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Chapter 10: Synthesis and Lessons from the 8 Catalysts

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This chapter presents a set of valuable findings and lessons from the 8 cases analyzed.

Section 1 sketches the contexts in which the Catalysts were created, to grasp their initial structural hurdles. Section 2 examines outstanding features of the Catalysts' founders, that help understand why and how the Catalysts were created. Section 3 indicates how the Catalysts have transformed rural areas, and addressed specific local needs and institutional gaps. Section 4 reviews challenges to the Catalysts' sustainability. Section 5 points to winning strategies that allow Catalysts to remain successful over time. Section 6 sketches the Catalysts' plans for the future, including financial independence, coverage of new fields and geographical expansion. Section 7 explains how, on the basis of the above, local, national and international actors can best support such Catalysts. Finally in Section 8, a synthetic table captures the main lessons learned from these 8 cases.

1. Challenging rural contexts

The 8 cases reviewed differ widely in terms of geographic location, scope and organization type; but all 8 operate in challenging rural contexts, with a number of specific hurdles.

Lack of basic services

Rural areas are marked by limited infrastructure and limited access to basic services, such as healthcare, education, energy, roads, transportation and communication technologies, creating major disadvantages for local communities.

In Peru, for instance, only 36 per cent of the rural population has access to sanitation facilities and less than one third has access to the internet.¹ The remote Peruvian village Cheto, where the La Chetina enterprise is based, has only one secondary school and one health centre. Similarly, while a majority of India's population (68.8 per cent in 2011)² lives in rural areas, there is an acute shortage of health care, education and financial infrastructure. According to a 2007 survey, 62 per cent of India's rural population did not have bank accounts and 98 per cent had no health insurance.³

1 *Peru Statistics*, Rural Poverty Portal, IFAD, <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/web/rural-poverty-portal/country/statistics/tags/peru> (accessed 26 August 2012).

2 Government of India (The Registrar General and Census Commissioner): *Census of India*, New Delhi, 2011.

3 See IIMS Data works and IIEF: *Invest India Incomes and Savings survey* (2007); see also R. Jhabvala, D. Sapna and J. Dave: *Empowering Women in an Insecure World: Joining SEWA makes a difference*, Ahmedabad, SEWA Academy, 2010, p. 54.

Development gaps and degraded environment

High levels of food, work, and income insecurity, illiteracy, and dependence on low-income small-scale agriculture in rural areas point to several gaps in rural development policies. Meanwhile, natural resources on which the majority of the rural labour force relies are deteriorating or being depleted, worsening food, work, and income insecurity.

In Rwanda for instance, in 2009 only 1 per cent of the rural population had access to electricity, which among other factors aggravates the “digital divide” between rural and urban areas, problems which the Nyamata Telecentre and RTN seek to address. Even developed countries can face major rural challenges. In the case of Latvia, the effects of industrialization and large-scale agriculture have not always been positive. Its rural population’s health, natural resources, and environment have deteriorated due to industrial farming and the overuse of chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides promoted during the Soviet Union’s occupation and still practiced today, which the EHFN is countering.⁴

Concentration of poverty

Rural areas host more widespread and deeper poverty than urban areas, as well as a number of groups such as indigenous populations, that are socially and economically disadvantaged.

In the Stung Treng province of Cambodia, where the SWDC is based, nearly 35 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line, while the average poverty rate is 22 per cent in urban areas.⁵ In Peru, 4 out of 10 people are considered poor, while in rural areas, 6 out of 10 are poor, a proportion even higher among indigenous groups in the Peruvian Sierra.⁶ Similarly, in 2004-2005, 42 per cent of India’s rural population, as opposed to 26 per cent of people in urban areas, lived below the poverty line.⁷

Isolation

Insufficient and disjointed national social and economic infrastructures physically isolate rural areas, and distance them from suppliers, markets and mainstream developmental agendas.

In the oPt, imposed restrictions on Palestinian goods and workers have been particularly harmful for agriculture. Farmers struggle to access their lands daily, and are unable to export their products since they cannot physically reach markets in the cities.⁸ In rural

4 Mara Bergmane, Ashoka Fellows, 2003, <https://www.ashoka.org/fellow/mara-bergmane> (accessed 18 December 2012).

5 UNDP: *Cambodia Millennium Development Goals Report*, 2010, <http://www.un.org.kh/undp/media/files/CMDG%20Report%202010.pdf> (accessed 18 December 2012).

6 IFAD: *Republic of Peru: Country Strategy Opportunities Programme*, 2009, <http://www.ifad.org/gbdocs/eb/97/e/EB-2009-97-R-11.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2012).

7 IFAD: *Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in India*, 2011, <http://www.ifad.org/operations/projects/regions/Pi/factsheets/in.pdf> (accessed 26 September 2012).

8 UNCTAD: *Report on UNCTAD assistance to the Palestinian people: Developments in the economy of the occupied Palestinian territory*, Geneva, 2011, http://unctad.org/en/Docs/tdb58d4_en.pdf (accessed 12 September 2012).

India, insufficient school coverage leads to a majority of rural self-employed women with low levels of education, training and awareness, that make them vulnerable to exploitative middlemen when selling their products or trying to access credit for their businesses.⁹ In Brazil, the lack of economic and social security policies targeting family farmers, who represent 84.4 per cent of all farms in the country, has severely marginalized them socio-economically.

2. Key features of Catalysts' founders

Catalysts' founders share common features, such as relevant education and training, strong social commitment, and incisive personal experiences, which have played a significant role in the creation and development of their initiatives.

Relevant education and training

Advanced educational, vocational, and professional training, have equipped most Catalysts' founders with the technical and leadership skills required for their specific initiatives, and enriched their conception of rural development.

Songhai's founder, Godfrey Nzamujo, has an eclectic educational background in diverse fields, such as philosophy, theology, mathematics, economics, management, electrical engineering, computer services and biology.¹⁰ This has directly influenced the goals and functioning of Songhai, making it an organization that is not specialized in a single field but promotes an innovative, integrated production model for agriculture by linking agricultural, industrial and service sectors. Similarly, the law degree held by SEWA's founder, Ela Bhatt, led her to work in the legal division of the Indian Textile Labour Association (TLA), where SEWA was initially launched. She complemented it with a diploma on Labour and Cooperatives at the University of Tel Aviv, Israel, and worked in an Israeli kibbutz, where she discovered how unions and cooperatives could work well together, leading her to apply this approach in SEWA.¹¹ Education and work experience have been major assets for entrepreneurs like Paul Barera, who obtained a Bachelor's degree in Management before launching the Nyamata Telecentre and the RTN. This allowed him to create a solid business model for his own enterprise and other telecentres in Rwanda's rural areas. Later, he completed a Master's degree in Development Studies, which enabled him to comprehensively address the issue of ICTs for rural development.¹²

The story of La Chetina's founder, Doris Sánchez, is somewhat different. Though she studied nursing, she gathered practical knowledge about dairy farming through trainings

9 D. W. Crowell: *The SEWA Movement and Rural Development - The Banaskantha and Kutch Experience*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 2003, p. 9.

10 *Father Godfrey Nzamujo*, The Hunger Project, http://www.thp.org/what_we_do/key_initiatives/honoring_africa_leadership/laureate_list/father_godfrey (accessed 22 August 2012).

11 E. Bhatt: *We are poor but so many: the story of self-employed women in India*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 9.

12 P. Barera, email correspondence, 7 October 2012.

offered by an NGO.¹³ She combined the trainings with her childhood interest in animal husbandry, to successfully create and lead La Chetina. EHFN's founder, Mara Bergmane, also learned organic farming and herbal medicine through diverse workshops and seminars on biodynamic agriculture, permaculture and traditional Latvian, anthroposophist and contemporary medicine.¹⁴ Concerning SWDC's founder, Chantha Nguon, she learned weaving and dyeing from her grandmother, which helped her revive the traditional practice of silk weaving in the Stung Treng Province of Cambodia through her enterprise Mekong Blue.

Strong social commitment

Catalysts' founders possess an important sense of social commitment, along with respect for rural communities' values and knowledge. Creating jobs, while ensuring these jobs are sustainable, offering good working conditions and livelihoods to employees, are among their key priorities.

For grassroots movements, serving the interests of local communities is central. Thus, FETRAF-Brasil is committed to improving the living standards and working conditions of smallholder family farmers. It does so by influencing policy-making at the national level and by providing direct support to small family farms, in education, housing, land tenure credit, and other diverse sectors ranging from marketing to ecological gardening.¹⁵ Likewise, SEWA's social commitment to improve the work, income, social, and food security of self-employed women has allowed it to reach 1.3 million members from diverse castes and religious backgrounds. SEWA was the first union in south Asia to address the concerns of informal economy workers that represent 86 per cent of India's labour force.¹⁶ Its internal cohesion is enriched by Gandhian values of *satya* (truth), *ahimsa* (non-violence), *sarvadharm*a (integrating all faiths, all people) and *khadi* (propagation of local employment and self-reliance).¹⁷

The agri-business La Chetina is committed to uplifting marginalized communities in Chachapoyas, Peru, and employs single women from the indigenous Quechua community, who have limited prospects for earning a decent, sustainable income in the province. As for EHFN, its main aim is to improve the health conditions in Latvia by linking local, national and international communities to better and healthier food, traditional health services, and awareness-raising and capacity building on health and environment preservation.

Songhai's social commitment is also very strong. It is centred on building the capacities of local farmers to ensure the sustainable socio-economic development of rural areas.¹⁸ Its integrated production system enables farmers to efficiently utilize their resources, so that

13 D. Sánchez, interview, 28 September 2012.

14 *Eco-health farms: Creating alternatives to mass tourism*, Ashoka, 2008, <http://www.changemakers.com/competition/geotourism2008/entries/eco-health-farms-creating-alternatives-mass-tourism> (accessed 20 December 2012).

15 E. Araújo: "Small-scale farmers and rural transformation: the case of Brazil", Presentation for the *Brussels Development Briefings on Rural Transportation*, 2011, <http://brusselsbriefings.net/past-briefings/n24-rural-transformations/> (accessed 18 June 2012).

16 K. Sankaran and R. Mahadev: *Gender Equality and Social Dialogue in India*, Geneva, ILO, 2011.

17 SEWA: *Annual Report 2008*, 2008, http://www.sewa.org/Annual_Report_2008-English.pdf (accessed 11 September 2012).

18 G. Nzamudjo: *Songhai. Quand l'Afrique relève la tête*, Paris, Les Editions du Cerf, 2002, pp. 133–134, 137.

for instance the wastes of one sector constitute inputs for other sectors, and production is locally adapted. This also makes farmers independent from larger companies for expensive inputs. Both Songhai and FETRAF-Brasil promote a value-chain approach that allows farmers to control their selling prices, process their production, and thus reap higher incomes. In the same vein, the PFTA aims at enabling Palestinian farmers to access international markets and improve their working and living conditions. Organic farming allows producers to avoid working with toxic chemicals, for instance, and the fair trade concept ensures profitable incomes, social benefits, and the establishment of a commercial partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect.

Incisive personal experiences

Founders' resolve to "make a difference" in rural areas often relates to some distinct personal experiences, that inspired or motivated them to create their Catalyst.

Born in Rwanda, Paul Barera grew up in Congo while the civil war ravaged Rwanda in the 1990s. On returning to his home country, he was keen to rebuild Rwanda's social and economic fabric by developing its rural areas. The founder of SWDC in Cambodia, Chantha Nguon, spent her childhood in refugee camps in Thailand and Vietnam, and returned to Cambodia to help those who had been affected by the 30-year-long conflict that had torn apart her country. Her interest in Stung Treng (a province particularly badly affected by the conflict) and in the revival of silk weaving (a banned craft under the Khmer Rouge regime), was based on her vision to rebuild Cambodia.

Having grown up in a farming family, PFTA's founder Nasser Abufarha was well-aware of the struggles of farmers in oPt, and this led him seek the betterment of his community by founding a producers' union. Mara Bergmane, the EHFN's founder, also personally suffered from the difficulties encountered by rural Latvians. Her family lost their land in the late 1940s due to Soviet land reforms, and recovered it 4 decades later, but without its cattle and farming equipment. Ms. Bergmane and her children were also seriously ill for several years, and were cured through traditional healing treatments and by eating healthier, organic food.¹⁹ This motivated her and her husband to create EHFN, a knowledge-sharing and capacity building network to support the work and health of small farmers, as well as the health of Latvian rural communities at large.

19 Op. cit., *Eco-health farms: Creating alternatives to mass tourism*, Ashoka, 2008.

3. Rural transformation achievements

Catalysts use effective and innovative strategies to address core challenges in their rural contexts, and positively transform these contexts in a number of key developmental areas through productive and decent work.

Addressing specific local needs and institutional gaps

Catalysts have grasped specific local needs, identified institutional gaps, and designed demand-driven products and services for their rural contexts. They have all addressed issues that were either not envisaged by other local, national or international actors, or issues that were officially recognized and targeted, but not appropriately addressed in practice.

In Cambodia, Chantha Nguon realized that health services, schools, income and food security were crucially missing in the Stung Treng province. Her work as a nurse dealing with HIV-positive sex workers led her to discover its problems of unemployment, poverty and lack of education, which were particularly severe for women, and not adequately addressed by governmental policies and programmes.²⁰ FETRAF-Brasil focuses on a population segment previously ignored by the Brazilian government that promoted a model of export-oriented agriculture favouring large-scale farming units. FETRAF's approach aids further rural transformation by honing the potential of family farms through providing them with a series of business services, access to credit, capacity-building activities, and ensuring their access to social security and infrastructure such as housing, healthcare, and education.²¹

Songhai endorses a model of agriculture different from that promoted by the Beninese government 25 years ago. Instead of focusing on commercial products that the country could export, such as cotton, the organization has developed a production model that favours small agricultural entrepreneurs and their environment. Tailored to local stakeholders' needs, Songhai's trainings are in high demand because they build participants' capacities to establish their own sustainable agricultural or handicraft business in their rural contexts. The holistic use of local resources, synergies between sectors, recycling, and the use of a value-chain approach,²² enable farmers to be independent of external sellers and buyers as they learn to produce most of the inputs they need - or to find cheap and accessible ones within the Songhai's Farmers' network - and directly profit from the value-added on their products from processing.

In the case of the EHFN, its founders realized that while Latvian organic farmers face tough competition from large-scale agriculture and the highly subsidised food imports from other European Union countries, their environmentally sustainable, safer, and healthier products possess several other advantages. They therefore created a network to enable small organic producers to competitively produce healthy food and deliver health

20 C. Nguon, interview, 31 August 2012.

21 *Quem somos* (About us), FETRAF-BRASIL, http://www.fetraff.org.br/site/quem_somos.php (accessed 19 July 2012).

22 *Mission*, Songhai, http://www.songhai.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=116&Itemid=104 (accessed 11 September 2012).

services for their local community, and the tourists who visit their farms. Similarly, the Israeli occupation has led to daily challenges for Palestinian farmers to access their land, as well as local and international markets to sell their products. By tapping the niche market of fair trade, PFTA has overcome these constraints, added value to Palestinian agricultural products, and provided decent working and living conditions for 1,700 smallholder farmers.

Lastly, while Paul Barera's initiatives, the Nyamata Telecentre and RTN, are closely aligned with the Rwandan government's developmental agenda, he was also able to recognize the important "digital divide" between urban and rural areas. With the Nyamata Telecentre, he promoted a model to bring ICTs to rural areas, a unique effort in Rwanda at the time. Its success led him to strengthen rural telecentres across the country, and to create RTN, Rwanda's first rural telecentre network.²³

Generating employment

All 8 Catalysts reviewed have directly created productive and decent jobs, and improved employability through skills development.

SWDC's social enterprise Mekong Blue is the largest private employer in the remote Stung Treng village in north-east Cambodia. Its founder aimed to empower young women through decent and productive work, since young, uneducated women in the region have limited job opportunities, and many become victims of sex trafficking as a result of household poverty. SWDC's business model includes training for its employees in sewing, weaving, and dyeing, alongside imparting health and literacy classes. This allows them to gain employment in Mekong Blue, as well as to seek skilled employment elsewhere. Similarly, in Peru, Doris Sánchez has successfully created jobs for young, single indigenous women in the remote rural village of Cheto to improve their living standards. La Chetina also strives to build up local producers' capacities by transmitting good practices and farming techniques. The Nyamata Telecentre and the telecentres in the RTN in Rwanda have created jobs in their own telecentres, and have also increased employment opportunities in rural areas through ICT training and BDS.²⁴

In Benin, Songhai generates and supports employment by training farmers to become productive autonomous agricultural entrepreneurs. Its production, experimentation and research activities, help small farmers achieve more effective and efficient, socially responsible and environmentally sustainable production, processing and marketing. Its other services, namely grants, credits, material loans, counselling, input access, transformation, commercialization and organizational support, contribute to their reinforcement.²⁵ By linking Palestinian producers to international fair trade markets, the PFTA has created a stable source of income for 1,700 producers, including 200 women, allowing many farmers who had previously abandoned their lands to regain their traditional occupation.

23 *Rwanda: A network of Telecentres for a new economy*, Telecentre.org Online Community 2011, http://community.telecentre.org/profiles/blogs/rwanda-a-network-of?xg_source=activity (accessed 30 July 2012).

24 P. Barera, interview, 9 August 2012.

25 *Centre Satellite Savalou*, Songhai, http://www.songhai.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=66&Itemid=76 (accessed 20 August 2012).

In some cases, particularly during harvest seasons, more than 2,400 seasonal workers are also hired with a PFTA-assured minimum wage.

By strengthening cooperatives and producers' full involvement in value chains, FETRAF-Brasil's training and capacity building activities, such as the First Family Farming Technical School created in 2004, which is now attended by 100 students annually, have improved employment prospects in productive agri-businesses and family farms. Similarly, SEWA has established rural cooperatives and networks that are entirely managed by self-employed women at the village level, providing them with good employment and livelihood opportunities. Building self-employed women's capacities is one of its key priorities and they include the SEWA Academy and SEWA Managers' School (SMS). Both provide basic education, technical training, and strengthen the capacities of managers in SEWA associations and cooperatives; and the SMS is also the only institution in India providing management training for rural self-employed women.

Enhancing social protection

Some Catalysts have prioritized social protection for their employees, beneficiaries and members by providing safe, secure and decent working conditions and increasing their access to social security schemes.

As an organization which seeks to achieve “full employment” and work, income, food, and social security, as well as “self-reliance” for India's self-employed women, SEWA has launched several initiatives to organize savings and credit, health care, childcare, insurance, legal aid, capacity building, and communication services. Its members pay an affordable fee to access these services, which ensures the financial sustainability of initiatives like SEWA's legal services, childcare or capacity-building programmes. Other initiatives, such as the SEWA Bank or childcare and healthcare services, have been organized into cooperatives or local associations managed by SEWA members themselves. These social protection schemes also serve as a source of employment and income for its members.

The PFTA in the oPt is based on international fair trade principles and practices, wherein farmers receive an extra sum called the “social premium” for every product sold, which producers' cooperatives democratically decide how to use. This premium is generally invested in education, healthcare, or farm improvements, which further increase producers' income and living conditions.²⁶ The PFTA has also established a minimum wage that is 60 per cent higher than the average wage for Palestinian agricultural workers.

In Cambodia, the SWDC has launched childcare centres and kindergartens for employees' children, and also provides free lunch meals to them to ensure good nutritional and health standards. In Peru, La Chetina promotes health coverage. For FETRAF-Brasil, the improvement of family farmers' working and living conditions is a fundamental priority. Its negotiations with the national government have prompted changes in national policies, and promoted new initiatives such as the introduction of Brazil's “Specific Health Inspection Law covering Small-Scale Farming Agricultural Industry”.

26 Fairtrade International: *Challenge and opportunity: Annual report 2010-2011*, Bonn, 2011, <http://www.fairtradelabel.org.za/news/fairtrade-international-annual-report-2010-2011-published.78.html> (accessed 15 January 2013).

Songhai's integrated agricultural production model ensures that trained farmers do not use dangerous pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers as it has to be fully organic in order to optimize synergies and recycling. The EHFN pursues a similar approach of training small-scale organic producers in health and environmentally friendly farming methods.

Advancing social dialogue and labour standards

Some Catalysts have also stimulated social dialogue on labour standards and policies to support them in their efforts to improve livelihoods in rural communities. Some have set up organizations and groups to give a voice to rural stakeholders, including in their respective national policy-making processes and international platforms.

Social dialogue, alongside raising consciousness (*conscientização* in Portuguese) is central to FETRAF-Brasil's approach. In workshops and meetings, FETRAF-Brasil members and local government officials exchange ideas to improve living and working conditions for farmers. At the national level, it participates in discussions in councils and public forums to gain official support for increasing housing, education, and financial services in rural areas, which have led to over 10 programmes related to social protection and labour standards for family farmers, implemented in partnership with the government and civil society actors.

In the oPt, the PFTA works towards advancing social dialogue at the local level through its democratic organizational structure, where a board composed of representatives of farmer and women cooperatives, processors, exporters and workers oversees the activities of the union. It also explicitly emphasizes International Labour Convention No. 111, in order to end discrimination towards workers based on race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion or national origin; Convention No. 29, on the use of forced labour; as well as Conventions No. 38 and No. 82, to combat child labour, particularly in hazardous occupations.

SEWA's history as a trade union displays several achievements in ensuring better labour standards for self-employed women workers. SEWA's campaigns are often based on demands to increase the salaries of women in the informal economy, through peaceful but effective strategies that use a mix of confrontational and collaborative elements. SEWA has also directly participated in legislative work, notably through its founder Ela Bhatt's participation in the second Indian National Commission on Labour that led to the creation of the 2009 Social Security Act, and active support to the development of International Labour Convention No. 177 on home work.

4. Challenges tackled

In creating and developing their enterprises, organizations or unions, Catalysts have encountered a number of similar challenges and have formulated strategies to tackle them, linked to their specific contexts.

Ensuring community engagement

Support and participation of local communities are powerful levies for the establishment and development of Catalysts, and securing such participation usually requires special efforts.

To launch his enterprise, Paul Barrera needed to convince local communities in rural Rwanda that ICTs were not reserved for the upper classes and that everyone could benefit from them. He had to demonstrate their practical uses to villagers to attract them to the Nyamata Telecentre. In Peru, Doris Sánchez gained support from local communities only after she proved that the goods produced by La Chetina were of high quality and could provide higher returns for them. The success of her enterprise helped her gain allies, such as small producers in the village that provided raw materials to her at competitive prices. For SWDC, a major challenge was overcoming family opposition towards allowing women to work. However, the profitability of its enterprise, Mekong Blue, has transformed several women weavers into breadwinners for their families, increasing their decision-making role in household affairs.²⁷

SEWA also had to adapt to rural societies which are less open to and suspicious of “outsiders”. Initially, in the Banaskantha district of Gujarat, SEWA rural organizers commuted from their city-based headquarters to villages, and faced difficulties in gaining the trust of rural women and engaging them in collective action.²⁸ To avoid being treated as outsiders, and gain the trust of the villagers, some SEWA’s urban organizers settled in Banaskantha villages for long periods of time, and subsequently hired some village women as Volunteer Village Leaders and SEWA managers.

Receiving recognition

Gaining recognition and acceptance from colleagues and counterparts has not always been an easy process for the Catalysts.

When it was first launched, SEWA challenged the traditional trade union norms and patriarchal biases, and faced opposition from other powerful actors. Unionizing was reserved for workers engaged in the formal economy, and thus excluded informal or self-employed workers. Also, forming a union was perceived as unfit for women. The Indian Ministry of Labour initially rejected SEWA founder’s request to form a union for

²⁷ C. Nguon, interview, 31 August 2012.

²⁸ Op. cit., Crowell, 2003, p. 10.

self-employed women workers,²⁹ but she argued convincingly that self-employed women workers' unionization was not *against* anyone but *for* unity and cooperation. Today, with 1.75 million members, SEWA is among the largest trade unions in India.

Similarly, FETRAF-Brasil was not politically recognized until it proved that its agricultural model could add value to family farming products and activities.³⁰ Once it proved in practice that smallholder farmers could be successful agro-industrial entrepreneurs, they were allowed to play a role in shaping Brazil's public policy related to agriculture. Songhai too had to face critics, particularly from a number of authorities and other organizations who found its model "too different" from mainstream ones. Its founder was also denigrated because he was neither an agronomist nor a farmer by qualification, and even encountered racism.³¹ Recognition came with time, when Songhai's entrepreneurial system proved effective, delivered products of good quality, and when its former trainees began opening their own successful businesses.

PFTA struggled at first to be recognized by the international Fairtrade Labelling Organization (FLO) as they did not have fair trade standards for olive oil, the main product of Palestinian farmers, and indicated that it would develop such standards only when there would be evidence of a sizable market for this product. As creating a market without certification was not possible, PFTA developed its own standards based on FLO's norms. It subsequently tried to secure certification from the Swiss company Institute for Marketecology (IMO), and was certified "Fair for Life" by an IMO third party certification programme for social accountability and fair trade in agriculture, manufacturing and trading operations. Based on PFTA's success, the FLO developed fair trade olive oil standards, and PFTA became the first organization to be fair trade certified for olive oil.

Securing external financial and technical support

Financial, material and technical support are important for most Catalysts, in order to launch their first products and services, and to develop their skills and those of their employees, particularly when support has been limited. Initial activities thus often started on a small-scale; and in the growth phase, they were sometimes suspended to focus on the core ones.

La Chetina's founder had received some initial basic training, but her enterprise was managed without external support, relying on the income generated from its own revenues. For SWDC in Cambodia, which was founded in a small house, with only 2 looms and 6 employees, initial financial support came through small donations from individuals and foundations. It was difficult to convince larger funding agencies to provide support since its work was perceived as too limited in geographical scope to interest donors. Songhai's founder also started with only small funds from a group of friends, and 10 hectares of

29 *About us- History*, SEWA, 2009, http://www.sewa.org/About_Us_History.asp (accessed 4 September 2012).

30 N. Paget-Clarke: "When Cooperative Structures are the Instrument and Autonomy," in *In Motion Magazine*, 24 April 2005, http://www.inmotionmagazine.com/global/at_fetra_fint.html (accessed 25 June 2012).

31 *Op. cit.*, G. Nzamudjo, 2002, p. 31.

land donated by the Beninese government.³² As for Paul Barera, he founded the Nyamata Telecentre with 6 chairs, desks, and computers, a printer, and a telecentre entrepreneurship training, given to him by an international institution on the condition that he would make his business economically sustainable within a year.³³

Mara Bergmane and her husband envisaged the concept of Eco-Health Farms in the 1990s but initially could not finance it. In 2000, with a group of colleagues who shared a common interest, they began developing the idea within the Latvian Organic Agriculture Association. In 2003, when Ms. Bergmane became an Ashoka Fellow, EHFN was launched as an NGO with funding from Ashoka; later on the Latvian State Bank also financially supported it and external experts became involved in the network's trainings.

Support at the foundation stage has proved essential in the case of SEWA, which was housed within the Textile Labour Association (TLA) of India, a major trade union. SEWA initially received the appropriate technical and capital inputs to launch some of its landmark ventures such as the SEWA Cooperative Bank. In 1981, its financial independence and security was under threat when it broke away from the TLA, but steady membership growth in the years that followed allowed it to surmount those challenges.

To avoid dependence on external donors, the PFTA's founder decided to create a professional commercial enterprise at the same time as the union. The Canaan Fair Trade was launched as the exporting company for PFTA, buying the olive oil and other products from the union's cooperatives and selling them to international buyers worldwide.

5. Ensuring long-term success

Promoting excellence

To gain credibility, Catalysts put considerable emphasis on delivering products or services of a higher standard than those of their competitors. Excellence is an end in itself, but also a means to achieve recognition and grow.

PFTA's commercial success is closely linked to the maintenance of stringent standards in the production of organic, fair-trade olive oil and other items in oPt, which allows Palestinian producers to access the fair trade market despite the isolation of their territory. The union trains, certifies, and routinely audits members to ensure that their products are of the highest quality and meet international fair trade standards. Similarly, the excellent quality of the EHFN's members' products is the distinguishing feature of the organization. As the network was created to improve health and nutrition in Latvia, its members take utmost care in producing food items without the use of harmful pesticides and herbicides, which gives them a qualitative edge over subsidised agricultural products from the EU and large-scale farms in the national market.

32 Op. cit., G. Nzamudjo, 2002, p. 71.

33 *Sharing my Experience in running rural ICT enterprise/Telecentre*, P. Barera, 2011, http://www.share4dev.info/telecentres/index.php?view=article&id=400&option=com_content&format=pdf&lang=en (accessed 25 June 2012).

SWDC also guarantees the excellence of its handicrafts. Improvements in design and quality of the silk scarves, bags and other items produced by Mekong Blue have led it to win the UNESCO award of excellence in 2004 and 2005, which increased its sales and gave it international repute.

The high quality of the Catalysts' products and services also establishes the worthiness of the model they promote as it proves, by practical examples, the possibility to excel even in particularly challenging contexts, and in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner. For instance, Songhai explicitly aims to show that its organic and integrated production system is a viable and needed approach to produce healthy food, while ensuring decent income and working conditions for farmers, and without degrading natural resources.

Training managers and employees

Several Catalysts retain their initial members and employees by training and promoting them to management or leadership positions. Diffusing organizational values and approaches to committed and capable employees and managers, contributes to the progress, expansion, and replication of their business, organization or union.

La Chetina strives to train its employees in all its core activities, such as learning to generate, process, and market high-quality products.³⁴ The SWDC has instituted a management system using “group leaders” in its Mekong Blue enterprise, in which the senior weavers – those who have been employed for 5 or more years – can train new weavers and maintain quality control over the enterprise's products. This creates group cohesion and strengthens effectiveness among the weavers trained by the organization, while maintaining the high quality of its production.

One of Songhai's core values is that of “exchange”; the idea that at any time anyone can share his/her knowledge, and also learn from others.³⁵ Thus, about 80 per cent of the people working at Songhai are former trainees who are invited to help develop new technologies, and train others.³⁶ This strengthens Songhai as the former trainees are already familiar with the organization's work ethic and values. Also, all trainees that receive financial support from Songhai are required to provide technical support to other farmers in their area.³⁷ This enables the organization to indirectly train farmers across Benin and neighbouring countries.

The governance of all SEWA organizations is based on democratic principles, which promote leadership and decision-making among its members as a means to empower them. As only 20 per cent of its employees possess a professional background (with 80 per cent coming from working classes), SEWA invests heavily in the education and training of its employees lacking professional or university degrees, in order to equip them with the necessary technical and managerial skills.

34 D. Sánchez, interview, 28 September 2012.

35 Op. cit., Nzamudjo, 2002, p.101.

36 G. Nzamujo, interview, 10 October 2012.

37 Op. cit., Nzamudjo, 2002, pp. 88–91.

Given its very limited funds, the EHFN does not have managers or employees, and board members are also unpaid; the decision-making process among network members is democratic and participative: at the beginning of each year, farmers propose topics that they would like to learn about, and the most knowledgeable members are put in charge of the related trainings, or to find experts who can implement them.³⁸

Gaining local support

An important characteristic of Catalysts is their ability to garner local support, notably through innovative activities and structures, and leadership in decision-making from within the local community.

For trade unions, finding local affiliates has been central to their success. FETRAF started as a grassroots movement in the south of Brazil, then spread to 18 states and today represents 500,000 family farmers across the country. Despite its spread, it maintains a decentralized organizational structure that encompasses over 600 state and municipal levels unions, which cater to the local needs and struggles of family farmers. In India, SEWA put considerable emphasis on adapting to the needs of rural women, and thus the types of structures and organizations it created in rural areas were different from those in cities. Its rural self-help groups are led by local members, or *Aagewans*, who help rural self-employed women identify their common problems and cooperate towards achieving shared goals.

Songhai seeks to make its trainees, farmers and crafts persons, leaders of their own community development by building their entrepreneurship and innovation capacities. Thus, on return to their respective villages, former trainees do not simply replicate exactly what they have learnt at the Songhai's centres, but experiment and develop ways to produce and process food and handicrafts that are better adapted to the local human and natural resources.³⁹

The EHFN is extensively involved with the local communities and municipalities in public workshops and seminars, particularly since such cooperation helps raise awareness about their organic agricultural products and members' services.⁴⁰ As for the PFTA, the "social premium" levied by its cooperatives for instance, is most often reinvested to improve village healthcare centres or schools,⁴¹ and its "Trees for Life" programme distributes olive trees to member and non-member farmers alike.

Diversifying products and services

Catalysts have managed to multiply their impact through a holistic approach. Incorporating diverse but inter-linked activities, has enabled them to reach more types of beneficiaries; find more sources of revenues; and, most importantly, strengthen their impact by integrating mutually reinforcing products and activities.

38 M. Bergmane, interview, 6 December 2012.

39 Op. cit., Nzamudjo, 2002, p. 81.

40 *Eco-health farm workers in Latvia*, Forum Synergies, 2010, http://www.forum-synergies.eu/bdf_fiche-experience-25_en.html (accessed 19 December 2012).

41 A. Haydariyeh, interview, 9 October 2012.

SEWA, which began as a trade union in urban areas but is now more akin to a “movement”, demonstrates how diversification and a flexible structure can increase the influence of an organization over time. This includes the creation of new social security organizations, federations and capacity-building centres to serve the specific needs of rural women; and new institutions in rural areas such as SHGs, cooperatives and producer networks, to serve the needs of rural self-employed women which are different from those in urban areas.

The enterprise model of the Nyamata Telecentre is also based on diversification. The telecentre does not only provide basic ICT services, such as access to the internet, but also banking, insurance, e-governance and BDS, all of which are much needed in rural Rwanda. For the enterprise, this diversity of services ensures greater revenues from different sources. The EHFN also enables its farmers to diversify their products in order to increase their revenue. As a knowledge-sharing network, farmers are able to learn about new techniques, through trainings and workshops. Similarly, Songhai is actively involved in producing, experimenting and researching new agricultural processing and marketing techniques to ensure that trainings are locally adapted, relevant, and innovative.

La Chetina started with dairy products that were well received by the local community; once it assured consumption and revenues at the village level, it started processing other local produce, introducing honey, jam, brandy and chocolate to the town market. The good sales obtained were utilized to open 2 more stores near the factory, and have led to exporting La Chetina's products to cities, including Lima.⁴² Diversification has proven useful not only to increase profits but also to grow and gain recognition locally and nationally.

PFTA members mainly produce olive oil, which is the speciality of the region. However, for Palestinian women farmers whose traditional produce also includes sun-dried tomatoes and couscous, PFTA created separate cooperatives, which helped them add value to their products, empowered them and also diversified sales. In 2011, PFTA began working on almonds, based on members' requests.

Expanding slowly but steadily

Catalysts have expanded progressively. This has often been a strategic decision based on finding the right partners, financial sustainability, and demand for their goods and services.

When launched, the Nyamata Telecentre only delivered ICT services. Soon after, it developed a partnership with the National Electricity Company of Rwanda, ELECTROGAZ, to sell electricity.⁴³ Presently, it delivers a variety of private and public services, which were all developed progressively, depending on the partners it could find. SEWA too gradually expanded its membership, which today includes rural and urban branches of the trade union, cooperatives and federations. The success of each venture, such as the SEWA Bank, provided the stepping-stone for taking up a new activity.

⁴² D. Sánchez, interview, 28 September 2012.

⁴³ Op. cit., *Sharing my experience in running rural ICT enterprise*, P. Barera, 2011.

Songhaï started as a small agricultural production, experimentation and training centre. It has since progressively built new infrastructures, such as larger fish ponds, food processing facilities, a shop, a restaurant, a bio-gas production unit, other centres, and the farmers' network, depending on available opportunities.⁴⁴ In 10 years, the SWDC in Cambodia grew from a small room with 2 looms, to an enterprise with 31 looms. Its founder, Chantha Nguon has used ventures such as the gift shops, café and gallery, to attract tourists to the SWDC weaving centre, thereby increasing the sale of Mekong Blue products.

Linking with the macro-level

Several Catalysts have linked their activities and projects to national and international policy-making and schemes. This has helped them publicize and advocate for their activities among influential actors, but also partnering with them to expand into new areas.

In Rwanda, the RTN works in close collaboration with the government, and now manages 30 of its telecentres in 5 districts. Its founder also contributed to the formulation of the third national ICT plan, leading to the RTN playing an important role in the national team implementing this plan, and to the official incorporation of one of RTN's main projects, the *1,000 Telecentres* into that plan. These links with the government have enabled it to shape and implement policies that ICT entrepreneurs need to support their work, such as an enabling environment for small and medium enterprises and the promotion of ICTs as an essential element of national development. Evolving from a grassroots movement into an important advocate of family farmers today, FETRAF-Brasil has been collaborating with authorities and other social actors at the national level in the formulation of new policies and programmes for smallholder family farmers, such as the PRONAF (National Program for Family Agriculture), which provides agricultural credit and institutional support, and the National School Meals Programme, which requires authorities to purchase 30 per cent of family farmers' produce for school meals.

SEWA too has achieved significant returns from partnering with state and national governments, for instance on projects such as the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DCRWA), which led to the creation of 181 rural producer groups for 3,000 women entrepreneurs.⁴⁵ As an advocate for self-employed workers, it has influenced government regulations and laws on informal economy jobs, such as the "National Policy for Urban Street Vendors". It has also had significant international policy influence, namely in shaping the ILO's Home Work Convention, 1996 (No. 177).⁴⁶

As for Songhaï, it works today in close collaboration with the Beninese government on the "*Projet Songhai National: Promotion de l'Entreprenariat pour la Transformation Socio-économique des Zones Rurales au Bénin*" (National Songhaï Project: Entrepreneurship promotion for the socio-economic transformation of rural areas in Benin) to disseminate and strengthen

44 Op. cit., Nzamudjo, 2002, p. 71.

45 *Movement- DWCRA*, SEWA, 2009, http://www.sewa.org/Movements_Gujarat.asp#DWCRA (accessed 21 March 2013).

46 Op. cit., E. Bhatt, 2005, p 213.

its activities in Benin. It also works with different international partners, launching for instance in 2008 the “Songhai Regional Project for Agricultural Entrepreneurship Promotion”, to reproduce its model in 11 other countries in Africa, with support from UN Agencies.⁴⁷

Creating networks

Support networks and institutions have proved to be a key element of success for Catalysts of rural transformation; both in allowing stronger ties and cooperation, and in increasing the quality of products and services, thus widening their delivery and outreach.

Paul Barera created the RTN in Rwanda following the success of the Nyamata Telecentre, to increase cooperation and jointly solve problems experienced by all rural telecentres.⁴⁸ Sharing knowledge and experience across the country is a way to improve the quality of services and to increase the presence of ICT. Similarly, the EHFN aims to strengthen the capacity of its members through knowledge and experience sharing. It puts farmers in contact with each other so they can collaborate at their level, and also organizes trainings delivered by experts or specialist members in the capital to increase their knowledge and reinforce and vary their activities. In Benin, Songhai launched a network of former trainees, which enables them to share experiences and difficulties, as well as technically support each other. By participating in the network, entrepreneurs can use the Songhai label, which associates them with recognized standards of socially, eco-friendly and high-quality products. Songhai also benefits from maintaining close ties with its former trainees, as they help disseminate its values, and strengthen its production model.

SEWA too has realized the potential of creating retail networks for small and marginal producers in rural areas. This led it to launch the Rural Distribution Network (RUDI) in 2004 at the village level to link high quality goods produced by small farmers to district and state markets. In 2006, its members launched the RUDI Multi-trading Company, a marketing company for the RUDI network, which procures products directly from the farmers, and processes, packages and markets them. Women's self-help groups at the village level manage both the network and the company.

Similarly, FETRAF-Brasil relies on an intricate network of cooperatives formed by small groups of family farmers. At the municipal or regional level, together with other family cooperatives, they form a larger system, such as the Union for the Cooperatives of Family Agriculture (UCAF) in the state of Santa Catarina.

47 *Ban Ki-moon's letter of appreciation*, Songhai, 2010, http://www.songhai.org/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=129:ban-ki-moons-letter-of-appreciation-&catid=50:remarks&Itemid=144 (accessed 22 August 2012).

48 P. Barera, interview, 9 August 2012.

6. What does the future hold?

Ensuring financial independence

Some Catalysts reviewed continue relying on external sources of financial, material or technical support, while others have reached financial autonomy. A common concern among all of them is maintaining their financial independence.

Today, the revenue generated by the Nyamata Telecentre sustains its costs. However its founder continues to look for funds to deliver more services to its clients, such as specialized trainings for farmers or women. It is also continuously looking for new partners, such as insurance companies, to ensure the diversification of activities.⁴⁹ Other Catalysts, like Songhai, have achieved financial independence. The organization provides for the management of its 6 centres in Benin, including the salaries of its employees, its trainings, production, processing, marketing, and research activities.⁵⁰ However, it is still looking for funds and partners to widen the scope of its activities, such as the Songhai's Farmers' network.

On the other hand, SWDC still depends on donors for its social development projects. While the Mekong Blue has been commercially successful, the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008 has badly affected its sales. Its founder hopes to expand sales in the coming years to gain financial independence, and also seeks technical support in design and enterprise management to strengthen her business. The EHFN too is restrained by lack of financial resources. Presently, its only employee is a part-time accountant, while board members and farmers work voluntarily.⁵¹ Additional funds are also needed to help organize more trainings, and help EHFN members to, for instance, defray travel costs related to attending training sessions.⁵²

By engaging in technical and leadership trainings, FETRAF-Brasil is working to improve its in-house financial management. It also seeks to ameliorate the organization's communication strategies, with a focus on social media, to strengthen coordination among its members throughout the country, and to better inform its members about related policies and other issues.⁵³

SEWA ensures the financial viability of its social security programmes such as housing, childcare, savings, credit and education by charging an affordable fee for each service from its members.⁵⁴ For other projects such as healthcare under the *Lok Swasthya* programme, or its new green energy project *Haryali*, it partners with the national government, international agencies, and the private sector.⁵⁵

49 P. Barera, interview, 9 August 2012.

50 P. Brachet, A. Rossignol, H. Giummelly: *Ferme modèle au Bénin*, Arte Geie, 2010, <http://www.arte.tv/fr/ferme-modele-au-benin/6576534,CmC=6576558.html> (accessed 9 October 2012).

51 Op. cit., *Eco-health farms*, Ashoka, 2008.

52 M. Bergmane, interview, 6 December 2012.

53 E. Araújo, email correspondence, 10 October 2012.

54 *SEWA Services*, SEWA, 2009, http://www.sewa.org/Sewa_Services.asp (accessed 4 September 2012).

55 R. Nanavaty, interview, 26 November 2012.

Addressing new domains and problems

While all analysed Catalysts concentrate on securing their primary products, services, and activities, they all have ideas for new initiatives, for expanding their current activities, covering new fields, and addressing other problems faced by their beneficiaries and members.

SWDC, which has focussed primarily on generating productive and decent employment for young women in the Stung Treng province, now seeks to expand its work on improving healthcare facilities and awareness in other rural areas of the province. Chantha Nguon hopes to find partners in Phnom Penh and other cities in Cambodia to set up a network of organizations that can increase poor women's access to healthcare services. Paul Barera seeks to widen the RTN knowledge-sharing concept beyond individual exchanges and isolated initiatives. He envisions developing the delivery of government services in all rural telecentres, such as the possibility to pay taxes or register businesses.

Songhai intends to develop new technologies to recycle local resources in innovative and effective ways. Its aim is also to increase the productivity of activities, such as fish farming, and to intensify trainings.⁵⁶ FETRAF-Brasil plans to strengthen access to research, technology and technical support for family farmers –especially rural youth– to produce healthy and high-quality food, and to create more employment.⁵⁷ Further, as its members are sensitive to environmental concerns, it intends to enhance agro-ecological production alternatives and lobby against the use of genetically modified crops. Within EHFN, each member has different objectives, but most of them want to engage in new activities in the future. For instance, Mara Bergmane who mainly specializes in tea, herbs and healing saunas, would like to start teaching the local population about producing organic food and healthy cooking. Other network members have recently started producing homemade cosmetics and ointments.⁵⁸

PFTA intends to develop fair trade ethics and standards in oPt through research. It now also invests in research related to improving organic farming productivity, and is recycling oil into fuel tractors to reduce some production costs.

Expanding in other parts of the country and globally

Most Catalysts aim to expand beyond their particular regions and countries, to reach more beneficiaries and clients, and to disseminate their model.

SEWA's approach has been exported to countries such as South Africa, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal, to help self-employed women develop unions and other structures that increase their collective strength. At the same time, SEWA still has the potential to grow in India and expand beyond the 10 states where it is currently active.

56 *Perspectives*, Songhai, http://www.songhai.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=49&Itemid=68 (accessed 11 September 2012).

57 Op. cit., E. Araújo, email correspondence, 10 October 2012.

58 M. Bergmane, interview, 6 December 2012.

On the other hand, FETRAF does not intend to expand outside Brazil, but aims to spread its ideology and message globally; that is, to convince family farmers in other countries that the “battle” of smallholders has to be carried across the world.⁵⁹

For enterprises such as the RTN, which is launching an umbrella network for all telecentres’ networks in Africa, called NetAfrica, the aim is to increase knowledge-sharing and problem-solving with other networks in the continent and to advocate for ICT’s a key role in Africa’s development. Such a continental network would also serve the needs of rural telecentres in terms of finding resources and support from international institutions through a collective channel. As for Songhaï, its “Songhaï Regional Project for Agricultural Entrepreneurship Promotion” aims at reproducing the organization’s model in 11 other African countries.

For micro-enterprises such as La Chetina, expanding implies growing nationally. Its founder is keen on opening a larger factory in the province to increase the volume of sales, reach more farmers, and thus also create more jobs.

7. How best to support Catalysts?

As different as they are, Catalysts’ stories indicate an array of ways of supporting their significant work of transforming rural areas that involve local, national and international communities, peers, authorities and institutions.

Help address financial, material and technical needs

All 8 Catalysts reviewed have been continuously looking for various types of external support, to strengthen current activities, or develop and implement new ones.

The analysis shows that communities, peers, authorities and institutions can not only provide funds, but also practical goods and services (e.g., computers, looms, facilities, website design, social media) or skills training (e.g., in weaving, marketing, management). Partnerships between Catalysts and other relevant actors are mutually beneficial and an important means for expansion. They can not only strengthen Catalysts, but also accelerate the process of rural transformation. For instance, a private or public partner entity can train Catalysts’ staff to deliver products and services using Catalyst’s facilities; or a government can provide a Catalyst with an official mandate to help it implement its policies in a specific rural area.

Technical support services in research and technology adaptation are also increasingly needed, as farmers and other rural entrepreneurs are exposed to global competition, rapidly evolving technology, and continuous shifts in regulatory frameworks. These services though must take into account local knowledge and specificities and promote partnerships among technicians, researchers and local practitioners to ensure appropriate rural transformation.

⁵⁹ Op. cit., Paget-Clarke, 2005.

Facilitating access to finance and economic and social infrastructure

The work of rural Catalysts is more effective in an enabling economic and social environment.

Availability, at low cost, of economic infrastructure (e.g., roads, electricity, ICTs) simplifies the creation and development of the Catalysts by connecting them physically and virtually to local, national and international markets, and to communities, peers, authorities and institutions, with which they can share information and knowledge to improve their work, broaden their activities, or request support. Equally important is the availability and low cost of social infrastructure (e.g., healthcare and childcare, insurance mechanisms), which contribute both to improving the performance of Catalysts' employees and members, and to increasing the willingness of the Catalysts' employees, members, beneficiaries, clients and partners to work in rural areas.

Access to finance is also crucial. Catalysts can ensure their current activities and develop new ones when they can easily obtain loans and do not lose time with complicated procedures to receive them.

Accessible and rapid administrative procedures to officially launch and register their business, organization or union, ease the Catalysts' creation. For instance, avoiding travels to the capital to prepare necessary paperwork, can save Catalysts considerable time and money.

Promoting and helping disseminate products, services and ideas

Supporting Catalysts to disseminate their products, services and ideas has a considerable impact on their sustainability and growth. Support can take the form of trainings (e.g., in marketing, and ICTs), or can involve the direct use of the Catalysts' products and services, or advocacy for their interests at local, national and international levels. This also helps Catalysts ensure community and institutional support.

Further, such support can enlarge the scope of their activities and allow them to gain wider support.

Facilitating information- and knowledge-sharing networks

Establishing knowledge-sharing and communication networks have proved to be a powerful means to ensure Catalysts' sustainability.

This review shows that external support can help Catalysts identify, develop, and use potential networking hubs in their activities. Support in terms of developing technical skills (e.g., in setting up cooperatives, ICT facilities) to build networks is also a key factor. External support can directly build, or provide capacity to build, formal and informal, horizontal and vertical networks among the Catalysts and the targeted beneficiaries, clients, peers and authorities.

Allowing political impact

The impact of the 8 Catalysts on long-term rural transformation has also proved to be considerably stronger and wider if national authorities take notice of their work. Catalysts' involvement in policy-making helps create a more enabling environment for them, their beneficiaries and clients, which in turn facilitates the implementation of their initiatives and models, thus prompting their progress.

This analysis points out that it is key to help Catalysts link up with local, national and international policy-makers. This allows them to share their ideas and challenges, propose models, discuss and formulate potential solutions, and develop public-private partnerships. A broadly participatory environment and influential facilitators are significant as they foster better communication between Catalysts, their beneficiaries and clients, and local, national, and international authorities.

8. Lessons learned

The following table synthesizes the lessons learned from the review of the 8 Catalysts of rural transformation. They are grouped by the core issues that help understand how they were created and sustained, how they have impacted rural areas, and how they can be best supported.

Key features of Catalysts' founders
■ Educational backgrounds, that shape their vision for rural transformation, and facilitate implementing the initiatives; ■ Educational and vocational qualifications, helping ensure the quality of Catalysts' products and services; ■ A sense of social responsibility, for improving the working and living conditions of rural communities; ■ Core values such as peace, democracy and non-discrimination, that lend credibility to their leadership; ■ Personal and professional life-changing experiences, that create a drive to promote development and support disadvantaged groups; ■ Charisma, which attracts attention, helps mobilize human and financial resources, and ensures leadership; ■ Perseverance and passion, to help overcome challenges and sustain long-term goals.

Rural transformation achieved

- Building capacities of rural communities to become socially and economically self-reliant;
- Increasing access to basic services and economic opportunities;
- Addressing specific local needs, not met by other local, national, and regional institutions;
- Encouraging social protection for rural workers, including proper income, healthcare, and food security;
- Raising awareness about the need to improve rural living and working conditions;
- Impacting public policy;
- Increasing and broadening employment opportunities, through skills development, promotion of alternatives to agriculture or innovative agricultural models.

Challenges tackled

- Ensuring community engagement and support, particularly at the early stages;
- Receiving recognition, through persuasion and by proving the effectiveness of the models used;
- Addressing a set of economic, social, institutional, and policy gaps (e.g., urban bias in development policies);
- Securing external financial and technical support, particularly at the early stages, but also to undertake new activities later.

Ensuring long-term success

- Promoting excellence in products and services, to gain reputation and credibility;
- Training employees technically to become future managers;
- Gaining local support and promoting local leadership;
- Diversifying products and services, and reaching diverse social groups and markets;
- Gradually diversifying and expanding;
- Establishing networks to connect and organize rural communities and stakeholders vertically and horizontally;
- Linking and collaborating with macro levels, including local, national and international policy-makers, to strengthen and disseminate initiatives and models, and impact policies.

How best to support Catalysts?

- Providing direct financial, material and technical support at crucial times, namely launching and expansion phases (e.g., funds, facilities, capacity building);
- Facilitating access to finance (e.g., loans, micro-finance);
- Granting easy access to economic infrastructure (e.g., electricity, roads, ICTs), at low cost;
- Ensuring access to social infrastructure (e.g., healthcare, childcare, insurance) and decent working conditions;
- Promoting and helping disseminate their products and services, to increase visibility, beneficiaries and clients;
- Promoting and disseminating their ideas, to encourage recognition at local, national and international levels, thus ensuring community-based, institutional, and other support;
- Assisting the creation of information and knowledge sharing networks for and with their beneficiaries, peers, partners, and authorities;
- Enabling them to reach authorities, and impact decision-making.

APPENDIX 1: Structure of the Case-Studies

Executive Summary

Summary of the case study with emphasis on achievements and on why the case is a Catalyst of rural transformation.

Section 1: Introduction and Context

1.1 Introduction

Key facts to acquaint the reader with the specific case, such as the type and size of the Catalyst, its main goals, key beneficiaries or members, geographic scope and highlights of its impact.

1.2 Context

Facts and figures on the country and local setting of the Catalyst; in particular: socio-economic conditions, geographic and historical characteristics. This includes information on the advantages and challenges of the local context, natural, physical, human resources, policy framework, etc.

Section 2: Analysis of the Catalyst

2.1 Why was it created?

Indication of the Catalyst's purposes (stated mission and goals); and of its special relevance, such as the problem(s) the Catalyst attempted to address, and the broader relevance of its work in rural transformation.

2.2 How was it created?

Details about the Catalyst's founder; its creation, including initial opportunities, initial challenges and strategies used to overcome those challenges; and the main steps taken to grow since its creation.

2.3 How does it currently work?

Presentation of the Catalyst's current structure (leadership, membership, staff, sections and components); partners (important donors or supporters); current activities and programmes; internal and external challenges and strategies used to overcome them.

Section 3: Assessment of the Catalyst

3.1 Achievements

Review of the Catalyst's key successes (in terms of growth, outputs and services, etc.) related to decent work pillars and contributions to the process of transformation that the Catalyst has made through its activities and success.

3.2 Future

Catalyst's major objectives and plans for the coming years; opportunities for growth; the local, national, and international changes that can improve the scope and performance of the Catalyst; foreseen (internal and external) challenges; threats to sustainability or further growth; support the Catalyst may need to seize opportunities and overcome challenges.

3.3 Lessons learned

Key elements of success: internal strengths of Catalyst, and external opportunities that proved essential; key challenges (internal and external) at various stages of growth, and type of support most needed and most effective at various stages of the Catalyst's growth.

APPENDIX 2: Summary Tables of the 8 cases

Summary Table 1:
Eco Health Farm Network (EHFN), Latvia

Name of Catalyst	Eco Health Farm Network (EHFN)
Country	Latvia
Level	Meso
Sector	Agriculture, Environment, Health, Tourism
Decent Work Pillars	Employment, Social Protection
Organization Type	Non-Governmental Organization
Starting Year	Early 2000s, formalization as an NGO in 2006
Description	The EHFN regroups individual organic farms to support their innovative work that promotes the integration of healthy working and living conditions, preserves the environment, and safeguards the cultural heritage of rural Latvia. Through various types of capacity building methods, from lectures with invited experts, to excursions on members' farms, the network enables small-scale producers to strengthen and improve their farming, health, and environment preservation, as well as tourism practices, products, and services, and to widen their range of activities. These activities ensure economic sustainability, while disseminating to local, national and international communities their holistic approach linking human well-being, economic relations, health and nature.
Purpose	Supporting small-scale producers to fulfil a harmonious integration of their farming practices, health, and natural environment protection, to enable them and their visitors to improve their lives through wholesome food, appropriate healing treatments, and preservation of their living and working environments. The EHFN's approach includes, at the network and at farm levels, the revitalization of rural Latvian traditions, their integration with modern practices, and the dissemination and exchange of knowledge and practices not only among members, but also with local, national, and international specialists, and rural and urban communities.
Beneficiaries	Latvian small-scale farmers; local, national, and international communities; tourists.

Activities	■ Developing of an alternative model to industrial agriculture through the promotion of organic and small-scale production, processing, and marketing; ■ Developing of an alternative model to mass tourism through the promotion of healthy and educational visits and stays at organic family farms; ■ Leading a national knowledge-sharing network about organic and small-scale farming, processing and marketing, health preservation and treatment, environment preservation and tourism; ■ Organizing monthly capacity-building lectures and workshops on a variety of topics related to the EHFN's approach, requested by members and delivered by them or by national and international experts; ■ Organizing of annual learning excursions in model farms in Latvia as well as in other European countries; ■ Actively collaborating with the Latvian Organic Agriculture Association (LBLA).
Achievements	■ Grew from 0 to 70 members, working on over 2,800 hectares; ■ Has strengthened the economic and environmental sustainability of its members' enterprises; ■ Has developed a variety of collaborations with national and international agricultural, health and environmental specialists and networks to deliver state-of-the-art information and trainings to its members; ■ Many EHFN members now receive over 1,000 visitors per year; ■ A number of EHFN members have developed multiple collaborations with municipal governments and local schools to spread EHFN's approach to improve the local population's living conditions.

Summary Table 2:
The Federation of Men and Women Family Farming Workers (FETRAF), Brazil

Name of Case/ Catalyst	<i>Federação Nacional dos Trabalhadores e Trabalhadoras na Agricultura Familiar</i> - FETRAF-Brasil (National Federation of Men and Women Family Farming Workers)
Country	Brazil
Level	Meso
Sector	Agriculture, Social security
Decent Work Pillar(s)	Social Protection, Social Dialogue, Labour Rights
Organization Type	Federation of trade unions
Starting Year	2004
Description	FETRAF-Brasil is a national federation of state and municipal trade unions, representing over 500,000 family farmers in 18 states across Brazil. It seeks to expand and strengthen national agricultural and social security policies aimed at family farming; and to increase the productivity and profitability of family farms products and services through the creation of cooperatives, and the implementation programmes that provide credit, technical support, and social security to its members.
Purpose	Strengthening and expanding the representation of family farmers in Brazil; unifying state and municipal trade unions for family farmers; and ensuring better living standards and working conditions for its members through an “alternative sustainable development model” that empowers family farmers.
Beneficiaries/ Members	Family farmers

Activities	■ Advocating and negotiating for state and national policies to improve family farmers' access to housing, education, health, land, and credit; ■ Facilitating members' access to existing government schemes targeting family farmers by raising awareness, and simplifying administrative processes for members; ■ Implementing projects; to improve family famers' access to credit, housing, food security; ■ Organizing small cooperatives to improve the productivity of members' farms, and improving community management of resources; ■ Capacity building, particularly for women and youth, through educational programmes and training on management, marketing, agro-ecological gardening, etc.; ■ Developing and promoting agro-ecological techniques; ■ Partnering with other rural labour movements, such as the Landless Workers' Movement and <i>Via Campesina</i>, to campaign and mobilize for agrarian reform and sustainable development.
Achievements	■ Spread from 3 to 18 states in Brazil within 10 years; ■ Includes 15 state-level federations and 600 municipal unions, active in 1,000 cities and 22 micro-regions in the country; ■ Broadened its activities from mobilizations and campaigns, to include implementation of community-led projects on access to credit, housing, education, training, etc.; ■ Successfully incorporated cooperative structures within its organizational structure. For example, COOPERHAF, a cooperative rural housing project, successfully spread to 12 states in the country, addressing the housing needs of over 30,000 family farmer households, and received the World Habitat Award; ■ Played a key role in advocating and negotiating agricultural and social security policies for family farmers, such as the PRONAF (rural credit), PRONERA (education), and PNHR (rural housing) programmes.

Summary Table 3:
La Chetina, Peru

Name of Catalyst	La Chetina
Country	Peru
Level	Micro
Sector	Agribusiness
Decent Work Pillar(s)	Employment, Social Protection
Organization Type	Micro-enterprise
Starting Year	2007
Description	La Chetina is a micro-enterprise located in the remote village of Cheto, in Peru's Chachapoyas province. It produces and sells goods prepared with local agricultural inputs produced by single women, who in turn earn a steady income, as well as access to healthcare for themselves and their families. Like most of her employees, La Chetina's founder belongs to the indigenous Quechua community. Today La Chetina has 3 stores, 6 employees, and generates further employment for over 50 agricultural producers.
Purpose	Providing employment for women and their families in Cheto and its surrounding areas, and promoting growth and development.

Beneficiaries	Local farmers, particularly women
Activities	■ Cultivating quality agricultural goods; ■ Producing and marketing yoghurt, cheese, butter, honey, marmalade, chocolate and other traditional products from locally-cultivated agricultural goods; ■ Training local farmers to cultivate, process, and market their products; ■ Promoting local product consumption in communities; ■ Facilitating access to healthcare services to its employees, and more broadly in the community.
Achievements	■ Expanded from 1 to 3 stores (1 in Cheto and 2 in the provincial capital Chachapoyas); ■ Generated employment for students and over 50 milk-producers; ■ Consumers come from outside Chachapoyas to buy La Chetina products and sell them nationally (in Lima, Chiclayo, Trujillo and Tarapoto); ■ Production expanded from dairy products to honey, marmalade, brandy and chocolate, all prepared with local goods; ■ Products are now also sold in nearby districts and other provinces.

Summary Table 4:

The Nyamata Telecentre and the Rwanda Telecentre Network (RTN), Rwanda

Name of Catalyst	The Nyamata Telecentre	The Rwanda Telecentre Network (RTN)
Country	Rwanda	Rwanda
Level	Micro	Meso
Sector	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
Decent Work Pillar(s)	Employment	Employment
Organization Type	Private enterprise	Non-profit organization
Starting Year	2004	2006
Description	A telecentre located in the village of Nyamata, 24 kilometres from Rwanda's capital Kigali. Its founder worked in the local government, studied management and development, and decided to become a telecentre entrepreneur to prove that ICTs could be effective tools for rural development. This telecentre is now an information, services and products delivery hub.	A network of rural telecentres, located in Kigali, launched by the founder of Nyamata Telecentre and 2 of his university colleagues, who wanted to enable Rwandan telecentre entrepreneurs to share knowledge, experiences and challenges, and collectively find solutions. It also supports government's efforts to reduce the urban-rural digital gap by taking part in national policy formulation and implementation, and creating new telecentres in rural areas.
Purpose	■ Reducing the digital gap between urban and rural areas by providing access to ICT services in villages; ■ Improving communication and services delivery between the Rwandan government, the local communities, and businesses.	■ Promoting and developing ICTs for rural development in Rwanda by strengthening and supporting existing telecentres in rural and semi-urban areas, and by helping or initiating new telecentres; ■ Improving the legal and economic environment for small entrepreneurs in ICTs for rural development.

Beneficiaries	Inhabitants of Nyamata and surrounding villages.	Telecentre entrepreneurs in Rwandan rural areas, their staff, and the local communities.
Activities	■ Providing ICT training and services; ■ Providing different kinds of services: BDS, e-governance, e-learning, banking, agriculture and health-related services.	■ Establishing new rural telecentres; ■ Implementing knowledge-sharing and capacity-building activities; ■ Creating and disseminating local content; ■ Advocating and raising awareness about ICTs.
Achievements	■ Growth from 2 to 25 employees; ■ 100 visitors a day; ■ Delivering a variety of ICT and non-ICT private and public services; ■ Numerous partnerships, including with banks, insurance companies, and the National Electricity Company of Rwanda (ELECTROGAZ); ■ Serves as a model for the creation of other telecentres in rural areas.	■ Growth from 3 to 25 employees; ■ 140 members; ■ 150 new telecentres created in rural and semi-urban areas; ■ Variety of trainings in ICT and non-ICT services delivered; ■ Management of 5 telecentres established by the government located in 5 districts of the northern province of Rwanda; ■ Numerous projects, including the <i>Knowledge Network of Community Telecentres</i>, <i>1,000 Telecentres</i>, <i>Telecentre Women: Digital Literacy Campaign</i>, and hosting of the <i>Pan African Network</i>.

Summary Table 5:
Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA), Occupied Palestinian territories

Name of Catalyst	Palestine Fair Trade Association (PFTA)
Country	Occupied Palestinian territories (oPt)
Level	Meso
Sector	Agriculture and related processing industries, Handicrafts
Decent Work Pillars	Employment, Labour Rights, Social Protection, Social Dialogue
Organization Type	National union of producers' cooperatives, processors and exporters (status: NGO)
Starting Year	2004
Description	The PFTA is the largest union of fair trade producers' cooperatives, processors and exporters in the Palestinian territories, with over 1,700 members. With its exclusive exporting partner, the company Canaan Fair Trade –also created to support it– PFTA economically and socially empowers Palestinian farmers, including women, through fair trade and organic certifications. It builds its members' capacities to profitably produce and sell, by organizing them in cooperatives and training them in fair trade and organic practices, in order to enable them to obtain the certifications which give access to profitable international markets. Working conditions are also improved by the implementation on each farm of labour standards, and by the social dialogue and facilitated business of the union's participative structure.
Purpose	Enabling marginalized Palestinian producers to become self-reliant in their traditional agribusiness and handicrafts, which are currently negatively affected by the conflict with Israel, in particular regarding their access to land and to local as well as international markets.
Beneficiaries	Palestinian farmers, producing principally olive oil, and women, producing and processing a variety of locally traditional agricultural products, such as sun-dried tomatoes, herbs, or soap from olive oil.

Activities	■ Setting up of locally-relevant fair trade standards, respecting international guidelines; ■ Promoting of fair trade and organic practices and standards, and providing of fair trade and organic certifications through creating and organizing producers' cooperatives and training workshops; ■ Following up of fair trade and organic certifications, through capacity-building workshops and field inspections; ■ Opening new international markets for Palestinian fair trade and organic certified producers, through its exporter Canaan Fair Trade; ■ Promoting PFTA's products, activities and producers at the national and international level, through PFTA's or Canaan Fair Trade's participation in national and international events, such as fairs, exhibitions or festivals; ■ Development of an environment where producers, processors and exporters can share ideas on common matters of interest, through a participatory and democratic union structure; ■ Promoting better working conditions and solidarity in the wider Palestinian community, through various projects, such as a micro-loans programme to start small fair trade agricultural businesses.
Achievements	■ Grew from 15 to 1,700 members - including 200 women - organized in approximately 50 village cooperatives; ■ 95 per cent of PFTA products are organic-certified; ■ Increased its members' productivity and their products' quality and value-added; ■ Opened new international markets and secured recognition for its members' products and practices; ■ Sold PFTA products for USD 4.8 million in 2011 - including USD 4.3 million from olive oil, its primary product; ■ Members employ over 2,400 seasonal workers for 3 months every year during the olive harvest; ■ Created a minimum wage for its members' workers, approximately 60 per cent higher than the Palestinian norm; ■ Became the first fair trade-certified association for olive oil worldwide; ■ Expanded from fair trade and organic certifications for olive oil, to other products such as almonds.

Summary Table 6:
Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), India

Name of Case/Catalyst	Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Country	India
Level	Meso
Sector	Diverse
Decent Work Pillar (s)	Social Protection, Employment, Social Dialogue, Labour Rights
Organization Type	Trade Union; Cooperative; Movement
Starting Year	1972 (1980s for rural areas)
Description	Established as a trade union, SEWA aims to organize poor, self-employed women in the informal economy, with membership from 12 states in India, across rural and urban areas. Its members are also organized into 130 cooperatives and 181 rural producer groups, that are independently managed but receive support in terms of capacity building, marketing, social security services and training, from SEWA federations, social security, and sister organizations.
Purpose	Ensuring that women achieve work security, income security, food and social security (healthcare, childcare and housing), as well as individual and collective autonomy, particularly in terms of decision making ability.
Beneficiaries	Self-employed women (particularly women with micro- or small businesses or employed in the informal economy)
Activities	Activities are organized into the following components: ■ Union – Supporting self-employed women workers to collectively struggle for equal rights, social justice and access to services; ■ Cooperatives – Helping women pool their assets and collectively share their revenues; ■ Rural Producer Groups – Helping women start their own businesses as part of India's "Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas" (DWCRA) programme; ■ Social Security Organizations and Federations – This includes savings and credit groups, capacity-building centres etc. Providing services to SEWA members in healthcare, childcare, insurance, and housing; ■ SEWA Sister Organizations – This includes research, capacity building and educational organizations- Supporting SEWA members, such as the SEWA Academy, SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre, and SEWA ICT.

Achievements	■ Spread to 50 districts in 12 states of India. SEWA also has affiliated sister unions in South Africa, Yemen, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nepal; ■ Membership grew from 1040 in 1972 to over 1.75 million in 2012, 66 per cent of which is from rural areas; ■ Established several innovative institutions such as self-help groups and cooperatives; ■ Launched as a trade union, SEWA now encompasses a network of structures such as cooperatives, rural producer groups, social security services organizations, training and educational centres; ■ The SEWA Bank, for the financial needs of women in poverty, is the first women's banking institution in India. The cooperative bank, which started with 4,000 depositors, now has over 276,000 women share-holders and is widely considered a pioneer in women's micro-credit; ■ Key national policy advocate for street vendors, home-based workers and key founder of Streetnet and Homenet, international street-based workers' and home-based workers' organizations; ■ SEWA's founder received several prestigious awards and civilian honours for her creation and leadership of SEWA, including the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership (1977), the Right Livelihood Award (1984), the Padma Shri (1985) and the Padma Bhushan (1986).
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Summary Table 7:
Songhai, Benin

Name of Catalyst	Songhai
Country	Benin
Level	Meso
Sector	Agriculture, Agri-business, Handicrafts
Decent Work Pillar (s)	Employment
Organization Type	NGO
Starting Year	1985
Description	An organization with a number of training, production, research and development centres specialized in organic, integrated, environmentally- and economically-sustainable agriculture. It builds and uses local capacities and resources to develop innovative techniques in agriculture that enable local communities to reach self-reliance. Entrepreneurship and creativity are promoted in a holistic development approach integrating agricultural, industrial and service activities. The organization has 6 centres across Benin, 11 in Nigeria, 1 in Sierra Leone and 1 in Congo Brazzaville; and is planning to open new centres in Benin as well as in 11 other African countries.
Purpose	Building the capacities of African local communities in agriculture and handicrafts to enable them to overcome poverty and become innovative actors of development, by producing, processing and marketing their own production; as well as to link, exchange experiences and technically support each another.
Beneficiaries	Youth, women and farmers in particular, but also all stakeholders working in agricultural value-chains (production of food crops, fruits, vegetables, fish farming, animal husbandry, food processing, marketing, mechanics, and energy production), and in handicrafts.

Activities	■ Producing, processing and marketing of organic products adapted to the local human resources and knowledge, and to the local agro-ecological system; ■ Researching, testing and developing of an integrated agricultural production system covering the primary, secondary and service sectors, and using locally-adapted techniques as well as plant and animal varieties; ■ Building capacities of, and training, youth, women and farmers, on sustainable agriculture and handicraft, entrepreneurship, and emphasizing practice and creativity; ■ Providing services to local farmers and former trainees, including grants, credits, material renting, counselling, input access, transformation, commercialization and organizational support; ■ Advocating at the national and international levels to promote a positive image of agriculture, and sensitize decision-makers to its potential for national growth, employment and social peace.
Achievements	■ Grew from 1 to 6 centres in Benin (from 10 to 550 acres of land and from virtually 0 to 46 acres of water) and 11 centre in Nigeria, opened 3 telecentres in rural areas, 1 shop and 1 restaurant in Cotonou; ■ Grew from 6 to 1500 employees; ■ Builds the capacities of 200 trainees and interns at any time of the year in the 6 main centres; ■ Links 250 farms in a network; ■ Receives 20,000 visitors per year; ■ Has developed numerous projects, including the Regional Songhai Project for the development of agricultural entrepreneurship, supported by 5 UN agencies, to replicate its model in 11 other countries; ■ Developed numerous partnerships with national and international institutions, including the Beninese government, CEDEAO/ECOWAS, IFAD, UNDP, SNV, UNESCO, UNICAF, UNIDO, USAID; ■ Received numerous national and international distinctions, including the <i>Special and steady achievements for South-South cooperation Award</i>, by the UN South-South Cooperation Unit.

Summary Table 8:
Stung Treng Women's Development Centre (SWDC), Cambodia

Name of Case/ Catalyst	Stung Treng Women's Development Centre (SWDC)
Country	Cambodia
Level	Micro
Sector	Handicrafts (silk production and weaving), health, literacy and vocational training
Decent Work Pillar(s)	Employment, Social Protection, Labour Standards
Organization Type	NGO/Social Enterprise
Starting Year	2002
Description	SWDC focuses on developing skills and livelihoods for vulnerable people, especially women in the north eastern province of Stung Treng, Cambodia. It has created a successful and sustainable social business enterprise, "Mekong Blue", which raises silk worms, dyes, weaves and crafts traditional silk products, considered among the finest handicrafts of Cambodia. This production provides sustainable incomes and livelihoods to women in the remote rural province, and sponsors several social development projects such as childcare centres, literacy and health classes for village communities.
Purpose	Equip young rural women with life skills and sustainable livelihoods to break the cycle of poverty and illiteracy in the Stung Treng province of north-east Cambodia.
Beneficiaries	Women
Activities	■ Producing, weaving, sewing, marketing and exporting of high quality silk products; ■ Providing literacy training and health education; ■ Organizing trainings in sericulture, traditional weaving and sewing, carpentry and building; ■ Offering child care and kindergartens for employees' children; ■ Sponsoring school education for young women in the province.

Achievements	■ One of the largest enterprises in the Stung Treng province, employing full-time 70 women and 9 men; ■ Expanded from covering 1 village to 5 districts of the Stung Treng province; ■ Grew from owning 2 weaving looms, to owning 31 looms, 7 sewing machines, a dyeing centre and a sericulture production centre; ■ SWDC's enterprise Mekong Blue Silk makes 100 per cent locally produced, hand-woven materials, of high quality and unique design, and won the UNESCO award of excellence in 2004 and 2005; ■ Offers the highest income for weavers in Cambodia, USD 85-150, which is twice the salary of government school teachers; ■ Offers important side-benefits for its employees, such as free lunch, a kindergarten for their children, and school sponsorship for young women from grade 1 to 9; ■ Beneficiaries of SWDC's social development projects, training centres and enterprises include 496 women, 685 children, 50 men and a total of 566 families.
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