses her parent, they fix a date and then proceed to a 1,000 FCFA-subscription. There is a risk that certain members will not be able to pay their share. Another disadvantage is that this assistance comes after the ceremonies for which the bereaved woman borrowed money with interest to meet the ceremony expenses. Besides, the bereaved woman may fail to get a loan and will find it difficult to carry out the ceremonies.

It is clearly better to benefit from immediate financial assistance and avoid having to take a loan. If a debt is not paid, the moneylender can seize assets (land, motors, clothes etc..) or put the debtor in jail. This constitutes a loss in production for the whole village and even for the country.

- Help the members to succeed with their ceremonies.

On the Adja plateau, there are expenses when you lose your parent-in-law: you invite drummers, give money to your wife, help the family-in-law, pay for clothes, receive visitors etc. The *tontine* fund enables you to solve these problems and successfully carry out the ceremonies. There is also technical support from other *Kugbè* members in organizing the ceremonies.

- Boost the affected member.

This is a secondary objective and is not always attained because in most cases the *tontine* fund is not sufficient.

Without financial help, the bereaved man always runs out of money to carry out his activities after the funeral ceremonies. The *tontine* fund sometimes solves this problem. Indeed the bereaved sometimes spends the greater part of the *tontine* fund on the ceremonies and saves the rest (10 percent) to help him do other things like buying a second-hand bicycle to resell or investing it in agriculture.

However, some farmers criticize the *Kugbè* organization. For example a farmer said that he is afraid because of the name given to the organization and the occasion on which the organization acts. He gives the example of his mother-in-law and says:

'If I'm a member of the organization and my mother-in-law is sick, I won't get any help from Kugbè, the members will wait till I fail to save her and it's only when she dies that I see the help of Kugbè. That is not a good organization.'

He continued his remarks and added that there is another example which prevents him from becoming member of the organization:

'One member of a tontine ran out of money to construct a building or to invest in agriculture, and his first idea was to murder his father-in-law. He actually poisoned him and obtained his tontine fund. I repeat again, the Kugbè organization is a club of murder; I shall never be a member of it.'

His opinion is not shared by many farmers as the number of participants to the *Kugbè* increases over the years. Initiatives to establish a *Kugbè* are also spreading in the area.

3.4.3 Information flow within the organization

Information is a source of power and he who has the information may have more power over other members (see also GAO 1995). In the *Kugbè*, there are two main kinds of information flows: information flow about the death of parents-in-law and information flow about agricultural technologies. Formally the first type of information is that which is passed from one person to another within the organization, while transfer of information about technologies occurs on an informal basis.

Information about the death of a parent in-law passes from the affected member to the chairman and the collector. From the chairman a message is sent to other zonal collectors who are expected to inform people in their zone. Everybody is thus informed and the bereaved person can get the needed assistance. He can get back the funds for the ceremonies, and the members of the network will assist him by giving him some individual gift, depending on the relations between them. The comments of one member are illustrative. He said about the information flow on the death of parent-in-law:

'It is enough to inform your zonal collector or the chairman, then all the other 81 persons are informed about your misfortune within two days. You don't need to bother yourself, everything will be done for you and you will get the assistance of others. The group is very good.'

The *Kugbè* is an effective channel for the disseminating information within a network composed of friends and kin. A stock of trust is built up and there is a confidence between members. Members trust their zonal collector and *vice versa*. This network covers an important area: villages in four districts. Messages flow very quickly from one village to another through the zonal collectors. They trust each other and are more willing to accept proposals from members of their network than from an external source such as the village extension worker.

Agricultural extension uses communication as a means for behavioral change. Despite the existence of institutions in charge of agricultural extension and research in Benin, the producers have little confidence in them. The *Kugbè* is a framework

where such confidence exists and where communication is easy. Because of this confidence, information flows easily from one end to the other. Agricultural producers exchange information about agriculture in the market and other places they find appropriate. Farmers are recognized as knowledge generators and disseminators. This is true in the case of the *Kugbè* which is not intended for the generation and dissemination of knowledge but which plays this role. This is illustrated by what a farmer belonging to the *Kugbè* told me about the organization. He said:

'The Chief (talking about the secretary of the Kugbè) is a trustworthy person and I could get from him information about new technologies. I apply what he tells me. I follow his advice more than that of the extension worker. I check with him what I am told by the village extension worker and accept it when he accepts it. This is another benefit I get from the Kugbè.'

This is only an illustration of what many farmers think with regard to the benefits they get from the *Kugbè*. In addition to the help they get from it to cope with the funeral ceremonies of parents-in-law, there is the aspect that the *Kugbè* is an important network where information about agricultural technologies is exchanged among farmers. The *Kugbè* is one of the channels through which information flows in the Adja plateau. Its importance is further emphasized by the fact that each member is also a member of other networks which can feed the *Kugbè* with information.

With regard to the evolution of the *Kugbè* which no longer plays a simple social role but contributes to improving the living conditions of farmers in general and the social position of women, it becomes interesting to analyze its impact on the dissemination of information in the area and its potential use in rural extension.

As I said earlier, the organogram of the *Kugbè* shows that there is a committee of a few members and collectors or team leaders. The role of the team leader and the zonal collectors are the same: the reception and supply of information to members. The collector receives information from the committee and delivers it to members. He also collects information from members and delivers it to the committee. He is brokering between members and the committee. From time to time, meetings take place which allow exchange among members of different zones. These meetings are those held for the funeral ceremonies of a parent-in-law of a member or that held at the end of each term. Members of different zones also meet in the market places.

Information about the death of a parent-in-law was the initial information the organization was intended for. But the changes occurring in the environment have caused many other subjects to be discussed during meeting between two or more members of the *Kugbè*.

Information about agricultural innovations has become one of the subjects discussed during meetings. Most members of the *Kugbè* are farmers and as such they are interested in information about farming. There is a growing interest in agricultural subjects during *Kugbè* meetings. In fact, they do discuss the dead person but in reality they discuss more about agriculture than they do other things. This is illustrated by the answers given by *Kugbè* members to a question related to their discussions when they meet:

'What do you want us to discuss during such a meeting? After consoling the bereaved person, the main subjects we discuss are related to our farms. We discuss about our experiences in farming: seed, pests, rain etc. We cannot discuss other subjects as we are farmers. These meetings give us the opportunities to get information about agriculture from friends.'

With regard to the area it covers and the number of people involved, the *Kugbè* may be a potential channel for disseminating agricultural innovations. The zonal collectors are not necessarily opinion leaders on subjects dealing with agricultural innovations. For the *Kugbè* of Ekponté, the secretary is the opinion leader on agricultural subjects! He is the one everybody in the network listens to when it comes to agricultural innovations. Other zonal collectors are still important but their role in the dissemination of agricultural innovations is limited. Analysis of the zonal collectors shows that around 70 percent of them have as their first activity agriculture but have also a second activity which varies from handicraft to petty trade. In the case of Ekponté, they are perceived as persons who work very hard. People listen to them as trustworthy persons and information got from them is more valued than that obtained elsewhere.

The role of the *Kugbè* depends also on the qualities of the members of the committee. The next section deals with leadership in the *Kugbè* and its role in the functioning of the organization.

3.4.4 Leaders

It is becoming clear that formal leaders play an important role in the performance of indigenous organizations/networks. This section describes the roles and functions these leaders have in the *Kugbè* and analyses their contribution to the performance of the organization.

The committee members are chosen on a consensus basis and are intermediaries between the outside world and the interests of the organization. They are the main actors in establishing and in enforcing the rules of the organization and they decide upon the acceptance of new members. When the money available is insufficient to meet demands on the fund, they determine the order in which claimants will be paid. For example, when the organization does not have enough money in cash or in the bank and many members lose their parents-in-law they decide on the order in which the bereaved will be helped. Usually their decisions are based on the order in which deaths were declared by members.

Committee members are also the people who articulate ideas developed by other members in order to make them useful for the organization. In fact, they are the people in contact with (or are leaders of) other organizations and are thus able to bring good new ideas for the improvement of the organization. An example of such an idea was one brought by the chairman on saving the funds of the *Kugbè* in the bank CLCAM for security reasons. Members accepted the idea and trust in the *Kugbè* increased because of this, people were sure that their funds were in a secure bank. Another example is the proposal to change the monthly share into a three-

month share and to give the bereaved only the money needed for ceremonies. The advantage of such amendment will be to enable members to have some money saved to cover the funeral ceremonies for other parents-in-law.

Another aspect leaders in the *Kugbè* have developed is the friendship among members or the improvement of relations with relatives. At the start they may not be friends or kin but before the end of any cycle members become friends. Kin also become friends as they can share many things together. The *Kugbè* contributes to extending relations among members (see Rowlands 1995:111-124).

Leaders convince members to follow the rules of the organization. Although there are rules to follow, these rules are not so often invoked. Leaders prefer to negotiate and to convince those at fault to change their behaviour. When a member, for example, does not pay his share, committee members threaten him that the other people in the organization will be informed about his behaviour. It is a shame for that person to know that everybody will know that he does not pay his share. Leaders sometimes convince people of the harm they would cause to other people by not contributing with their share. They behave more as friends and counsellors than as police putting people into jail.

Zonal collectors: In addition to their role in preselecting people, they collect shares from members of their zones and represent committee members in their zones. They are the first to be contacted by committee members in case of any information related to the organization and its environment. Zonal collectors are the relays of the organization committee: they carry information from the committee to members and vice versa. Thus they are centres within the organization for circulating information related to death, and some information on agriculture.

3.4.5 *Comments*

The foregoing described internal factors which have some influence on the effectiveness of the *Kugbè*: the roles and functions of committee members, of zonal collectors, and the objectives of the *Kugbè*.

I analyze how the roles and functions of leaders are performed in the *Kugbè*. Leaders in the committee and zonal collectors are the main actors in carrying out the activities of the *Kugbè*. Are they selfishly oriented or collective-action oriented? The answer is that they are both. They are trying to satisfy their own interest and at the same time satisfying interests of others. The leaders are selfish in the sense that they look for their own interests. In fact the *Kugbè* was initially created because the son of the founder of the village had but limited success in coping with the funeral ceremonies for his father-in-law. In order to cover the funeral ceremonies for other fathers-in-law he founded the *Kugbè*, but unfortunately it did not succeed. The second founder was also motivated by the same reason. He saw that alone he could not save enough money to carry out the funeral ceremonies for all the parents of his wives – he has four wives. He reckoned that collective action might allow people to carry out such activities. His behaviour is therefore not altruistic because he was looking for his own interests first and the interests of others second.

The choice of zonal collectors was made by the chairman or the members of the committee, and they report and are accountable to him/them. Further, there is rarely a meeting at zonal level to decide upon what it is useful or not to do.

It is important to mention that committee members have been the same since the creation of this organization. The *Kugbè* are in general identified with their founders. The committee is renewed at the end of a cycle, when key members are called together and make decisions about the continuation of the group. The committee is always asked to continue as nobody has complained about their work; this allows committee members to have some power over other members.

When a *Kugbè* member was asked about how to become a committee member, he has just replied:

*'People who carry out the activities are doing well and we never think of replacing them. We know them for years and we trust them. They are involved in the promotion of many activities in the region.'*¹⁵

The committee members have been in office since 1975, i.e., twenty years. The duration of these members in office might suggest they used chair power to their own benefit. But this is not the case. The conduct of committee members in respecting the rules can be explained by the fact that they have their honour to save and people in this village still believe strongly in ancestors. Robbery and diversion of collective funds are perceived as a shame for the whole village. Hence a member found guilty may get sick, be cursed and lose his dignity in the village. To avoid such situations and to keep one's honour and dignity, committee members develop norms for not stealing collective money. The second reason lies in the fact that all members of the organizations know the rules and the amount of the share, and most people are informed about the deaths of parents-in-law of the members.

It is important to mention that at the beginning of the *tontine*, the first turn is automatically picked up by the chairman. This is one of his advantages. He does not wait till the death of a parent-in-law before picking the first share.

Although some behaviour indicates selfishness, it is important to notice that by pursuing their own interests, leaders in the committee or zonal collectors are oriented to collective. The interests of others are not neglected by the leaders as they pursue their own interests as well as those of others. In pursuing the collective interests they guarantee the success of the organization. They design rules and mechanisms allowing members to perform their duties with regard to the organization. Leaders have some particular qualities which should be mentioned here. These are self-sacrifice, competence and benevolence.

Self-sacrifice

Discussions with members and non-members of most *Kugbè* have shown that leaders devoted themselves to make the organization successful, in other words to guarantee the access of all members to the share. They tend to take the objective of the organization as their own. As such they invest a lot of energy in carrying out the activities of the organization without asking for salary. They set aside their own activities in favour of those of the *Kugbè*. For example leaders and zonal collectors

use their own means of transportation to visit and to collect funds in the different regions of their jurisdiction. For the success of the organization it is common to see leaders taking less care of their crops: They miss many agricultural activities or are forced to pay additional external labour for their land.

A leader told me that:

'The success of the organization is our preoccupation and we spend a lot of energy in visiting members to collect funds and to create cohesion in the group. We do that not because they are not serious but because we think that it is necessary to have cohesion in the group and we need to be near our members. The organization is established for financial support but also for material and moral support. Although we, in the committee, have many opportunities to divert the Kugbè funds, we do not behave like that. We have the following possibilities (1) to take the money from the bank and to lend it to some friends and so to gain money because nobody can check if the funds are there or not; (2) to favour some people when many members at the same time lose their parents-in-law; we could favour close friends to the detriment of other members in order to obtain some advantage; (3) to steal the money and to corrupt the police in order to avoid to bring before the court by members. We are in a situation which could be used for satisfying our personal interests, but we prefer the collective interests because people trust us. Once members lost their confidence in us, the organization would collapse and our credibility would suffer in the whole region. We prefer to keep the confidence people have in us rather than trying to pursue our individual interest which is not sustainable.'

This is an illustration of conflicts between individual and collective interests and of what costs are related to leadership in *Kugbè*. Leaders are willing to bear such costs for the success of the organization. Leaders have chosen to defend the interests of their organization because of the perceptions people have about their ability to lead an organization. This ability has been built up progressively through different experiences they have had in various less important organizations which they successfully ran.

In most *Kugbè* visited, leaders show other qualities which are worthwhile to mention. These qualities are altruism and benevolence. Leaders are oriented to collective action and they are looking for the way to improve the wellbeing of most of their members. In many committees visited, members are more oriented to collective action than to pursuing their own interests. This is why they can cooperate within the committee. This type of cooperation was also found by Uphoff (1992) when he analyzed the behaviour of farmers in Gal Oya irrigation programmes. He found that people cooperate because they are oriented towards collective action.

Leaders in the *Kugbè* show a combination of self-seeking behaviour and the desire to create collective action and to prevent free-riders. Leaders encourage and promote ideas, friendship and ideals among members. How do they realize such things? The analysis of this is done by taking into account the fact that responsibility is at all levels. Responsibility is at the level of leaders (committee members and zonal collectors) as well as at the level of individual members.

The functioning of the *Kugbè* is dependent also on the choice of individuals and the responsibility they take for their acts. The review of these factors shows that leaders play an important role in the functioning of the organization. But the

question is how these leaders are accountable to their constituencies and are recognized as the representatives of farmers' organizations.

3.5 Analysis of the effectiveness of the *Kugbè*

I shall say that many factors contribute to the success of the *Kugbè*; I will discuss the following items: rules and sanctions, the access to the benefits, the access to information and other factors which are more related to the African culture.

3.5.1 Rules and sanctions of the Kugbè

The *Kugbè* has adopted a structural arrangement which was useful to cover its territory and was effective. The selection of members was based on mutual trust between the candidates and people who support their election as members of the *Kugbè*.

The rules are known to everybody and they accept and comply within them. There are graduated sanctions if people fail to comply with the rules and the ultimate sanction is dismissal for the following term. The dismissal of somebody from the *Kugbè* may have consequences for his relationships with members of the community, and may later on affect his acceptability to join other organizations in the villages or the surrounding area. Other effects of dismissal are related to the fact that he will not get support from the network for carrying out funeral ceremonies for his own or his wives' parents, which is very important in the area. This is illustrated by the statement of an informant who said to me during the fieldwork:

'If I don't attend the funeral ceremonies of others, they won't attend mine. When you are abandoned by the community, you are like an orphan and it is not good to be like that in our society.'

These sanctions are the ones applied openly, but there are also sanctions which may come from the ancestors because you offend them by not respecting the norms. You can get cursed, and be abandoned by people. You won't have friends as before. These mechanisms force people to respect rules they established themselves. This perception is not unique to the Adja region. In Cameroon, Miaffo & Warnier (1993:55-60) reported that when a member receives his share and fails to respect his engagement, he is forsaken by the ancestors. As such, he is also forsaken by people in the society.

The fear of being punished by ancestors or God contributes to making people respect the rules of the organization. The main asset of this organization is trust. The members have faith in their leaders as the following illustrates. When people are asked what they do to check the behaviour of the *Kugbè* leaders, their answers are invariably the same. They say:

'We know the members of the committee, they are honest and they cannot divert our funds. What can they [talking about the leaders] do in the village that will remain unknown to villagers? We know the financial capacity of the committee members. It is easy to detect if our funds are diverted. If this occurs, the person who did it will be

thrown into jail. But this never happens in our organizations. It is our own initiative to set up such organizations for solving our problems. It would be a shame for the whole group if a man could not do the funeral ceremonies for his parents-in-law because the fund was diverted for other purposes.'

In speaking about their election to the committee, committee members recognize that they are elected by consensus, and that at the end of each term the committee should have been replaced. But the committee is never replaced as the members of the old committee still have the confidence of the members. It was at the end of the first meeting that the chairman was elected on the basis of consensus. Members were told that a committee is needed to run the activities of *Kugbè*. The initiator of the meeting was proposed and was accepted by other members and the same procedure was followed for the election of the secretary and the treasurer.

3.5.2 *Access to shares*

The advantages of being a member of the *Kugbè* have been discussed, but I would like to recall them and to demonstrate the effects of easy access to the share when needed on the accountability mechanism.

The benefits accruing from being a member of the *Kugbè* are clear to all the members of the *Kugbè* we discussed it with. All the informants felt sure of getting back their share and those of others. The following reasons came up.

- A deceased person has some power over people who are living. According to members of the *Kugbè*, people are afraid to divert funds which were supposed to be used for the funeral ceremonies of a deceased person. It is commonly said in the area that deceased persons always claim their property from people who owe them something. As the money collected from the *Kugbè* is intended for the funeral ceremonies of the deceased, it is thought to be dangerous to divert such funds. People are aware of that and act accordingly.
- The second reason given is the fact that the money is kept in the bank and people can control it. The fact that the money is kept in the bank increases the trust of people in the organization. They know that their money is not diverted. The existence of an outside institution induces some trust by members in their organization.
- The third reason lies in the fact that the leaders of the organization are trustworthy people who cannot afford to divert the funds of the group. They have built up this trust after many years demonstrating their capability to run such activities.
- The fourth reason they give is that the social pressure is very high. Everybody knows everybody and nobody would like to be seen as the author of the misfortune of others in a community.
- The fifth element is the fact that the same people are both lenders and borrowers. When you collect your share, you become a borrower and you pay gradually without interest, as is not the case with a formal bank. As all members are at the same time borrowers and lenders there is mutual control. The money borrowed (when you get your share it is like borrowing money) is repaid in instalments, and never in one lump sum. (see the case of Djanggi, a rotating credit association in Cameroon, discussed by Bouman & Harteveld 1976:111).

3.5.3 Access to information about the organization

The *Kugbè* is a simple organization concerned with helping the bereaved. As such, there is not much information to be withheld in order to increase one's power. It is an organization in which nearly everybody has access to the same type of information: the share is known to everybody and it is also known to everybody when a person receives the funds. Given the nature of the *Kugbè*, access to information is the main source of power: but all members have access to the same information.

Social control and fear of the dead are the main mechanisms through which people are made accountable. Social pressure plays an important role in the accountability of leaders to their constituencies. It is shaming in a structure like that of the *Kugbè* to misappropriate the funds of the organization. It is easy to detect whether the funds are available or not – because when a parent-in-law of a *Kugbè* member dies, the amount of money should be available and given to that member.

In fact, the founder of the organization is perceived as its owner and nobody discusses its management with him. The failure of such organizations is also the failure of their founders and for that reason they make every effort to save the organizations.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the *Kugbè*, a special type of rotating saving and credit association, is an effective organization able to reach the objectives set by its members. Its success is due to the fact that people are accountable to the organization and thus misappropriation has been avoided. The effectiveness of such organizations in dealing with financial activities for many years, a field in which formal banks fail, is an indicator of the capacity of farmers to manage organizations for collective action.

The role of the *Kugbè* may be controversial as it is not easy to understand that people spend so much money on funeral ceremonies. To cope with the expenses related to funeral ceremonies, farmers have chosen to develop a way to save their honour as it is not possible to suppress these ceremonies. The *Kugbè* succeeded by providing funds to its members, and it contributes to helping people to continue their activities without mortgaging their assets because of the credit they could not repay. The success of the *Kugbè* is related to the fact that the organization is not large and can adapt itself to some changes in the environment. It is flexible and self-regulating. This is not the case for the institutional bank (see Bouman & Harteveld 1976). Introduced organizations may learn lessons from the success of the *Kugbè*. I will come back to this issue when comparing the different types of organizations.

An issue important to raise concerns the use of this type of organizations. There is no consensus about how to use these organizations for saving and credit. Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey (1995:77-93) have discussed the issue extensively in their study of the *susu*, a rotating saving and credit association in Ghana. Quoting Jackelen & Rhyne (1991), Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey (1995: 77-93) state that *innovative credit schemes sponsored by donor agencies that utilize the operating principles of informal groups*

tend to be more successful than those that do not. Collaboration with these informal credit and saving associations is problematic in the sense that people are not prepared to have access to such an amount of money. I think that it is interesting to find that these small credit associations are effective, but the way to work with them needs further investigation if one is to preserve them from destruction while drawing lessons from their effectiveness for that of introduced organizations.

Notes

1 The Kugbè can be taken as a specific *tontine*, which is defined as an association formed upon a core of participants who make regular contributions to a fund which is given in whole or in part to each contributor in turn (Ardener 1995:1).

2 Twins (*hòhò*) are perceived as fetishes and are respected alive or dead. Special ceremonies are carried out in their honour. Some of the revelations of the *Boconon* may indicate the necessity to renew ceremonies towards them. These ceremonies are meant for 'feeding *hòhò*'.

3 Funeral ceremonies are carried out for adult deceased people. They are perceived as helping the ascension of the soul of deceased people. In addition to this are other objectives, for example the funeral ceremonies are sources of earnings for some people. Funeral ceremonies can be also considered as a device to bring people together and to enhance binding them together among families. Funeral ceremonies therefore help the building of trust between allied families.

4 Agbo (1991:376) has found that around 17 percent of heads of household have five wives, around 69 percent have between two and four wives, around 14 percent have one wife in the Adja region. This is possible because women marry at a much earlier age than men.

5 The *donhoungan* is the person in charge of burial and funeral ceremonies. It is often said that most of the earnings of a *donhoungan* come from funeral ceremonies. he is said to be able to settle his debts only when someone does.

6 The *tontine* is a rotating savings and credit association. It is defined as an association formed on a core of participants who agree to make regular contributions to a fund which is given, as a whole or in part, to each contributor in rotation (Ardener 1995:201).

7 MAIR= *Méthodes d'Animation et d'Intervention en milieu Rural*.

8 Apparently there is no vote but in fact a choice is made at each family level. A person who is chosen has proved his capacity during a number of activities and in different small groups, for example, being a good member of a small help group, having been a good messenger. When you had proved your capacity, you be proposed by your family to contest the post in the committee. But it is not always an easy process.

9 The *Kugbè* is divided into zones. Each zone is run by one zonal collector. He is in charge of the first selection of members, with the collection of shares and with the first verification of information about the death of a member's parent-in-law.

10 CLCAM is a bank for farmers.

11 In some places, women carry out a number of ceremonies when their husbands lose one of their parents. They help the husbands by giving them goods and money. All this is given to the husbands during a gathering attended by many people invited by the wives and by the husbands. It is an occasion for competition among wives: whose help to the husband will be the best and will gather many people? Drinks, foods and gifts characterize the gathering. To do this they 'buy' money with illegal interest rates or join a rotating saving group. Thus, women who join the men's *Kugbè* are born in villages where such ceremonies are done by wives and they would like to carry out the same in their adoptive village.

12 • The *Kugbè* can function as a normal *tontine* as a member can get his money back, but only at the end of the cycle if does not lose any parent-in-law. It should be recalled that a member gets his shares plus the shares of others only when he loses parents-in-law.

- When a member dies before getting his share, one of his sons is asked to join the organization. If he does not want it, the family will wait to the end of the cycle to get the share. When the deceased member has already received his share and the share of others, his sons are forced to join the organization and to continue till the end. If not, people who introduce him have the responsibility to continue. This is not the common case. Usually people agree to join the organization because they knew it before the death of their father.

13 It is normal in the area to give money and a *sodabi* to people for an announcement or a demand.

14 This amount of money deducted from the amount an individual receives when he loses a parent-in-law is called *souvi*, i.e., the small *tontine* (literally translated).

15 I would like to call attention to the fact that most leaders are also members of other organizations and their capacities of management convinced people. Furthermore they are members of the district committee in charge of granting credit to farmers. They were successful as leaders of these organizations.

4 The *Groupelement Villageois* and selfishness

The focus of this chapter is on analysis of the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in GVs, farmers' organizations introduced by an extension agency. To explain the functioning of the 'Groupelement Villageois' the chapter reflects on the history of the GV, the common resource of the GV and its use, and the functioning of formal accountability mechanisms in the GV. This analysis is based on data collected from three GVs in three different villages: Gbècogblé, Soukpodagni and Ekponté. The main differences between these GVs concern the roles of elders of the villages where these GVs were established, and the reasons for their establishment.

4.1 Introduction

During the conference of Niamey in 1969, participants recognized the need for the establishment of farmers' organizations at the village level in order to deal with production and services. The need to establish farmers' organization at village level was related to the observation that farmers' s involvement in the process of decision-making on agricultural activities would improve the results of the various activities carried out. It was assumed that when farmers are involved in problem identification, in the choice of adequate solutions, and in the implementation and evaluation of these solutions, results would be better. The village was accepted as the basis for such actions.

In Benin, GVs were established for the implementation of the recommendations of the conference of Niamey. The GV was perceived as an innovation which could contribute to the development of the village. GV was expected to generate funds for community development and in order to promote development is profitable for all members of the GV, various accountability mechanisms were established. These accountability mechanisms were based on a western view of the functioning of organizations and on democratic principles: one man one vote. The present chapter will describe these accountability mechanisms and will analyze their effectiveness in a Beninese context. The chapter addresses questions such as: To what extent could GV generate funds and contribute to community development? To what extent could accountability mechanisms be effective for collective use of the funds generated by the GV? In other words, the chapter considers of the effectiveness of the institutional frameworks established for community development. In this chapter, I discuss also strategies developed by certain leaders to control and misuse common

funds and common assets. Further, I investigate factors which contribute to the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in GVs. I argue that the cohesion of a village contributes to keeping leaders accountable to their organizations. Factors explaining the cohesion of a village vary from one village to another (see chapter two). I discuss the role of the council of elders, that of associations of sons abroad, and the situation of competition between organizations which plays an important role in making leaders accountable.

To this end, the chapter deals with the following points:

Section one deals with the historical development of the GV in Benin. The objective of this section is to gain insight into the introduction of the GV as an innovation in rural areas. This allows a better understanding of the perception of villagers about the assets of the GV, and their reactions to the misuse of common funds.

The second section describes the formal accountability mechanisms established by the extension service in order to promote fair access to the profits for all members of the GV.

The analysis of the real functioning of these mechanisms is done in sections three, four and five. Each section points out different elements for understanding factors which promote or undermine the effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms.

The last section of the chapter summarizes the findings and draws some conclusions on the factors for effectiveness of accountability mechanisms in the African context.

To deal with these different points, data were collected on the functioning of the GVs of these villages: Gbècogblé, Soukpodagni and Ekponté (see the map). These data were collected between 1990 and 1995. The GVs of Gbècogblé and Soukpodagni were established by the CARDER, while the GV of Ekponté was created by villagers, after difficult negotiations with the CARDER agent because Ekponté is a hamlet.¹ 'The villagers of Ekponté wanted their own GV because of the perceived advantages of these organizations in the surrounding villages, and the mismanagement of the funds of the GV to which producers of this hamlet belonged.' These villages were chosen because of collective achievements. Their GVs are interesting for this study because they have some common goods to manage and they provide an opportunity to study social dilemmas and accountability mechanisms in villages. Some other data derive from my own experience in the areas as District Extension Officer. Data on the GVs surrounding the selected GVs were also used for checking information obtained on those of Gbècogblé, of Soukpodagni and of Ekponté. These GVs are typical because of their extreme characteristics.

The *Groupement Villageois* (GVs) were introduced by the *Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural* (CARDER)² in order to involve farmers in all aspects of the production process (crop production, technological information dissemination, marketing, setting prices).

4.2 Historical development of GVs in Benin

The first GV in Benin dated from 1965, when a joint project between West Germany and Benin tried to organize farmers for marketing and services in the Atlantic Prov-

ince (Pfeiffer 1988 :57-60; Vodouhê & Tossou 1995:78). The GV³ is a village-based association of producers which will gradually take charge of activities related to their production. The GV was created according to the decrees n° 143/PC/MDRA-AGRO of 15/04/1965 which was modified by the decree n° 119/PR/MDRC/AGR of 18/04/1967. This is completed by the order n° 59/PR/MDRC of 20/12/1966. Various roles and functions of GVs were reinforced by the *Projet de restructuration des Services Agricoles* of 1990 (see section 1.3).⁴

Activities carried out by the GVs in the Atlantic Province failed for the following reasons:

- the lack of cooperation among members in taking care of storage facilities which were given to them;
- the lack of collaboration among members at the village level led to the centralization of activities at a higher level. This centralization gave the director of the federated GVs opportunities to misuse the funds of the GVs. Misuse of the funds of the federation led to distrust of the organization by members, and its dissolution.

The lack of effective mechanisms to make leaders to comply with the rules of the organization contributed to the misuse of common funds and the ineffectiveness of the organization. This first attempt to establish a GV in Benin had limited success for the above reasons. This attempt was at a regional level; the failure of these GVs at regional level forced politicians to experiment with GVs at village level.

The administration, in the search to replace colonial institutions and in line with the conclusion of the Niamey conference, decided to extend the experience of the GVs to all Provinces. During the conference held in Niamey in 1965 by the Organization for Africa Unity (OAU), one of the recommendations was to take the village as the basis of community development. The conference was held in a context where the 'participation' of farmers was perceived as a *sine qua non* for development (Vodouhê & Tossou 1995:78; Tossou 1995:82-83).

The GVs had economic and technical objectives.

- the economic objectives deal mainly with the supply of agricultural inputs (tools, fertilizers, pesticides), the marketing⁵ of agricultural products, and the supply of members with credit. Members of the GVs are responsible for the debts of the organization. For example, the credit which is not reimbursed by a member is a debt for the whole organization. The creation of the GVs also encouraged producers who were tired of being exploited by development agents and dubious traders.
- the technical objectives deal with the cooperative education (management skills, book-keeping, habit to cooperate, the access to benefit) of members and the reduction of the number of extension workers who dealt not only with extension work but also with the commercial activities of cooperatives.

4.2.1 *Gradual involvement of farmers in GVs activities*

The GV aims at addressing problems in the upstream (crop production activities) and downstream (marketing) activities of the production of all crops. Individual farmers are themselves in charge of the production activities. GVs are more effective in cotton-growing areas than in other regions because of the good organization of the cotton sector⁶ and the money profits of the GV which villagers can use for com-

munity investment. The involvement of farmers in GV's activities are discussed in relation to different cotton markets. For the sale of cotton there exist three types of markets: ordinary markets, self-managed markets and autonomous markets.

Ordinary markets

In this type of markets, cotton producers are simply sellers of their products. Agents of the extension agency are in charge of all other activities related to the marketing of the product (weighing, handling, transportation and coordination). The extension agency therefore buys the cotton which is delivered to the *Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole* (SONAPRA). The extension agent is an intermediary between producers and his agency to which he is more accountable. The extension agency itself is an intermediary between producers and the agency in charge of the ginning and export of the cotton fibre.

The profit of members in an ordinary market is the refund on pesticide.⁷ The extension service earns commission on the total weight of cotton bought in return for organizing the weighing, the handling, and the transportation of the cotton. I describe the different types of refunds in section 4.2.2.

The important role played by the extension agency facilitated the misappropriation of refunds by extension agents acting in collusion with some of their superiors. This situation created an opportunity for some agents to become rich because of a lack of clarity in the management of inputs and refunds. This is very often done with the complicity of some farmers and their superiors. In 1985, a few ordinary markets were transformed into self-managed markets.

Self-managed markets

Self-managed markets have been introduced all over Mono Province since 1987. In this type of markets, farmers organize the weighing, the management and the transportation of the cotton from the village to the ginning mill. The extension agency plays the role of a coordinator and intermediary between farmers and SONAPRA. Farmers have some advantages in this type of market as they get refunds on pesticide/treatment, on weight and on organization. Extension agencies are paid for their intermediary and coordination roles. Self-managed markets are possible because farmers were trained in weighing by extension agents. In self-managed markets, corruption still existed and was in relation to farm input and credit management. Agents and farmers' leaders could enter into collusion for corruption and mismanagement of common funds. Strategies for collusion and corruption will be discussed with the cases (see sections 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6).

Autonomous markets

In this type of market, farmers are responsible for all activities and are in direct contact with SONAPRA. In addition to the gain obtained by self-managed markets, the gain of the GV's includes commissions previously given to CARDER. GV's with autonomous markets are becoming more important because of the pressure of the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). These institutions advise extension agencies to transfer economic activities to the private sector and farmers' organizations. There are only a few autonomous markets in Mono Province to date. In autonomous markets, members of the GV are in charge of all the activities related to the production of the cotton (production, marketing, transportation of the products from the village to the ginning mill). The extension service does not play any role in these markets. The CARDER does not play the coordination role and the role of an intermediary between farmers and the SONAPRA.

Each of these types of market shows an evolution in the policy of giving more responsibility to farmers' organizations. They may be seen as on a continuum of increasing responsibility.

Comments

The transfer of most responsibilities related to upstream and downstream activities to farmers' organizations is expected to eliminate the misappropriation of common funds by extension agents and to promote community achievements. The following figure indicates the relation between different types of markets and the involvement of farmers in GVs' activities.

Figure Evolution of cotton markets in Benin and involvement of farmers

lower power

higher power

Ordinary markets

self-managed markets

autonomous markets

The monopoly on input supply,⁸ credit distribution, and marketing of agricultural products was a source of power for extension agents who used it for negotiations with farmers about the adoption of agricultural innovations. Some farmers entered into deals with extension agents in order to get inputs on credit in return for promising to adopt a number of innovations. It was a kind of contract between extension agents and farmers (see von der Luhe 1990, Vodouhê & Tossou 1995). The implications of the recommendations of the *Projet de restructuration des Services Agricoles* are to share the source of power with farmers' organizations by giving up commercial activities. The sharing of the source of power with extension agents does not necessarily mean a decrease of their power in rural areas. One of the objectives of the policy of giving more responsibility to farmers is to enable extension agents to concentrate more on extension activities. Giving more power to farmers is expected to increase the effectiveness of extension agents.

But the question here is related to: who is using the power farmers are now enjoying, and who participates in the management of the assets of the GVs? All members of the GVs or only a few people? This question will be explored through the different case studies.

The following sections discuss the development of GVs in Benin, and the formal assets of GVs.

4.2.2 Importance and distribution of GVs between Provinces

Table 13 shows the distribution of GVs among the administrative Departments of Benin. It also shows an evolution of the number of GVs over time: The number of GVs in Benin increased from 421 in 1987 to 1464 in 1995, i.e., within two years the number of GVs increased three-fold. The administrative Provinces of Borgou and Zou are the leading provinces as far as the number of GVs is concerned. These two provinces are also the leading provinces for cotton production.

The evolution of the GVs also involves the establishment of the GVs-test and the Unions of GVs. The GVs-test are the GVs which are going to be autonomous. If they succeed in carrying out all their activities without the intervention of the extension agency, they will become autonomous GVs. This means that they will hold an autonomous market. One of the implications of the PRSA is to promote autonomous GVs. To reach this end, a sample of GVs were taken to implement the policy of giving more responsibility to GVs before its adoption on a larger scale. The GVs included in the sample were called GVs-test.

Table 13 Evolution of the number* of GVs in Benin

Provinces	1986/ 87	1987/ 88	1988/ 89	1989/ 90	1990/ 91	1991/ 92	1992/ 93	1993/ 94	1994/ 95
Atacora	-	84	164	155	195	195	251	200	309
Atlantique	-	-					1	2	8
Borgou	421	393	409	432	433	433	469	456	497
Mono	-	-	207	278	279	279	262	245	191
Ouémè	-	-	20	15	59	59	53	34	44
Zou	-	691	685	669	593	593	631	456	415
Total	421	1168	1485	1549	1559	1559	1667	1393	1464

Source: MDR (1995)

The distribution of these GVs-test and Unions among the administrative Provinces is shown in table 14.

The creation of the unions and GVs-test is one of the improvements⁹ in the GVs experience in Benin. The GVs-test are given more responsibilities and are more autonomous than the ordinary GVs in which extension agents still play important roles. The establishment of GVs unions aims at giving more responsibilities to farmers in the management of their upstream and downstream activities of agricultural production. The GVs-test now represent 27 percent of the total number of GVs in Benin (MDR 1995).

Table 14 Number of GVs, GVs-test and unions of GVs per province in 1995

Provinces	GVs	USPP*	GVs-test	% GVs-test/GVs
Atacora	309	13	51	16
Atlantique	8	4	-	-
Borgou	497	15	159	31
Mono	191	12	30	15
Ouémé	44	8	22	50
Zou	415	15	120	27
Total	1464	67	382	26

* GVs come together to form an Union at the Communal level which is the *Union Communale des Producteurs* (UCP). The UCP come together to form the *Union Sous-Préfectorale des Producteurs* (USPP).

Source: MDR (1995)

4.3 Formal accountability mechanisms within the GVs

4.3.1 *The theoretical assets or benefits of GVs*

The assets of the GVs are the money earned by the GVs and the communal goods. There are two main ways for the GVs to earn money: the refunds and the 'plus-value' (extra payment).

The refunds comprise three components: the refunds on the excess of weight of cotton, the refunds on pesticides/treatments and the market management commissions. The two first refunds can be perceived as taxes for common amenities on each seller of cotton.

The refunds on the excess of weight are the value of the difference between the weight obtained in the village market and the weight obtained in the ginning mill. Due to the loss during manipulation and transportation from the village to the ginning mill, GVs keep (in compensation) some weight from each farmer who sells cotton. The quantity retained is usually greater than the loss. The value of the positive difference between weights at the ginning mill and at the village level is returned to the village as a refund for community investments. At the beginning of the campaign, the GV orders a quantity of pesticides which is delivered to it. The payment for this quantity is deducted from the value of the village's sale: by the *Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole* (SONAPRA). If the GV does not use the whole quantity of pesticide purchased, the rest constitutes a common fund for the village.

The market management commissions are the amount of money which is paid to the GVs for managing the market and for the expenses related to holding the market. This commission was 2500 FCFA per ton for the campaign 1994-1995.

The total amount of refunds paid to cotton producers for the same campaign is 922,625,132 FCFA (922,625,132 FF). The *Plus-value* is the amount of money given annually to producers of cotton at the end of each cotton campaign. With respect to the rules of stabilization,¹⁰ extra money is given to farmers after a cotton campaign with good results. The total amount of 'plus-value' for the campaign 1993-1994 was about 709,259,356 FCFA (709,259,356 FF).

Both the refunds and the *Plus-value* are expected to be used for collective purposes such as building classrooms, dispensaries, or maternity clinics, street repairs, etc. There are other community amenities which are given by the development agencies to help the village.

Community achievements, refunds and *plus-value* are managed by the members of the GV.

Case studies will give more detailed information about common goods and community amenities.

4.3.2 The formal institutional arrangement for accountability in a GV

In establishing the GVs, the promoters (the CARDER) thought about accountability within the organization. The following describes the formal structural arrangement¹¹ which is established for enabling the participation of members in the management of the GVs and proposed by the extension agency for all GVs in Benin. This structural arrangement comprises the general assembly (GA), the executive committee (EC) and the control committee (CC).

The *General Assembly* (GA) is the meeting of all members of the GV. Regular meetings should be held for the involvement of members in decision-making about the needs of the GV members, the generation of assets for the GV, the utilization of the assets of the GV and the execution and the follow-up of communal achievements. The GA should also decide upon the use of the communal infrastructure. Thus, the main decisions should be taken at this level. The GA is the most important organ of the GV.

The *Executive Committee* (EC) comprises members elected by the GA. This committee is in charge of the implementation of decisions and recommendations of the General Assembly. The committee is composed of nine people: a president, a vice-president, a secretary and his deputy, a treasurer and his deputy, and auditors. Each committee member has his role well defined.

The *Control Committee* (CC) is constituted by members elected by the General Assembly. The objective of this committee is to check whether decisions taken by the General Assembly are being implemented by the Executive Committee. The role of the committee is to prevent the misuse of the funds and assets of the organization. The CC members are expected to control the EC members and to see that they comply with the rules of the organization.

The *election of officials* of the different committees is done during the first assembly. All members of the organization are eligible. Democracy should prevail during the election of the members of the different committees (one man, one vote). A part of the Executive Committee should be renewed every year in an election at the GA. Members of previous committees may be re-elected.

The members of the committees are not paid for their work. There is no formal material and financial remuneration for the members of the committees, although they have many costs to bear: for example leaders leave their own work to attend meetings on behalf of the organization or they use their own means of transportation for the organization.

Summing up the institutional arrangements of the GVs, the effective functioning of the formal accountability mechanisms comprising the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and the Control Committee may contribute to the good functioning of the GVs. Executive Committee members may be accountable to all members of the GV in the GA. It would contribute to the improvement of the participation of farmers.

The following examines the real functioning of these mechanisms in three GVs. The first GV is characterized by corruption of different members of the Executive Committee and the ineffectiveness of the Control Committee. The second GV is getting 'indigenized' by villagers with the combination of indigenous rules and the formal rules. The third GV is characterized by its cohesion and the accountability of leaders to the GV members: the cohesion is induced by the competitive situation in which the GV is operating.

4.4 The GV of the village Gbècogblé

The village Gbècogblé is the most important village in the region. It is the centre of the region and is composed of many compounds and lineages. The village is heterogeneous with regard to its inhabitants and their religions. With respect to religions, there are Christians, Muslims and adepts of African traditional religions. It is not easy to make a clear distinction between African traditional religions and other religions as many people are both Christians and adepts of African traditional religions.

Gbècogblé is the chief village and many other villages depend on its political administration. Inhabitants from this village consider people from other villages and hamlets as *les gens de la brousse* (bush people). Until recently, marriage between girls from Gbècogblé and men from the other villages was disapproved because it was perceived as a union between people from the 'city' and people from remote places. In other words, people from Gbècogblé feel themselves superiors to people of surrounding villages.

Due to the heterogeneity of the village with respect to its population, people feel themselves more accountable to their extended families than to the village community. Elders are regularly challenged by young people. Young people have the opportunity to go to cities where they look for jobs or become apprentices. Many young people migrated from the village because of the lack of land.

Most villagers farm and land is becoming scarce. The main crops produced in the area are cotton, maize, cowpea, peanuts, and tomatoes. The sizes of cotton farms vary between 0.2 hectare and more than 4 hectares.

The GV of Gbècogblé was created around 1971 and held ordinary markets, but it now holds a self-managed market.

4.4.1 The functioning of accountability mechanisms

This section describes the functioning of the institutional arrangements for accountability, the different assets of the GV, the GV members, access to these benefits, and the strategies developed by committee members to misuse the assets of the organization, together with some strategies developed by members to make the leaders accountable.

The General Assembly

The General Assembly convenes under the following conditions:

- the extension agent is asked by his superiors to hold a meeting at the GV level in order to learn the needs of farmers or to proceed to the renewal of committees. Even in this case, the extension agent deals mainly with influential people in the area, i.e, people in the Executive Committee. About ten people participated annually in such meetings; they did not discuss the financial reports and policy decisions.
- because of suspicions of corruption, young people asked for the meeting in order to discuss the issue of management and to ask for the renewal of the committees. It was difficult to put such subjects on the agenda. People preferred to raise other subjects and ended up on the main issue they would like to discuss. One of these meetings is described in the section on the strategies of leaders for misusing the GV funds.

In this GV of Gbècogblé, the chairman has never taken the decision to hold a meeting and discuss the activities of the organization.

The GA, though formally an important component of the organization, unfortunately did not participate in decision-making. The main decision-makers were the EC. Producers might contribute to decision-making through the GV but they did not ask for a GA for the following reasons. Producers were not interested in asking for the GA meeting because they thought they were not concerned with the functioning of the organization. They did not perceive the GV as their organization because it was established by the extension agency and most of them were not informed about the existence of collective funds. The individual contribution to the collective funds was low and was perceived as a tax.¹² In effect, these contributions were composed of the deduction of two kilogrammes per sack which was not important for individuals but in aggregation could be important. Most people who were informed about the existence of these funds were not interested because of the fact that the funds were said to be for collective investments. They left their use to the EC. Their behaviour is also due to the fact that members of the executive committee are influential people in the village. Another explanation of their behaviour is related to the producers' perception of the Executive Committee. First, the Executive Committee is considered as having to report to the extension agency and not to farmers. Secondly, the funds are not perceived as the funds of the village but as government funds the use of which can be decided by the EC. Having this perception about the GV, its Executive Committee and the funds, most cotton growers think that it is not possible to replace the EC members as they are accountable to the CARDER. In this GV, attempts to replace people have failed and this has caused the

departure of some people from the GV. They created their own GV in their hamlets. The extension agent did not encourage the renewal of leaders of the GV because of the relations he already had with these leaders in office.

Moreover, producers do not know the functions and roles of the GA and the power attributed to it. Only a few people know the role it is supposed to play. People who know the role of the GA are already in the EC or use this power to get some advantages from the EC members. In effect knowledge of the function, roles and the limits of the GV yields some power to some people, but unfortunately only a few people have that knowledge. In effect, the GA yields power to the EC and can take back this power if it is not satisfied. But not all members of the organizations are aware of the possibility of using this mechanism for controlling and for checking the work of people in the EC. The lack of information about the role and functions of the GA is the main cause of the non-use of such a powerful mechanism to make people accountable to the organization.

Mode of election of committee members

The first committees of the organization were set up in the first big meeting in 1971, attended by about fifty producers. Producers were asked to elect their representatives by vote, and the members of the Executive Committee were duly elected. They were the influential people of the village: wealthy people, witchcraft men, literate people or those who had travelled abroad, or politicians. These people elected were perceived by villagers as persons with the ability to represent them. The chairman was a trader and owned a large cotton farm (more than four hectares), he also grew other crops. The vice-chairman also owned a large farm, and was from a satellite hamlet. The treasurer was a trader and owned a large farm. Villagers valued his trading more than his farming. The secretary had completed four years study at primary school and was also a farmer: he was perceived as the literate person of the group.

The Executive Committee

Although the EC consists nine members, only the chairman was known as a leader of the GV. Sometimes he was helped by the secretary and the treasurer, but other EC members ignored their roles. The roles of the other elements of the organization were ignored by members of the EC, who felt themselves accountable not to producers but to the development agency. They worked more with the extension agent and with the political administration than with the members of the GV. They acted as if they were members of the extension agency, perceived themselves as workers of the extension agency, and even asked for a monthly salary.

Renewal of committees

Once elected, people are able to stay in office for many years while no one calls for them to be replaced. According to villagers, this situation persists because:

- people are frightened to ask for the renewal of the committee because of the social risks involved in replacing an influential person;
- members of the committee bear some costs which people are not willing to support, preferring to leave them to the people in office.

In any event, people do remain in office for many years. The GV is therefore identified with the chairman, and the people do not arrange any annual meeting.

Some people in the EC have been replaced: the chairman because he died and the vice-chairman because he left the GV and created a new GV in his hamlet.

Members of the GV develop a kind of collusion with the field agents and they protect one another. Leaders and extension agents develop relations profitable for both parties. Leaders protect extension agents against their superiors when they come on inspection, for the superiors of the extension agents would use these leaders in order to find out what their agents are doing in the field. The following story provides an example of the protection of agents by leaders:

'A District Extension Officer (a superior of the extension agents) went to the village in order to check information about his agent: he had heard that he (the field agent) was often drunk and could not do his work properly. For evidence he went to the village to talk with villagers. He met the leaders of the organization who told him that the agent was a good agent and was regularly in the village. They even declared that he was living in the village and they showed his house to the superior. When asked about his weakness with respect to local drink, they replied that everybody in the village drinks and there was nothing to complain about in that. In short they presented a good impression of the agent.'

This situation is not unique to the village of Gbècogblé but common to many villages. Leaders and agents develop such collusion in which they protect one another, and this is one of the reasons why agents develop good relationships with leaders. In Gbècogblé, for example, I could meet the agent only a few times during my whole stay as he did not live in the village and he was carrying on his own activities in addition to the extension work. He had his own farm about forty kilometres distant from Gbècogblé. He was also involved in trading spare parts for vehicle engines between Nigeria and Benin; he sold these spare parts in the surrounding villages. These are some of the reasons which explain why the extension agent supports people holding office in the GV.

About decisions related to the management of the GV

The EC members decided the use of the GV funds. In the GV of Gbècogblé, the main decision-maker is the chairman, sometimes influenced by the political administration. This claim is supported by the findings of the *Fonds de Stabilisation et de Soutien* (FSS). The following table indicates who decides what activities to carry out with the funds of the GV.

Table 15 Importance of decision-makers for the use of the GV funds

Decision-makers about the use of GV funds	%
Executive Committee	55
Political administration	20
General Assembly	10
<i>Associations de développement</i>	4.5
NGO	0.5

Source: MDR 1995

These figures indicate that most decisions are taken by the EC without consulting the GA. The political administration comes second in this process and the GA comes only third.

The Control Committee (CC)

Investigation has shown that the CC members do not know their role. When members of the CC were asked about their role in the GV, they replied that they are members of the GV without referring to their role as CC members. When they were asked about the role of the CC, most of them were surprised because they did not recall belonging to any committee like a CC. A few people recognized their membership of the CC but ignored its functions. Some people did know of the existence of CC and its functions but could not act. An analysis of the inaction of this committee shows that its members could not play their role because of relations between people in the village. The first reason is the social position of the members with respect to the position of the EC members. The latter are very influential people in the village. Leaders of the GV are chiefs in the existing secret societies of the village. These secret societies are very powerful and adepts of these societies are respectful to their superiors. Furthermore, it is risky to attempt to denounce the bad practices of influential people and sorcerers in the village who are very often elected to the Executive Committee. The impact of witchcraft is very important in *Adja* villages, as will be illustrated by examples presented in the paragraph below on the use of the assets of the GV.

This is an illustration of the importance of witchcraft in the functioning of farmers' organizations. The witchcraft prevents the Control Committee from functioning and therefore from making a contribution to the accountability of the Executive Committee members to their constituencies.

The use of the assets of the GV

Having held ordinary and self-managed markets, the GV gained a certain amount of money. A few members of the Executive Committee, and the different extension agents who worked in the village, knew the exact amount of money the GV got but few people were informed. When members were asked about the GV they recog-

nized its role in input supply and during the marketing of the end products but they did not know about the assets of the organization.

People who knew of the existence of the refunds accused the Executive Committee of their misuse of these funds, as is illustrated in the following:

'We know the advantages of having a GV. But in our village, only people on the committee and the extension agent know the amount of money given to the GV and these people put the money in their own pockets. The arrival of such money is very often marked by frequent visits by the extension agent. The visits of the extension agent at very short intervals are for me an indication of collusion between leaders and him: in normal times his visits to the village are rare. The funds of the GV are misappropriated by them, that is why nothing is done in the village while the newly created GVs are moving ahead.'

Some ex-members of the GV say they decided to leave the GV because of the mismanagement of its funds. I will return later to the strategies these people developed to make leaders accountable to the ordinary members of the GV and to stop the misuse of collective funds.

These perceptions are not shared by the Executive Committee members. Discussions with them gave other accounts of the use of GV assets. They defended their integrity in the use of the funds of the GV. This is an illustration from one of them:

'In the village we are wrongfully accused of misusing the funds of the GV. I can tell you that I do not get anything from my involvement in GV activities. Contrary to this accusation, the GV owes me money because I work for it without payment, I use my own transportation to attend meetings on behalf of the GV, I leave my farm while others are working in their fields, and all visitors to the village come to my house and I entertain them without compensation. I give some gifts to agents to ask for their favour. People talk about refunds I misuse. How much do they think the GV gets? After the different deductions by the extension agency, nothing remains. The situation is quite difficult for me and I know that I am doing a lot for the village.'

But when he was asked if he would give up and leave the EC to other people, he replied sharply: 'Never, because young ambitious people will take over and destroy everything'.

Members of committees do not get any special remuneration. They are not paid for the activities they perform but are supposed to work for the wellbeing of the community. Are they altruists? Various strategies are developed by leaders to get their work recompensed: overvaluation of the weight for their cotton, false declaration of expenses (food, transportation, bribing development agents), and the use of the communal property.

These are two opposite judgements of the GV of Gbècogblé. Investigations show that the GV has some assets and that people develop strategies to fulfil their interests. Through the following illustrations, different aspects of strategies are presented.

Overvaluation of committee members,¹³ cotton weight

Some EC members and some literate people compose the cotton weighing team. Committee members develop a strategy to avoid a loss at the ginning mill. The strategy consists of the decrease by two kilogramme of each weighing. But committee members do not decrease the weight of their own cotton. It is difficult for producers to check the real weight of the committee members' cotton. Very often they increase their weight to the disadvantage of others. During the survey many cases of an increase in weight of the committee members' cotton were noted. Here are some illustrations of what happens in the village.

'Most villagers produce cotton and are therefore members of the unique GV of the village. They weigh their cotton in the village. This is done by a weighing team. This team decreases the weigh by two kilogramme for each bale¹⁴ of cotton. After weighing at the village level, the cotton is weighed again at the ginning mill for checking. In 1993, in the village they found 37 tons of cotton while the weight at the ginning mill was only 32 tons. So the negative difference was 5 tons. The GV was paid on the basis of the 32 tons. It became difficult for the EC to pay all the producers because of shortfall for the five tons. But how did they get to this point? Each member of the weighing team increased his own weight in order to take a cut of the potential weight gain of the village. The potential weight gain was expected from the aggregation of the two kilograms taken from each bale. In fact, they took more than what the surplus could be. A village meeting, with the help of the police, forced them to give back the defocot allowing the cotton to be paid.'

The above illustration is helpful for understanding the overvaluation of the weight of the crop of the members of the committee. The situation was known to all the producers because it was difficult to pay them. Villagers who could not get their money went to the extension agent to ask for their due. The extension agent told them that they would have to discuss the issue with the GV Executive Committee or to go to the police. They went to the police, who made the committee members accountable to the GV members who had not been paid. This story highlights:

- one strategy developed by leaders to get rewarded for the work they are doing. They cheat other farmers and increase their cotton weight.
- the failure of the functioning of an effective control mechanism facilitates this situation;
- the inability of villagers to use the local accountability mechanisms, consisting of complaint to elders in the village or to friends of the wrongdoers, which leads to calling in an external body to help in enforcing rules. In the present case, the police were called.
- in the village, the chairman was feared because of his ability to put a curse on a person but in this case people did not fear him and went to the police in order to make him pay the stolen funds. They did not fear him in the present case because they have their money to get back. They felt concerned and this feeling gave them strength to face the anger of the chairman.

It was shameful for the Executive Committee but they tried to justify themselves by saying that it was not their fault, and they blamed the weighing machine.

False declaration of expenses

Here are some examples of the misuse of funds by committee members:

'A committee member told his peers to the need to bribe the quality controller of the ginning mill to ensure a good classification¹⁵ of the village cotton. He took the amount of money (30.000 FCFA). But the cotton of the village was not accepted as first class cotton. Villagers were very surprised and sent another delegation to contact the controller and to ask him the reasons for his behaviour although they had sent him some money. The reply of the controller was that he had not received anything from anybody and that he did his work as it should be done. Investigations have shown that the committee member did not give any money to the controller. He took the money for his own pocket and went to talk with the controller as a friend. He met him on many occasions and thought that he would use the friendship to persuade him to accept the cotton of his village as first quality cotton.'

This illustration illuminates the fact that committee members use every opportunity for own enrichment and that people do not trust each other. The lack of trust has led to the designation of other people to go and check what another committee member has done. This is also stressed in the following example.

'During recent years government policy was to restrict the areas under cotton production because of the degradation of soil fertility and the limited capacity of the existing ginning mills. To reach this end, government took the decision to regulate the production of cotton by allocating to each region a certain area to crop. This is done with respect to the potential capacity of each zone to produce cotton and so the quantity of seed per zone is known. The seed is supplied by the SONAPRA and is free of charge. In order to increase their area, producers went to buy cotton seed in the black market. They sent a delegate (a committee member) to the officer in charge of the supply of cotton seed. The delegation was supposed to bribe the officer with 10000 FCFA in order to get more seed than planned. But this committee member did not see the cotton seed supplier and left him only 2.000 FCFA in an envelope with the guardian. The remaining 8000 FCFA were kept by the committee member. The supplier did not receive the money because he did not like to be bribed before carrying out his duty. He was in a religion in which it is forbidden to rob. Cotton producers, having waited for a long time the arrival of the cotton seed, decided to check the reasons for the delay although they had sent a delegate to bribe the officer in charge of the cotton seed. A delegation of three members (the chairman included) went to check if they could have their demand satisfied and to ask if the supplier got the commission. At their surprise, the amount given to the guardian was different from the declaration. They asked the delegate to pay back the difference. But unfortunately people in the delegation got into trouble with health problems and could not pursue the claim.'

This story explains the following elements:

- a strategy for leaders to misuse the common funds for their own interests is again pointed out. The delegate tried to get some extra payment for contacting the supplier of the cotton seed.

- how it is possible to try to make people accountable within the EC. Not all members of the committee were involved in this mismanagement. People who were not involved in the mismanagement tried to make the delegate accountable to the organization by asking him to pay back the difference. This did not happen very often in this village, but as it was very obvious that many people were disadvantaged by the behaviour of the committee member, action was taken to make him reimburse what he had stolen; and
- the costs related to the control of some committee members are very high. The sickness of people after asking the delegate to pay back the amount he retained him was attributed to a curse sent by the delegate.

The use of community possessions

The GV of Gbècogblé covers a number of hamlets but it has only one building to store agricultural inputs (fertilizers, pesticides). This amenity was in the chief village as most influential members of the EC are from that village.¹⁶

Strategies of some members to make Executive Committee members accountable to the GV

Some members of the GV developed strategies to make the leaders accountable. Here are some examples:

'In the village, a group of young farmers was formed to criticize the development of the village. Their main worry was the delay in the building their school. They persuaded people of the need for a meeting of the whole village to discuss the issue of the school and related problems. The meeting was held and the main issue on the agenda was that of the school building. About one hundred villagers attended the meeting, cotton growers, traders, school-teachers, etc. Not all participants in the meeting had children in the school, but all who did came. It was one of the biggest meetings held in the village for a long time. For about half an hour information was given on the day-to-day management of the school. The school director gave information about the evolution of the school and its problems. Many questions were put to the director and the president of the Association des Parents d'Élèves (APE). On the reasons for the delay in the building of the school. There were mutual accusations among the members of the APE. The discussions went on to strategies to improve the situation. In seeking solutions to improve the state of the school, some participants in the meeting proposed the use of funds of the GV. The reply of the chairman of the GV (he was also the president of the APE) was very sharp. There was no money in the GV which could be spent for such an end. Discussions then moved on to the management of the GV, and people accused the EC of misappropriating the funds of the GV. Members at the meeting claimed that there should be enough money in the GV. They said the opportunity should be taken to get a financial report from the EC, and to renew it as they were together and as the GV was for the village. The meeting divided into two main subgroups supporting different ideas: one subgroup supported the idea of removing the people in office, and the second supported the idea of discussing only ways to improve the school. The first subgroup was led by young people because it was their hidden objective. During the break negotiations took place and consensus was obtained on the separation of the two subjects. In the end, it was only the problem of

improving the school which was discussed by the assembly. The attempts of young farmers to bring before the meeting of the villagers open criticism of the functioning of the Executive Committee of the GV was not successfully, but was a beginning.'

Discussions with people after the meeting pointed out the influence of the complex relationships existing in the village. A member of the extended family of the leader of the young people was a friend of the chairman of the GV. During the break he went to persuade the leader of the young people to stop the attack on the chairman of the GV. I was told that a short time later the chairman invited the young people to discuss the future of the village and they met frequently to discuss problems concerning the village.

The meeting was useful in inducing discussions between committee members of the GV and young people. The fact that the management problem was brought up for open discussion led the chairman to think that his credibility would suffer if he did not take some action. One action he was very often accused of was to curse people, but this time the leader of the offenders was a relative of one of his friends. He chose to convince the leader of the youth and to work with him. The meeting alone was not sufficient to induce this cooperation. A member of the extended family of the leader of the young people played an important role in avoiding an open argument between the chairman and the young people, which could have been harmful for the young (according to some villagers). He (the member of the extended family of the leader of the young people) was an intermediary between them. It is common in this area to use an intermediary when there is a problem or when you want something from somebody. This intermediary may be a friend of, a person, or accepted by, both sides. This informal accountability mechanism can be useful, but the problem with such mechanisms is that they cannot be used to solve the problem of the whole GV, which goes beyond personal interests.

This example shows how the chairman could avoid conflicts with young people, but he is still in conflict with others. It deals with the costs of exposing the mismanagement of leaders. Here is a story of a farmer in the same village:

'A cotton producer checked and objected to the stated weight of the cotton of the committee members. He compared his own area under cotton with those of the committee members. Their areas under cotton were similar and they were supposed to have similar products (weight). But after weighing he found that the weight of his neighbour (a committee member), was higher than that of his own cotton. He got 500 kilogramme while the committee member had 900 kilogramme. He objected and brought the problem before the extension agent. He accused the committee member of increasing his own weight and by decreasing his. He protested against the payment for 500 kilogramme of cotton and claimed more than that. Finally, the extension agent confessed that the weighing committee had diminished his weight. His weight was reviewed and he was paid for 700 kilogramme of cotton rather than the 500 kilogramme previously announced. From that time the EC gave him no credit for his inputs, and he finally migrated from the area because of the difficulty in getting inputs and also the fear of being cursed.'

In most cases, farmers prefer to keep quiet in order to avoid actions of the jujū priests who are on the committee. This is the case with a cotton grower who

complained about the mismanagement of the funds of the GV, but who prefers to keep quiet and to sell his cotton in the GV of the next village. He said:

'People in the GV of my village misuse the pesticides and fertilizers. The leaders are behind such behaviour. They enter into collusion with some people to sell these inputs at cheaper prices for their own pockets. The GV is charged for all these inputs it did not use, and finally, we support the expenses. I was also sure that I did not get the right weight for my cotton and was cheated. I decided to join another GV which is more effective. The only thing I regret is that I contribute to the generation of refunds which are not going to be profitable for my village. Many people like me left the village to join other GVs, but the Executive Committee members did not react to the situation and I got the impression of collusion between a few young people and them. From my point of view, it is desirable that people have access to information and that everything be discussed openly. I like it where I am now.'

This example makes the point that there are other GVs which people can join if they want to, creating a situation of competition with the village of the Gbécogblé. This competitive situation might be expected to be a factor enhancing the consciousness of EC members of the GV, but so far they have not reacted.

This section on the assets of the GV indicates that leaders are acting according to their own interests regardless of the interests of the GV. It may be expected that pursuing their own interests could be profitable for the whole organization; but the situation in this GV is such that pursuit of individual interest is leading the organization to its downfall.

Concluding this section, a few points need attention. The first point is related to the institutional arrangement for accountability, and the second point deals with the social structure of the village for accountability.

- the institutional arrangements for accountability exist in the GV, but they are not used because of lack of information about their functions and how to use them. Illiteracy is one of the causes of this situation, but it cannot be the main cause as in the same area there exist effective farmers' organizations created and led by illiterate farmers. The second reason for the non-use of the mechanism for accountability may be the perception farmers have about the GV. Perceiving it as a component of the extension agency, the GV is a public good from which people (members of the EC) take advantage. Funds and assets of the GV are not perceived as the goods of the village or at least of members of the GV, but as state goods. As such there is no need to control the people in charge of the GV. The misuse of the funds of the GV was supported by the field agent who protects the leaders against their constituencies.
- the social structure in Gbécogblé is such that there is no longer cohesion between people. In such a situation it might be expected that there would be competition between people which would lead to effective control; but this is not the case in the GV of Gbécogblé as the social pressure is not high.

4.5 The village of Soukpodagni

4.5.1 Introduction

There are two main extended families in the village of Soukpodagni. The elders of these extended families form the council of elders which is very active in the village. It is the main actor in planning activities in the village and is involved nearly in all activities taken place in the village. When you enter this village as an outsider, you are immediately invited to visit and to discuss your business with this council. Discussions are very often related to the development of the village. The council asks you your objective and tells you about the domain in which they would like you to intervene. When you are not able to intervene in that domain, they will leave you to start your activities knowing that they will try to bring you back to something which is in their plans. All the villagers are aware of this.

It is in this context that the GV was created in Soukpodagni. The population of the village is about 1200, mostly farmers producing both export and food crops; the latter are more important. The export crop they grow is cotton. A few people of the village work in Cotonou in government service or as private entrepreneurs. The village of Soukpodagni is about eight kilometres distant from the largest neighbouring market of that region. In the same area there is another village which has about 2200 inhabitants, about four kilometres away. The two villages are very often in competition to hold administration responsibility. Actually the seat of the commune is in the other village but the mayor is from the village of Soukpodagni. People from the village of Soukpodagni claim to be hard workers and perceive the others from the neighbouring village as lazy people. In all situations, the Soukpodagni people compare themselves to people of the other village. Elders in the village of Soukpodagni play an important role in bringing interventions to the village.

Creation of the GV

The GV of Soukpodagni was set up by the extension agency around 1980. Villagers asked for its creation because they wanted to hold their own market rather than depending on that of the next village. The extension agency granted them the GV because of their efficiency in agriculture and their keenness to have a GV. The village held the first self-managed market in 1987 and was able to get enough refunds which were invested in the construction of the dispensary and maternity clinic of the village. The amount of this refund was very high; it will be discussed with the problems of mismanagement.

Mode of election

Members of the Executive and Control Committees are elected during the General Assembly. They proceeded as follows. When the chairman is from one extended family, the treasurer or the secretary should be chosen from the other extended family. The roles change at the renewal. Roles are allowed to the extended family and not to individuals. Individuals must prove that they are capable in their own

family. It is not an election during which one person has the right of one vote. The big families of the village supply committees with members.

Mode of remuneration

There is no formal remuneration but committee members are given some amount of money when they go on a mission for the GV. This money covers the costs of food expenses and transportation. Sometimes committee members try to divert the funds of the organization, but they are very easily detected and decisions are taken about it.

Here is an attempt to misuse the funds of the GV and how the problem was solved. There was no outside intervention before people in the village solved the problem.

'Some people from the weighing committee colluded with the extension agent and some agents at the ginning mill to overestimate the total cotton weight of the village in order to get some surplus to share. They succeeded in getting an extra weight of about 10 tons for their village. They knew that they could pay all the farmers. But, unfortunately or fortunately, the council of elders sent some literate young people to check at the ginning mill the total weight the village obtained. The delegates discovered that the cotton weight was greater than that obtained in the village. Having noticed that some other villagers were informed about the situation, the extension agent contacted them and promised to include them in the division of the spoils. But they refused and reported their findings and discussions to the council of elders. They proposed to discuss the problem in a big village assembly, but the council asked them to leave the council to do its work. Instead of discussing the subject openly, the wrongdoers were called before the council of elders to which were also invited the chief of the village and some other members of the EC. Elders heard the case in camera and solved the problem. The extension agent was not invited to the discussion. He was found guilty but they could not take any decision about him. Neither the police nor the court were involved in handling the problem. The people found guilty remained in office but were checked more closely. The superior of the agent was informed about the situation later when everything was already set. The money was used for building a dispensary for the village. The council of elders acted as a court to solve the problem and to maintain the cohesion of the village. Bringing the problem before the court implies that some people will be put in jail. The consequences of this would be very grave in the village where all them come from the 'same' family, the 'same' blood. When the elders were asked for the reasons behind their decision to keep the problem at village level they said having the same ancestors they could not put somebody of the same blood in jail. They said it was enough to bring them before the council of elders, for people from the same lineage will constantly impress upon them that such behaviour should never occur in the village.'

The council of elders plays an important role in making people accountable in the village a mechanism based largely on the traditional mechanism to make people accountable. There are also some formal accountability mechanisms at work in the GV which I will discuss in the next section.

4.5.2 The functioning of the formal accountability mechanism

The General Assembly (GA)

People in Soukpodagni hold a General Assembly¹⁷ any time they find it necessary. They hold their assembly to discuss events in the village and development planning which has been elaborated by the EC and the council of elders. During the GA, producers are informed about expenses incurred on behalf of the population. People are free to discuss the accuracy of the information given by the members of the executive committee. Nobody is frightened to discuss all subjects relevant to the development of the village. There are many ways to convoke the general assembly: the first is the usual convocation of assembly. This is done on the demand of the extension agent and aims at discussing the needs of villagers for cotton production.

Another possibility is the convocation of the assembly by the council of elders or by the young people. They usually ask for such a meeting when they find that important subjects need to be discussed. For example, when they get information about new development possibilities in town and would like the involvement of the GV, they ask for the assembly. They also call for the general assembly when they want corruption problems they have heard about settled.

Not all members of the GV participate in the GA but all are welcome at the assembly and not everybody present at the assembly speaks. The main actors are the Executive Committee members, the chief of the village and the elders. Usually, elders leave people to discuss the issues and intervene only towards the end of the discussion when they do influence the decisions of the GA.

Executive committee

The executive committee comprises representatives of the different lineages of the village. Members are influential people in the village. They represent the village in negotiation with outsiders. They attend meetings outside the village and report to the council of elders before informing the people if necessary. Before being appointed to such a committee, members must be approved by the council of elders; one might even say that they are appointed by the council of elders.

The Control Committee

There are formally elected members of the Control Committee but they do not know their role. The real control committee which exists in the village is the council of elders.¹⁸ This council comprises three persons who check the activities of the Executive Committee. When they find it necessary to report their findings to the people they do it through the General Assembly. But usually they prefer to solve problems among themselves. They prefer to maintain the cohesion of the village even though members support sometimes divergent interests. According to some villagers, the cohesion of the village was necessary because of the neighbouring villages which (they thought) would perceive open conflicts among them as a lack of capacity to manage the village.

Relations with other organizations

The GV develops close relationships with the council of elders, the Association of Sons Abroad, and with women's groups.

The *council of elders* is formed by elders of the main extended families (*hennu*) of the village. Although, there are some conflicts¹⁹ between them with respect to leadership in the village, elders act together for the development of the village. The council of elders influences the objectives and the way refunds and *plus-value* are spent. It has also some influence on the election of members to the executive committee of the GV. The council backstops the activities of the GV. The council of elders represents one of the components which contribute to the accountability of development agents and of members of the Executive Committee to producers. The council is helped in its work by young villagers and the Association of Sons Abroad.

The *young villagers* are not organized into any formal association but their role is very important in the village. They are in contact with the outside world (Dogbo, Djakotomè and Lokossa) and they bring information about it to the village. They were the main people who discovered the collusion between the extension agent and some members of the GV Executive Committee.

The Association of Sons Abroad

The village of Soukpodagni has some sons who are living in the cities such as Cotonou, Lomé and Bohicon. They created an association called the Association of Sons Abroad. They are about 65 people in the association:

- about 30 people have permanent jobs and have some relationships with the political administration in Cotonou. They are called *les cadres*; and
- about 35 people do not have any permanent job: they are students or apprentices or have occasional jobs.

Each extended family has its own sons abroad but all are in the same association.

The contribution of the association to the development of the village is valued by villagers. First they are perceived as trustworthy people because most of them have built a house in the village. The construction of a house in the village is considered an indication of wisdom. It means that the person is still keeping his relations with the village and is not *enfant perdu*. A person is treated as *enfant perdu* when he is working abroad earning money, but does not come home frequently and does not invest in the village: he is not a wise person and cannot be trusted – he is lost to the village. One of the roles of this association is to persuade members to maintain relations with the village and to contribute to its development. A member of this association has built a house which is reserved for workers who stay in the village.

There are three aspects to the contribution of this association to the village's development. The first aspect deals with the contacts the association has with various development agencies and the political administration. The association facilitates contacts of the village with the outside world and contributes to negotiations with development agencies. The association is said to have facilitated the establishment of the dispensary in the village and the choice of the village as one of those in which the PADES is working. The second aspect is related to their financial contribution. The association is often invited to make financial contributions to the development of the village. For example, the association made an

important contribution to the building of the village school and the organization of regional seminars on agricultural development. The third aspect of their involvement is related to conflict resolution in the village. The association is invited to help the village to solve various problems which divide villagers. For example, when young villagers distrusted the dispensary worker and the health committee with regard to the management of dispensary funds, they informed the Association of Sons Abroad. The association sent two delegates from Cotonou to help the council of elders and the youth organization to settle the problem.

In addition to the collective activities carried out by the association, individuals contribute to the development of the village by helping their relatives to go to school or to apprenticeship or in other activities.

Villagers trust the Association of Sons Abroad and therefore refer to it for making people accountable. When a worker's behaviour was not acceptable to villagers, they informed the association which helped the villagers to make him improve his behaviour. This was the case with the dispensary worker and the extension agent. Usually problems are solved together with other groups in the village: the council of elders and the youth organization.

The GV has good relations with the women's groups which it influences. These women's groups continue to their activities because of the support of the GV. Women's groups will be discussed in chapter 5.

Concluding this part, I shall say that Executive Committee members are accountable to the members of the GV because of the combined action of the council of elders, the young villagers and the Association of Sons Abroad. These 'institutions' exert some countervailing power and check their actions. In this village, different organizations are working towards a common goal, the development of the village. The actions of these different organizations contribute to making people in office avoid corruption. Corruption is easily detected in the village and people are punished. The functioning of these organizations prevents free-riding. It does not eliminate it completely but reduces its impact in the village. People in this village perceived their village as in competition with the neighbouring villages for attracting development interventions. They are keen to raise the status of their village compared to the same neighbouring villages.

4.6 The GV of Ekponté

History of the creation of the GV of Ekponté

Producers of the hamlet of Ekponté were previously members of the GV of Gbècogblé which is a big village and the headquarters of the 'Commune'. According to people of Ekponté, the GV of Gbècogblé earned a large amount of money by holding cotton markets – they mean the refunds. They accused the chairman of that GV of misusing this money for his own personal benefit. The chairman was also accused of lack of cooperation with other members of the Executive Committee. The deputy chairman of the GV was from the hamlet Ekponté but had little power because of the following reasons:

- the chairman did not consult him in running the organization; and
- the hamlet of Ekponté was perceived by people of Gbècogblé as a remote hamlet, *les gens de la brousse*.

Many attempts by the deputy chairman to discuss the issue of the use of the funds of the GV failed. He tried unsuccessfully to convince other members of the Executive Committee to join him in making the chairman more cooperative, for most members of the committee were from the same village as the chairman. The chairman was said to have secret power with which he was able to curse his enemies. He was not replaced till he died. His successor was also from Gbècogblé and continued like his predecessor in misusing the funds of the GV. The deputy chairman remained the same. Because of this situation, the deputy chairman and the cotton producers of Ekponté decided to create their own GV and to manage the refunds for public purposes. The GV of Ekponté was therefore created in 1976 after a big meeting. The GV started with 25 members. Unfortunately the fall in the international market for cotton forced cotton producers of Ekponté to stop their activities till 1986 when cotton prices became better. Producers from two small hamlets started the GV in spite of the opposition of the extension agent. The extension agent was against the creation of the GV in Ekponté because of the size of the village (Ekponté is recognized as a hamlet), and also because approval of this GV might motivate other villages to create new GVs which would increase the number of GVs to be supervised by the extension agent. The determination of the farmers of Ekponté either to create their own GV or to cease growing cotton convinced extension agents to recognize the creation of the GV of Ekponté. The GV is considered as a farmers' organization introduced by the extension agency, but in the present case the farmers themselves decided on its creation and adopted the terms used in similar organizations. This GV differs from the other GVs I discussed because of its history and the reasons for which it was created. It is not an organization imposed from above but an organization desired and fought²⁰ for by the farmers. Here is a process of 'indigenization' of the GV. The GV of Ekponté is a half way between a pure indigenous organization and a pure introduced organization.

Because of its origin, the GV of the hamlet of Ekponté was competitive with the GV of Gbècogblé. The people of Ekponté were motivated to succeed in demonstrating their capacity to run an organization.

The hamlet is composed of many compounds but there are only three extended families. The population of the hamlet is about 500 inhabitants. There is a certain harmony between people of the hamlet and the leading role is held by the eldest person of the hamlet. The power to lead the hamlet passes from the eldest to the younger brother or to the nephew. Till now the succession to power has been as follows:

The founder of the hamlet (A)²¹, the eldest son (B), young brother (C), young brother (D), nephew (E).

Responsibility for the management of the hamlet is transferred from the older to the younger and the same process is taking place in the different organizations established in the hamlet, the *Kugbè* and the GV.

The effectiveness of the GV of Ekponté convinced many farmers to join it. Interveners are also improved by its effectiveness and pay much attention to its

activities. The consequences of this recognition were the increase in the number of producers from many other hamlets who have joined the GV of Ekponté, and the fact that the GV was promoted as a GV-test in 1994.

Having started with 25 people from two hamlets, the GV in 1995 has 111 members from 12 hamlets and villages.

Election of officials and the mode of remuneration

After deciding to withdraw from the organization of the GV of Gbècogblé, people held a meeting in Ekponté, attended by people from the hamlets of Ekponté and of Tolehoué. The GV was set up according to the principles of the extension agency. The members elected the officials of the different committees as in all GVs. Some members of the committees come from Tolehoué, but the most important members were from the hamlet of Ekponté. The ex-deputy chairman of Gbècogblé became the chairman of the new GV. The treasurer and the secretary were from Ekponté. All the rules established by the extension agency were respected. The mode of election did not change anything in the power patterns of the hamlet: the chairman of the GV was already the leader of the hamlet and the secretary was his nephew whom he was training to lead the hamlet. The treasurer was another person from the hamlet who was perceived as a rich person. The deputy treasurer was from the hamlet of Tolehoué. The power ranking in the hamlet was kept and the creation of the GV with its rules did not disturb this order. The GV, an innovation in the hamlet, was well adapted to the cultural context of the hamlet Ekponté. The Executive Committee drew up policies which the GA approved or rejected. Usually the proposals of the Executive Committee are accepted and implemented. Leaders of the GV encourage members of the GA to express their views. For example during a meeting²² it was proposed by the EC to construct a water tank for the hamlet. People did not react to the proposal and the secretary of the GV said:

'Please, we would like to have the agreement of all of you (members) before implementing the proposal. We would not like to carry out any controversial activities which would bring harm to our GV. Our GV has a good reputation and it would not be good if some people start denigrating the GV in the region. We are observed by our neighbours and by the officers of development agencies. Any criticism is harmful to us (meaning the GV).'

After his speech, many people spoke up and said that the GV was very open and that if they (i.e. the GA) disagreed about the policy conducted by the leaders they would have said so. Another speaker agreed and said that he was very pleased with the GV, and that the construction of the water tank was a necessity for the hamlet. These are illustrations for the search for consensus in the GV.

The EC members had been in office since 1976, when the GV was started, and had been re-elected every year. In effect, in order to follow the rules set by the extension agency, they hold a GA during which they discuss the activities of the GV. There are at least two GAs a year: one for preparing the campaign and one for discussing the use of GV funds. I will return to the contents of these GAs when discussing the functioning of the accountability mechanisms.

Members of the different committees are not paid for the activities they perform, though they are reimbursed for their expenses of food and transportation. They have the advantages of being the leaders of the GV; and most visits to the hamlet are paid to them first, and they get some satisfaction from this. They also represent the hamlet during important meetings where it is possible to exchange knowledge with other people. As was pointed out by the secretary of the GV after paying a visit to the District Extension Officer (DEO):

'I visited the RDR (DEO) to discuss the problem of input supply for the GV. I was there when an agent came from Cotonou and told the RDR about the existence of a project for farming rodents. A few farmers were needed in the District to hold such experiments. I was asked if I would like to take part in one of these experiments and I accepted and found it interesting. I wonder if I would be chosen for such experiments if I had not gone there for the GV, if I had not been around.'

The illustration shows that even if members of the committees did not get any direct remuneration for their involvement in working for the GV, they could come into contact with many people, exchange knowledge, and grasp opportunities offered to them.

The functioning of accountability mechanisms in the GV of Ekponké

There are formal accountability mechanisms which are adapted to the situation of the hamlet of Ekponké.

The General Assembly

Producers in the GV of Ekponké hold regular meetings in which all farmers are allowed to participate. But the smallholder farmers do not really participate in these meetings: Big producers from the different areas take part in discussions and decide upon the use of the funds and the kinds of investments to be made. Usually a meeting is held at the beginning of the cotton growing season, aimed at getting information about the planning of each producer for the coming year (area to crop, needs of pesticide and fertilizers). The extension agent attends these meetings in order to support the Executive Committee in discussions about agricultural technologies.

The second meeting is after the sale of the cotton and after the Executive Committee has been given the refunds. This meeting aims at giving information about the amount of money received as a refund and about how it might be used. Producers may contribute but usually they leave the initiative to the Executive Committee. The main actors operating in the GV are the chairman, the secretary and the treasurer. The GA is regularly informed about the activities of the GV and people in the GV trust the leaders.

Decisions on the utilization of the refunds are now difficult to make because of the number of hamlets which constitute the GV. It was easy for them to decide on building a store or a water tank because Ekponké and Tolehoué are neighbours. A member of the Executive Committee pointed out the difficulties. He was asked

questions about the use of the GV funds to finance the construction of a road to their hamlet. He said:

'We created an organization for the development of the hamlet and it is in charge of the development of the hamlet. Each household contributes financially to the construction of the road. We could not use the funds of the GV for such a project because the road is useful only for the hamlets of Ekponté and Tolehoué. There are more than two hamlets involved in the GV and we could not afford to act as before. Members for other hamlets would criticize us and it would harm our GV.'

This story illuminates the extent to which the opinions of members of the GV are important in the decisions the EC members can make. The GA is an organ which is important for making the members of the Executive Committee accountable. GA members trust the members of the EC but the GA constitutes an important element for making leaders accountable.

The Executive Committee

The Executive Committee was elected as in most GVs. No change in the board has occurred since then. As I said earlier, the chairman is the senior elder of the hamlet, the secretary is his nephew and the treasurer is from another extended family. Other functions are distributed among extended families of the other hamlet. The Executive Committee has the responsibility to carry out activities, but they inform their constituency about what they are doing. The formal roles assigned through the regulations of the CARDER are not respected: People in the hamlet behave as if the rules established by the extension agency are enforced in the GV, but in fact leaders in the hamlet follow their own rules. For the renewal of the committee each member of the Executive Committee is training a person who will inherit his role in the hamlet. The chairman is already progressively giving the leading role to his nephew, the present secretary. The secretary is training his nephew for the role of secretary while the treasurer is doing the same thing. Each of them is very often replaced by a substitute, the person he is training. For example the treasurer has been ill for more than a year but his substitute has been his nephew and not the deputy treasurer. When he was asked why he did not leave the responsibility to the deputy, he replied:

'I am in permanent contact with my nephew and I trust him. He is the one who follows my policy when I am away. I cannot transfer the responsibility related to money management to another person who may divert the funds and cause me trouble.'

Nobody complains that the deputy treasurer did not take over the office in the absence of the treasurer and the same thing holds for the other roles. People trust their close kin more than others. The committee is being renewed through inheritance.

The Executive Committee is not influenced by the political authority and the development agency with regard to the main decisions they take. They are motivated to show that they can manage public funds and to invest in community projects. For this reason they make many investments: two large stores, a water tap, a literacy centre, a well. The Executive Committee of the GV takes charge of the

organization of other people in the hamlet. They organized women in the hamlet and in neighbouring hamlets. They contacted various projects to help them to improve the living conditions of the hamlets. They achieved the construction of 19 latrines and a second large store. The Executive Committee organizes technical advices to farmers with regard to cotton production. In effect, the committee does the first pesticide treatment on the cotton of most farmers. They do this in order to know the approximate quantity needed by each farmer and to avoid a waste of input. The EC is in charge of the organization literacy training in the hamlet.

The Control Committee

The members of the Control Committee actually ignore their membership and do not play their roles. Even if they knew their roles it would be difficult to perform them. In effect, they were assigned these roles by their elderly parents and they cannot check the activities of their parents. In the community, they are asked to do certain things by the people who are on the Executive Committee and they can only do as they are told. To check the management of others implies a lack of trust, an implicit accusation of misuse of the common goods. Controlling the conduct of other members is impossible because of the mutual trust it would rupture. When members of the GV are asked their attitude to the management, their answers are invariably the same.

'We trust people in office and they have demonstrated their capacity through holding offices in many other organizations.'

Relations with other farmers' organizations

The GV of Ekponté maintains close relations with many other farmers' organizations and with development agencies. The main farmers' organizations the GV is in contact with are the *kugbè*, the council of elders, women's groups and *tontine* groups.

The GV contributed to the emergence of women's groups in the hamlet and in the neighbouring hamlets. In the hamlet of Ekponté, the GV contributed to the creation of the women's group which deals with the processing of *gari*; it constitutes one of the cases discussed in chapter 5. The emergence of this women's group is one of the main causes of the intervention of other development agencies in the hamlet. The intervention of other development agencies was a strategy developed by the GV leaders. In the GV, the dominant people are men, women do not play any role. The leaders observed that women can contribute to their own development by the promotion of their own activities as in some neighbouring hamlets. The creation of the women's group brought about competition and cooperation between development agencies. Competition because the GV of Ekponté is the favourite GV of the extension agent: he is proud of it and his superiors are also. The presence of other interveners worried them at the beginning but fortunately they find that they can cooperate with them. At present there is an increase in the activities of the extension agency in the hamlet. I can say that the creation of other organizations by farmers contributed to the improvement of extension activities in the hamlet. This is illustrated by the number of visits the extension agent pays to the hamlet. He is

in the hamlet every week while he does not visit other hamlets. The District Extension Officer, and the specialist in farmers' organizations of the CARDER, both pay more frequent visits to the hamlet than they do to other hamlets.

The lessons to be learnt from the relations of the GV of Ekponté with development agencies concern the creation of competition between agencies. Frightened to lose its influence on a favourite organization, the extension agency improves its effectiveness and becomes more accountable to farmers. This is well illustrated by a farmer's saying:

'If someone does not want to work with us, we will work with others, as the monopoly of the CARDER (meaning the extension agent) did not help us. Now that the extension agent knows we can work on our own he is always with us.'

Analysis of the GV of Ekponté points to the importance of:

- the combination of formal and informal power to run an organization established according to the rules of development agencies. A formal structural arrangement was established to run GVs. This structural arrangement was used by indigenous leaders of Ekponté to create their organization. The formal election mode was adapted to the culture, norms and values of the hamlet.
- the capacity of the GV to contribute to the emergence of other farmers' organizations for the development of the region; this especially in the direction of the promotion of women's activities;
- the capacity of leaders to influence development agencies by demonstrating that they can manage the funds of their GV properly and can enhance the development of their hamlet;
- the development of these capacities through indigenous organizations and through indigenous accountability mechanisms;
- the adaptation of formal accountability mechanisms to the context of the hamlet;
- a smooth transition from traditional practice and vision to a development vision;
- leaders in the hamlet organized other categories of farmers so that they contribute to development and make their voice heard. Women have been organized and contribute to decision-making in the hamlet.

Concluding the analysis of the GV of Ekponté, I would like to say that the effectiveness of this GV derives mainly from the effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms. The effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms stems from the size of the hamlet, the effectiveness of the indigenous accountability mechanisms and the competitive situation. The competitive situation is due to the history of the creation of this GV which obliges people to develop cohesion in the hamlet and leaders to follow the rules of the organization.

Relations in the hamlet are very complex, the work of a committee seems difficult in such hamlet as the social costs for controlling a person may be higher than the rewards obtained from it. As it is difficult for the control committee to be effective, why are the committee members accountable to the organization? The following reasons can be advanced:

- the *size of the organization* is important for understanding why leaders comply with the rules of the organization. The organization started with two neighbour-

ing hamlets. They have known each other for a long time. People in both hamlets have close relations with each other: family links or friendship links. Hence social pressure plays an important role in making representatives accountable to their constituencies. Most farmers are informed about the activities of others and there is an implicit control. It is difficult for people to escape from that control. Information is easily disseminated in the hamlet and shared by most people. These two hamlets formed the stable core of the GV. Members from other hamlets joined the GV and accepted its rules. They are not on the committee and cannot disturb the functioning of the GV. Members of the hamlets of Ekponté and Tolehoué are aware of the difference between newcomers and themselves. They usually say, if people join our organization, then they should accept our rules and our way of management.

- The *competition* between GVs plays an important role in making committee members accountable. In effect, having decided to organize the sale of cotton on their own, leaders are keen to succeed. They are forced to succeed to prove their capability to manage collective funds and to develop their hamlet. This situation helps them to build cohesion in the hamlet. Leaders found it easy to build this cohesion because of the way they were treated by people in Gbècogblé: treated as *gens de la brousse*, they want to show their capacity to develop their hamlet and to improve the image of their hamlet. Ekponté has been seen as a remote hamlet. People are aware of their position in the region and would like to prove the opposite.
- the *existence of an effective indigenous farmers' organization*, the *Kugbè*, contributed to the development of respect for common goods. In the *Kugbè*, as described in chapter 3, people fear the powers of the dead and believe in god and ancestors. This belief helped to make people respect the funds of the organization. The same leaders in *Kugbè* are in the GV and are also training their replacements. They reproduce their *Kugbè* behaviour in the GV, and people like to preserve such behaviour.
- the *openness of discussion* contributed to keeping people accountable to the organization. Through regular meetings members or at least big farmers are informed about the management of the organization.
- the *training of members* of the GV was also an important factor in making leaders accountable. In effect, the extension agency organized some training for leaders in simple book keeping to allow them to keep note of expenses and earnings. Literacy was also encouraged in the hamlet to enable many people to have access to written information and also to be able to check the weight of their cotton.

4.7 Analysis and conclusion

Before analyzing these cases I would like to draw attention to the fact that the GV is considered here as an organization introduced by the CARDER. I do so because it was on the initiative of the CARDER, a government organization, that the GVs were created. These cases have shown that one cannot talk about a pure GV as it is a mixture of indigenous and modern organization. One cannot understand the

functioning of these organizations if he has not in mind that they are influenced by the 'traditional' culture. I talk about modern organization to some degree. I will talk also about indigenous organizations to some degree.

The same thing holds true for the structural and cognitive explanations as they influence each other, and it is not possible to draw a line and say that this can be explained by the structural arrangement alone and that by the cognitive explanations.

4.7.1 Analysis

Structural explanations examine the effects that situations and contexts have on behaviour. They focus on the influence of the roles created by the common expectations associated with certain statuses or positions. In the cases of successful GV – the GV of Soukpodagni and the GV of Ekponté – the CARDER established the structural arrangement and decided on the roles of different members of the different committees. Besides this structural arrangement which, in effect, should contribute to the accountability of committee members to their constituencies, there is the strong social pressure. I will focus here on the social pressure, as the structural arrangement of the CARDER is also present in the failed GVs. The social pressure is very strong in the hamlets of Soukpodagni and Ekponté.

In the hamlet of Soukpodagni it is the council of elders which acts as the rock of reference. People in this committee are attached to their hamlet and develop the future plan of their hamlet. All activities should fall into that planning. The village council of elders with other people may wake up early in the morning to discuss village problems before going to their farms. Also, children of the village living outside created an association which contributes to the development of the village. This association forms a second rock of reference in Soukpodagni. In such a situation, people in the executive committee seem to be more oriented to collective action instead of pursuing their own interests and destroying the interest of the community. But this structural explanation does not prevent free-riders from operating. A case was found in this village in which a few committee members tried to divert the funds of the village with the help of the extension agent.

In the case of the hamlet of Ekponté, people hold regular meetings in which representatives report their activities to hamlets. Representatives broker between outsiders and villagers. They collect information from the outside world and discuss it with villagers before taking any major decisions. Outsiders get feedback through these representatives or from villagers themselves. Most people are informed about the activities carried out by the GV.

Committee members do not possess any formal authority but they are very powerful in the hamlet. They get this authority because they are able to lead the organization fairly and are not accused of corruption with public funds. Their authority comes also from the fact that they collect useful information from the outside world in order to help the villagers solve their real problems. Thus it was the case of the provision of tap water in the village, easing the workload of women, and the building of storage facilities, a school and latrines in the village.

The influence of social pressure is very important in the village because of its size. It comprises two main families and people are expected to be oriented to collective action. Board members of the GV are from both extended families and robbery is severely sanctioned. It is a great shame for the hamlet when a member is accused as a thief. In such situations, committee members are compelled to manage public funds properly. Activities in Ekponté can be qualified as sustainable as the group is small. This is consistent with Olson's stipulation that voluntary collective action will be more sustainable in small groups.

The accountability mechanism which exists in the village of Ekponté is consistent with the process of electing people to office, the process of renewal of committees, the process of building local capacity for management of common goods, and decision-making on activities of the village. Most of these activities are carried out on the basis of consensus and by inheritance. This prevents the disappointment of some people when the election is done by vote.

This explanation is not enough to explain why the accountability mechanisms are effective in the GVs of Soukpodagni and of Ekponté.

These two GVs are in a situation of competition with the neighbouring villages to which they would like to prove their capacity for management and upgrade their status. As they are perceived as people from the bush, the GV was an opportunity to prove the opposite. This creates a solidarity within the village. Boards members approve this solidarity and are accountable to their fellow villagers.

4.7.2 *Conclusion*

The chapter has shown that the effectiveness of the GV, a farmers' organization, depends among other factors on the structure and the culture of the society.

In establishing GVs, the CARDER has urged these organizations to have a General Assembly which is the most important organ, an Executive Committee and a Control Committee. One third of the Executive Committee should be renewed every year. It was also expected that the GV would contribute to community achievements through collegial management of public funds. But various results were achieved in different GVs and different reasons underline this difference.

The GVs which fail to involve villagers in decisions on community investments and technological innovations are characterized by a poor management, ethnic conflicts between members and between young and elders and between men and women. Lack of accountability is the main factor which prevents community achievements. Villagers do not feel themselves concerned with the management of the public goods which comprise the refunds and the *plus-value*. These funds aim at community investments and as such they do not care about their management. GV members are not motivated to check the activities of the committee members. Consequently they do not participate in the communal activities and do not exert any power over the committee members in order to make them accountable to their constituencies. Another effect of their behaviour is the fact that the main decisions about the use of the public funds are taken by the committee members, the extension agents or the administrative authority. The utilization of the communal investments is under the unique control of the committee members or the extension agents

or the administrative authority. The failure to exercise power by the constitencies can also be illustrated by the behaviour of the committee members who take decisions which should be taken by the general assembly. Committee members do not feel themselves accountable to their constituencies, and the Control Committee does not work as the members of this committee cannot check the activities of the executive committee members as they are under their influence. Most members of the Control Committee belong to the same family or to the secret societies of the leaders of the Executive Committee. The study has shown that Executive Committee members contribute in some villages to the election of the members of the Control Committee. Here are some of the factors which contribute to the failure of these GVs.

- most elected people are the wealthy and influential people in the village. They are usually the first to be in contact with outsiders and generally, external agents find it easy to cooperate with them. In some committees, one may find the village chiefs, the literate people or those who got their social position through the practice of magic;
- the Control Committee members are either the sons or the followers of members of the Executive Committee. These relations do not facilitate the exercise of the power given members of the Control Committee by the GV members. In fact, the influential persons contribute to the election of these members. Members of these committees are scared of the effects of their actions. They may lose the security (material and spiritual) they have with the influential people or all under the spells of the sorcerer of the village. There are patron-client relationships in the village. People prefer to keep the *status quo* rather than bearing the costs of behaving otherwise.
- members of the GV are not interested in the management of public funds. They are uninterested in this management as they do not know that a public fund exists, or if they do know the exact amount is not known to them. They are not motivated to participate in this administration because the funds are intended for collective purposes and they prefer to leave these activities to the committee members.

The successful GVs showed the following characteristics:

- the process of electing committee members: in their villages criteria are set out by which to elect people. People are elected on the basis of consensus. In fact, they avoid the vote. The cohesion of the village does not allow a vote and they prefer to choose people by consensus. In a small village, everybody is well known and people of dubious morality are not chosen. Activities of kinsmen are also taken into account before choosing a person. This process of choosing prevents the choice of lazy persons or thieves, and takes into account the composition of the village. Functions in the GV pass from one family to another and thus a balance is respected among families.
- The process of renewal of the committee: the structural arrangement of the GV prescribes the renewal of one third of the committee every year, but this is not done automatically and members of the committee stay in office for many years.

But villagers in the successful GVs renew their committee members through different processes.

In the GV of Ekponté, the renewal is done through inheritance. People in office train their nephews to take over their functions when they will no longer be able to carry out such functions. This system has been working for many generations and there are few conflicts between old and young people. Young people are involved in the management of the public funds.

- The building of local capacity: As mentioned in the previous paragraph, old members train young people to take over their activities. The processes of appointing people to committees, of renewing people and of building local capacity are in harmony with the existing indigenous organizations. This contributes to avoiding a rupture between the existing rules and values of the society and the imposed rules. Members of the newly established organization have their roots in the indigenous organizations. Leaders are brokers between introduced and indigenous organizations.

Notes

1 Benin is organized as follows:

- Province (divided into Districts or Sous-Préfectures);
- District (divided into communes);
- Commune (comprises many villages); and
- Village (comprises many hamlets).

GV is usually established at the village level.

2 a) Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural (CARDER) is the most important rural development agency in Benin with regard to its staff size and their representation at village level. The CARDER is also important with regard to the activities performed.

b) The creation of GVs responded to the need to increase the involvement of villagers in decision making for a better control by members of activities being carried out at village level. It was expected that the social control would deter mismanagement as people know each other very well in the village. Many activities were carried out by the CARDER in favour of the boards' members of GVs: literacy programmes, training in book-keeping and notes-keeping for financial and administrative management. Decisions to create these GVs were taken by politicians without consulting farmers.

3 The GV is an organization of farmers for services. It carries out activities such as:

- the marketing of agricultural products and trading of other goods necessary for members;
- the supply of input and credit to members; and
- use of the profit accrued to these activities for the improvement of the wellbeing of members and of the village.

Members of the GV are villagers. But, the effective members are the cotton producers, for this crop is the only one which is well organized. This is due to its important contribution to the economy of the country.

4 One of the objectives of the PRSA is to promote the federations of GVs. Federations will be given more responsibility which will enable their involvement in decision making at all levels: the village, communal, District and Provincial levels. Federations were created at all levels.

5 Crops are produced in remote areas and producers are very often cheated by traders. The GV is expected to help producers to sell their products at better prices. The GV will be able to supply members with information about agricultural prices and marketing opportunities.

6 Many actors benefit from activities in the cotton sector: government workers, traders, owners of lorries, etc. Cotton sector is very important for the government because of its contribution to the exports of the country. It is the core of agricultural activities in Benin. Many services are involved in its production, its marketing, its processing. The cotton fiber is exported. Only 2 percent of the cotton produced in Benin is locally used (Ton & Vodouhè 1995; Vodouhè and Ton 1995). The importance of cotton in the national economy explains why the organization of farmers with respect to its production and marketing is needed. Such organizations ensure its production at better prices.

7 In an ordinary market, there is a forfeit per kilogramme of cotton sold for pesticide used. The difference between the amount deducted for forfeit and the real costs of the pesticide used returns to the village for communal investments. Due to the cost of pesticides, experience of farmers and other reasons, farmers adopt only partially the recommendation of the extension agent with respect to the quantity of pesticide. Farmers use less pesticide than recommended.

8 Inputs on cotton have been subsidized until recently. Because of this, no private traders were involved in the sale of these products. With the restructuring of the agricultural services, many private traders are now allowed and are involved in the supply of agricultural inputs to farmers and in the marketing of the cotton products. The privatization of the cotton sector concerns also the ginning mills (Vodouhè & Ton 1995).

9 Before the creation of self-managed and autonomous markets, extension agents were perceived by producers as people who exploit them and they could not avoid the exploitation. The GV-tests with autonomous markets enable farmers to commercialize their products and to manage the benefit accrued to these activities. The creation of unions may increase their negotiation power with development agencies about prices of inputs and of agricultural products.

10 Many institutions are involved in the cotton sector. The *Fonds de Stabilisation et de Soutien* (FSS) is one of them and is in charge of keeping cotton prices at a reasonable level. Thus to keep product prices at a reasonable level, a policy was developed. The values of a kilogramme of agricultural products are fixed annually. These values are very often inferior than to values of the same products in the international market. When the values of the products on the international market are greater than the values paid to farmers, profits are made. A part of these profits is given back to farmers. A part is kept for administration and for compensation during years when the values paid to farmers are greater than the values of the same products in the international market. The fact that cotton prices are well known in advance convinces many farmers to grow cotton because they are sure about what they can get from their crops. The FSS is a marketing-board and farmers are not in direct contact with the reality of the international market. The real cotton prices are not known by farmers. Marketing-boards are known to have misdirected people for years in many countries, but it is still working in Benin. Decisions about restructuring this marketing board depend on actors such as the national government and the international French company the CFDT.

11 The type of structural arrangement adopted by the GV was decided by the CARDER which based its decisions on structural arrangements at work in developed countries. The CARDER assumed that villagers might elect members of the GV board, and renew them, and that the control committee would force people to work honestly. The assumptions of the CARDER did not consider the reality of power relationships in Beninese villages, the meaning of checking the work of a person in a village.

12 A tax is generally collected by the government agency and farmers are not informed about the reasons for its collection and how it is used. The weight deduction is perceived as another government tax.

13 Overvaluation concerns some influential members of the executive committee and some people who are trained to join the team for cotton weighing.

14 It is very often explained to producers that the 2 kilogrammes represent the weight of the bale used to wrap the cotton before weighing.

15 There are three categories of cotton: first class, second class and third class. The first class is the most expensive. Most farmers work to get first class cotton. The quality of the cotton is checked twice: once in the market by a quality controller and secondly by another quality controller at the ginning mill.

16 All influential members of the Executive Committee come from the chief village. Some members come from other hamlets but do not have some influence on decisions. Furthermore, the chief village was supposed to benefit from achievements on behalf of the region (this is a perception of people from the chief village). This is one of the reasons for the creation of GV in other villages which became competitive with this so-called chief village.

17 The General Assembly of the GV in this village is the same as the assembly of the village. The GA did not only the cotton growers but also some other villagers. The GA was not held on a regular basis. At least three or four times a GA has been held in the village and it gathered about 50 people each time.

18 Although the council of elders appears homogenous in handling the problems of the village, there are matters of dispute between the extended families. One elder would like to be the chief of the village. He was the former chief of the village and would like to continue to be. One of his successors died, the second is sick and he is accused of cursing people who replaced him in office.

19 The main conflict related to leadership in the village is due to the fact that one elder who has been the chief of the village for ten years would like to remain in power. He attempted unsuccessfully two times to be elected. One of his successors (from another extended family) died and the second is sick. He was said to have cursed them. But villagers recognized that he has some qualities with respect to work. People did not like him in office as chief of the village because he forced people to work for the village when he was in office. It is difficult for an outsider to detect that there is some conflict between elders in the village of Soukpodagni. They are always together to meet outsiders and to defend the interests of the village.

20 Producers of the hamlet Ekponté would like to get the refunds and 'plus-values' for investments in their own hamlet. They would like to develop their hamlet instead of depending on the village Gbècogblé. They would like to improve their administrative and social status.

21 A is older than B. B is older than C. C is older than D. E is eldest son of B and the nephew of C and D. D is still leading the village and is training E to take over his responsibility in the future. As he said himself, I am getting old and my nephew (the eldest son of my eldest brother) can now act on behalf of the village where my presence is needed but not obligatory). He is demonstrating already his capacity to lead the village.

22 This meeting was held in 1990 after the sale of cotton and after the GV obtained the refunds on weight. Members of the GV in 1990 were exclusively from the hamlets of Ekponté and Tolehoué. The construction of the water tank could be advantageous for both villages but more to Ekponté than to Tolehoué because of the distance between the two hamlets (about 1000 metres). The water tank was constructed and they could get water taps one year later in both hamlets.

5 Establishment of functional groups: attempts at collective action for sustainable development

An organization which understands poor people's problems cannot develop into a bureaucratic organization; when it does, it alienates itself from the poor.

Stan Burckley 1993

This chapter analyzes the effects of strategies aiming at establishing a countervailing power in farmers' organizations introduced by a non-governmental organization. It aims at assessing the extent to which a non-governmental organization could contribute to the establishment of accountability mechanisms which are both acceptable to members and effective.

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms introduced by a non-governmental organization (NGO) aiming at human resource development. The ultimate objective of this chapter is to analyze the extent to which external interventions can contribute to establishing mechanisms useful for making leaders of farmers' organizations accountable to members, and for making development agencies more oriented to poor farmers.

The chapter aims at discussing strategies useful for inducing better linkages between farmers and development agencies and better linkages between agencies. In this chapter, I would like to argue that outside intervention can contribute to building effective accountability mechanisms, and that the checks and balances they provide are necessary conditions for effective and just rural development.

The *Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-Préfectures du Mono* (PADES-Mono) is an NGO which, through a participatory approach, aims at producing accountability mechanisms which are useful for compelling interveners to respond to the needs of small farmers, and for compelling leaders to be accountable to members of their organizations.

I would like to argue that there is no sustainable and more equitable development without the participation of the people concerned with this development. In order to avoid an approach which fails to address the felt basic needs¹ of the majority of beneficiaries, their involvement in crucial decisions which concern them is necessary. Their involvement in most activities starts with problem identification, and continues through subsequent phases to the execution and evaluation of identified activities. Farmers' organizations are the core of intervention strategies of most NGOs. It is expected that many problems can be solved if efforts are brought

together. Collective action would contribute to the development of the village. Farmers, beyond their individual organizations may form a federation, and contribute to the rise of organizations which may exert some influence on regional and national politics (see Widner 1994a, 1994b, Collion 1995). Widner (1994a) discusses the case of the rise of civic associations in Ivory Coast, while Collion describes the situation in Mali.

In the Province of Mono, differentiation among farmers is important (Den Ouden 1986, 1990, 1991 and Fanou 1993:83-141) with respect to production factors. Although some farmers may have more than 10 hectares, the majority are holders of small farms. The average farm size owned by an individual family is less than one hectare. Activities of government extension concern mainly cotton production. Little or no adequate attention is paid to other crops such as maize, cassava, tomatoes, etc. These crops are very important to farmers with respect to food supply. Access to land is becoming difficult because of population growth and the increased needs of farmers. The needs of farmers have increased because of the effects of modernization.² These different developments cause degradation of the soil as it becomes less possible to leave it fallow for a long period. Farmers are developing strategies such as 'oil palm fallow'³ which can be considered as an agro-forestry activity for the restoration of soils (Brouwers 1993; Röling 1995). Given the rapid population growth, the rapid degradation of the soil, and the inactivity the government in offering adequate services to solve the problems, there is a need for farmers to organize and to engage in collective action such as construction of roads, claiming services, building of common meeting houses, maternity clinics for the village, or the processing of agricultural products. These are indivisible collective actions for which many people would like to free-ride waiting till others bear the costs of taking such initiatives. The opportunity for people to free-ride may lead to a situation in which nobody takes initiatives. But the 1980s yielded some optimism about the potential of collective action, especially in resource-management and other dimensions, as long as the internal and external environments were favourable to the release of 'social energies' (Carroll 1992: 22).

The *Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-Préfectures du Mono* (PADES) is active in trying to promote effective farmers' organizations which would contribute to local development by claiming services from relevant institutions operating in the areas. In the long term, these organizations would exert some influence on local agents, and on regional and national institutions.

The present study examines the process of developing farmers' organizations capable of influencing development activities in Mono. PADES intends to encourage people's willingness to cooperate and to influence politics. To this end, it establishes organizations, holds meetings, induces the creation of coordination committees between organizations, and organizes excursions, as well as *Journée Africaine de Participation Populaire au Développement* (JAPPD) (see PADES 1991).

The chapter is organized as follows:

- an introduction outlining the focus of the chapter and the rise of NGOs in Benin;
- an overview of PADES which deals with the historical development of PADES-Mono, its intervention approach, and accountability mechanisms introduced at the farmer and the institutional levels. The different accountability mechanisms

promoted by PADES are presented. Some of them are discussed in this section, for example the effectiveness of the JAPPD and the two platforms of agencies working in the areas, while other mechanisms are discussed in the case studies.

- case studies which comprise successful and unsuccessful cases with respect to the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms; and
- an analysis and conclusion.

The data used in this chapter were collected by different methods. The most important method was the follow-up of the activities of organizations which had been promoted by PADES. Semi-structured interviews contributed to the gathering of information about opinions and perceptions of different actors involved in these activities. This was done during the period starting from the end of 1990 till 1995. My assistant and myself had easy access to PADES because of my role as representative of the University in the steering committee of PADES. Our position might have limited access to certain information, but we tried to separate our research work from our membership in this steering committee. For example, we did not report to PADES what farmers told us about the organization in response to our questions. In the methodology section, strategies used to overcome delicate situations were explained.

As the effectiveness of farmers' organizations can be viewed at the individual level as well as at group level, I discussed matters with individuals and attended group meetings. At the individual level, the organization may contribute to raising the living conditions of individuals and to their development capacity. Broadly speaking, farmers' organizations aim at involving farmers in development activities i.e., their participation in development activities. At the societal level, the organization may contribute to the social and cultural amenities, and may represent the interests of its members in bargaining with outside interveners.

5.1.2 *The rise of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Benin*

The purpose of this section is to present the context in which the *Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-Préfectures du Mono* (PADES-Mono) was initiated.

The poor performance of the Marxist-Leninist government in dealing adequately with the problems of smallholder farmers contributed to the rise of NGOs in Benin. With respect to this unsatisfactory performance, there was a need to find a new balance between the public and the private sectors. The public sector should reduce its involvement in the economy and concentrate on the role of stimulator and controller of the economy. The private sector should develop its initiatives in order to play a more important role in the economy (Vodouhê & Tossou 1995:173). The government under the pressure of the international donor agencies decided to give more responsibility to civic society. It is in this context that NGOs were promoted. International donor agencies, having lost their trust in government administrations, contributed to the promotion of NGOs in order to bypass ineffective and hierarchical government agencies.

PADES-Mono is one of these NGOs, created on the basis of the law of 1901. It belongs to the category of grassroots support organizations defined by Carroll (1992:9) as

'a civic developmental entity that provides services allied support to local groups of disadvantaged rural or urban households and individuals. In its capacity as an intermediary institution, the grassroots support organization forges links between the beneficiaries and the often remote levels of government, donor, and financial institutions. It may also provide services indirectly to other organizations that support the poor or perform coordinating or networking functions.'

Carroll distinguishes two other categories of NGO. The second group of NGOs is characterized by its functions. These NGOs provide services and linkages to local groups and, in principle, represent and are accountable to their base membership.

The third group comprises primary grassroots organizations. These are the smallest aggregations of individuals or households that regularly engage in some joint development activity as an expression of collective interest. The functional groups described in this book correspond to these primary grassroots organizations.

Other classifications which overlap with the present classification have been made (see Wellard. 1993:136-141).⁴

The historical development of NGOs in Benin is characterized by the creation of the first NGOs, called *Associations de développement*, which were accepted by the single-party regime. These associations were initiated by people living in cities and sought to promote the development of their villages or of their regions. I discussed in chapter 2 the scope of these associations. Many other NGOs have been created since then.

Since the creation of the first there was a rapid increase in the number of NGOs. According to UNDP reports on NGOs (PNUD/MPRE 1994a and PNUD/MPRE 1994b) there are more than 700 NGOs and associations in Benin. About 500 NGOs are present in the field, but among them only 47 are active and effective (Tossou 1995b:3). Most NGOs have been created without clear objectives. They are working in various fields:

- training members (male and female) of local organizations;
- supporting agricultural production by providing advice on storage, agricultural product processing and husbandry;
- giving advice on health care and nutrition;
- raising awareness of environmental issues;
- literacy training;
- promoting saving and credit and
- promoting community infrastructures.

Most NGOs in Benin are created by active civil servants or persons retired early from government or private services. They are supported financially, materially and technically by international or foreign NGOs. Many international NGOs are present in Benin. Some of them are in direct contact with the field while others operate through national or local NGOs.

In addition to these international, national and local NGOs, there are some federations of NGOs. These are:

- The *Conseil national des ONG Actives au Bénin* (CONGAB) established in 1988;
- The *Fédération Nationale des ONG et assimilés du Bénin* (FENONG) established in 1992;

- The *Fédération Nationale des Associations Féminines du Bénin* (FNAFB) established in 1990;
- The *Fédérations des Unions de Producteurs du Bénin* (FURPRO-Bénin);
- the *Coalition des ONG béninoises pour le Développement Durable* established in 1994;
- the *Forum des Organisations Volontaires Africaines pour le Développement* (FOVAD) established in 1986;

There are attempts by the government to coordinate NGO activities. This led to the creation of secretaries of NGOs and of coordination committees. Some important coordination committees are the *Sécrétariat Permanent des ONG pour le Développement Durable* (SPONGDD) and the Coordination Service of NGO activities.

The NGO which is the focus of this chapter is PADES Mono. It is a part of the SNV, which is a Dutch Foundation and has been established in Benin since 1970. Given its dependence on SNV, PADES has international and national characteristics. The staff of PADES consisted of Beninese and Dutch people who are in charge of setting the policy and programme of the organization. This staff is also in charge of the execution of the programme; it reports to the SNV, which can influence the activities of PADES, and is paid by the SNV.

Table 15 indicates some of the NGOs operating in Mono Province and the source of their support.

Table 15 Active NGOs in Mono Province

NGO	Date of creation	Actual partners
APRETECTRA	1982	NCOS Belgium, CEBEMO, MEMISA, PNUD, Embassy of USA, Canada, MICAC, AFRICARE, FAIB, SNV, OCSD, Switzerland
CIRAPIP	1984	Development Foundation in Africa PROTONS Belgium
CERIDAA	1987	CRS, Dutch Embassy, PAM, CTA
MCDI	1987	Dutch CARITAS, World Church Council
ESAM	1987	PNDP, GTZ, ASAFEDBE, UNICEF, AFRICARE, Embassy of Canada
REPFED	1988	Embassy of Canada, OCSD, FAIB, GTZ
GROPERE	1990	ACDB, JMC, AFRICARE, GTZ, UNICEF, PNUD, PROTONS, FARGF
CEREP	1990	GTZ, German Embassy, Dutch Embassy, FODES
CBDIBA	1991	GTZ, Dutch Embassy, Embassy of Canada, SNV, EZE BECEAO, IRED, Action Carême Switzerland, 'Frères des Hommes', Bruke, AFRICARE, Dutch CEBEMO
APFEM	1991	GTZ, AFRICARE, OCSD, CRDI, ABPF, FPBS
GRABS	1992	GTZ, UNICEF, AFRICARE, 'Solidarité Mondiale'

Source: After Tossou (1995b: 10-11)

Strength and weaknesses of NGOs

The discourses within most NGOs in Benin indicate that they are in favour of participatory approaches⁵ to rural development. This is a strength and it can be expected that farmers will be able to participate in decision-making concerning rural development.

The number of NGOs is increasing rapidly due to the increasing pressure of international donors. NGOs have the potential to contribute to the rising awareness of the rural and urban people. They have some advantages over government institutions because of their flexibility, informality, commitment, and participatory style (Caroll 1992). NGOs could provide vertical mediating links between local groups and the higher levels of the financial, technical and political power structure. The increased freedom to intervene in rural and urban areas and their direct involvement in these areas could contribute to the development of effective farmers' organizations which would contribute to making government and development institutions more accountable.

5.2 Overview of the *Projet d'Appui au Développement des Sous-Préfectures du Mono* (PADES-MONO)

The actual objectives of PADES Mono can be summarized as follows:

- reinforcement of the social, political and economic position of the marginalized people (women and men);
- relative improvement of the social, economic and political position of women with respect to men; and
- sustainable management of natural resources.

The following aims at describing PADES and its activities to promote civil associations. This section comprises the historical development of PADES, its intervention approach and strategies, and its achievements.

5.2.1 Historical development of PADES MONO

The project PADES (ex-PEMR) was initiated conjointly by the *Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques* (FSA), the Dutch Organization for Development (SNV) and the *Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural* (CARDER), and began its activities in 1987. Why did the three institutions jointly undertake such a venture?

The FSA was financially and materially supported by the Dutch government which was helping the faculty to develop teaching curricula and materials and its human capacity. The FSA carried out a number of research projects on the Adja plateau, mainly in the villages of Zouzouvou in Djakotomè, Touléoudji in Toviklin and Gbanavé in Dogbo. One of the conclusions of these studies was that the intervention approach used in the area was top-down and did not respond to farmers' problems. Farmers were not involved in decision-making with regard to setting research agendas and deciding on development activities. Following these conclusions and in order to contribute to the development of the areas, the FSA

initiated a project using the participatory approach. Lecturers of the FSA were expected to use the results of this experience in their teaching. It was expected that the project would contribute to building links between theories developed in classroom and the field. The FSA carried out its activities in Mono during a period characterized by heavy involvement of government institutions in rural areas. During that period all interventions in the agricultural sector were shouldered by the CARDER. The FSA and SNV were obliged to carry out their activities within the CARDER. The functional group approach was chosen as the participatory approach to use in the project. This is an iterative approach and comprises five elements: mobilization, organization, training, technical support and system management (Röling 1988:166-167). It was chosen because of the fact that approaches used the area were not satisfactory and were criticized for their lack of flexibility, their top-down approach and their heavy administration. The structure in charge of development in the area was perceived as being too hierarchical. The FSA and the SNV⁶ had the conviction that an approach based on the participation of farmers would contribute to better achievement.

In fact, the CARDER was the development agency which, since its creation in 1969, had had the monopoly of interventions in rural areas. Its approach focused more on technical aspects of development. It was represented in most villages by development agents and in all districts by the 'Responsable de Développement Rural' (RDR). The activities of the CARDER cover interventions in agriculture, animal husbandry, fishing, input supply, marketing and the organization of rural areas. The approach used was based on the 'Training and visit' (T&V) system (Benor, Harrison & Baxter 1984) and concentrated mainly on the improving management of extension. The CARDER achieved some positive results with regard to the increase in cotton production, but this limited success was criticized on the grounds of the failure to satisfy the basic needs of farmers and the large amount of resources used to reach these results. The CARDER Mono was not, at that time, financially supported by any donor and wanted to benefit from outside financial support. The CARDER was willing to host the project and to get some indirect gain from it (some material and financial profit). The CARDER knew that it would not get any direct support from the SNV but it believed that it might be possible to gain from the project. The CARDER officials were convinced that the project would be a failure and therefore the 'theorists' from the University would be confounded.

The SNV, a Dutch organization for development, aimed at reaching poor people. It defined new plans in 1987 and was willing to :

- pay special attention to regional development programmes and to district level programmes;
- pursue projects aiming at reaching beneficiaries with external funds. These projects should not be located in public institutions;
- stop financing public institutions and to select intervention areas.

A project using the functional group approach was perceived by the SNV as a means to deal more directly with the rural population and to develop tools for their interventions in rural areas.

Starting from 1989 the quinquennial planning of the SNV adopted the functional group approach for its interventions. A joint pilot project of CARDER, FSA and SNV

was financed by the SNV and started its activities in 1987. Its results convinced people to adopt this approach in 1989, as mentioned above. The SNV thought that the project team operating in the project would form an intermediary organization.

Activities of the project started in the villages of Zouzouvou in the District of Djakotomey, Touléoudji and Atindéouhoué in the district of Toviklin and Gbanané in the District of Dogbo. These were the villages in which the FSA conducted its research (see the map). As such villagers were in regular contact with many interventions: the CARDER, FSA, RAMR, schools, health care centres, etc.

Since 1987, PADES has grown and gained experience. Among its goals are to contribute to building the capacity of farmers to claim services and to negotiate with development agencies. In other words, PADES is expected to play a facilitation role. The capacity of farmers is built up by giving information and creating opportunities for farmers and development agencies to meet so that, in the long term, farmers will be able to do these things without PADES. PADES strives to promote the accountability of leaders to their organizations, and the accountability of development agencies to farmers through their organizations. To reach this end, many mechanisms were established: regular meetings of farmers' organizations, exchanges between farmers, meetings with development agencies, creating devices linking different development agencies. I will come back to these mechanisms later on. These tools were applied during the implementation of PADES. With respect to the evolution of PADES, in terms of the involvement of its staff, farmers and their organizations in decision-making about problem identification, activities to perform, the size of the groups, etc, one can distinguish three different periods. These periods are also characterized by the extension of the project to other villages, the improvement of the implementation of the approach and the diversification of the focus of the project. PADES follows a learning process approach and adapts itself with respect to lessons learnt from the practice. It is therefore flexible.

First period or the focus on the establishment of farmer groups

During this period the different steps followed were:

- village meetings to identify problems encountered by villagers. Discussions were held with three different groups: women's (young and adult) group, young farmers group, and adults group. PADES promoted its own farmers' organizations and did not try to reorganize the existing farmers' organizations.
- The different problems identified were aggregated into a few main problems;
- Villagers were asked to create groups of twenty people each to act to solve these problems.

PADES staff decided on the main important problems and on the size of each group. People in the different groups did not feel themselves involved in the activities chosen by the groups because of the way problems were identified and decisions were made. The result was that, in many cases, groups were formed whose members had never carried out the group's activities. For example, a group for the processing of cassava into *gari* consisted of twenty women, but none of them had ever processed cassava into *gari* before becoming a member of the group. They were not owners of farms on which cassava was grown. During this period, money

was donated and credit made available by PADES to farmers, and many groups were set up by farmers in response to the stimulus of PADES. Villagers chose to be members of groups in order to get money to carry out other activities. Later on, many of these groups shifted to petty trade.

PADES granted credit to functional groups at a 24 percent interest rate while village committees were granted financial assistance because they worked for the welfare of the whole community.

The second period: Improvement of the involvement of farmers in problem identification

Due to the fact that few groups could successfully carry out their 'chosen' activities, PADES staff, having learnt from the first period, tried to improve their approach to rural communities. They tried to be less involved in problem identification and in the creation of groups. A major lesson learnt from the first period was that groups should be formed by farmers themselves according to their own criteria. Villagers had some experience with interveners, and they knew that they needed to form groups in order to get financial support from a project. Because of this, they did not care about the activities to be done: the main thing was to be in a group to get financial support.

Consequently, PADES staff moved towards conducting a Rapid Rural Appraisal with farmers. A team of two PADES staff stayed in the village to make the project known in these new villages. They discussed the issues with villagers, and then withdrew from the village. Villagers who were willing to work with the project visited the project office and asked for more information; they received information and advice. Villagers created their own groups without intervention by the project staff; they got together around problems they thought relevant to their situation and carried out appropriate activities. The progress made was in the creation of the groups and the identification of the problems of farmers.

The third period: Support to individuals farmer and groups

This period corresponds to the extension of the project activities to individual villagers. During this period, the project supported individual activities which were expected to have positive effects on group activities. For example, if the supply of animal food is a problem for a group of villagers who are raising animals, PADES may help any individual who undertakes the production of animal food in the area in order to make this input available to raising animals.

PADES also responds to demands which fall outside their intervention zone because of the first groups created and the desire to give assistance to people who ask for it.

5.2.2 The intervention approach and its development in PADES Mono

Before talking about the functional group approach, let us recall its underlying reasons. The initiators of PADES thought, in line with Röling's conclusions after working in a project called 'The Small Farmer and Development Cooperation', that

the key ingredient for smallholder farmer development is the organization of smallholder farmers, which develops joint understanding of problems, mobilizes local resources, assembles the mix of essentials for innovation, and creates a powerful voice for making claims for support and for exerting countervailing pressure on powers that seek to exploit and oppress them. (Röling 1995). The initiators base their approach on the five elements mentioned above.

PADES promoted farmers' organizations through the functional group approach, and was the first NGO to implement this approach in Benin under the Marxist-Leninist regime. Through trial and error, the executive committee of PADES developed strategies which were based on a joint learning process. The activities of PADES staff comprise mobilization, organization, and the provision of training and technical supports. This is summarized as follows:

- *animation* (consciousness raising): through this activity, villagers are expected to develop a collective awareness of their real situation in order to define their real problems;
- organization: PADES intervenes in the establishment of various groups in order to solve their common problems;
- training: local knowledge is valued and the main focus is on joint learning. There are two types of training: informal and formal training. The informal training deals mainly with organizational, managerial and methodological aspects while the formal training deals with the bookkeeping, health care training, agricultural technologies etc;
- the service provision: PADES helps groups get into contact with relevant services which operate in the areas in order to benefit from their capabilities. But, sometimes, due to the absence or the ineffectiveness of such services, PADES takes the responsibility to provide them. This was the case with the grant of credit to groups, until the recent establishment of formal credit institutions in the area.
- the setting up of system management for sustainability.

As a consequence of the above activities, PADES staff contribute to the organization of:

- regular meetings of the groups;
- excursions of farmers from one area to another so they learn from their fellow farmers;
- unions at village level;
- a *Journée Africaine de Participation Populaire au Développement* (JAPPD) which aims at bringing together representatives of farmers, officials from the other intervention agencies and representatives of development agencies.

The intermediary role of PADES

PADES acts as an intermediary between the farmers' organizations and relevant services. The functioning of this tripartite arrangement would lead to better participation of farmers in the development process (Röling 1995; Sene 1995). It is expected that through this mechanism development agencies would be more accountable to farmers' organizations. PADES would disappear when farmers' organizations become strong enough to deal with development institutions without intermediaries.

PADES conducts activities at the farmers' level in order to promote accountability within farmers' organizations and between development agencies and these farmers' organizations. At the same time it is active at development agencies level to prepare them to work with farmers and to be accountable to them. There are also some joint activities which bring farmers and development agencies together. I will discuss this process in section 5.2.3.

PADES is following a learning process,⁷ raising the following points:

- the lack of knowledge of all relevant processes and their interrelationships which have to be influenced in order to achieve the objectives of the project (see PADES 1995:21 and Van Dusseldorp: 1991: 11-12);
- the environment of the project is not static.

Because of these point PADES has adopted the process approach which allows them to adapt their different activities to the changing environment.

The following presents the different accountability devices established in order to promote on one side, the accountability of leaders to their organizations, and, on the other, the accountability of development agencies to farmers' organizations.

5.2.3 Formal accountability mechanisms

This section consists of three main parts: the mechanisms at farmers' organizations level, the mechanisms at institutional level, and the mechanisms involving farmers and agencies.

The objective of the section is to give an overview of the formal mechanisms introduced by PADES in order to promote the accountability of leaders to their organization's members and development agencies to farmers' organizations. Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 will discuss the effectiveness of these accountability mechanisms.

Accountability at farmers level

The accountability at the farmers level comprises the elections and renewal of board members, regular meeting and the establishment of coordination committees.

Election and renewal process

There are attempts to promote⁸ fair elections and renewal of the members of different committees on a regular basis. Groups need representatives for negotiation with development agencies and with the other farmers' groups. Farmers were accustomed to choosing committees, because they had been in contact with successive development agencies which insisted on the creation of an organization before getting any financial or material help from them. As such, it was not difficult for farmers to form various committees for various groups. The elections are supposed to be democratic and there should be renewal of committee members. By proceeding this way it was expected that nobody could withhold information and that everybody would get some power by sharing information. By sharing information and

getting some power, members may exert some influence on the committee members in order to make them accountable to the group.

Regular meetings

PADES promotes regular group meetings in order to enhance the exchange of information among members of the group and to take joint decisions about what actions to take. A PADES representative attends the first meetings in order to follow the course of discussions between members and to give additional information. The main actors are supposed to be farmers, but in reality farmers wait for proposals from the representative. Regular meetings are supposed to promote democracy within the group, as people can express their opinions. Coordination and control committees were created by farmers in a few villages. These committees are different from those created in GVs and aim at helping groups improve their performance and making leaders of various farmers' groups accountable to their members. Their activities vary from one village to another. Most coordination and control committees were established by farmers themselves. Sometimes they act on behalf of PADES in the villages and contribute to the improvement of group activities. They play a catalyst role in helping groups to put together some of their resources in order to solve community problems: construction of roads, storage house, health care centres, research-action, etc;

With regard to the catalyst role, many groups are still operative because what was done by the coordination committee. In effect, villagers have established these committees in order to check the activities of different functional groups in the village. Some of them work as a control committee, while others aim at helping the functional groups of their village to improve their work by giving them some training in bookkeeping, in keeping notes.

The method of election and the regularity of meetings will be discussed in the case studies.

Making development agencies more accountable to farmers

To make development agencies more accountable to farmers' organizations, PADES initiated discussion platforms between development agencies. Two platforms⁹ were initiated: one at the District level and the other at Province level.

Comité de Coordination et de Suivi de la Sous-Préfecture (CCS)

The CCS is a forum meant for officials of development agencies operating in the District of Dogbo. The District of Dogbo is the core region of the activities of PADES. The participants of the meetings in the CCS are:

- representatives of farmers;
- the official of the health care centre;
- the official from the extension agency service at the District level, i.e., the District Extension Officer;
- the official of the social services in the District;

- the manager of the rural bank (CLCAM);
- the Coordinator of literacy training;
- two representatives of PADES.

Comité Consultatif de Projet (CCP)

The CCP brings together the following officials working at the provincial level:

- Director of Planning and Statistics;
- the General Director of the CARDER;
- the departmental director of health;
- the director of the rural credit bank;
- the chief of social services;
- the chief of the maintenance of roads; and
- an official from the project RAMR (*Recherche Appliquée en Milieu Réel*).

In addition to these members, the following people participate in the meetings of the CCP:

- representatives of farmers;¹⁰
- a representative of the FSA;
- the SNV Coordinator of the activities in the South;
- two representatives of PADES.

During the meetings of the CCS and CCP, plans of and reports on the activities carried out by PADES are discussed. The main objectives in establishing these platforms are:

- to assist the good integration of PADES into the development of the region;
- to promote information exchange among the main actors involved in the development of the area; and
- to facilitate the extension of the project ideas, philosophy and experiences of PADES (see PADES 1993: 37-38).

The role of the FSA is to contribute with its neutral view to the improvement of the relations between agencies with respect to PADES. Its contributions in terms of theory were also welcomed.

Participants of these two platforms value these meetings as they facilitate exchanges between development agencies. Most members attend these meetings. The CCS is convened every three months while the CCP meets every six months. The meetings of the CCS are more regular than those of the CCP because of the difficulty of getting all the officials working at the provincial level to come together. Items discussed in the CCS and in the CCP are very often different.

The two platforms allow PADES staff to raise problems encountered by farmers. These platforms are crucial for linking institutions which ignore one another while working towards the same objective, at least in principle. Through these platforms, PADES expects to raise the awareness of officials regarding farmers' problems and to get some consensus on the complementarity of their various activities.

In the long term, this platform is expected to become a forum for exchange between members. In such meetings, all participants will be equal partners. A reflection on the way the platform is functioning now indicates that it is the forum

of PADES, for PADES sets the agenda, locates the platform, and meets the expenses related to the meetings.

Problems cannot all be solved at the District level because the officials attending the CCS represent their organizations of which the head offices are located in the capital of the Province. Furthermore, PADES has some activities in the other Districts of the Province. To back the activities of officials in the District of Dogbo, there is a need to sensitize their superiors, and the establishment of the CCP aims at solving such problems. Once convinced, officials in the Province may instruct their agents in the field to cooperate with PADES or with farmers' organizations. Another objective is to make officials at the District level accountable for their decisions. When officials know that their superiors are informed about the activities with PADES, it concentrates their minds. It is therefore a way to make District level officials accountable for what they do with PADES. The platform has no power to compel officials to respect decisions taken in the platform, but it is difficult for members to misbehave when the decisions are taken in a group. Furthermore, bad behaviour may influence the superior's assessment of his representative at the District level.

Making links between farmers and development agencies

Many activities are carried out in order to establish links between farmers and development agencies. The main activities are the organization of contacts between some farmers' groups and development agencies. An example is organizing a visit by an official from the local bank to inform local people about the procedures and the advantages of the bank.

The second way to organize contacts between development agencies and farmers is through the *Journée Africaine de Participation Populaire au Développement (JAPPD)*. This is a day during which the delegates from all functional organizations introduced by PADES in the Province gather once a year in one village to exchange information. Officials of development agencies operating in the Province are also invited to attend the meeting. The first two meetings were organized by PADES with the help of villagers from the host village. The other meetings were organized by a committee of villagers created by villagers themselves. The first JAPPD took place in 1991 and was attended by more than 400 people coming from different villages of the Province. The subsequent meetings brought together as many people as the first. The main subjects proposed by farmers and discussed during the different meetings are:

- development indicators: the perceptions of villagers about development and how a village can develop?
- role of outside interveners in village development and how a village can develop;
- popular participation in development: present situation and perspectives;
- effects of the devaluation of the currency CFA on living conditions in rural areas;
- the role of veterinary agents and forest agents;
- the management of a self-managed dispensary and a maternity clinic;
- how to keep one's health, and the relations between health and living conditions;
- literacy training.

During such meetings, delegates also describe activities carried out by their groups in their village and report on the difficulties encountered, in order to get advice from other farmers. Villagers are very critical about activities carried out by their colleagues. They also put many questions to representatives of development agencies, which very often turns into criticism of the administration and development agencies. Their failure to address the majority of poor farmers' needs are disclosed to the participants in the meeting. Officials answer questions raised by farmers. After primary discussions, farmers visit the achievements of the host village.

The effects of these JAPPD are:

- exchanges of information among farmers on difficulties encountered in carrying out certain activities. Strategies are developed in order to overcome difficulties;
- exchanges between farmers and development agencies: during such meetings officials become aware of what farmers can do themselves and are forced to give certain services to farmers. They become aware of the farmers' ability to claim services from government institutions. They also become aware of the perception of farmers about their institutions.
- the fact that farmers can visit the achievements of the host villages provokes the other farmers' desire to make some improvement in order to host the next meeting in their village. This is a motivation to improve one's own activities if one would like to avoid criticisms when the meeting is held in one's village.
- exchanges among farmers also convince them that collective action is necessary. Because other farmers present achievements which are not possible without collective action, people are motivated to engage in more collective behaviour in order to compete with other villages.

Discussions with farmers after one of these meetings gave the following appreciations. The first comment comes from a farmer who is perceived by his peers as pursuing his own interest. He was said to have contributed to the diversion of collective funds of his village. He is the chairman of his village GV and nothing could be done in the village with the refunds the village received from the sale of cotton. He said:

'Farmers in this village (talking about the host village) have done interesting work. How could they do all this? They cannot achieve this without working together. I shall convince my fellow villagers to work together more for common achievements so that we may be chosen for hosting the next meeting.'

His peers reported to me three years after he made these comments that he is more cooperative and works more for the common interests of the village. Other comments were obtained after the last JAPPD. Farmers take different views of the JAPPD. These are some other comments. A farmer from the hamlet Ekponté said:

'It is a good meeting. It is an opportunity for us to present our problems to officials of development agencies. We denounce the teasing of government agents. It is also an occasion for us to get information on some subjects. Before this meeting I thought that the CARDER decides upon the cotton price. But in fact another institution is in charge of this. That is the SONAPRA. I also get useful information on how to get an estimate of the costs of constructing the road.'

A farmer from the village Soukpodagni said:

'During this meeting I get really useful information about the availability of rice in the farms of rice producers and the procedure to buy it. Every time I need rice I go to cities far from here and buy it for cash. In a farm of my neighbouring village this rice is available and I can buy it and pay without delay. The farmer who has the rice does not know that some people are in need of such rice and is looking for traders who will come and cheat him. The meeting has helped us to get into contact and each of us will profit from it. This is an opportunity for my group to start a trade rice during the coming dry season during which we have less to do.'

A farmer from the village of Gbécogblé said:

'Most of our problems were exposed to development agencies and to the political administration but no solution was found so far. I think that this meeting is more political than economic. Administrative authority was denounced but what are the effects? We need to organize ourselves for development purposes instead of bringing the administrative authorities to insult them publicly. I wish that we thought more positively on the way to organize ourselves.'

Concluding the section on the JAPPD, I would like just to mention that the JAPPD offers the opportunity to make development agencies accountable to farmers. They make promises to farmers to carry out certain activities and they will be asked what they have done to solve the problems during the next JAPPD. I notice that many participant villages receive visits from some officials after a meeting of the JAPPD because they were accused of not being present in the village and that there was no information about how to get service from them. Officials of development agencies may get frustrated during such meetings, but they cannot afford not to be present at them because their superiors are informed about the meetings and will expect reports. Furthermore, their absence would prove their unwillingness to work with farmers.

Making links among producers from different villages

Women's organizations are engaged in the processing of three main agricultural products: groundnut and the palm kernels into oil, and cassava into *gari*. One of the problems faced by women in carrying out such activities is the price in the market. The prices are very low during the period of abundance compared to the costs. In other periods, the prices of the same products may reach a higher level. Another problem faced by the processors of agricultural products is related to the quality of the products. In order to deal with such problems, meetings were initiated to discuss the issues. Women from different villages gathered together in the village of Hounsa. The meeting resulted in the creation of a woman's organization which covered the whole District. Different groups have been created to discuss specific subjects about agricultural products processed: improvement of the quality of the product, marketing of the products, training... The strategy of the organization is to buy the products when their prices are low and to sell them when the prices are high. The organization will search for markets for such products. Members are

groups or people who would like to sell their products to the organization and who are willing to allow a commission of 20 percent when the products are sold at a better price.

5.2.4 Quantitative achievements

PADES is working in more than 30 villages with 82 functional groups¹¹ (the average size of each group is 15 people) and 26 Village Committees. All these functional groups and Villages Committees were set up by PADES. The functional groups carry out activities in agriculture, animal husbandry, processing of agricultural products, commercialization and storage of agricultural products, saving and credit. The village committees were nominated by family heads in order to raise awareness and to manage community achievements. These committees achieved the building of five health-care centres, ten wells and eighty latrines. The latrines were asked for by different families while the health centres were built for a whole village. Four committees are in charge of the construction of roads and many saving and credit committees were created.

Table 16 Distribution of functional groups, village committees and coordination committee according to types of activities

Activities	Number of organizations
Trade	14
Crop production	16
Processing of cassava and of palm oil	22
credit	2
animal raising	6
Village water supply	10
Dispensaries	6
latrines	3
Road construction	1
Coordination committees	2
Total	82

Source: PADES Mono 1994 (Rapport annuel 1993)

Table 16 and table 17 give the quantitative achievements with regard to the number of functional groups, village committees and coordination committees. There are 836 people in the functional groups and 186 in the village committees. Table 17 indicates

that about 62 percent of members of the functional groups are women. The proportion of men is only greater in groups concerned with animal husbandry. The table demonstrates also that people are engaged in many activities such as crop production, trade, animal husbandry, agricultural product processing. Women are less well represented in village committees.

5.2.5 Conclusion

Section 5.2 gave an overview of PADES and its achievements. The following section analyzes achievements through three cases. These cases have been chosen taking into account the evolution of PADES: the three cases correspond to the three periods of the evolution of PADES. Each case representing one period. The analysis of these cases allows us to draw some conclusions about the effects of the approach of PADES on the promotion of accountability mechanisms in farmers' organizations and on the relations of development agencies with farmers. The three cases are taken from the villages of Gbècogblé, Soukpodagni and Ekponté.

Table 17 Proportion of women in the different organizations

Type of organizations	Percentage of women	Percentage of men
Functional Groups	62	38
Village Committees	22	78

Source: PADES Mono 1994

5.3 The case of Gbècogblé

5.3.1 Context of the creation of farmers' groups and the objective/vision

The village of Gbècogblé was one of the villages in which the FSA (lecturers and students) carried out research for years. Many villagers were recruited as enumerators or were owners of houses rented by students. Villagers obtained different benefits from lecturers and students and from the CARDER: rent of houses, recruitment as enumerators, free-agricultural inputs for research experiments, etc. Gbècogblé is not a remote village and it has developed many contacts with outside interveners.

When PADES started there in 1987, villagers were asked to form three discussion groups: adults, young farmers and women. Subjects for discussion were on problems encountered in the village. After the discussions in groups, there was a plenary session during which each group presented what were the main problems of the village. Many problems were presented followed by discussions. None of the problems was rejected during the first meeting. Many other meetings were held after the first. During these meetings people such as village chiefs, literate people

and some elders spoke mainly on behalf of villagers. Problems were aggregated into four main clusters of problems and farmers were asked to form groups of twenty people to solve each of the 'agreed upon' problems: two groups for crop production, one group for health activities and water supply, two groups for agricultural products processing. All groups carried out trade activities.

The objectives of the different groups were not clear and were not discussed in the groups. Groups were formed just to respond to the arrival of the project in the village. The project was perceived as an opportunity to get financial and material help for farmers' organizations. Farmers who had frequent contacts with projects, and knew that it was possible to profit from PADES just as from other projects, took the opportunity to organize their fellow farmers.

With respect to the way groups were established, members did not come from the same socio-economic category. There was a kind of clientism: patrons were in the executive committee while clients were members of the organization. The existing relations between clients and patrons¹² were simply reproduced in the newly created organization.

5.3.2 The election of members of the board and renewal

There was no election of the members of committees. In the village, an influential person decided upon people who would become leaders of the different groups. He is well known in the village. His name is Doudokabimè. He was in frequent contact with people outside and villagers thought that he was the right person to negotiate with outsiders. Villagers were asked to become members of groups of their choice. Queues were formed behind appointed leaders. Committees were created. There was a chairman, a secretary and treasurer as in any other introduced organization. At the beginning, groups met with PADES staff. After some time, members forgot about their membership of groups because there was no concrete activity. It was common to find the same people in two or three groups. Other members did not come to meetings. Officials of PADES tried many times to check out people attending meetings but could not reach their objectives. Groups preferred to take the list and to call people. They were always there when called.¹³ One day, an official of PADES, suspecting some irregularities, asked: 'I would like to know the people who are effectively present at the meeting'. People replied that if a person is not there, somebody represents him, therefore there is no problem of absenteeism.

People leading the different groups remained in office. None of them has yet been changed. Groups were identified with leaders. Sometimes, members did not know the group to which they belonged, as was confessed by an old woman who said:

'I am told that I am a member of one group today, but tomorrow it is another group. I do not know which one is my group. Groups are created and disappear after a few days or after few months and I do not know which one is functioning. Maybe the one of Koffi.'

This is a general impression of the membership of groups created in this manner in the village. People join introduced organizations for an anticipated short term

benefit without understanding the real objectives of such organizations. These organizations are created without any sound purpose acceptable to members.

5.3.3 *Leaders: interests in question*

There was no formal remuneration for the activities performed by the committee members. But strategies were developed by leaders to divert the collective goods, the money granted by PADES, the collective amenities and the use of the name of organization.

Leaders were appointed by this influential person, Doudokabimè. Each group has one leader but in reality, the leadership role was mainly played by Doudokabimè. He is involved in most activities in the village and nobody can bypass him for any activity, be it a political or a rural development activity. He is the chairman of the group dealing with health and water supply. Doudokabimè says that water is the main problem of the village and he would like to focus on this activity which will benefit the whole village. A village committee was created for the improvement of water and health conditions in the village. A village committee is different from the functional groups in the sense that nobody can be excluded from the benefit derived from the activities of the village committee. The benefits derived from the activities of the functional groups are shared by members only. But it was expected that individual wellbeing would benefit the whole village and that individuals would come together for sustainable development of the village. Doudokabimè is also a member of the functional group dealing with the processing of groundnut into oil and to make *Kluiklui* (a kind of cake).

But before going further into activities in groups introduced by PADES, let us present first these different activities and their role in the village before the arrival of PADES. When Doudokabimè was asked to describe his activities and his involvement in different development agencies, he said:

'The first development agency with which I began working was the CARDER. The CARDER was an agency for the promotion of cotton and it carried out some experiments in the field. I was chosen as an activist of the village and I also carried out experiments for the CARDER. As such I was in regular contact with the agri (referring to the extension agent) and I could be favoured by him. He visited me every time he came to the village. I was the only one he visited because I was able to give him all the information he needed. He convinced me also to become a member of a group dealing with the programme Sasakawa Global 2000. With the CARDER, I also had the opportunity to attend many seminars which were very interesting. You were paid each time you attended a seminar. In this programme I could get some inputs free of charge. The people I started working with next were people from the university. I became an enumerator for lecturers and students. I let my house to some students and gained some income from that. They were very nice to me and I regretted their departure from the village because I lost my job as an enumerator and also the income I got from renting my house. Their activities were concentrated on questioning people about their activities and on visiting farms. I am now working with the CARDER and PADES, a project for granting credit and for the construction of latrines and wells. The PADES is a project with material objectives set in advance. My strategy in dealing with projects is to be the first or among the first to

be involved in the activities of a project when it starts in my village. I do so because of the chance to get something from a project when you are the first to be involved. When many people get involved in the project, the benefit decreases. That is why I am involved in all the projects operating in my village. I was successful until the problems I had with digging the well.'

As this short story points out, he is a leader pursuing his own interest and trying to get the maximum profit from each activity. Some people would argue that he can pursue his own interest and at the same time contribute to the interest of the whole village. It may be expected that, searching his own interests, he may convince people to come and to invest in collective actions which are profitable for all.

In the following I will introduce his role in the different activities carried out with the help of PADES. As I said at the beginning of this section, Doudokabimè was the chairman of the group dealing with health and water supply in the village. To start its activities, group members asked the other groups to give them some support because they were working for the interests of the whole village. They needed funds to travel and to negotiate with people outside the village and as such the contribution of the whole village was expected. They collected funds mainly from the different groups to carry out their activities. Negotiations with PADES led to its willingness to contribute to digging a well and to constructing latrines in the village. They succeeded then in convincing outsiders to help the village. Financial as well as physical participation of the population was required and groups were asked to contribute to this. They did so. The village was granted material and funds to construct latrines and to dig a well.

The first latrines constructed were those for Doudokabimè's nuclear family, followed by the construction of latrines for members of his extended family. PADES gave money to bring about these works, while Doudokabimè was responsible for them. Nobody could say how the funds were managed. He was also in charge of the construction of the well.

Well-diggers were brought from outside the region to dig the well because of a lack of local capacity. The health and water group was the manager of the goods (material supplied by PADES). Doudokabimè was in charge of all the activities. Members of his group did not know anything about the work, for he did not report anything to the others. I may speak of him as the manager of the common good. After a few months of digging the well, it was found that the quantity of material necessary for the work was not used. Workers used less material than initially planned. They decreased the quantity of cement and iron. The difference they got was sold and the money obtained shared. PADES discovered this because of the failure of its project in another village. The well could not be completed in time, and PADES staff discovered the fraudulent diversion of cement and iron with the help of the manager of the material. Investigation in the village of Gbècogblé showed that a significant quantity of material was set aside by workers in collusion with the leader of the group. The well was not completed as planned and villagers continued to go far away to fetch water, or to use water of doubtful quality. The leader's pursuit of his own interests prevented the realization of the collective interest.

Doudokabimè was threatened by PADES staff. He paid back what he had taken and the well was completed one year later.

This story points up the situation of leaders in groups where there is no effective accountability mechanism to force them to behave in the interests of the group. The perception of villagers of a project is another factor in not making a leader accountable. In effect, digging the well was perceived in part as a provision by outside interveners, and Doudokabimè was the person in the village who brought projects to the village. As such, most villagers did not care how he managed the project. But some people cared about how he managed the common goods because of:

- the contribution of different groups to provide the necessary funds for the well. These people were not happy about the way he managed the materials for the well;
- their attendance at meetings in other villages which were successful many communal activities beneficial for all villagers. These opportunities to visit other villages were offered by PADES in order to raise the awareness of villagers about the differences between villages.

In order to avoid outsiders intervening to solve this issue, they met with Doudokabimè but did not get him to stop selling the project materials. He declared that he was selling the surplus to gain money for the village. He argued that PADES staff bought more materials than needed to the village in order to use the rest later on for their own interests. He preferred to sell the surplus now to avoid the exploitation of the village by outsiders. He could convince some people with his arguments. People who gained from his behaviour were his friends or people from his extended family. Later on, people, who talked to him went to his friends and told them that if Doudokabimè did not stop selling the project materials they would go and complain to PADES staff. They went to his friends because they knew that they had some influence on him – it was an indirect way to make him accountable. But in his case it was unsuccessful because he was confident of his relations with PADES¹⁴ and was sure that nobody would come and ask for details, because he was informed about how things were done elsewhere: he knew that villagers misused the materials and nothing happened to them. He trusted his friends in the village expecting that nobody would denounce him to PADES staff, for it was unusual to denounce people in the village – they protected one another. But things went differently.

A well in one of the PADES village, collapsed and PADES found that this was because of the reduced quantity of material (cement and iron) used. Villagers who complained about the behaviour of Doudokabimè helped PADES to find the truth, because some villagers wanted the village to develop like other villages they visited, and they were more oriented to collective action. By helping some villagers of Gbècogblé to visit other villages and to discuss matters with them, PADES contributed to raising the awareness of some people about the common good. These people first tried the indigenous mechanisms to make people accountable, but when these failed they helped PADES staff to find the truth.

The story of Doudokabimè invites us to look at the various accountability mechanisms introduced by PADES in order to make people accountable to their constituencies.

5.3.4 The functioning of the formal accountability mechanisms

In establishing a functional group, PADES expected that all members would participate in decision-making and that they would be informed about the activities carried out by the group. Members would decide on how to use the benefit they got. To reach this end, members would meet at least once a month. At the beginning, PADES staff attended these meetings in order to observe how decisions were taken and the level of participation in the meetings. The objectives of their presence were to contribute to fairer discussions among farmers and to teach them how they can solve their problems. They helped villagers to discover the process of solving problems themselves.

Committee members were expected to be accountable to members of their groups. With regard to regular meetings, committee members would be forced to be accountable to their mandates and the group could be successful.

People attended meetings when the PADES staff was there. They created a coordination committee to control and to help groups to improve their activities and to help people solve their problems. The coordination committee was supposed to be the committee to which people could complain about misuse of funds within a group. Leaders were supposed to be called before this committee. The role of the committee was to force leaders to be accountable to members. But when the members of this committee are those who misuse the common goods, it is hard to expect such mechanisms to be effective. Self-interested leaders belonging to such committees may prevent them from being effective.

The village was well known for not having a good social structure with a council of elders before which problems would be brought. In this village, many decision centres exist. There are many political decision centres because of the different political parties operating in the village. There are many religious centres due to the existence of many religions (Vodjou, 'modern' religions). Each decision centre constitutes a power centre and there are very often conflicts among these different decision centres.

The failure of the implementation of accountability mechanisms is also due to patronage relations. The following examples illustrate it.

'In a functional group which aims also at carrying out trade,¹⁵ members developed the following strategies. The group was divided into two subgroups. Each subgroup used the capital of the group for one month in order to carry out trading activities. The money was returned to the group for the second subgroup. Each member was able to carry out his own trading activities and to get some profit for himself. The group can also benefit from the activities performed by individual members through the returns given to the group. Members gather every month and decide upon the future activities of the group. But Doudokabimè, an influential person who was the founder of the group, at one of these monthly meetings decided to end this way of using the money and to keep the money for more than two months before returning it to the group. When he was asked the reasons for his behaviour, he said that some members did not use their share themselves but gave it to other people to bear fruit. He kept the money in order to check if the information was right or not; he said he found out that it was not right. Investigation has shown that he used this argument in order to have the total amount of the money which was about

500,000 FCFA to 'sell' it to somebody else and to get a significant return. According to some members he got about 250,000 FCFA, within two months.'

Nobody could express an objection and denounce this behaviour because he is a very important person in the village and many members depend on his generosity¹⁶ to survive. Members prefer the client relationship to denouncing the behaviour of an important person, because the cost of denunciation is greater than that of silence.

The internal accountability system failed for these reasons but also because the person denounced can curse the denouncers. This fear is so great that people sometimes decline to give information about an organization led by a suspected sorcerer. The following illustration helps to understand the behaviour of villagers with regard to sorcery and its effects on the working of functional groups.

'During the fieldwork, data were collected on the size of the organization, its activities, how decisions were taken, the use of money by the organization, and the reasons for the failure or success of the organization. The leader and chairman of the organization gave answers which did not really explain what was going on in the group. The researcher decided to get information from members of the organization. But nobody in the organization was willing to give information. Members did not know how many they were in the organization and who was taking advantage of the activities of the organization. In fact, they did not want to contradict the answers of the chairman. Fortunately a woman was willing to give all the information the researcher wanted, but wanted this information to be kept confidential. It was only when the researcher promised to keep the information secret that she answered questions related to the organization to which she belonged. When she was asked why nobody was willing to give information about the organization, she replied that the president is a sorcerer and has the power to kill people or to curse people. He was said to have killed many people in the village.'

In order to avoid such misfortune people prefer to leave the organization and to look for other things.

5.3.5 Values, norms and the role of indigenous organizations

Values, norms and the influence of indigenous organizations have been weakened in the village of Gbècogblé by the introduction of the market economy. There are permanent conflicts of interest between elders, and between elders and young villagers. There is no council of elders which could contribute to the maintenance of the cohesion of the village. The village is broken up into several small entities. Cohesion exists in extended families but not at the village level.¹⁷ Many villagers have migrated to towns and the ties with villages have been weakened. The villagers living outside have not created any association in order to help the village to develop. This is due to conflicts over power and land among families in the village. Social links are not strong enough to make executive committee members fear public sanction. Individuals in various committees are protected by members of their extended families. The introduction of new religions (Islam and Christianity) contributes to the division of the village; it has created some behavioral change with

respect to belief in ancestors and Vodjou, so that people do not follow established traditional rules which are, to some extent, promoters of village cohesion and respect for old people.

5.4 The case of Soukpodagni

This second case concerns functional groups created during the second period of PADES. After the first experience and having learnt from the initial mistakes, PADES adapted its approach with respect to the creation of groups. PADES chose to leave farmers to form groups when necessary.

5.4.1 Context of the creation of farmers' groups in Soukpodagni

There are two farmers' groups introduced by PADES in the village of Soukpodagni. They were established after PADES decided to extend its activities to other villages. To establish these groups, a Rapid Rural Appraisal was carried out in the village by an interdisciplinary team of trainees in the use of the tools of Rapid Rural Appraisal. The team comprised a agronomist, a sociologist, a zoologist, an economist and a nutritionist. The team worked with villagers to determine their needs. The results were discussed with villagers before the final report was submitted to PADES. The focus of the diagnosis was on analysis of the effectiveness of the existing farmers' organizations and on problems and opportunities in the village.

This is one of the differences between the process of establishment of groups in this village and the other villages. A Rapid Rural Appraisal aimed at raising the awareness of the villagers about their own problems was carried out before the establishment of groups. This Rapid Rural Appraisal served as a support for PADES's intervention in the village. PADES started by visiting the village and by informing the people about its activities. Discussions with villagers pointed out that women carried out processing activities and the sold products when prices were very low. The main reason for this situation was perceived as the lack of capital for investing in such activities and keeping the products for more favourable periods. It was also found that they lacked a sound organization to deal with the various problems raised. This discussion pointed to the necessity of creating organizations for women. Two main processing activities were identified: the processing of cassava into improved *gari* and oil-palm nuts into palm oil.

After these first activities in the village, PADES brought women from a neighbouring village from groups which were already organized and were carrying out joint activities. The delegation talked about their activities and the way they organized themselves to solve the problems they encountered. Following the presentation and discussions, women of Soukpodagni village established their own groups to deal with problems identified with PADES.

The two women's groups established comprise respectively 15 people for the palm oil group and 12 for the cassava processing group. The secretary of each of these groups is a man because women could not read or write.¹⁸ One of the secretaries was also the literacy trainer of the village.

5.4.2 *The election of members of the boards of these groups*

The groups are called Gbenondou (the palm oil group), and Gbenonkpo (the cassava processing group). Both groups were created on the same day. Board members were elected according to their capacity to run an organization or according to their relations with village leaders. Most boards members were either the wife or the sister of a member of the council of elders, the chief of the village, or the mayor of the commune. For example the chairwoman and the treasurer of the Gbenonkpo are wives of the brothers of the mayor of the commune, the vice-chairwoman is the wife of a member of the council of elders, the treasurer is the wife of the chief of the village. The boards of the women's groups are elected according to rules established by PADES, and have not been renewed since the election.

5.4.3 *Access to benefits and avoidance of the misuse of collective funds*

Each group started its activity by gathering contributions from each member. The contribution of each member of the group dealing with the processing of palm oil was 600 FCFA, while the member's contribution was 1000 FCFA in the cassava group. Each group was granted a credit of 50,000 FCFA by PADES to buy some materials. Leaders were not to decide alone on the use of benefits accruing from the activities of the groups. For example, a woman who was about to leave the group told us that women in her group did not reach any agreement about the use of the benefits. According to her, some women would like to re-invest the benefits increase the size of the activities, while others would prefer to share the benefits among themselves and to ask for additional funds from PADES. She said that this controversy might be one of the reasons which discouraged people from active participation. Other members of the groups pointed out that decisions were taken together and that there was no influential person in the groups. There was no mismanagement of the groups. The size of the two groups contributes to raising the participation of all members in decision-making in the groups; I will come back to this. The size of the group may not be the only factor motivating people to work together and manage their common property, consisting of financial and material supports they got from PADES and their own contribution to the capital.

The following examines other reasons underlying the sustainability of these groups, even though the income generated in the groups is lower than the individual income. For example, since the creation of the palm oil group, individual members got only 100 FCFA as a share. But I should add that members have other benefits from their membership of the groups.

In effect, members of the organizations do not get enough refund to compensate for their contribution to the functioning of the organization, but they continue to participate in the activities of the organizations. The next section deals with the internal factors and the influence of the existing organization.

Assistance in the case of ceremonies

Beside the processing activities, women developed drum groups.¹⁹ In this area, drums play an important role during most ceremonies, and these drum groups were established in order to help members to conduct such activities decently. Members of women's organizations benefited from their membership, and from the financial support of other members, in case of death of parents or parents-in-law.

Credit

The organization funds are used to provide credit to members. The interest rate on the credit is 24 percent per year. Members use this credit to carry out personal activities: agriculture, trade, and the processing of agricultural products. Being members of women's organizations gives people access to these funds and allows them to carry out remunerative activities for personal profit. The repayment of this credit is not a problem. Women pay back their credit and the interest in order to allow others to carry out their activities. Members of the groups know each other before joining having had occasion to work together before the groups were established. Members of the groups are selected on the basis of friendship and kinship, and thus they each know the capacity of the other in cooperating. They live in the same village and because of social pressure it is difficult for some members to cheat others.

Size of the organization

People were appointed to the leading committees of these groups with regard to their links with influential people of the village and to their capacity to lead people. Before the establishment of these organizations, leaders were involved in other group activities which helped them to develop some capacity to manage farmers' organizations. They also got this capacity by helping their husbands to manage a farmers' organization or to manage the village.

Women's groups are very small and most activities are done by all members of the group. Information circulates easily from the committee to members. There is no retention of information in order to get power. Information is supplied by many people. Information is obtained from PADES, from the Organization of Sons Abroad, the organization of young people²⁰ and from the council of elders.

The influence of existing organizations

The existing farmers' organizations (GV, *Kugbè* and the elders council) play an important role in the functioning of the women's organizations. In effect, the latter were created because the leaders of these organizations felt the need. The leaders of the existing organizations were in contact with outside development agencies and villages and found that women in other villages created organizations to get external support; knowing that PADES supported many of these, they had expectations of similar support. Another reason for their willingness to create these women's

organizations was that they do have some development vision for their village. They supported the women's organizations by giving advice and by settling conflicts among members, thus helping to prevent defection from the organizations. The reasons for their behaviour are illustrated in the following answer of a member of the council of elders:

*'We have a development plan for our village, and the PADES project contributes to this development through the women's organizations. Defection of women from these organizations would imply their failure and would lead to the cessation of PADES support to the village which needs this help for its development. For us, PADES is in the village because of the existence of the two women organizations and it is necessary to keep it in the village.'*²¹

5.4.4 Accountability mechanisms in women's groups in Soukpodagni revisited

These women's groups established formal accountability mechanisms: regular meetings. The groups are small (12 and 15 members) and the village is not large, so members of groups knew each other before joining. They are carrying out activities known to them. The face to face encounters were useful for avoiding misuse of the common goods. Another factor which is very important in explaining the effectiveness of these groups is the existence of the council of elders and the relationships between this council and the groups. There are formal relationship between the women's groups and the council of elders as well as informal ones. Most members of women groups are wives and sisters of members of the council of elders. The council members could get information about all the activities of the groups because they have their relatives in them.

Another important factor to take into account here is the organization of young people. Young people take not of the activities of women. Considering the fact that some members of the women's groups can report abuses in their organizations to the young people and the young people to the council of elders or to the Association of Sons Abroad described in chapter 4, leaders of women's groups avoid misuse of the common assets. Links between various organizations in the village are very strong and these links between organizations provide many ways to make leaders accountable to their organizations. Members of organizations are also made accountable because of the influence of other organizations. Concluding this part, I may say that the accountability mechanisms of the village of Soukpodagni consist of the council of elders, the organization of young people and the organization of villagers living abroad. To end this section I would like to give this illustration of how people make leaders accountable to villagers:

'This illustration is about the management of the Unité Villageoise de Santé (a local clinic). This clinic was created and managed by a village committee. This health centre purchased and sold tablets to sick people; it treated sick people and gained some money. A health agent was recruited to carry out activities in the village and he was paid from the income obtained from these activities. The health agent was left alone to run the centre: he should have reported to the committee but he did not nor did the committee report anything to villagers for about eleven months. The organization of the young people reacted in order to get information about the management of the centre; it wanted

to sack the health agent but was prevented from doing so by the village committee. After this first meeting of clarification, the organization of the young people went further and wrote to villagers living abroad inviting them to come and solve the problems of mismanagement of the health care centre. The organization of villagers living abroad sent delegates to the meeting and the problem was solved with the help the council of the elders and the organization of young people. People were sent to the regional official for health to complain about the behaviour of the health agent, and he was taken to task by his superiors.'

5.5 The Women's Group in the village of Ekponté

5.5.1 *The creation of the organization*

Minonkpô, an organization of women, was born in 1990 in the hamlets of Tolehoué and Ekponté. It was founded by one man who is a farmer and is involved in many other organizations. He also undertakes voluntary literacy training in the region, and as such he was in contact with activities in many other villages, and notably with those which villagers carried out with PADES. He found that many women were involved in these activities, so in order to help women in his own hamlet, he initiated the creation of a women's group covering the hamlets of Ekponté and Tolehoué. The organization comprised 60 members, all women: thirty-two from Ekponté and twenty-eight from the second hamlet. Most members were involved in farm activities, cassava processing included. The founder was the counsellor of the organization; he helps women to manage their organization but he is not a member himself.

The organization took as its activity the processing of the cassava into *gari*. But due to its poor performance, the organization was divided into two groups in 1992: *Minonkpô 1* for Ekponté and *Minonkpô 2* for the second hamlet. Members of the *Minonkpô* hoped to get financial and material support to improve the processing and to increase their revenue. The objective was also non-material. Outside people would know about the existence of women's groups in the village, a fact which increases the prestige of the village and the women. It could be also an opportunity for women to meet and to exchange opinions on various subjects.

5.5.2 *The mode of election and the renewal procedure*

The committee members of women's organization of Ekponté were elected, and renewal can take place every year during the General Assembly. The personal qualities of people are important for the election. The main qualities people look for are: honesty, intelligence, a spirit of tolerance and competence. The secretary was the one who was able to read and to write French.

Every year the same committee members are elected. All members explain their decision to elect the same people because they think that they carry out their activities correctly.

According to their statutes, committee members are supposed to hold a meeting every three months, but these meetings are held every time they sell *gari*. The organization conducts activities such as the production of cassava, of maize, of cotton, of groundnut. The main subjects discussed so far during meetings are related to the sale of their products, solutions to problems encountered, discussions with the representative of the CARDER, and reports of the management of the common funds. These meetings aim at informing all members about the progress of the organization and the planning for the future.

They organize the activities in such a way that each member has her turn to work for the group. A member receives a plus when she works for the organization and a minus when she does not. Any failure to participate in the activities of the organization is punished. The defaulting person is forced to carry out her activities or to pay their equivalent in money. When a member fails repeatedly to fulfil her duties, she is brought before the founder of the organization, who is a very influential person in the village. He stresses in such circumstances the need to develop the village and to create conditions to ease the work of women. Members of the organization are sensitized to the fact that there is also *Minonkpô 2* in competition with *Minonkpô 1*, and that the former is much praised by outsiders. The image which villagers of Ekponké have about their hamlet motivates collective action.

5.5.3 *The functioning of formal accountability*

The main structural arrangements established are the committees, the General Assembly, and regular meetings to report to the rest of the organization. These structural arrangements are copied from the established structural arrangements for other organizations operating in the area. As is shown in section 5.5.2, there are regular meetings during which committee members report to their constituencies. There is no fixed date for such meetings.

Members are satisfied to copy the existing organizations and to prove that women are able to follow the examples of their husbands, whose organizations are among those in the region most praised by outsiders (farmers and interventionists). Through regular meetings, committee members are accountable to their constituencies and information is shared among members. Rules and sanctions are established in the organization to prevent mismanagement, corruption and misbehaviour of members. Some of these rules and sanctions are summarized as follows:

- people are fired from the organization for adultery, for laziness, incessant taunting, repetitive robbery inside and outside the organization, and repetitive lies;
- people are fined for other faults such as 200 FCFA per delay, 300 FCFA plus one litre of *sodabi* for disputes, one litre of *sodabi* when a member sells and does not report to members just after the sale.
- equal division of the work among members, promotion of mutual help within the group, a General Assembly every year when the committee is (renewed but the same people can be in office continuously), members are given help when they are injured during work, women should inform their husbands before coming to work in the group.

Due to all these rules and sanctions plus the vigilant eye of leaders of other organizations, members feel an obligation to contribute to the success of the group.

Members of the women's organizations are very rigorous in the application of the rules established. They share most information they get from round about because the hamlet is very small.²² The following gives some examples of the functioning. This first story is about the exchange of information among members.

'In order to improve the quality of their gari and to be able to sell it at a better price, they asked PADES to help them to find gari processors with sufficient knowledge to train them. PADES helped them to get into contact with some women in Savalou, a region well known for the quality of its gari. Members of the group were informed about the possibility to organize training in Savalou with some delegations from other villages. The women's group came together to decide upon the people who would take the training. Four members offered to attend the meeting, two committee members and two regular members. On a consensus basis, they decided to send the chairwoman and another regular member to attend, one member of the committee was not chosen because, members argued she had already attended another meeting outside the hamlet and it was fair that she leave the opportunity to other people to be trained and to see what was going on in other villages. She did not oppose the decision and all members agreed on it. The regular member was chosen because of her ability to process cassava. The delegates from the group spent a week at the training session given by women villagers who were skilful in processing cassava. Once back home, they called a meeting of members to report what they had seen in the host village and to teach them how to process cassava to obtain good quality gari. After teaching women from the group, other women from other hamlets asked for the same training which was given to them one week later.'

This short story illustrates the democratic process of choosing representatives to attend a training. The second aspect of this story is the report of activities to members and the dissemination of information among members. Members who go on a mission should report their activities to other members. Members share the same information. Access to information makes members more willing to contribute to the activities of the group. In effect, the power derived from information is shared by members of the organization.

Women shared information about the sale of their products. In effect, members are assigned in turn to go to the market and to sell the product. They got a commission on the quantity sold. After each market day, the members who went to sell should report the income to the group. In doing so, all members are informed about the earnings and the expenses of the organization. A failure to respect the rules of the organization is an occasion for enforcing these rules. Members of the organization comply with these rules, be they a member of the committee or a regular member. The following illustrates the rigour in enforcing the rules of the organization.

'The organization needed land to plough. The chairwoman was in charge in negotiating for the land. She negotiated the land on behalf of the group and reported back to them. Members disagreed with the content of the verbal contract between the chairwoman and the owner of the land and asked her to go and renegotiate the contract or to cancel it. Fortunately the renegotiation was possible. The meeting and the report helped members

to make the chairwoman accountable to them. The same thing happened to another member of the organization's committee. She was asked to go and sell products of the organization in the market. She agreed and went to sell the product, but did not report to members as she should have done. She was fined and paid some money for not respecting the rules.'

This illuminates the functioning of the accountability mechanisms in the organization. Rules established by members are enforced by themselves. But there are occasions during which outsiders of the organization can be called for setting difficulties. The following is an illustration of such a situation.

'The woman Codjonon was a member of the women's group. She avoided contributing to the activities of the organizations arguing that her husband asked her to do various jobs before leaving her house to join the common activities. She was fined many times. One day, women joined together and asked her to change her behaviour in order to make her contribution to group activities. She was also intimidated by other members in bringing her problem before the founder of the organization. It was reported that she has changed completely and now contributed to the functioning of the organization. When she was asked later on about her change, she said: 'I can bear criticisms from my peers and can pay fines but it is better for me to avoid having my case put before the founder of the organization. He is a nice man but very rigorous. He is a reference, and when he does not speak well of you, you have some problems in dealing with other people in the area. That is why I changed my behaviour. Another reason for changing has to do with the fact that I understand better the objectives and how the organization earns and spends money.'

It was sufficient to mention the name of the founder of the organization to make the member change her behaviour. This is confirmed by other members who preferred to settle problems among themselves rather than bring them before that man. This is an accountability mechanism used by members of the women's group to make people accountable. People trusted the founder of the organization and he became a reference in the area. People imitate him.

The following lines report the support the women's organization obtained from PADES, from other organizations, and from the founder of the organization.

5.5.4 *The support from existing organizations, the founder of the organization, and from PADES*

The newly born organization received important support from existing organizations. For example, the money needed to start activities was granted by the *Groupement Villageois* (GV). The *Minonkpô* used the storeroom of the GV to stock their material and the *gari*. The GV and the *Kugbè* are supporting organizations for *Minonkpô* 1 which gets much advice from them. In effect, the functioning of *Minonkpô* is a replica of that of the GV and the *Kugbè*. This is well developed in chapter 4.

Indigenous organizations also affect the functioning of *Minonkpô*. In fact, *Minonkpô* benefits from the harmony between modern and indigenous organizations, which is obtained through the leaders involved in both organizations. They are the same

and the process of renewal of the committee is based on inheritance. Old people train young villagers to take over responsibilities. This process of renewal prevents conflicts between younger and older generations. Another important factor here is the good management of these organizations.

The most important support for the women's organization is given by the founder. The following lists his contributions.

He is an altruist

The founder of the women's organization is a *doumegan* – that is, he is credible and respected in the area. Members of the organization praise him because of the unpaid work he performs and his devotion to duty. He is perceived to carry out many activities for the wellbeing of the community. He is the person who is in regular contact with the outside world and who represents the interests of the hamlet. He gets information from other villages and discusses the issues with other villagers before any decision. When he obtained information about women, he informed the women's group which decided what to do. He creates conditions for making people his friends. He is more oriented to the wellbeing of the population than to his own direct profit.²³

He is the link between old farmers and young farmers

He is not old and is accepted by both old villagers and young farmers. As such he is able to make a link between the two main generations of the village and to help to solve conflicts between old people and young people. Through this ability, he was able to negotiate the participation of young farmers in programmes initiated by old farmers, and to involve young farmers in the management of activities of the village. For example, there was a conflict among villagers about the construction of a road between their hamlet and the main road but he could help to solve it. His ability is the main factor which contributes to the smooth passage of responsibility from old to young farmers.

He is the link between men and women

He has much credibility capital in the village and men trust him. Due to this credibility, men have confidence in leaving women to work together in the groups he helps to set up. He is one of the main actors in solving problems arising in the women's groups. His intervention is welcomed in this group and all women are afraid of his anger. As a woman puts:

'It is better to have one's problem settled during the meeting when this man is not there, because it is difficult to recover one's credibility when he is informed about one's misbehaviour. He is the guarantee of our organization and our husbands listen to him.'

He is the link between the village and development agencies

He has an ideal for his hamlet: the alleviation of poverty. He puts the development of his hamlet at the centre of all his activities. He would like to share his perception of his hamlet with all villagers and interveners. As such, he is in a team composed of young and old villagers which decides about the future of the village and which negotiates with different interveners. Through these contacts they were able to get a classroom for the elimination of illiteracy, a store to stock agricultural products, and a clean water facility for the hamlet. He avoids the mismanagement of these common goods. When he was asked about the quality of management of public goods, he said:

'I do not want people to divert public goods. If I notice that some sum of money is missing I try to find it before going any further.'

They sell the water of the village in order to pay back expenses. Villagers are asked to sell the water in turn. But one day, the amount brought to him was less than the counter indicated. They tried to find out how this happened for more than an hour until it was found that two villagers had bought the water without paying. The difference amounted to 25 FCFA.

He is a promoter of development activities in other villages

As a literacy trainer in the village and neighbouring villages, he is involved not only in the activities of *Minonkpô 1* but also in the creation of a network of organizations. This network was initiated by farmers themselves. As a catalyst, he advises the establishment of twenty farmer's groups: 17 groups composed of women and 3 groups of men and women. About 500 people are mobilized through this network.

The support from PADES

The contribution of PADES to this women's group can be summarized as follows:

- it supported the establishment of the women's organization by helping them to establish their own rules and how to enforce them. Decisions were taken by the women themselves;
- it helped to create an environment favourable to the organization. The interest of PADES in this organization and the organization of meetings between farmers and development agencies have contributed to raising the interests of the development agencies in this women's organization. This is expressed through the visits officials paid to this newly created organization;
- it contributed to the establishment of links between *Minonkpô* and other women's organizations carrying out the same type of activities;
- it favoured the training of women in bookkeeping, record keeping and literacy; and
- it promoted regular meetings and open discussions.

All these activities were possible because of the leader who played an important role. The role of this leader was also dependent on the social structure in the village which was favourable to the development of collective activity in the village.

In the hamlet of Ekponté, there are effective leaders who work for the development of the hamlet although they try also to achieve their personal objectives. Their behaviour can be understood in the light of:

- the situation of their hamlet which induces a cohesion among villagers in order to achieve some concrete activities to prove their capability to run a village. Here is a handicap related to the situation of the hamlet;
- the second handicap was the lack of a knowledge of French, the official language. This contributes to increasing the desire of some leaders to prove their capability through their involvement in effective activities.

5.6 Conclusion: lessons to be learnt

Formal and informal accountability mechanisms exist in the villages studied in this book. Formally, the organizations function according to introduced principles: choice of objectives, election of committee members, regular meetings, participation of all members in decision making and equal access to benefits.

PADES plays an important role in helping farmers to establish and manage their organization.

At the beginning of this chapter I argued that it is possible to intervene in an organization to promote:

- the accountability of leaders to the members of their organizations and to avoid the misuse of common goods; and
- the accountability of development agencies to farmers' needs.

PADES aims at improving the claim-making capacity of farmers. It helps the establishment of accountability mechanisms at the farmer level. Through the different platforms, PADES has introduced the accountability of development agencies to farmers' organizations. The third set of mechanisms established are related to the JAPPD. These mechanisms constitute what I will call the structural explanatory factors of the effectiveness of farmers' organizations. (see also Uphoff 1992). Other factors which contribute to the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms are the roles of charismatic leaders, of councils of elders (respect for ancestors and god), of organizations of sons abroad. An other important factor is the competition among villages and organizations.

5.6.1 Structural explanations

PADES helped farmers' organizations to install committees whose roles are to manage the organization. Mechanisms established to involve all farmers in activities include regular meetings of all members and the presence of a PADES official at these meetings. The role of the PADES official was to act as a catalyst, to ease discussions among farmers, and to provide information which is out of the reach of farmers.

Organizations hold monthly meetings during which activities are discussed and information is shared among members. The presence of a PADES official facilitates the involvement of most farmers in discussions. The influence of a PADES official

in the village helps small farmers to take the risk of expressing their opinions in groups in which some influential people are present. Another effect of their presence is related to holding effective regular meetings. Influential farmers can tolerate small farmers expressing their opinions during these meetings. Some influential farmers adapt their behaviour to the new situation. People are prepared to adapt their behaviour to a new situation and to justify their actions; but when it is possible, they try to change the situation and to adapt it to their behaviour. The presence of outside people prevents the second alternative to some extent. Many farmers' organizations introduced by PADES were able to survive and continue their activities even when PADES had stopped its frequent visits to them. It is an indication of sustainability. But most of the organizations left on their own have either stopped their activities or have become dominated by influential people.

Other mechanisms established are the coordination committees which organise activities of the functional groups in each village. These committees check activities of farmers' organizations and give them advice. These devices aim also at facilitating exchanges at village level among farmers' organizations introduced by PADES. These mechanisms are intended to help farmers develop their negotiating power in order to make development agencies accountable to their needs. But only a few coordination committees were able to succeed in initiating discussions with these development agencies. They try to look for favour either for themselves or for their organizations. This is well illustrated by the impression of a former PADES member. He said:

'After many years of helping farmers to develop their power to negotiate with development agencies it is easy to notice that there is not enough change in the behaviour of farmers in their attitude vis-à-vis development agencies. Farmers are still demeaning themselves to beg instead of claiming services. A member of a coordination committee who introduced himself as such came to me begging for funds for himself and not for the whole village he was supposed to represent.'

The council of elders has successfully played the role of coordination committee in many villages, such as Soukpodagni and Ekponté. They succeeded in maintaining the cohesion of organizations and motivating people to work for their own interests and the interests of the organizations.

Another structural arrangement facilitated by PADES is the JAPPD, during which to some extent development agencies are made accountable to farmers, and during which exchange of experiences among farmers helps to improve the accountability of farmers' representatives to the regular members of their organizations.

The forum facilitates the contacts among farmers and officials of development agencies. But to what extent can these open discussions influence decisions within development agencies? Representatives of development agencies at these open discussions are not the decision-makers of the agencies they represent. They become informed about the problems of farmers and may be more willing to work with them. For example, these forums and the actions of a PADES team might make possible the training of midwives and first-aid workers in many villages. The health care centre could supply these persons with drugs and could agree to supervise their work.

On the other side, to what extent do these open discussions contribute to the accountability of representatives of farmers' organizations to the rest of members? The most important effects of these meetings are: farmers trained by farmers. During the meeting, village representatives report to the assembly the activities of farmers' organizations in their village.

Difficulties and successes are also reported to the assembly and discussed openly. Through these annual open discussions, farmers are aware that their ineffectiveness can be disclosed to many people and can be criticized by everybody. To avoid such criticisms, farmers improve their performance. But the most important thing to mention here is the opportunity offered to farmers to teach other farmers on subjects they have mastered better than others. This way of proceeding has some advantages over the traditional teaching by extension agents or other outside people. Farmers could identify themselves to their fellow farmers and adopt technologies taught to them by their peers. But the most important problem with farmers is that most participants to these meetings are big farm owners and influential people.

5.6.2 Role of indigenous organizations

The structural explanation helps us to get some insight into the functioning of accountability mechanisms which contribute to effective farmers' organizations. Additional explanations are needed to understand some actions for which one could expect that many people would free-ride and no action would be taken. In effect, the same structural arrangement has been adopted by PADES for all introduced organizations but not all could maintain their cohesion and achieve communal activities and also satisfy individual interests. The role of charismatic leaders, the role of existing indigenous organizations and of the associations of sons abroad have been pointed out as additional essential mechanisms.

In Soukpodagni, the Association of Sons Abroad, the unstructured organization of young people and the council of elders have been important factors for the success of farmers' organizations. In the hamlet Ekponté, a charismatic leader plays an important role. In the village Gbècogblé, the non-existence of any such an organization prevented the functional groups from functioning as expected by the founders. Functional groups were established during the first phase of PADES when the main decisions were taken by PADES's officials and not by farmers. The establishment of Functional Groups in this village is comparable to an imposition from above. In that sense I agree with Burkey when he says: *It is absolutely essential for the change agent to ensure that the group makes its own decisions as to what it wants to do, when it wants to do it, and how it will do it* (Burkey 1993:151). I would like to comment on the words 'the group makes its own decisions as to what it wants to do.' The problem with this is that the real agenda of the group may be to defraud PADES; cases of groups established in order to defraud a development agency are not rare. An alternative to such a situation may be the establishment of an hybrid organization by members themselves to which they contribute financially.

5.6.3 Sustainability of the introduced accountability mechanisms

The successful cases have shown that the accountability mechanisms introduced by PADES function partly because of the regular visits of PADES staff to the groups, and their frequent presence at the meetings of these groups. But how can these accountability mechanisms be sustainable? Can they survive after the end of the activities of PADES in these villages? The functional groups created during the first period of the implementation of PADES are useful for understanding the adoption of the principles introduced by PADES. PADES cut back its activities in villages which were not in the District of Dogbo because of the need to concentrate its activities in an area easily manageable. It continues to pay some visits to these first functional groups. Some of these groups have continued their activities without PADES intervention. They have increased the size of their activities. Some of them restructured themselves by reviewing the size of their organization with respect to their activities and to the confidence among members.

With respect to regular meetings, some groups have continued to hold regular meetings in which most members participated. Individual members expressed their opinion without fearing repression from board members. A democratic system can be observed in these groups. Meetings we attended (my assistant and myself) indicated that possibilities were given to all members to express their opinion. We thought that it was due to our presence, but other people in the village confirmed our observations. In effect, we discussed our observations with the director and other teachers of the primary school of the village. To give another example of such a democratic system, I would like to report the process of decision-making of one group.

'The chairwoman of the group heard about the possibility of applying for funds from the CLCAM. She reported the information she collected to members. A decision was taken for all members to look for more information. A group of two people were sent to the offices of PADES and of the CLCAM to get more information. Once back, they reported to the members the results of their mission (conditions for obtaining credit from the CLCAM). With respect to the report, members decided to become members of the CLCAM and to apply for loans. Grants were given to ten of them (there were twenty). Collegial decisions were taken with all members and these grants were shared among all twenty members. They repaid the money together also.'

This happened in this group after PADES had decreased dramatically its activities in it. Board members are accountable to the ordinary members of the group. The group still exists and is carrying on its activities after the 'departure' of PADES from the village.

This group is not alone for there are many other groups functioning in the villages where the first functional groups were created. Once farmers became conscious of the need to organize and to deal with their concrete problems, they pursued their activities.

The next problem deals with the sustainability of mechanisms created at levels beyond the village. Participants of the different committees (CCP, CCS) are increasingly interested and found them useful. But the question remains who will organize

such committees after the end of PADES? The CCP and the CCS can be sustainable if they become institutionalized and if members integrate them into their own activities and do not perceive them as PADES's committees.

With respect to the JAPPD, its sustainability will depend on the functioning of the CCP and CCS and also on the effectiveness of the regional organizations of farmers such as the women's organization for marketing palm oil. This women organization operates beyond the village level.

One problem encountered with these projects is their replicability. Three other projects have learnt lessons from the experience of PADES and are using the same approach in other parts of the country. These projects are PADEC Kandi, PADES Boukoubmé and PADES Coby. These projects are executing the approach according to the specific situations they are facing in their areas. A participatory approach is difficult to replicate in a planned manner because of its characteristics such as: spontaneity, conviction, commitment, identity and confidence (see Burkey 1993:125).

5.6.4 Conclusion

In concluding this chapter, I would like to say that many factors contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of the farmers' organizations introduced by PADES. I have discussed most of them in sections 5.6.1 and 5.6.2. In this conclusion I would like to elaborate more on:

- the effects of the two platforms (CCS and CCP) on development agencies with respect to their accountability to farmers' organizations; and
- other crucial factors in the effectiveness of farmers' organizations.

The effects of the two platforms on development agencies

The first platform was established at the District level. All officials of development agencies working in the areas participate effectively in the meetings of the CCS. Experience was exchanged among officials. They discussed mainly the activities of PADES and were informed about the problems of farmers. They found themselves obliged to carry out their duties towards villagers, as the failure to deliver their services could cause harm to the population. For example, the village dispensaries started functioning after the difficulties of farmers in coming for medical visits had been discussed in the CCS. Lack of transportation was an important problem faced by farmers and was the cause of many deaths in many villages. The awareness of medical officials was raised through such discussions.

The negotiations were conducted by PADES alone but with the involvement of farmers. The CCS served to support what farmers had started on their own or with PADES officials.

Another example it is important to cite is the literacy training programme. The contribution of the CCS was influential. Officials of the training service were sensitized to this problem during the CCS and decisions were taken to improve the situation. Now, PADES and the officials of this service have initiated the training of local trainers for training villagers. More than thirty people were trained for such activities.

Because of these meetings, the problems of farmers were taken more into account by development agencies. The staff of these agencies knew also that their superiors would meet at the CCP to discuss the progress of the activities undertaken by PADES, so they felt themselves compelled to improve their performance. The participation of these officials in the meetings of the CCS was one of the reasons for their participation in the JAPPD, during which farmers demonstrate their activities and also during which some agencies are denigrated.

The existence of the CCP is a guarantee for the participation of officials at lower level in the meeting of the CCS. The CCP members felt that it had become necessary to improve their activities in the field. It is their representatives, i.e., the members of the CCS who have to improve the perception people have about them.

Other factors

These are the size of the organization, the motivation to join the organization, the access to the benefits, the capacity to claim this benefit. These points have been discussed throughout the chapter. The size of the functional group of Ekponté is a crucial factor of success. People know each other and there is mutual trust. The existence of mutual trust was reinforced by the existence of a counsellor who did not take decisions but was there to help members of the organizations make things to work. People have joined the organization because they are sure to have access to the benefit. The fact that the rules apply equally to all convinced members of the impartiality of enforcement of the rules.

An important lesson to be learnt from the work of PADES is the flexibility of the project to adapt its strategy as it gets more knowledge about the environment. In effect, from the first phase to the present, many adaptations have been made. PADES started with the establishment of farmer's organizations, which is similar to the imposition of farmers' organizations on farmers. It has moved to first do a rapid rural appraisal before starting activities in the areas, and to leave farmers to establish their own organizations. It is becoming more respectful of the social structures and existing organizations.

I will end this chapter with a statement of one official of PADES. He said:

'An organization which is functioning is the one in which all members obtain some direct or indirect benefit. Leaders and supportive existing organizations play an important role in keeping the organization in the right direction. The role of the change agent is to help villagers to identify these existing organizations and these leaders.'

Some people who have the potentiality effectively to lead an organization may not be visible because of handicaps they suffer from. Another problem may also be that, once effective leaders are identified and trained, they can become ineffective and seek to follow their hidden agenda which may not be in line with the objective of the organization. In such a situation, members of the organization are in a better position to choose their own representatives.

Notes

1 The International Labour Organization defines the basic needs of poor people as including certain minimum requirements of a family for private consumption (adequate food, shelter and clothing, etc.) and essential services provided by and for the community at large (safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health and educational facilities) (Burkey 1983:31).

2 Modernization and modernity are associated with development. There is no clear definition of what development can be. Many scholars have pointed out that it is difficult to arrive at some agreed definition about development (see Long 1982; Apter 1987:7). For economists, development is equivalent to economic development and is measured as an increase of the gross national income (Higgins 1959 quoted by van Dusseldorp 1991:2). Other people will include notions such as equity, poverty alleviation, basic needs, cultural and religious in the definition of development. Van Dusseldorp (1991:2) defines development in such a way that it covers most of these aspects. According to him development is '... a change, or a set of changes, in an existent situation leading to a new situation, more in line with the goals, objectives, and targets of individuals or groups in society, at a specific point in time.' This definition is useful for this book but there is a need to add the aspect of emergence of checks and balances in society without which only a few people will benefit from the growth. For such a reason I will use the following definition: Development is the emergence of checks and balances in society. This can be seen as a condition for reduction in oppression, exploitation and inequity, and for democracy and a needs-oriented economy (Röling 1993).

3 People plant palm trees in order to process the palm nuts into palm oil and to process the palm wine into the local drink well known as *sodabi*. The management of the plantations of oil palm trees in Mono Province indicates farmers strategies to proceed to a sustainable land use. In effect, it is an agro-forestry practice which allows them to continue cropping. They associate the annual crops with the palm oil trees.

4 Wellard (1993: 136-142) distinguishes three categories of NGO. The first comprises those acting mainly as a channels of funds to development projects. The second group includes the professional NGOs which provide services such as training or research for other organizations. The grassroots service organizations constitute the third group and are local organizations with in-house capacity to provide some services to their members.

5 The local NGOs are financially dependent on the international donors. Participatory approaches, gender or environment issues are key words they use to get financed. International donors are sensitive to these words. In the field, most of them use top-down approaches.

6 The SNV was contacted by the Dutch people working in the *Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques*. The first to take the initiative of establishing the PADES was the FSA which asked for the collaboration of the two other parties.

7 PADES learns from its practical work in the field and adapts the implementation of its strategies accordingly. For example, a lesson learnt from the first period is the danger related to the grant of credit or gift to organizations at the beginning of a project. Many fictitious organizations had been formed and the results were poor.

8 Farmers formed groups with respect to their interests. In doing so, PADES staff thought that groups were homogeneous to some extent with respect to problems and solutions identified. They helped farmers to plan their meetings and attended these meetings. Their involvement in the planning and their presence at these meetings were perceived as stimuli for fair elections and regular organization meetings.

9 According to Rölöf (1995:14) a 'platform is a soft system made up of people who constitute a system if they share goals, develop a common understanding of the problems they experience, realize their interdependence and develop joint agency to do something about their problems. This requires negotiation, accommodation, conflict resolution, joint learning and consensus'. Usually, people have different goals and the stated goals may not be real. It is important to develop mechanisms which allow the expression of the hidden agendas of the different actors involved in the platform. In the present book, development agencies are all working in the same areas for the welfare of villagers. The CCP and CCS are established for exchange of experience and the improvement of the relations among development agencies and their actions towards farmers.

10 The presence of the representatives of farmers in the CCS and CCP is planned but was not yet effective at the time of the research.

11 This count of Functional Groups is that of November 1994 and may have changed.

12 In the village of Gbècogblé, there are patron-clientelism relations. Most 'rich' people have their followers. The followers, in case of financial problems (expenses related to health, funeral ceremonies, school fees, food shortage), refer to the rich men to borrow money at a high interest. Their land is used as mortgage. They are not (very often) able to pay back this money which increases with time. At the end of the period of repayment, the lenders (the rich) may become the owners of the land if the borrowers are not able to pay back. In order to keep their sole productive assets, some farmers and their families (children and wives) work for the lenders. Borrowers become dependent on the lenders and support them in all their activities (politics and economics). The same relations exist between the leaders of religions and the followers. A villager who got his sickness healed by a *Vodjounon* and is unable to pay the amount of money asked by the *Vodjounon* becomes his follower. He is frightened of getting the sickness back or of dying. Taking land from the borrower is acceptable in the area.

13 People become members of the organization but are not able to be there for all the meetings which are perceived as useless by them. People are not familiar with such regular meetings and such discussions. Many members are represented by their children, their wives or by some dependent persons. The representatives report discussions to their father, mother or to their patrons. As such, decisions reached at the meetings are unlikely to be applicable because they are not taken by the right people.

14 Doudokabimè facilitated the work of PADES in the village. He organized gatherings of villagers and discussions between villagers and PADES. He gained the confidence of PADES's staff by helping them by supplying them with information about the area. He was a key informant. PADES believed in his capacity to mobilize villagers for collective actions and made available funds for achieving certain activities. PADES found it easy to use him for its purpose and Doudokabimè took the opportunity to reach his hidden objectives. Both PADES and Doudokabimè played a game, each pursuing his own interests.

15 People in the group thought that it would be profitable for them to distribute the money and to carry out individual petty trade. This would help them to have some other activities outside farming. The strategy was that the individual paid interest to the group which would contribute to increase the capital of the group.

16 An investigation into his social role in the area shows that all members of the functional groups belong to his extended family in which he plays the most important role. They were dependent on him for survival (school fees, expenses related to health, food). Membership of the group is perceived as a favour granted by him to some of his relatives. As such, members perceive their gains as members of the group as dependent on his will.

17 There is a village administration composed of the elected village chief with his counsellors. The village administration is renewed each time there is political change at national level, but the previous administration continues to exert some influence in the village. The main influence in the village scene derives from the different decision units.

18 The PADES is promoting literacy training in this village in order to help women farmers to read and write. All members of these groups are following this training and are well motivated. They are regular at the training sessions.

19 Processing palm oil or cassava are the formal activities of these groups. These are economic activities. But women had also another important social duty: the attendance at funeral ceremonies organized by members of the group. Funeral ceremonies are important in the area as described in chapter 3. Women therefore took the opportunity to organize a drum group which links the two women's groups.

20 There is an organization of young people in the village. It is not well structured but still plays a role in disseminating information and in checking activities carried out by different people in the village. Members of the group are young men living in the village. This organization is in contact with the Organization of Sons Abroad and with the council of elders.

21 The objectives of the council of elders are to get more help from PADES. The existence of the women's groups which look good to donors may facilitate the achievement of their objectives.

22 The hamlet is very small and women would like to show the outside world that they are capable of managing their activities and increasing their wellbeing. As such, they think it necessary to share most information for the health of the organization.

23 Some benefits accrued from his involvement in the activities of the women. These are indirect benefits. In effect, he has not been to formal school but manages to get the ability to write and to read both French and the local dialect (Adja). He is a teacher of the local language. His participation in women's activities contributes to the improvement of his social status in the hamlet and in the area. He is perceived by villagers as a *mece agbeto unto enyi* that is a conscious person. Furthermore, people from this hamlet were perceived as '*gens de la brousse*' by people of other villages. His objectives and those of his peer villagers were to improve the situation of the hamlet so that it can be recognized as a village. To attain this end, they need to promote all activities which can contribute to improve the view people have about the hamlet. Activities of women's group contribute to attaining such an end.

6 Main results and discussions

This chapter presents the main findings. It stresses the main factors that hinder or promote trust/accountability in farmers' organizations in an African context. The first crucial set concerns internal factors while others concern the environment of the organization. All these factors are important for understanding the effectiveness of farmer's organizations. With respect to lessons learnt from the effectiveness of indigenous and introduced organizations, the chapter proposes hybrid farmers' organizations which might be acceptable both to farmers and to development agencies.

6.1 Summary of major findings

6.1.1 Introduction

Before presenting the main conclusions, I would like to recall the focus of this book. I started with the observation that farmers' organizations are extensively used in order to create an interface between villagers and the outside world, and to make the agenda of development agencies better adapted to the realities of rural areas. Another observation is that lack of trust and lack of accountability are major factors which undermine the effectiveness of these organizations. The book has reported on accountability in farmers' organizations, and has examined how trust/accountability work in farmers' organizations and the extent to which an agency can contribute to the effectiveness of their promotion.

To get an understanding of the functioning of trust and accountability, three types of organization in three different villages have been studied. Organizations and villages are chosen to represent extremes.

- the *Kugbè* is a self-initiated and self-organized farmers' organization aiming at the protection of its members against expenses and dishonour related to funeral ceremonies for parents-in-law. In addition to their aspect of helping the ascent of the soul of the deceased person, funeral ceremonies offer occasion for people to be in contact with relatives and parents-in-law. As such, the funeral ceremonies play a social role by contributing to the cohesion of the village. The *Kugbè* has some meaning in the society as it helps the reproduction of 'tradition' and the maintenance of relations between people linked by marriage. The *Kugbè* was discussed in chapter 3;

- the GVs are farmers' organizations introduced by the CARDER, the government extension service for village development. GVs were perceived as branches of the CARDER. As such, leaders were perceived as members of the CARDER, and other GV members did not expect leaders to report to them. With the restructuring of agricultural services which aims at giving more power to these GVs, farmers are becoming more aware of the control they can exert on leaders to make them accountable. The progressive process of taking over responsibilities in the GVs contributes to their indigenization and to a better understanding of their existence. The use of a participatory approach by a few NGOs in the area contributes also to the emergence of groups of people who would like to be involved in the management of GVs. GVs created on the initiative of farmers themselves develop characteristics which are close to indigenous organizations and are more effective. The description of these organizations was the core of the chapter 4; and
- the functional groups are organizations induced by PADES, an NGO which aims at developing the negotiating capacity of farmers. The first functional groups were created and were perceived like organizations established by the CARDER. They were treated like them (see GV) because of they lacked meaning for farmers. The introduction of a Rapid Rural Appraisal to start or to evaluate actions of PADES in some villages helped to change the way villagers perceived organizations introduced by PADES. The success of some functional groups is mainly due to the actions of some charismatic leaders and to a better application of accountability mechanisms introduced by PADES. An important point in introducing accountability mechanisms is that on the one side there is the development of a democratic system in farmer organizations, and on the other side there are the platforms of development agencies which create favourable conditions for the emergence of effective farmers' organizations. This was the focus of chapter 5.

These organizations were studied in the villages of Gbècogblé, Soukpodoté and Ekponté, three different villages with respect to their social structure, the size of their population, their status (with respect to the surrounding villages) and the quality of leaders. They differ also with regard to the process of creation of the introduced organization.

6.1.2 Importance to development of countervailing power and checks and balances

No matter how effective an organization is, if only a few people benefit from it, the improvement of living conditions will be for a small group of members of the organization. This book argues that an organization will be effective if it gives opportunities to most members to achieve their goals without harming others. Development is argued to start from the individual level (see Burkey 1993). Development is taken here as the process through which there is an increase in the capacity of all groups in society to influence their own future (Bryant & White 1982:14-19; Van Dusseldorp 1991:2). Development will not occur if only a small segment of the population has access to the benefit derived from the growth, and others not. Evidence has shown that benefits tend to go to those in power. At the local level, and more specifically at farmers' organization level, benefits tend to go to members of the board of the organization. Without any pressure from members,

people in power will not develop any sound distributional policy of national, local and organization wealth. The powerful group will always benefit from the collective efforts. A mechanism which makes people accountable to the majority of the contributors can help to improve the access to benefits of other segments of the population. This involves the generation and expression of power through these mechanisms. Various power holders in the village develop strategies to resist and to prevent the effective functioning of such mechanisms. Opposed to these hindrance factors are those which promote accountability. We will discuss them in this chapter, which takes into account the results discussed in the previous chapters.

During the colonial period, accountability mechanisms based on rules and laws of the colonial country (France for the case of Benin) contributed to making rulers accountable for their behaviour. Corruption and the misuse of common goods could be avoided to some extent. In effect, people were accountable to their superiors and complied with the established rules. During this period, there was no downward accountability. In effect, at the lower levels, the *commandants de cercle* ruled with the help of chiefs of village and notables nominated by them. Difficulties in communication allowed these *commandants de cercle* to possess tremendous and exceptional powers, some of which were abused (Decalo 1976:33). As a result, village chiefs and notables did not have any influence on the commandants, while villagers did not have any formal influence on the chiefs and the notables. But because of the functioning of upwards accountability mechanisms, corruption was limited.

From 1960, Benin became politically independent as did many other French-speaking countries. Benin was characterized at all levels by the lack of countervailing power which can allow the activities of government to be controlled. Although there were created various types of National Assemblies which did not last, the rulers did not focus on the distributional issue of development. Corruption was widespread. Benin can be characterized as one of the 'soft states'. Bryant and White (1982) state that:

'Corruption is part and parcel of the general condition in the underdeveloped countries of their being soft states . It is a major inhibition and raises serious obstacles against all efforts to increase social discipline. Not only are politicians and administrators affected by the prevalence of corruption, but also businessmen, and the whole population'.

According to them, one criterion for successful administration is to find ways to enhance the responsiveness of lower level officials to their clients' needs. In other words, to find ways to make these officials accountable to their clients. This is the focus of the argument developed in this book.

Benin has been ruled for years by 'non democratic'¹ regimes, until the recent national conference which allowed the multi-party presidential elections and the election of deputies for the parliament. With the installation of the government and of all the institutions of countervailing power (National Assembly, Constitutional Court, Economic and Social Council, High Authority of Audio-Visual and of Communication, Supreme Court, Labour Unions, Political parties, etc.), Benin entered a new period of development and one can expect that institutions for countervailing power may be able to exert pressure on the government. The countervailing power institutions are expected to check the activities of the government and

to guarantee the interests of citizens. Members of these institutions are elected people or representatives of different interests groups. As such, they are expected to exert pressure on the government for the avoiding misuse of common funds and for a better distribution of the fruits of development. The actions of the government are expected to be discussed by these different countervailing power institutions without being influenced by the government. These institutions are autonomous and independent of the government. But the extent to which the interests of the constituencies are represented by these bodies is questionable. Members of these institutions represent more their own personal interests than those of their electorate. The interests of farmers are not defended by these people in the countervailing power institutions. The same results have been found by Widner (1994a, 1994b) in Ivory Coast.

The existence and good functioning of countervailing power and checks and balances are essential for development in which some of the components will be equity and empowerment. The existence of such mechanisms may contribute to equitable development and will allow poor farmers to have access to the benefit of growth. Accountability has to do with equity, with the absence of exploitation and oppression. It allows people to express their opinions and needs, and to make claims. Accountability helps people to oppose power-holders who exploit them, because there are effective mechanisms which help them to do so. The same mechanisms would help them to alter the agenda of political administration and development agencies. That is what some farmers believe and it appears in the following sentences:

'You have said democracy!! Then all actors in the village, elected or not, should be involved in decision making' (Adjinacou 1994:13 reporting a farmer: translated into English by the author).

In the context of democratization of the political environment in Benin, more room for the development of accountability mechanisms has been created in rural areas. The present book has looked at these mechanisms at farmers' organization level. These mechanisms are expected to contribute to a fair distribution of the benefits that accrue to farmers' organizations. This study is an exploratory study which has looked at limited evidence in one culturally homogenous situation, the Adja plateau.

Nevertheless, it is of interest to understand the functioning of these mechanisms in rural areas. The first observation which it is of interest to mention is the limited attention given by scholars to such an important issue for more equity. It is not the only issue in bringing just development but is one of the most important ones. Field results have shown that there are mechanisms which promote trust/accountability (charismatic leaders, councils of elders, associations of sons abroad, the size of the village and of the organization) while others hinder it (lack of shared paradigms, the process of choosing leaders, power patterns). These mechanisms, presented in section 6.1.3, are found at organization level, at village level and at higher levels of social aggregation. They reinforce each other. Trust exists in cases where power is very low and solidarity very high (see Bailey 1971:15). Accountability is the extent to which individuals or organizations who hold power, responsibility or goods on behalf of others can be made to behave in the collective interest. Those people or

organizations are made accountable to the other members of the organization or to the people who should benefit from the results. One cannot talk about accountability without referring to power relations, which are determined at the village level by social, economic and political status. Access to sources of power such as sorcery, *vodjou* and the relations with politicians and development agents yields power to people in the village. This is presented in the section of this chapter on leaders.

6.1.3 *Major findings*

The broad findings of this study concern the effectiveness of indigenous organizations, and how the effectiveness of farmers' organizations depends on the quality of the leaders and the social structure of the village. This study has shown that indigenous organizations are more effective and more sustainable than introduced organizations. The following discusses explanatory factors for such differences.

a) *Perception of the organizations*

Farmers' organizations are among the attempts to make linkages between the central authority and civic society. These attempts have been regularly interrupted (Bierschenk 1994). Bayart (1989) describes these interruptions as '*totalisations*' and '*détotalisations*'.

The introduction of farmers' organizations has been perceived as state policy to control activities in rural areas. In effect, the introduction of GV, for example, corresponded to the imposition of cotton in Benin. The GV and other organizations introduced by outsiders do not represent realities familiar to farmers. Contrary to the introduced organizations, indigenous organizations such as the *Kugbè* represent a certain reality embedded in their daily life. The *Kugbè* aims at burying people and contributes to building cohesion among kinsmen. Introduced organizations did not play such social roles, and the different mechanisms installed for these introduced organizations were difficult for farmers to understand. In effect, there are administrative procedures to join an introduced organization, regular meetings, different committees with different roles which are not familiar to villagers. Most villagers are not able to read or write and it is difficult for them to handle all the administrative procedures introduced by development institutions. The introduced mechanisms are different from these known to villagers who work mainly on trust and relations. Furthermore, introduced organizations are perceived as owned by the development agencies which established them. Thus, they constitute opportunities for easy access to public goods.

b) *Transparency*

I refer to transparency as the extent to which people can understand the different mechanisms established: rules, control mechanisms and reward or punishment systems. Introduced organizations are established with their different mechanisms which are difficult to understand by villagers. To take an example, the control system is not so familiar to farmers. In a village, a decision to control somebody means that there is already a suspicion about him. It means a lack of confidence in him and endangers the relations between the controller and the controlled even if

no fault is found. Mechanisms for the renewal of boards or book-keeping are not usual in the rural communities and are also too complicated for them. This facilitates the access of some people who are familiar with these mechanisms to the boards of different introduced organizations. They do not necessarily fulfil the 'traditional' qualifications for eligibility. Indigenous organizations deal with mechanisms which are accessible to members and which are familiar to them. For example to become a member of the *Kugbè*, one needs to have two trustees people who support his admission into the organization. Procedures for becoming members, or getting one's share are very simple and accessible to most members. There are no papers to sign or to carry with oneself before getting what is needed. The presence of the witnesses is sufficient.

c) *Purpose of the organizations*

Organizations cannot be separated from the purposes for which they are established. The indigenous organizations are established for a purpose which aims at solving a specific problem for members. In the case of the *Kugbè*, the purpose was to bury deceased kinsmen. It allows people to come together and to strengthen their relations. Members do not expect any support from outsiders (development agencies) before carrying out these activities. But in the case of introduced organizations, the expectation of subsidy or donation to the organizations may be one of the major reasons for joining. The purpose is mainly external to the members of the organizations. For example, the creation of GVs responds to the need to decrease the workload of field agents. There are some advantages for members of the organizations but the first objective was to satisfy outsiders' needs. GVs' members were not involved in the setting of this objective.

d) *Establishment of rules and their enforcement*

Rules are established by outsiders in most introduced organizations. In the case of the GV, rules and how to enforce them were determined by the extension service. In some functional groups, rules and how to enforce them were copied from those of the GV. But in their evolution, more freedom was left to villagers to establish the organizations and to rule them as they wished.

It is completely different in the indigenous organizations: rules and their enforcement are decided by members themselves. These rules are sometimes based on common beliefs. For example, people can be brought before a *Vodjou* to make a promise. These rules are meaningful to them and are embedded in their societies so people fear them more than the imported ones which they do not understand. In the *Kugbè*, it is difficult to steal the money because people believe in the harmful power of the deal over wrongdoers. Furthermore, people would be ashamed to be seen as thieves by members of their families in-law. The assets of the *Kugbè* are recognized as the group's own assets, and any misuse is perceived as a robbery. The assets of introduced organizations are perceived as public goods which one can misuse provided they are distributed among kinsmen. The use of government money to carry out activities for kinsmen is not perceived as a misuse of common goods, but is accepted as extraction from central resources to benefit the local community.

e) *Leaders*

Leaders play an important role in running the organization. They mobilize and direct groups but also serve as brokers between the organization and the outside world. The present study has shown that leaders in indigenous organizations did not misuse the common funds as it is the case for most introduced organizations. Effective leaders have been found among excluded leaders, i.e., leaders who are not recognized by other people because they lack the capacity to read or write, or they are from hamlets considered as '*brousse*' (not important areas). In some villages, leaders are illiterate people who perceive their responsibilities as opportunities to increase their status by running the organization properly. The study has shown that well-educated people are not necessarily the best leaders. Most effective leaders of the different organizations (GV, *Kugbè*, and functional groups) are illiterate people who are trying to improve their social position. An example is the case of the secretary of the GV of the hamlet of Ekponté, the chairman of *Kugbè* of the same hamlet. This can be explained by the fact that the well-educated people in a village already have social status and are much more eager to look for better opportunities outside the village. For the less educated people, being chosen for the board of an organization means that people have confidence in them. They try to keep and increase this confidence to better their social status. Apropos, it might be interesting to find these people when establishing farmers' organizations elsewhere.

Let us come back to the differences observed in the indigenous and introduced organizations with respect to the behaviour of leaders. Analysis of the process of choosing leaders, and of the control mechanisms, directs attention to power relations, shared paradigms, the influence of outsiders.

- *The process of choosing leaders* In indigenous organizations, people are chosen for reasons which are in harmony with the reality of the society. In effect, people prefer to have as leaders people they trust, i.e., people who are committed to the village and will not leave it. As evidence of that might be the fact that they have built their house in the village and live with their families in the village. They do not choose people who are coming up and down, or strangers to the village, because these people do not belong to the trust circles. Old people are chosen as chairmen of these organizations. In the *Kugbè*, committee members are old people. It is the same thing for the GV and effective functional groups. They are old and have no interest in leaving the village for another part of the country or abroad. They are also more 'close' to ancestors and can easily enforce the rules of the society. They are chosen also for their capability to gather members. Their authority cannot be challenged in a village where there is a loyalty to ancestors and elders. In certain cases, young people are chosen to lead indigenous organizations. These young people would have proved their willingness to stay in the village and would have convinced people of their loyalty to shared beliefs. They would have gained the confidence of villagers (the case of the *Kugbè* in Ekponté).

In the case of introduced organizations, the main criteria used for choosing leaders are their capabilities to use the language of interveners. Writing and reading in French are important criteria for becoming members of introduced organizations (making reports, book-keeping). These leaders do not prove their acceptability in the rural community before being elected on account of their ability to understand the

'language' of outsiders. These leaders are not necessarily accepted by the rural community which does not understand this language. These leaders feel themselves more accountable to outsiders than to the community. Other factors which contribute to the lack of accountability of these leaders to their constituencies are related to their access to power sources uncontrollable by other members. These power sources may be economic, political and social. The same people may control one or two of these sources of power. Trying to make these leaders accountable implies dealing with power relations (see Burkey 1993).

- *Power sources uncontrollable by members*

Sorcery and the Vodjou

As other members of the organization are not empowered to make claims on them, these responsible persons would try to seek their own interests which can be in conflict with the organization's interests. As they misuse the public benefit, they may use their expertise in the field of sorcery² to curse people who are against them. As such, they are feared in their society. The owners of such a 'power' are also in a network of sorcerers which goes beyond the village. In such networks, there is a mutual support. Leaders with such capability may be very dangerous for the effectiveness of the organization.

As owners of *Vodjou*, leaders get some power from it as the *Vodjou* has many adepts who owe obedience to the *Vodjounon*. As such, the adepts yield power to their *Vodjounon* which they cannot take back when the *Vodjounon* does not work efficiently in farmers' organizations. Adepts support their *Vodjounon* in his work in farmers' organization and cannot take back the power they yield him because of membership of their community. To disobey the *Vodjounon* is perceived as disobeying the *Vodjou*.

Board members may also be members or have close relationships with private gangs of thugs. Their membership in such organizations allows them to misbehave in relation to common goods. Confronting them may be dangerous to the authors of such actions. A teacher of Gbècogblé village experienced such actions from a leader when he tried to raise the awareness of the members of the GV against the misuse of the assets of the GV by the chairman. His motorcycle was taken from him on his way back home after bringing his wife to hospital. Two '*coupeurs de route*' went to the road and fought him and took the motorcycle. Investigation in the village indicates that the operation was done by a gang which has close contact with the leader of the GV of the village. He was asked to improve his relations with the leader if he wanted to get his motorcycle back. He did not do that and never got his motorcycle back.

Power sources derived from their relationships with politicians and development agents

It is interesting to understand that politicians at the village level are very important in the effectiveness of trust/accountability. The number of politicians at village level increases with the number of regimes. In effect, the renewal of the national political system implies a renewal at the village level. New political elites emerge without the disappearance of the previous ones. Many decision-making centres may exist in the same village. Furthermore, the political parties may have their representatives

in the village. One could expect that the multiplicity of decision centres would create competition among people which could force board members to be accountable; but all this power may be concentrated in the hands of a few people and in such a situation it may be difficult for other people to make them accountable.

Politicians from various parties use leaders of farmers' organizations for their activities in the village; politicians and leaders cooperate in their mutual interest. These relations are used by leaders to strengthen their position in the village, so preventing the accountability mechanisms from functioning correctly.

Field agents enter into collusion with these leaders in order to gain protection from them against their superiors. They need to show their superiors that they are well known in the area, and leaders are the people most likely to be contacted by superiors when they visit a village. They get this protection and some other advantages from these leaders. They are the ones who know the malpractice of leaders. Field agents, in turn, help these farmers to get facilities from the development agency. Von der Luhe (1990) came to the same conclusions when studying the relations between farmers and field agents in the CARDER Atlantic. He concluded that the interaction between field agents and leaders can be seen as a business where everyone bought and sold resources by exchange of mutual benefits. These facilities contribute to improving the life of these leaders, widening the gap between people in office and other members of the organizations.

- *Lack of shared paradigms*

This is another important point when examining farmers' organizations. In effect, the lack of shared paradigms, such as the belief in common *Mawu* or *Vodjou* and in the predications of intermediaries, contributes to the lack of loyalty to elders and their council, if any. Unsuccessful organizations are found in villages where many religions coexist: the common *Vodjou* of the Adja people (Lissa, Gù, Sakpata, Tohossou, Dan), the newly imported *Vodjou* and religions such as Christianity (many types) and Islam. This situation reflects conflicts among villagers and undermines the accountability of leaders to members of the organizations. The village Gbècogblé is interesting in that respect as displaying a lack of cohesion among villagers. This is due also to the fact that religions value different norms and are sources of power for their leaders.

The role of people outside the organization in promoting trust/accountability

In villages where there exist shared paradigms such as the belief in ancestors and respect for elders, people refer to the *council of elders* to settle conflicts and to enforce accountability within the organization. The council of elders was very effective in the village of Soukpodagni in making board members accountable to ordinary members of the various organizations existing in the village. Older people are more concerned with the future of their village as they are unlikely to move from the village to another place. They exert some influence on people to maintain the cohesion of the village by helping organization members to have access to the benefits accruing from their activities. It is therefore interesting to look at the existence and the role of councils of elders in a village.

The role of the Association of Sons Abroad

An effective association of sons abroad contributes to promoting trust among members of farmers' organizations in their home village. That there is an effective association of sons abroad is an indication of trust among families in the village. Each member has some links with his parents at home who may be members of the farmers' organization. The fact that the association can be called upon when there is a problem of misuse of the common benefit makes board members more aware of a control mechanism which is not in the village but controlled by their sons living outside and having 'more knowledge' as said by a leader:

'Our sons living in towns are in contact with activities beyond the village and help us to have access to people working in the administration. They are the channels for many of our achievements. They save us time as they can do in one week what we need more than one month for because they know the administrative system better than us. Administrative people do not treat them like they treat us. They can be very disappointed when they are informed about the misuse of common goods. We fear their reactions to misuse of funds and assets by some members.'

The existence of effective association of sons abroad is an indication that there is trust among them. The existence of trust among sons abroad may reflect the nature of the trust among their parents. When parents do not trust each other, they prevent their children from cooperating with the children of their opponents. The village of Soukpodagni is very interesting in that respect.

Concluding this section on the major results of this study, I would like to stress that indigenous organizations are much more effective than the introduced organizations, and the well-educated people are not necessarily the effective leaders. Furthermore, effective organizations are not necessarily found in big villages. Marginalized villages struggle to increase their administrative, economic and social status in the area, and the cohesion among members of the village increases consequently. Cohesion increases in the village and contributes to the effectiveness of farmers' organizations.

Having found that indigenous organizations are more effective than introduced organizations, what next can we do about the introduced organizations? It is not because indigenous organizations are more effective that they can be used for all purposes. With respect to the fact that organizations cannot be separated from their purpose, I do not completely agree with some scholars who hold the view that there is no need to form new organizations for extension purpose (Venkatesan 1995). I would like to argue that objectives are different and as such, old organizations cannot be taken systematically to implement extension objectives. What can be learnt from indigenous organizations for introduced organizations? There is a need to create hybrid organizations which are equally transparent to villagers and also to government. This is the focus of the next section.

6.2 What new hybrid organizations are needed?

Indigenous organizations are strong and sustainable because they are based on mutual trust among members. The purpose and the control mechanisms of indigenous organizations are understandable by all members because they have 'lived' in them since their childhood. The needs they address are mostly social needs. The success of these organizations is based on mutual trust, flexibility, mutually shared paradigms, and the acknowledgement of the importance of social relations. The interdependence between purpose and organization suggests that when the purpose of the organization changes, there is a need to review the organization. With respect to this and the sustainability of farmers' organizations, there are some characteristics which can be useful for a new organization. These characteristics will contribute to a better understanding of the organization by members. Characteristics which contribute to the strength of the indigenous organizations will be used for the creation of the hybrid organizations.

Introduced organizations promote western democracy and a system of checks which can allow simple members as well as outsiders to evaluate the management of the organization. Development agencies promote regular meetings of all members, election and renewal of representatives, book-keeping and note-keeping.

A new organization will take into account the strong characteristics of indigenous organizations and those of introduced organizations. This will have as a consequence the understanding of the organization by both villagers and development agencies. I will call this organization an hybrid organization. It is an hybrid organization because it is neither a pure indigenous organization nor a pure organization introduced by development agencies. It is established by farmers themselves in response to their needs but it takes into account some of the positive elements of introduced organization if members find them necessary. For this aspect, I would like to mention the case of the *Kugbè* which is an indigenous organization but is related to the formal bank for keeping the money instead of leaving it with the chairman or the treasurer. Similarly, the board members of the *Kugbè* have defined roles as would be expected in an introduced organization.

An hybrid organization can be established when the need arises. Thus a project will serve to establish procedures, although the establishment of organizations cannot be the objective of projects. Projects may start with concrete activities such as experimentation with innovations, the marketing or storage of agricultural products, health care activities or credit and saving activities. The establishment of organizations should be a consequences of these activities. In other words, farmers' organizations will be created if people participating in the activities feel the need to do so. People in the hybrid organization would learn to cooperate and would learn new skills. A few examples of projects with hybrid organizations are discussed below.

The saving and credit are activities carried out by farmers. A *tontine* plays an important role in the mobilization of funds in rural areas. They are supported by specific structural arrangements. The *Kugbè* is a particular *tontine*. Members of a *tontine* rely more on mutual trust and flexibility. They are sure to get their share back when the *tontine* group is a trustworthy one. These organizations may have

some problems when there are no mechanisms which guarantee access to benefit. Development agencies interested in financing development activities may use these networks by increasing an individual's share. But the problem with this may be the perception of the funds as public goods which can be diverted. An important element for the commitment of members to the *tontine* is the mutual share values regarding indebtedness to one's neighbour (see Bortei-Doku & Aryeetey 1995:90-92).

The horizontal organization of women seeks to deal with the storage and marketing of agricultural products. Women are already carrying out such activities, for example the processing of palm oil but have some problems in selling their products at good prices, because of lack of funds to keep their products until times when the prices are high, and also because of lack of facilities for storage. A project may contribute to setting up procedures for building an organization in response to the needs of women. Women would establish their own rules which are more understandable to them.

For good experimentation with innovations, projects may base their activities on the existing knowledge and the existing organizations dealing with such subjects. In rural areas, there are experimenters who are continually innovating. The role of projects may be to enhance the activities of these experimenters and their organizations by promoting new skills. The projects would contribute to facilitating cooperation and exchange among people carrying out similar experiments. The establishment of an organization would follow if experimenters decided to do so. This organization will be based on their own values and the introduced accountability. This may help them to learn more and to improve their situation.

Concluding this section, the new type of organization is an hybrid with respect to its creation, purpose and mode of functioning. Its characteristics derive from the indigenous and introduced types. As such, it can be understandable to both villagers and development agents.

6.3 How to create hybrid organizations

The objective of this section is to discuss some principles which can help the creation of organizations acceptable both to the government and to villagers. The hybrid organization will benefit from the experience of indigenous and introduced organizations. The major findings have pointed out that effective organizations are not necessarily found in big villages and that effective leaders are not necessarily well-educated people. With respect to these characteristics and the desire to have an organization which reflects the strength of both the introduced and indigenous organizations, the following principles will be proposed. I would like to add that they are not universal principles but they can constitute guiding principles. There are no right solutions when one deals with development which includes capacity, equality, empowerment (see Bryant & White 1982:294).

6.3.1 *Where to start effective farmers' organizations?*

Big villages might be characterized by lack of cohesion. This may be due to many factors: many religions (imported and indigenous), the penetration of modernization, the first to be in contact with development agencies. Some consequences of these factors are the lack of cohesion among people in the village and the development of strategies to have individual benefits from interventions. In marginalized villages, the introduction of an organization may be an opportunity for villagers to increase the administrative, political and social position of the village. This has been proved by the case of the hamlet of Ekponté. People of less endowed areas show a greater cohesion than big villages as they still share some paradigms such as loyalty to ancestors. In small villages there are also some dangers as a few leaders may take the opportunity to exploit others.

6.3.2 *Acknowledging effective leaders or representatives*

The study has shown that effective leaders of farmers' organizations are not necessarily found among well-educated people. A common interest is more important (see also Widner 1994a). They are people who are marginalized because of their level of education and are struggling to improve their social, economical and political statuses. They take the opportunity granted them by being representatives of farmers' organizations to show themselves at their best in order to improve their position in society. The organization is a means to this end. This is the case with leaders of the hamlet of Ekponté. When a chance is given to such people to start an organization the probability that it will be well run may be high. This is an occasion to build his reputation. Effective leaders have shown the following characteristics and roles:

- they are members of the village, living in the village and having built their houses in the villages. Their assets are not spread all over the area. This is an indication of their permanence in the village. They cannot move from the village in one day. They 'belong' to the village.
- they have the capacity to orient indigenous values towards development purposes. They are able to combine indigenous with modern values. An example is the process of training successors to the offices of leaders in the village of Ekponté, while in introduced organizations there should be a renewal of the office through vote. People adopted this process but chose to train their successors to guarantee the sustainability of the organization.
- they are brokers between generations and between men and women. In effect, the role of effective leaders would be the capacity to mobilize not only resources but also ideas. They will be able to coordinate activities between young and old people and between men and women.
- Their brokerage role between development agencies and members is very important. They are the representatives of villages to development agencies and they share innovations with the members of their organizations. In this role, representatives may be self-interested seekers and do not represent the interests of the

organizations. Leaders are also the brokers between their own organizations and other organizations.

- management transparency is a key issue for the effectiveness of farmers' organizations. Effective organizations have shown a combination of modern tools and indigenous tools. Transparency in book-keeping is important and villagers have a preference for women rather than men. Women are perceived as being more trustworthy than men. In organizations comprising men and women, the office of treasurer is very often held by women.

6.3.3 Established rules, sanctions and rewards by members of the organizations are more readable by them than when they are imposed by outsiders

Rules, sanctions and rewards introduced by development agencies are very often not embedded in the society. They are not easily understandable by villagers. I mention throughout the different chapters the failure of control committees and the renewal mechanisms in introduced organizations. These mechanisms are difficult for farmers. But, in the rotating credit and saving association for funeral ceremonies, mechanisms established by farmers themselves are functioning. With respect to these findings, rules, sanctions and rewards established by people themselves are likely to be respected as they take into account their beliefs and their principles. In addition, development agencies may help them to have access to other existing facilities: bank, experience of other villages, etc. In sum, there should be a collective choice arrangement by members of the organization (see Ostrom 1990 and Merrey 1995).

6.3.4 Change agents as catalyst and facilitators for farmers' organizations

Farmers' organizations cannot develop completely independent of national, international political and economical structures (Burkey 1993:206). Marginalized villagers do not have a lot of contacts with the macro structures which they may need for their development. The role of the change agent will be to help villagers to have access to these institutions and to claim services. The change agent would contribute to the organization of platforms of development agencies for their receptivity of the villagers' demands. The cases of the CCS and CCP and the JAPPD are instructive. They are discussed in chapter 5. The change agent therefore plays the role of an intermediary between farmers' organizations and development agencies but this should be a temporary role. In the long term, farmers should be able to put their problems directly to development agencies.

Another aspect of the contribution of the change agent will be to help members in the organization avoid conflicts with the power holders of the village. In effect, leaders in these organizations are not necessarily the power holders of the village, and they may be confronted with the power holders who would like to harm the organization because they may think that they are losing their power. The change agent has an important role to play in such circumstances by taking into account certain activities in which powerful groups also have their interests.

In sum, the change agent would be a facilitator of the process of establishing farmers' organizations.

6.4 General conclusion

In this book, I argue that trust and accountability are crucial factors for the effectiveness of farmers' organizations which, in turn, contribute to development in which distribution of growth to all segments of the population is important. Indigenous organizations are found to be more effective in carrying out the purpose of the organization. This is mainly due to the fact that people are familiar with the tools they establish to run the organizations.

To improve the functioning of farmers' organizations there is a need to create an organization with principles acceptable both to members of the organization and to development agencies. Some principles of establishing such organizations have been given but they cannot be taken as universal.

In conclusion, major factors in the success of farmers' organizations are the motivation, honesty, and capability of, and confidence in, the leaders. This can be enhanced by various accountability mechanisms, but it also depends on the social structure, networks of actors at different levels and the culture of the village.

A final question of this book is whether one can systematically facilitate increased sustainability, through e.g., deft use of development projects, training, enhancing competition among villagers, helping organizations and federations to develop.

Notes

1 Bierschenk (1994:7) raises the point that if it is difficult to identify the colonial period with a dictatorial regime and the period from 1960 until 1972 with a democratic period, it would be also difficult to identify the marxist-leninist regime with a completely dictatorial regime and the period from 1989 onwards as a democratic period. He based his argument on the fact that the first democratic procedures in rural areas were carried out in 1950 during the colonial period. Furthermore, during the marxist-leninist regime, real democratic elections were carried out in rural areas in 1974 when village chiefs and mayors were democratically elected. He noted that in previous National Assemblies (under the marxist-leninist regime) about 100 farmers and workers were represented. During the present period with one man one vote, only a few farmers were elected as deputies. The actual National Assembly comprises mainly people who are University lecturers or rich people. Other categories of the population are excluded because of a lack of money to 'buy' votes. The present procedure of election is costly and is for rich people.

2 In this paragraph, I talk mainly about the leaders who are witches or sorcerers and use this expertise to exercise their power. The second aspect should also not be neglected, i.e., the leaders who are not witches or sorcerers, while some regular members are and use this capability to make leaders accountable to them. 'Witchcraft ordeals' and the like are a type of terror ordeal that compensate a deficit of power in rural society but in certain fields. In such cases leaders are made accountable to the witches and sorcerers and the common goods might be diverted in their favour.

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List of abbreviations

ACOODER	= Association des Coopératives pour le Développement Rural
AKIS	= Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems
CAETS	= Coopérative Agricole Expérimentale de Type Socialiste
CAR	= Coopérative d'Aménagement Rural
CARDER	= Centre d'Action Régionale pour le Développement Rural
CATS	= Coopérative Agricole de Type Socialiste
CCP	= Comité Consultatif de Projet
CCS	= Comité de Coordination et de Suivi de la Sous-Préfecture
CLCAM	= Caisse Locale de Crédit Agricole Mutuel
CONGAB	= Conseil National des ONG Actives au Bénin
CRCAM	= Caisse Régionale de Crédit Agricole Mutuel
FENONG	= Fédération Nationale des ONG et assimilés du Bénin
FG	= Functional Group
FNAFB	= Fédération Nationale des Associations Féminines du Bénin
FOVAD	= Forum des Organisations Volontaires Africaines pour le Développement
FSA	= Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques
FURPRO-Bénin	= Fédérations des Unions de Producteurs du Bénin
GF	= Groupement des Femmes
GRVC	= Groupement Révolutionnaire à Vocation Coopérative
GV	= Groupements villageois
JAPPD	= Journée Africaine de Participation Populaire au Développement
MAIR	= Méthode d'Animation et d'Intervention en Milieu Rural
MPRE	= Ministère du Plan et de la Restructuration Economique
NGO	= Non Government Organization
PADEC	= Projet d'Appui au Développement de la Circonscription Urbaine
PADES	= Project d'Appui au Développement de Sous-Préfecture
PEMR	= Poursuite des Etudes en Milieu Réel
PNUD	= Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement
PRSA	= Projet de restructuration des Services Agricoles
RAMR	= Recherche Appliquée en Milieu Réel
RDR	= Responsable de Développement Rural
SIP	= Société Indigène de Prévoyance
SMDR	= Société Mutuelle de Développement Rural
SMPR	= Société Mutuelle de Production Rurale
SNV	= Stichting Nederlandse Vrijwilligers
SOBEPALH	= Société Béninoise de Palmier à Huile
SONADER	= Société Nationale de Développement Rural
SONAPRA	= Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole

SONICOG	=	Société Nationale pour l'Industrie des Corps Gras
SPONGDD	=	Sécrétariat Permanent des ONG pour le Développement Durable
UNDP	=	United Nations Development programme

Summary

This book analyses farmers' organizations with respect to trust and accountability, in order to contribute to the building of viable organizations. It argues that the lack of trust or of effective accountability mechanisms is one of the major factors which undermine the effectiveness of farmers' organizations. The quality of trust (or its absence) is found in relations between people who consider each other to be equal in status and when solidarity between them is very high. Accountability is defined as the extent to which individuals or organizations who hold power, responsibility, or goods, on behalf of others, can be made to behave in the collective interest. I argue that the combination of indigenous and introduced accountability mechanisms contributes to the promotion of trust among members of farmers' organizations. For this purpose, three different types of organizations were selected in three different villages in order to represent extreme cases. This work is an exploratory study which looked only at limited evidence in one culturally 'homogenous' situation (the Adja plateau).

The organizations taken are:

- the saving and credit associations for funeral ceremonies which are self-initiated and self-managed by farmers. Outside intervention is very little;
- the *Groupeement Villageois* (GVs) which are set up by CARDER, the government extension service. The intervention of the government institution is very great. The decision to create the GV with its structural arrangements was taken by CARDER, the extension service. Villagers were not involved in the establishment of these structural arrangements; and
- the functional groups (FG) which are set up by PADES, an NGO. This NGO expects farmers to create their own organizations and would like to help them to seize available opportunities. The NGO would contribute to creating a favourable environment for farmers' organizations and to inducing accountability mechanisms within them in order to allow all members to benefit from their membership to the organization.

These three types of organization were chosen in villages which are different with respect to their size, their economic and social situations and power patterns. The village of Gbècogblé is a large village with many different African traditional religions and many imported religions. There are some big farmers and big traders. Conflicts are frequent between groups and consensus is rarely reached between them about development goals. Powerful people impose their views. The village of Soukpodagni is a large village with many religions. This village is in permanent

competition with the surrounding villages with respect to outside interventions in the area. Power holders in the village very often reach a consensus with respect to outsiders, and develop strategies to attract as many development interventions to the village as possible. The hamlet of Ekpointé is very small and is considered by the neighbouring villages as a 'bush' village. People in Ekpointé tried to improve the image of their area. As such, they invest in building consensus on most development activities. There is some level of social cohesion in the hamlet and the level of social control is very high.

Investigations in the three types of organization in the three villages revealed that the effectiveness of these organizations can be explained by the existence of trust among members, or the effectiveness of accountability mechanisms. Elements which influence the creation of trust or effective accountability mechanisms in these organizations are the perception of people about the organization, transparency, the purpose of the organization, the involvement of members in setting rules and their enforcement, and the quality of the leaders and the influence of outsiders.

The perceptions people have about their organizations influence their behaviour with respect to the organizations. When they perceive organizations as imposed people frequently scheme to misappropriate public property. But when people perceive the organization as their own, they develop strategies to make leaders more accountable for their behaviour and fight for common interests. With respect to this, most GV and some functional groups are perceived as imposed organizations and do not have any meaning to members. Corruption is very rife. In contrast to these introduced organizations, the *Kugbè*, an indigenous organization, the GV of Ekpointé and some functional groups represent a certain reality embedded in the daily life of members. For example, the *Kugbè* aims at helping members with expenses related to the burial of parents-in-law. Burial activities are well known to members and represent some realities to them. Funeral ceremonies contribute to the gathering of people and thus to building cohesion among kinsmen. Introduced organizations did not play such social roles.

Introduced organizations are established with their structural arrangements which are not familiar to villagers. They are useful but difficult to understand by farmers. The accountability mechanisms embedded in introduced organizations allow all members to have equal access to its assets, and are expected to foster democracy within farmers' organizations. These reasons are not very well explained to farmers before the establishment of rules, control mechanisms, reward and punishment structures. These mechanisms are very complicated and difficult to understand by farmers. In indigenous organizations, people use simple mechanisms: and sometimes the respect of elders, the fear of the actions of ancestors, *Vodjou* and God are sufficient to ensure 'good' behaviour by leaders. People decide upon rules and how to enforce them. Leaders are much more afraid to misuse funds for ceremonies than the funds of GVs or of functional groups.

This study has shown the importance of leaders in running farmers' organizations and in their achievements. Leaders direct groups and serve as brokers between the organization and the outside world. Leaders in indigenous organizations did not misuse common funds as is very often the case in most introduced organizations. The most effective leaders are found in indigenous

organizations and among excluded leaders, i.e., leaders who are not recognized as such by other people because they lack the ability to read and write in the interveners' language, or they are from hamlets considered as 'brousse' (not important areas). In some villages, leaders are illiterate people who perceive their responsibilities as opportunities to increase their status by running the organization properly. The study has shown that well-educated people are not necessarily the best leaders.

In indigenous organizations, people are chosen for reasons which are in harmony with the reality of the society. In effect, people prefer to have as leaders people they trust, i.e., people who are in the village and are not going to leave it after a while in connection with work. Government workers are not chosen as leaders of such organizations. Factors very often used for selection are related to the ownership of houses in the village and to long-term settlement in the village with their families. Villagers do not choose people who are always coming and going, or strangers to the village, because these people do not belong to the trust circles. Old people are very often chosen as chairmen of these organizations.

The study has also revealed that there are mechanisms which undermine the accountability of leaders to members. It was found that the access of leaders to power sources uncontrollable by other members such as witchcraft, political leaders who are themselves unaccountable or private gangs of thugs, together with the lack of a common problem/goal and a shared paradigm (belief in ancestors), constitute mechanisms which tempt leaders not to behave in the collective interest.

In contrast to the above mentioned factors, there are factors which promote the accountability of leaders to members. Some of these factors are the effective functioning of the council of elders, the inspired leaders, and the outside agencies, notably sons abroad or association of young people, which can be called upon to settle conflicts within the organizations.

In the light of the findings and the limits of both indigenous and introduced organizations, I propose the use of the existing potentialities in these organizations. I argue that there is a need to create hybrid organizations. A hybrid organization can be defined as an organization of which the structural arrangements are understandable to both farmers and to development agencies. For this, projects must not be used for the creation of organizations but will contribute to the establishment of procedures. The objective of projects should not be to establish organizations. A project must work on technical problems: organizations may be created if the need is perceived by farmers themselves.

As implications of the results of this study, the following suggestions are made as to create an hybrid farmer organization. The first step will be to think about where to start this hybrid organization. The findings have shown that effective organizations are not necessarily found in big villages. Thus, the marginalized villages or hamlets are likely to be the best places to start such organizations. These villages might need to improve the image others have about their areas and to work accordingly. The second step might be to acknowledge the potential leaders who are not prominent because they lack certain capacities (illiterate or poor). These people are likely to seize the opportunities offered to them to improve their economic, social and political status.

Another element to consider is that farmers will be responsible for the creation of the organization, will establish their objectives, rules, and systems of sanctions and rewards.

Change agents may play the roles of catalyst and facilitator. They will contribute to creating an environment favourable to the promotion of these types of organization. As facilitators, change agents might contribute to the promotion of effective accountability mechanisms at various levels. These mechanisms are expected to mutually reinforce each other.

In conclusion, the effectiveness of farmers' organizations depends on the motivation, honesty and capability of the leaders and on people's confidence in them. Some of these characteristics can be enhanced by accountability mechanisms, social structure, networks of actors at different levels and the culture of the village.

A question which needs to be explored is whether one can systematically facilitate increased sustainability through, e.g., deft use of development projects, training, enhancing competition among villages, and helping organizations and federations to develop.

Samenvatting

Dit proefschrift betreft een analyse van boerenorganisaties ten aanzien van vertrouwen en verantwoordelijk beheer met het doel een bijdrage te leveren aan het opbouwen van levensvatbare organisaties. In het proefschrift wordt beargumenteerd dat het gebrek aan vertrouwen of aan effectieve verantwoordelijkheden één van de belangrijkste factoren is die de effectiviteit van boerenorganisaties ondermijnt. De kwaliteit van het vertrouwen (of de afwezigheid hiervan) wordt verkregen in verhoudingen tussen mensen die elkaar een gelijke status toekennen en bij grote solidariteit tussen hen. Verantwoordelijkheid wordt gedefinieerd als de mate waarin individuen of organisaties die macht hebben, verantwoordelijkheid of goederen beheren namens anderen, bewogen worden om zich in de richting van het collectieve belang te gedragen. Ik betoog dat de combinatie van inheemse en geïntroduceerde verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen bijdraagt aan de stimulering van vertrouwen tussen leden van boerenorganisaties. Om dit te onderzoeken werden drie typen organisaties in drie verschillende dorpen geselecteerd om op die manier ideaaltypen te representeren. Dit werk is een beschrijvende studie die slechts een beperkte bewijsvoering verschaft voor een cultureel 'homogene' situatie (het Adja plateau).

De geselecteerde organisaties zijn:

- de spaarkredietassociaties voor begrafenisplechtigheden zijn zelf-geïnitieerde, organisaties in eigen beheer van boeren. De invloed van buitenaf is zeer laag;
- de *Groupement Villageois* (GV's) zijn opgezet door CARDER, de voorlichtingsorganisatie van de overheid. De inbreng van dit overheidsorgaan is zeer groot. De beslissing om een GV op te zetten met deze structuur werd door CARDER genomen. Dorpsbewoners waren niet betrokken bij het vaststellen van deze structuur;
- de functionele groepen (FG's) werden opgezet door PADES, een NGO. Deze NGO verwacht dat boeren hun eigen organisaties oprichten en wil hen graag helpen om de mogelijkheden daartoe in hun omstandigheden te gebruiken. De NGO wil bijdragen aan het scheppen van gunstige omstandigheden voor boerenorganisaties en aan het instellen van verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen binnen deze organisaties met als doel dat alle leden voordeel hebben van hun lidmaatschap.

Deze drie typen organisaties werden gekozen in dorpen die verschillen in grootte, economische en sociale situatie en machtspatronen. Het dorp Gbècogblé is een groot dorp met vele verschillende Afrikaanse traditionele godsdiensten en vele

geïmporteerde godsdiensten. Het dorp heeft een aantal grote boeren en grote handelaren. Er zijn dikwijls conflicten tussen groepen en tussen deze groepen is nauwelijks consensus te bereiken over de doelen van ontwikkelingshulp. Machtige personen leggen hun visie op. Het dorp Soukpodagni is een groot dorp met vele godsdiensten. Dit dorp is in voortdurende strijd met de omringende dorpen over externe interventies in het gebied. Machthebbers in het dorp bereiken vaak consensus met betrekking tot buitenstaanders en ontwikkelen strategieën om zoveel mogelijk ontwikkelingshulp voor het dorp aan te trekken. Het gehucht Ekponté is zeer klein en wordt door de omringende dorpen beschouwd als een 'bush'dorp. Mensen uit Ekponté probeerden het beeld over hun gebied te verbeteren. Daartoe investeren zij in het verkrijgen van consensus over de meeste ontwikkelingsactiviteiten. Er is een bepaald niveau van sociale samenhang in het gehucht en de sociale controle is zeer groot.

Onderzoek binnen de drie typen organisaties in de drie dorpen heeft aangetoond dat de effectiviteit van deze organisaties verklaard kan worden uit de aanwezigheid van vertrouwen tussen de leden of door de effectiviteit van verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen. Elementen die het creëren van vertrouwen of van effectieve verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen beïnvloeden zijn de perceptie van de mensen over de organisatie, de doorzichtigheid, het doel van de organisatie, de betrokkenheid van leden bij het opstellen van regels en hun naleving en de kwaliteit van de leiders en de invloed van buitenstaanders.

De percepties die mensen hebben over hun organisaties beïnvloeden hun gedrag ten aanzien van de organisaties. Wanneer zij organisaties beschouwen als opgelegde organisaties, dan zijn mensen er vaak op uit zich publieke goederen onrechtmatig toe te eigenen. Echter wanneer mensen de organisatie als hun eigen organisatie beschouwen, dan ontwikkelen ze strategieën om de leiders meer verantwoordelijk te maken voor hun gedrag en strijden ze voor gemeenschappelijke belangen. De meeste GV's en een aantal functionele groepen worden gezien als opgelegde organisaties en hebben geen betekenis voor hun leden. Corruptie is groot. In tegenstelling tot deze opgelegde organisaties, representeren de Kugbè, een inheemse organisatie, de GV van Ekponté en een aantal functionele groepen een zekere werkelijkheid in het dagelijkse leven van de leden. De Kugbè bijvoorbeeld, is bedoeld om leden te helpen met uitgaven in verband met de begrafenis van schoonouders. De leden zijn vertrouwd met begrafenissen en deze vertegenwoordigen een deel van hun werkelijkheid. Begrafenisplechtigheden dragen bij aan het samenkomen van mensen en op die manier tot het bouwen van een saamhorigheidsgevoel tussen verwanten. Ven buiten geïntroduceerde organisaties speelden niet dergelijke sociale rollen.

Van buiten geïntroduceerde organisaties worden opgericht met structuren waarmee dorpsbewoners niet vertrouwd zijn. Ze zijn zinvol, maar moeilijk te begrijpen voor boeren. De verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen die ingebed zijn in deze organisaties geven alle leden het recht op een gelijke toegang tot de voordelen van de organisatie en er wordt verwacht dat zij het democratisch gehalte van de boerenorganisaties zullen versterken. Deze redenen worden slecht aan de boeren uitgelegd voordat regels, controle-mechanismen, beloning- en strafstructuren worden ingesteld. Deze mechanismen zijn zeer ingewikkeld en moeilijk te begrijpen voor de

boeren. Mensen in inheemse organisaties gebruiken eenvoudige mechanismen en soms zijn het respect voor ouderen, de angst voor voorouders, Vodjou en Godme voldoende om 'goed' gedrag van de leiders te verzekeren. Mensen beslissen zelf over regels en over hoe de naleving geregeld wordt. Leiders zijn meer bevreesd dat zij fondsen voor begrafenissen op een verkeerde wijze aanwenden dan fondsen van GV's of van functionele groepen.

Deze studie heeft het belang aangetoond van leiders in de organisatie van boerenorganisaties en van de prestaties daarvan. Leiders geven richting aan groepen, dienen als makelaars tussen de organisatie en de buitenwereld. Leiders in inheemse organisaties misbruikten gemeenschappelijke fondsen niet zoals vaak het geval is in de meeste van buiten geïntroduceerde organisaties. De meest effectieve leiders worden gevonden in inheemse organisaties en onder buitengesloten leiders, d.w.z. leiders die niet erkend worden door anderen vanwege het gebrek aan schrijf- en leesvaardigheden in de taal van de externe organisatie of vanwege het feit dat zij uit gehuchten afkomstig zijn die beschouwd worden als 'brousse' (onbelangrijk gebied). De leiders in sommige dorpen zijn analfabeten die hun verantwoordelijkheden als mogelijkheid zien om hun status te verhogen door de organisatie op een goede wijze te besturen. De studie heeft getoond dat goed opgeleide mensen niet noodzakelijkerwijs de beste leiders zijn.

In inheemse organisaties worden mensen gekozen vanwege redenen die aansluiten bij de werkelijkheid van de samenleving. In feite willen mensen bij voorkeur iemand als leider die zij vertrouwen, d.w.z. mensen die in het dorp zijn en die niet na een tijdje vertrekken vanwege hun werk. Overheidsambtenaren worden niet tot leiders van dergelijke organisaties gekozen. Selectiecriteria die vaak gebruikt worden, zijn gerelateerd aan eigendomsrechten van huizen in het dorp en de duur van het verblijf in het dorp bij hun familie. Ze kiezen geen mensen die komen en gaan of vreemden, omdat deze mensen niet tot de vertrouwenskring behoren. Oudere mensen worden zeer vaak als voorzitter gekozen van deze organisaties.

Het onderzoek heeft ook aan het licht gebracht dat er mechanismen bestaan die het vertrouwen van leden in leiders ondermijnen. De bevindingen tonen aan dat de toegang van leiders tot machtsbronnen die niet gecontroleerd kunnen worden door andere mensen (zoals bij hekserij of het inzetten van bandieten), met daarenboven het ontbreken van een gezamenlijk probleem/doel, en een gedeeld paradigma (het geloof in voorouders), mechanismen zijn die leiders er toe verleiden zich niet te gedragen in het algemeen belang.

In tegenstelling tot bovengenoemde factoren zijn er factoren die de verantwoordelijkheid van leiders naar leden stimuleren. Enkele van deze factoren zijn het effectieve functioneren van de raad van ouderen, geïnspireerde leiders, externe organisaties, geëmigreerde zonen of een associatie van jonge mensen die ingezet kan worden om conflicten binnen de organisaties te beslechten.

In het licht van deze bevindingen en van de beperkingen van zowel inheemse als geïntroduceerde organisaties, stel ik voor om gebruik te maken van de potentiële mogelijkheden van deze organisaties. Ik betoog dat de noodzaak om hybride organisaties te creëren aanwezig is. Een hybride organisatie wordt gedefinieerd als een organisatie met structuren die zowel voor boeren als voor ontwikkelings-

organisaties begrijpelijk zijn. In dezelfde lijn dienen projecten niet gebruikt te worden voor het creëren van organisaties, maar voor het bijdragen aan het instellen van procedures. Het doel van projecten moet niet zijn het oprichten van organisaties. Een project dient te werken aan technische problemen en organisaties kunnen opgericht worden als de noodzaak daarvan door de boeren zelf gevoeld wordt.

Als implicaties van de resultaten van deze studie worden de volgende suggesties gedaan om een hybride boerenorganisatie op te richten. De eerste stap is om te bedenken waar deze hybride organisatie gestart moet worden. De resultaten toonden dat effectieve organisaties niet noodzakelijkerwijs in grote dorpen gevonden worden. Daarom zijn gemarginaliseerde dorpen of gehuchten waarschijnlijk de beste plaatsen om dergelijke organisaties te starten. Deze dorpen zouden misschien het beeld moeten verbeteren dat anderen hebben over hun gebied en daaraan willen werken. De tweede stap zou kunnen zijn om potentiële leiders te erkennen; zij zijn onbekend vanwege een gebrek aan bepaalde capaciteiten (analfabeet of arm). Het is te verwachten dat deze mensen de geboden mogelijkheden aangrijpen om hun economische, sociale en politieke status te verbeteren.

Een ander belangrijk element is dat boeren verantwoordelijk zullen worden voor het oprichten van de organisatie, dat zij doelen, regels, sancties en beloningssystemen vaststellen.

'Change agents' kunnen de rol van katalysator en facilitator spelen. Zij dragen bij aan het creëren van een omgeving die gunstig is voor de bevordering van deze typen organisaties. Als facilitators, zouden deze 'change agents' kunnen bijdragen aan de bevordering van effectieve verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen op verschillende niveaus. Deze mechanismen zullen elkaar naar verwachting wederzijds versterken.

Concluderend kan gezegd worden dat de effectiviteit van boerenorganisaties afhankelijk is van de motivaties, eerlijkheid en capaciteiten en van het vertrouwen in de leiders. Enkele van deze factoren kunnen vergroot worden door verantwoordelijkheidsmechanismen, sociale structuur, netwerken van actoren op verschillende niveaus en de cultuur van het dorp.

Een vraag die verder onderzocht moet worden is of het mogelijk is om op systematische wijze grotere duurzaamheid te bevorderen door bijvoorbeeld goed gebruik te maken van ontwikkelingsprojecten, van training, het vergroten van de competitie tussen dorpen, en steun aan de ontwikkeling van organisaties en federaties.

Curriculum Vitae

Simplice Davo Vodouhê was born in Abomey, Benin in 1954. He and his wife have three boys and one daughter, Mahougnon, Coffi, Patrick and N'Tifa. Simplicite completed his *Ingénieur Agronome* degree in Agricultural Sociology and Economics at the *Université Nationale du Bénin* and at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria in 1982, and obtained a M.Sc in the Management of Agricultural Knowledge Systems at the Wageningen Agricultural University in the Netherlands in 1990.

In 1983, Simplicite started his professional career with the CARDER-Mono as a District Extension Officer in the District of Comè where he stayed from 1983 to 1985. Later on, he was transferred to the District of Dogbo where he was also appointed as District Extension Officer from 1985 to 1987. In 1987, he was transferred to *Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques* of the *Université Nationale du Bénin* as junior lecturer. He works in the Rural Economics and Sociology Department.

In addition to his work as lecturer, Simplicite has carried out much research for different institutions in Benin and also in Niger and in Mozambique. He contributed to the establishment of projects using the functional groups approach in Benin and to the development and the execution of a training curriculum for development workers in West and Central Africa: *Formation à l'Appui à l'Auto-Promotion Rurale* (FAR). He is on the *Comité de Pilotage* of this training. He is also involved in the training of NGOs' staff.

Since 1994, he has been involved in the evaluation of the effects of cotton production on the environment in Benin, and the possibilities of substituting conventional cotton with organic cotton.