

Action Research and Social Faith: What Contribution to the Development Process? The Case of Mangatsiotra (South-East Madagascar)

Raharinosy Vololoniaina Iharimalala^{1,2,3}, Robijaona Rahelivololoniaina Baholy^{1,2,3,4}

¹University FJKM Ravelojaona

²Reformed University of Madagascar

³Interepistemological Doctoral School

⁴University of Antananarivo

robijob111@gmail.com

Abstract

This review article contemplates the experiential wisdom garnered from the transformative endeavors embarked upon by the Reformed Church FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, nestled within the impoverished precincts of Mangatsiotra in Madagascar. Aspired towards inclusivity and participatory engagement, the initial trajectory of these ventures faced a faltering onset. Regrettably, the genuine engagement of the indigenous populace within the manifold initiatives remained elusive. Such discernment precipitated a collective introspection among the stakeholders, prompting a recalibration of methodology imbued with a deeper resonance of praxis and the theological conception of communal faith. In embracing this renewed ethos, a paradigm shift ensued, catalyzing a comprehensive gestation of developmental ethos.

Keywords

FJKM; Action research;
Social faith; Mangatsiotra;
Development



I. Introduction

Within the tapestry of nations, Madagascar emerges as one of the poignant embodiments of destitution, as delineated by the somber annals of the UNDP in 2020. Nestled in the southeastern expanse of this island nation, Mangatsiotra emerges as a symbolic bastion of entrenched poverty. Ravaged incessantly by the ravages of inundation and besieged by the specter of nutritional dearth, as delineated by the IPC data of 2023, the denizens of Mangatsiotra, with a particular focus on the vulnerable cohorts of women and children, find themselves ensconced within the labyrinth of precariousness. In the expansive purview of the Grand Sud-Est, where between 50% to 65% of inhabitants' grapple with acute food insecurity, as delineated by the IPC Phase 3 or higher, the contours of affliction deepen. Despite the zealous endeavors embarked upon by governmental apparatuses and myriad benefactors across the temporal expanse, the fruits of labor bear the blemish of relative disillusionment, veiling the trajectory of progress in a pall of inadequacy.

In the annals of 2017, the devout adherents of FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe embarked upon a sacred mission, adorning their endeavors with the mantle of SEkoly MIisionera (SEMI), heralding a missionary ethos infused with profound purpose. This sacred covenant intertwined the gospel imperative with pragmatic interventions designed to ameliorate the quotidian plight of the populace. Their noble aspiration resonated with a holistic vision, eschewing the allure of transient gratification in favor of a progressive odyssey delineated by sequential epochs, thereby transcending the confines of ephemeral triumphs.

Initially, the blueprint and enactment of endeavors within Mangatsiotra purported to espouse a participatory ethos, orchestrated through a mosaic of consultations and collective deliberations. Endeavors spanning educational outreach, husbandry endeavors, agricultural model prototypes, and the concomitant erection of infrastructural edifices adorned this noble pursuit. Nevertheless, the stewardship of these initiatives and the modality of their execution rested within the purview of the technocrats affiliated with FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe.

This hierarchical *modus operandi*, akin to the venerable "top-down" approach, engendered reverberations of consequence upon the yielded outcomes, manifesting as a dearth of ownership, a paucity of accountability, and an undue reliance on fiscal allocations, among other maladies. A seismic shift commenced in 2021, heralding a recalibration in the implementation methodology of diverse initiatives. Through the auspices of action-oriented inquiry and the embracement of a paradigm underpinned by "social faith," the imperative unfolds: to elucidate the prospect of inciting a holistic and enduring metamorphosis, engendering a salubrious elevation in the quality of life for the denizens of the locale. This transformative endeavor pivots upon the twin pillars of judicious governance and the alchemy of individual metamorphosis into vanguards capable of seeding the fertile grounds of societal transformation.

The focal intent of our discourse unfurls as a contemplative exploration into the efficacy of an ethos imbued with "social faith" in the orchestration of a comprehensive developmental narrative, as exemplified in the tapestry of Mangatsiotra's landscape. Within this scholarly odyssey, two conjectures beckon particular scrutiny:

The initial conjecture accentuates the imperative of inclusivity, advocating for the cognizance of stakeholders and the bespoke adaptation of remedies consonant with the intricate tapestry of contextual exigencies and the inherent complexion of challenges therein.

Concomitantly, the second conjecture avows the preeminence of education as the veritable linchpin undergirding a metamorphosis in cognition, adeptness, comportment, and conceptual frameworks.

This treatise, wrought through the crucible of several temporal cycles of implementation, accentuates the epochal evolution vis-à-vis the initial harvest gleaned through erstwhile "traditional" paradigms.

II. Research Method

2.1 Materials

a. Characteristics of the Area and the Population

Inscribed within the hallowed annals of geographic delineation, the Vatovavy Fitovinany Region, as delineated by the 2009 monographic survey, unfurls its expanse, anointing Mangatsiotra within its embrace, spanning a terrain of 20,875 km², a meager 3.33% fraction of Madagascar's terrestrial tapestry, as posited by Primature data of 2014.

This precinct of the island is imbued with a climatic duality, where the vestiges of a rainy season, erstwhile near-extinct within the village, remain sporadic, with rainfall maintaining a modest cadence throughout the calendar, save for the tempestuous interludes of cyclonic fury.

The terrestrial visage, ensconced within this geographic demesne, mirrors the dictates of its climatic verity, as discerned through the flora and fauna that adorn its

countenance. Despite the traverse of Madagascar's cherished aqueous conduits, such as the Canal des Pangalanes, originally conceived as a conduit for the conveyance of southeastern spices to the Tamatave port, as elucidated within the Mangatsiotra monograph of 2019, and the meandering tributaries spawned from its course, namely the Sahabe, Betsiriry, and Andranomatavy rivers, which grace the Fokontany, their perenniality wanes, reduced to a mere whisper of surface runoff during the parched interlude of the dry season.

The majority of the population of Mangatsiotra belongs to the "Antemoro" ethnic group or "those of the shore" as the Vatovavy Fitovinany Region is made up mainly of four ethnic groups: the Antambahoaka, the Tanala (this means people of the forest), the Sahafatra and the Antemoro (according to the monograph of the Vatovavy fitovinany region, in 2014).



Figure 1. The children of the Fokontany
Source: Author

Despite the poverty, you can see the joy on the children's faces.

Entrenched within the fecund bosom of tradition, the denizens of this realm have historically sought sustenance from the hallowed triad of agriculture, freshwater pisciculture, and the artisanal crafts. Within this veritable tapestry of livelihood, the cultivation of tuberous treasures such as cassava and sweet potatoes, alongside leguminous legacies and arboreal bounties, including mangoes, avocados, and coconuts, adorns the agricultural vista, nurtured by the benevolent embrace of fertile soils and temperate climes.

Simultaneously, the pastoral pursuits of poultry husbandry find ubiquitous patronage, enriching the agrarian tableau with their fecund presence. In the tender hands of womenfolk, the art of weaving ascends to a sacred vocation, birthing woven wonders in the form of mats, baskets, and hats, thereby weaving a tapestry of artisanal legacy.

Furthermore, amidst the rhythms of agrarian toil, certain homesteads endeavor to diversify their bounty through the cultivation of staples such as rice, maize, cassava, and millet, thereby invoking a symphony of sustenance. Yet, amidst the rustic idyll, a contingent of Antemoro kin opt to traverse the confines of their ancestral abode, seeking solace in the bustling enclaves of Madagascar's urban nuclei, thus endowing these hubs with an abundant font of labor, a testament to familial providence amidst the tapestry of migration.

Enshrined within the fabric of societal organization beats the heart of lineage and clan affiliations, etching a narrative of ancestral bonds and communal kinship. Within this venerable schema, a lineage, coalescing the progeny along the paternal lineage of a singular progenitor, spans a spectrum that may encompass multitudes, resonating with the echoes of generations past.

The veritable tableau unveiled through the canvass of the Mangatsiotra survey unveils the entrenched position of men, epitomized by the paternal figure, within the social tapestry. A patriarchal paradigm reigns supreme, endowing the father, ensconced as the familial patriarch, with unassailable authority. In the echelons of societal hierarchy, the venerable figures, colloquially known as "Lonaky" or "ampanjaka," emerge as custodians of moral rectitude, occupying a sacred mantle as arbiters of Antemoro customs and traditions.

They stand sentinel, stewarding the sanctity of moral precepts, social mores, and communal decorum, whilst serving as venerable counselors to the administrative and political elites. Beside the edifice of official administrative apparatuses, the hallowed convocation of the General Assembly of the Fokonolona assumes a pivotal role in the quotidian tapestry of Antemoro existence, weaving threads of communal cohesion within the fabric of daily life..

Within the rich tapestry of linguistic expression on the Malagasy isle, the Antemoro dialect emerges as a distinctive branch, nestled within the broader Malayo-Polynesian lexicon, and chiefly spoken by the Antaimoro denizens enshrouded within the verdant embrace of the Vatovavy Fitovinany expanse, spanning the lyrical interlude between the bastions of Mananjary and Vohipeno. A symphony of vocal resonance, it finds resonance upon the tongues of approximately 1,106,000 souls.

While tethered to the common lexicon shared amongst Malagasy tongues, such as the term "accept" in French, which metamorphoses into "Magnaiky" in the Antemoro dialect and "Manaiky" amongst the Merina, it unfurls its own nuances, reminiscent of a melodious sonata echoing through the ages. Notably, the Antemoro possess an innate acumen for comprehending the "official Malagasy" tongue without the exigency of linguistic intermediaries during discourse—a feat oftentimes elusive among their Malagasy brethren hailing from diverse ethnic enclaves.

In the annals of 2017, the intrepid emissaries of FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe embarked upon a pilgrimage of inquiry unto the hallowed precincts of the Mangatsiotra District, therein unveiling a tableau of profound isolation. The sinuous arteries of passage, in a state of egregious disrepair, served as testament to the remoteness cloaking this enclave. Chronic malnutrition, typified by the scourge of stomach afflictions and diarrheal malaise, cast their long shadows, reaching their zenith during the somber months of October and November. A scarcity of potable aqua vitae beset the populace, while the specter of rampant unemployment loomed large, casting a pall over the livelihoods of many.

Within this crucible of deprivation, the inhabitants found themselves ensnared within the visceral throes of subsistence, ensnared within the lowermost rungs of Maslow's hierarchical paradigm—a poignant commentary on their existential plight. Bereft of the requisite reservoirs of knowledge and experiential wisdom, the denizens grappled with the daunting task of tilling the land, harvesting from the bounties of the sea, and augmenting productivity. Alas, the pall of destitution eclipsed their aspirations, shackling them within the confines of penury.

The meager fruits of labor yielded paltry incomes, insufficient to nurture the dreams of progeny through the halls of academia. A grim reality unfolded, marked by the swelling

ranks of illiteracy and the disquieting specter of dropout rates—testaments to the insidious undercurrents of societal malaise, as documented by the annals of FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe in 2018..

Paradoxically, Mangatsiotra has exploitable natural resources (renewable and non-renewable). Within this verdant expanse, the allure of cash crops, epitomized by the fragrant tendrils of vanilla and the aromatic embrace of cloves, begins to stir the collective imagination. The fecund soil, teeming with fertility, stands poised to yield bounteous harvests. However, the nascent strides towards agricultural prosperity find themselves hamstrung by the paucity of technical acumen among the tillers of the land, a lamentable lacuna engendered by the dearth of vocational training tailored to harnessing the rich reservoirs of local resources.

Industrial titans, such as sugar cane and oil palm, alongside the arboreal ambassadors of agro-forestry, including coffee and pepper, slumber in latent repose within the precincts of the Fokontany, yet to be roused from their dormancy, unlike their counterparts in the broader expanse of the region.

To sum up, agriculture emerges as a burgeoning bastion within the Fokontany's vista, with myriad households finding sustenance amidst the verdant bounty of agricultural harvests. Yet, within this tale of burgeoning promise, lie the whispers of untapped potential, beckoning for a nuanced exploration of the myriad parameters enshrouding the realization of the populace's entitlement to the wealth latent within their soil.

Moreover, Mangatsiotra, ensconced within its bucolic embrace, unfurls as a haven ripe for the embrace of tourism. Its tapestry, woven with the vibrant hues of exceptional biodiversity, invites the wandering footfalls of pilgrims and sojourners alike, beckoning towards the meandering embrace of the Pangalane Canal and the hallowed precincts of its touristic and historical sanctuaries.

b. Role of the church

The development of a community depends largely on the motivation of those involved and the collective responsibility of its members.

If we refer to the Bible, Jesus said: "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it". (Matthew 16:18). The apostle Paul reinforces this idea when he says: "For as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ. For we were all baptized into one Spirit, into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (I Cor.12:12-13).

The Church is thus seen as the body of the risen Christ and also as the community of believers built up by the action of the Holy Spirit. In the words of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger: "The Church is not primarily to be found where organisation, reform and leadership take place, but in those who simply believe and who in the Church receive the gift of faith and live by it" (Ratzinger, 2005).

In ecclesiological and sociological terms, the Church is defined as a mobilised community that is "convinced, responsible and committed". The term "church" comes from the Latin word "ecclesia" or the Greek "ekklesia" (gr.) which evoked the Hebrew "qahal Yahweh" meaning "assembly of the people of God" (according to the SEFALA and SAMM courses in 2019, Ambohitrarahaba). This "Qahal Yahweh" was a large Jewish community or Tribes of Israel on their way to the promised land of Kanaan.

Particularly, "Qahal", during the Reformation of King Josiah (640-609 BC), referred to Israel as God's "Chosen People" and also Yahweh's witness before the Nations (Bergsma and Pitre, 2018). The Church refers to the gathering of all Christians, particularly

the baptised, affirming their faith in the risen Jesus. Möhler defined the two notions of the Church: that of a hierarchical society and that of a community inhabited and governed by the Holy Spirit (Geiselman, 1960).

From this contemplation, we can deduce the essence of the church—a congregation unified in shared presence. It emerges as a collective, bound by distinctive traits, beliefs, or faith, all under the auspices of divine guidance and a steadfast commitment to human welfare. The nurturing milieu within the church molds its adherents, imbuing them with a sense of stewardship towards their environs and fellow beings. Consequently, the church evolves into a dynamic agent, galvanizing communal advancement within its fold.

At the international convocation convened on Tuesday, 4th April 2017, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the encyclical "Populorum Progressio" by Pope Paul VI in 1967, His Holiness Pope Francis I expounded upon the essence of integral human development—a mission underscored by Pope Paul VI as pivotal to the church's mandate. His Holiness emphasized that development transcends mere economic facets, advocating for its holistic integration, encompassing the corporeal and spiritual realms..

The church, therefore, assumes a pivotal role in discerning the exigencies of the community, necessitating innovation and adaptability to effectively address predefined challenges therein. It behooves the church to conceive and implement bespoke programs or initiatives tailored to meet these needs. For instance, Tearfund, a UK-based evangelical Christian organization dedicated to development and relief efforts worldwide, underscores in its 2018 publication the involvement of over 12,500 local churches across more than 40 nations in the church and community mobilization process. This concerted endeavor impacts the lives of over 6,250,000 individuals globally (Njoroge, 2019).

In a compendium titled "Church and Community Mobilization in Africa," Tearfund delineates the "Church and Community Mobilization Process (PCMEC)"—a framework advocating for locally adapted solutions crafted in collaboration with church representatives and experts, mindful of the nuanced realities of the African context (Tearfund, 2018).

2.2 Methods

a. From the first actions to the questioning

The Mangatsiotra district did not have an FJKM temple until 2017, when the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe initiative was launched (FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, 2017). It should be noted that the Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe team for Mangatsiotra was made up of theologians, an entrepreneur, educators, pedagogues, a medical consultant, a historian-geographer, an engineer specialising in local development and agronomy, with a balanced gender representation.

The initial approach adopted by the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe in its evangelisation mission in Mangatsiotra was inspired by the missionary approaches used by the London Missionary Society (LMS) in Madagascar (Hubsch, 1993). It combined evangelism and holistic development. At the expense of the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, a catechist was assigned to Mangatsiotra. As far as the modus operandi is concerned, the "missionary technique" is the main tool used, since empiricism is one of the particularities of the Antemoro ethnic groups. They believe and change based on tangible results.

The mobilisation of the church and the community was based on educating the members of the future FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Mangatsiotra Basic Ecclesial Community as well as the local population. The interventions were based on the PESTEL method developed by Michael Porter in 1979 and used to carry out a strategic analysis covering the

environmental, political, economic, social, technical, ecological and legal fields. This approach benefited from effective collaboration between the state authority, the population and various local entities.

Subsequently, the inquiry underwent refinement through the discerning lens of strategic analysis, employing either the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) or MOFF (Threats, Opportunities, Strengths, Weaknesses) methodology. This pragmatic tool, esteemed for its efficacy in the strategic diagnostic phase, serves as a complementary adjunct to the comprehensive PESTEL analysis. The SWOT analysis, or SWOT matrix, epitomizes a strategic apparatus wielded not only within the realms of corporate enterprises but also applicable to a diverse array of organizations. It serves as a linchpin in the preliminary diagnosis preceding the inception of endeavors, be it the formulation of a business blueprint, the introduction of a novel product, the crafting of a marketing strategy, or the orchestration of a company acquisition.

The principal objective of the SWOT analysis resides in the evaluation of the cogency of prospective strategies, facilitating an incisive assessment of anticipated outcomes. It avails itself of the inherent advantage of encapsulating the inherent strengths and weaknesses of an endeavor, juxtaposed against the opportunities and threats engendered by its milieu. This methodological modality, however, does not preclude the integration of insights gleaned from the sociological inquiry conducted amongst village elders, dignitaries, stakeholders, parents, and the indigenous populace. The amassed data, thus garnered, serves as the foundation for the formulation of the Mangatsiotra Evangelization and Development Program and Project.

This participatory and contextualized approach has yielded the identification of inaugural endeavors, comprising the provisioning of potable water, selective sanitation initiatives, the erection of a platform showcasing indigenous trades such as agriculture—encompassing staple crops and orchards—the establishment of Vondron'Olona Miara-Mivavaka (V.O.M.M.) prayer and Bible study collectives within each neighborhood, and the widespread distribution of birth certificates in 2022. The culmination of these efforts materialized in October 2022 with the unveiling of the Temple F.J.K.M. Ziona Fanantenana Analamaitso—a project gestated over a span of four years, precisely culminating on October 30, 2022, under the auspices of the esteemed presence of the Synodal Presidents, SPAA 12 Pastor ALIOLIHARIMANARIVO Mahabo Saotra and SP 14 Pastor RAZAFINDRATSIMBA Tokinirina..

The implementation of sustainable income-generating projects has also begun during the construction phase, with training in breeze block making and masonry, which are simply on-the-job vocational training courses.

The construction of schools to provide schooling for children and young people, as well as adult literacy, are still to come, with the setting up of a TOBY, a project to be initiated in 2024.

However, it emerged that this modality of operation precipitated challenges in its execution. With all facets of the project—proposals, decisions, funding, etc.—emanating from Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, the indigenous populace found themselves ensnared within a web of financial dependency, disempowerment, gradually receding from active participation. Consequently, a dearth of ownership ensued, as evidenced by the lack of stewardship exhibited by the local community. Notably, the agricultural showcase and ancillary infrastructure suffered from neglect, with 60% of nursery produce succumbing to neglect and inadequate maintenance. Additionally, 40% of the allocated rice was consumed prematurely, intended as it was for seed propagation.

Furthermore, a gradual entrenchment of financial dependence manifested through the burgeoning budgetary allocations designated for Mangatsiotra by the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe—a sum escalating from 9,000,000 Ariary per annum in 2017 to 10,000,000 Ariary per annum in 2018. Within the Christian psyche, there burgeoned the perception that the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe stands as an immutable bastion of succor and support, ready to extend its benevolent hand in times of need. This sentiment reverberated in contributions towards catechist remuneration and operational overheads alike.

In the execution of these endeavors, the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe assumed a mantle of authority, entwining itself in the fabric of financial deliberations and managerial prerogatives, alongside moral and spiritual deliberations. Regrettably, the embryonic stages of the development initiative within Mangatsiotra, spearheaded by the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, stumbled upon a disheartening commencement, eliciting an unfavorable appraisal.

To redress this predicament, a paradigm shift ensued in 2021, heralding a transfer of administrative and managerial reins from the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe to the Parish and the indigenous populace, overseen by the watchful guardianship of the Atsimo Atsinanana SP14 Regional Synod. Entrusted with the mantle of project oversight and regulatory stewardship, the Regional Synod undertakes the mantle of monitoring and oversight, relegating the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe to the esteemed position of a technical and financial collaborator.

b. Action research combined with a social faith-based approach

After a participatory discussion with the technicians and representatives of the parish branches, it was decided to opt for action research in order to contribute actively and effectively to the development of the Mangatsiotra community. The involvement of everyone, women and men, young people and adults, was sought in collaboration with the technicians from Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe.

c. Theoretical basis

This novel approach, rooted in the praxis of action research, finds its antecedents in Dewey's theory, which propounds that social actors glean wisdom through active engagement (Miettinen, 2000). Roy and Prévost (2013, p.129) elucidate action research as "a research paradigm interwoven with pragmatism, positing that it is through action that we engender scientific insights pertinent to comprehending and transmuting the social fabric of individuals and societal systems." Within this framework, action research amalgamates scientific inquiry with pragmatic application, birthing newfound wisdom requisite for the developmental journey. In the crucible of reflexive action research, stakeholders metamorphose into co-creators of knowledge, whilst researchers themselves transition into stakeholders, fostering a symbiotic nexus aimed at the collective betterment of society.

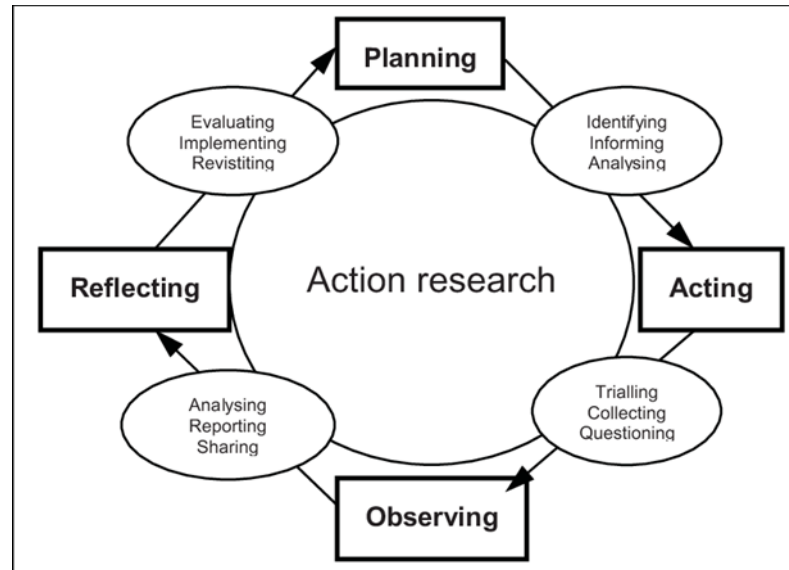


Figure 2. *The action-research cycle (Ray and Prévost, 2013, p.116)*

Source https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Le-cycle-de-recherche-action_fig1_272566694

Based on these different considerations, action research can be seen as a contextual scientific research method that is also participatory and inclusive, which is essential for sustainable and holistic development.

d. Emphasis on education and social faith

Vocational training and initiatives aimed at enhancing motivation constitute the indispensable bedrock for societal advancement. In Mangatsiotra, paramount importance is accorded to the principles of quality, sustainability, and pedagogical innovation.

The educational paradigm espoused in Mangatsiotra finds its roots in biblical precepts, while conscientiously catering to the exigencies of local social imperatives. As a conduit for evangelization, the harmonization of the gospel with indigenous cultural mores—the process of inculturation and contextualization—stands as an imperative. However, confronted with a community characterized by its distinct way of life, cognitive frameworks, linguistic nuances, and socioeconomic exigencies, missionaries bear the responsibility not merely to proffer solutions to these challenges but also to adapt their language and methodologies accordingly.

This contextualization of the Gospel, serving as both a vehicle for evangelization and a catalyst for community development, heralds a transformative journey towards holistic societal betterment.

This imperative for adaptation lies at the very heart of the educational endeavor, epitomizing what we denote as integrated education. In essence, it entails the seamless fusion of active pedagogy, contextualized learning, and holistic education. Active pedagogy, in practice, prioritizes experiential engagement above all other avenues of knowledge acquisition.

According to KOLB, learning unfolds through a quartet of discernible phases: reflective and attentive observation, immersion in concrete experiential realms, abstraction and theoretical conceptualization thereof, and the pragmatic application of insights gleaned from initial encounters. It is within the crucible of action and experience that knowledge finds its genesis and flourishes. Learning-by-doing, attaining its zenith amidst problem-laden scenarios, emerges as the quintessence of this educational ethos (Miettinen, 2000). This explains the use of the action-research approach at Mangatsiotra.

Contextualized learning denotes the nuanced adaptation of projects and methodologies to the unique tapestry of the local milieu. This departure from a posture of imposition heralds a paradigm shift towards indigenous problem identification and solution cultivation. Drawing inspiration from Marcel's (2002) discourse on contextualization within pedagogical praxis, this approach embraces the local environment not as a hindrance to development, but as a wellspring of resources and assets.

Embedded within this integrated education is a holistic conception of humanity, wherein individuals are envisaged in their entirety—embracing physical, moral, intellectual, spiritual, and emotional dimensions. Echoing the sentiments of Michel de Montaigne, "It is not a soul, it is not a body that is trained, it is a man," this comprehensive consideration underscores the quintessential role of the Gospel in educational pursuits. Moreover, this holistic ethos engenders an inclusive educational ethos, transcending barriers of gender, race, or physical prowess, encapsulating the tenet that "everyone is an educator."

In the words of Durkheim (2022), this embodies the essence of hetero-education, wherein the adult generations exert their formative influence on those yet unripe for societal integration, thus weaving a tapestry of collective advancement through inclusive pedagogy.

We advocate for a strategic framework that embraces multifaceted engagement, complemented by an educational modality integrating community-based biblical reflection. This approach facilitates a participatory process wherein issues are identified collectively, solutions are delineated, and the contours of developmental initiatives are concretely outlined.

In the initial phase, all stakeholders, representing the populace without discrimination, converge inclusively within a workshop setting to explore and elucidate the contextual nuances and challenges pervading the community. This endeavor embodies an ecosystemic ethos, underpinned by "the application of appropriate scientific methodologies rigorously focused on levels of biological organization. These levels constitute the main structures, processes, functions, and interactions between organisms and their environment. The distinctive feature of the ecosystem approach is that it recognizes that human populations, in their cultural diversity, are an integral component of many ecosystems" (IUCN, 2015, p. 13).

The second phase unfolds with a structured Bible study orchestrated by the leaders of the Base Ecclesial Community (BEC). A facilitator, selected from among the BEC's members, steers a participatory exploration of Scripture, probing the depths of its wisdom to discern potential solutions to the manifold challenges besetting the community. Within this sanctified space of biblical inquiry, participants earnestly seek divine guidance, drawing upon the wellsprings of faith to unearth God's ordained remedies for the afflictions afflicting a populace mired in the depths of poverty.

In the subsequent stage, the solutions unearthed by the Base Ecclesial Community (BEC) are presented for deliberation to local stakeholders and representatives of the indigenous populace. The objective of this phase is to foster consensus—a shared conviction—on viable solutions that garner universal acceptance, thereby fostering an inclusive resolution to social maladies. Moreover, this stage endeavors to delineate a collective vision and set shared objectives, translating the proposed solutions into a cohesive developmental blueprint embraced and enacted by all. This convergence of purpose, this "common conviction," serves as the impetus for collaborative action, galvanizing the BEC, the church, and the community into unified engagement. This approach is encapsulated within the ethos of "SOCIAL FAITH."

Social Faith embodies a manifestation of "social representation," rooted in biblical precepts and Christian faith, yet embraced by the indigenous populace. Within the realm of Social Faith, individual actions spring forth from personal Faith and Conviction, while communal endeavors are propelled by the collective ethos of "Social Faith." This communal conviction serves as a unifying force, galvanizing the community or society towards the attainment of a shared vision and common goals.

It is imperative to invigorate the members of the Base Ecclesial Community (CEB), not only to engage in the study of Scripture for the nourishment of their faith, but also to bear witness to the transformative power of a new life suffused with hope and peace. Elevating their standard of living holds the promise of catalyzing positive ripple effects throughout the broader community and society at large. Likewise, the educational initiatives undertaken by the church aspire to cultivate upright and engaged citizens—first and foremost for the ecclesiastical realm, subsequently for the community, and ultimately for the nation.

It is the steadfast faith of each individual that serves as the catalyst for transformative change and enables the collective to confront and surmount the formidable challenges of contemporary society.

III. Result and Discussion

3.1 Analysis of the results of the new approach implemented

The Basic Ecclesial Community (CEB) of the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Analamaitso Church must be a living, mobile, skilful church that brings about change in society (cf. Figure 2). Its mission is to respond to the needs of the population of the Commune Urbaine de Mangatsiotra, given the poverty and chronic and acute malnutrition that are rife in the area.

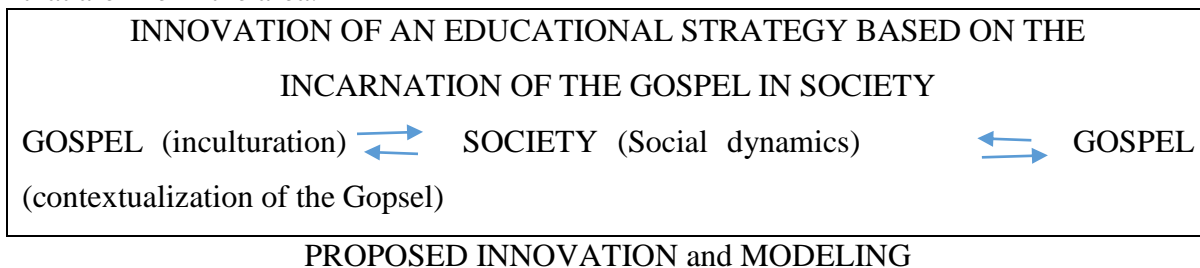


Figure 3. An educational strategy based on the incarnation of the Gospel in society

3.2 Towards holistic development

Following the reorientation of the approach, the evangelisation mission and the launch of a development process in the south-eastern part of the Grande Ile are already bearing fruit. Part of the local population, and especially the Ecclesial Base Community, has become more proactive and is beginning to feel responsible for the local development process, through efforts and the mobilisation of internal resources.

The local community and technicians have worked together to improve and develop the fencing of the "agricultural showcase", in particular by planting around a hundred fruit trees, including species presumed to be incompatible with the region, such as banana and papaya, using more advanced techniques.

The local authorities in Mangatsiotra recognise the importance of these development initiatives, particularly the impact of the education provided by the Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar's Sunday School. This approach, initiated by the FJKM in Mangatsiotra, seems to have been adopted by other parishes in the FJKM.

3.3 Empowering Sustainable Progress: Securing the Future of Transformational Endeavors

The pursuit of sustainability mechanisms extends beyond mere maintenance of attained outcomes; it encompasses a steadfast commitment to advancing further towards the program's objectives. This strategic imperative prioritizes the empowerment of local stakeholders, ensuring the enduring sustainability of both achievements and capabilities.

In the wake of the gradual disengagement of the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe, the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Analamaitso Basic Ecclesial Community transitioned into a parish under the auspices of the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana MANGATSIOTRA Church. Emerging as a nascent ecclesiastical entity within Mangatsiotra, this fledgling church, along with the broader community, fervently embraces its responsibility in fostering sustainable development endeavors. It is imperative to fortify the capacity of these two local communities, empowering them to perpetuate the project's trajectory and enhance envisioned outcomes through their concerted efforts.

IV. Conclusion

A review of the "top-down" approach during the first years of the actions initiated by the FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe enabled the approach to be rectified.

Often, the actions proposed did not correspond to the context or did not enjoy the support or ownership of the stakeholders and the local population. This is where the policy of empowering stakeholders and citizens comes in.

Three consecutive phases have been observed:

- An integration and trial phase from 2017 to 2018,
- A management transfer phase from 2019 to 2022, and
- A production and autonomy phase beyond 2023.

The amalgamation of the research-action methodology with the concept of "social faith" in the context of Mangatsiotra manifests as a pragmatic endeavor, harnessing the collective wisdom and experiential insights of all local development stakeholders and partners, including technicians and other esteemed contributors. Central to this approach is the cultivation of local ownership and comprehension of prevalent issues, fostering an inclusive engagement in resolving the social quandaries under scrutiny. Notably, certain local populations have transcended what Olivier De Sardan (1995) delineates as "assistencialism," epitomizing a shift towards empowered agency.

Education emerges as a cornerstone of the church's active contribution to the advancement of its local community. The purview of ecclesiastical education extends beyond pedagogy or formal schooling, encompassing holistic endeavors aimed at enhancing the human condition, rooted in Christian ethos, cultures, and values.

Enhanced local coordination of initiatives, often absent in donor or governmental interventions, holds the promise of yielding compelling outcomes (Olivier De Sardan, 1995). Furthermore, it is imperative to underscore the pivotal role of church mobilization in community life, facilitating an "ecosystem approach" that fosters holistic, participatory, and inclusive development endeavors, poised to effect transformative change on a global scale.

References

- Bergsma, J., & Pitre, B. (2018). *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Decary, R. (1964). *Monographie de la Région de Manakara*. Tananarive: Bulletin économique [de Madagascar].
- Durkheim, E. (2022). *Education et Sociologie*. Collection Quadrige. Paris: PUF.
- FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe. (2017). *Rapport de la mission exploratoire du district de Mangatsiotra, 01 – 05 Novembre 2017*. Document de travail.
- FJKM Ziona Fanantenana Ambatobe. (2019). *Projet de développement et d'évangélisation dans le district de Mangatsiotra: "approche missionnaire"*. Document de travail.
- Geiselmann, J. R. (1960). Les variations de la définition de l'Église chez Joh. Adam Möhler, particulièrement en ce qui concerne la relation entre l'Épiscopat et le Primat. *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 34(2-4), 141-195.
- https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Madagascar_Acute_Food_Insec_2022Nov2023Oct_Report_French.pdf consulté le 17/12/23
- <https://www.primature.gov.mg/cpgu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/ATLAS%20DE%20LA%20VULNERABILITE%20SECTORIELLE%20REGION%20VATOVAVY%20FITOVINANY.pdf>
- https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/mg_mef_monographie-region-vatovavy-fitovinany_2014.pdf
- IUCN. (2015). *Rapport de Synthèse de l'Atelier régional de partage d'expériences sur les approches de gestion intégrée des écosystèmes, Cotonou, du 6 au 8 mai 2015*.
- Jovelin, E., & Rarivomanantsoa, L. (2010). Opinion publique et bonne gouvernance à Madagascar - La représentations sociales. In J.-F. Marcel (Ed.), *L'Harmattan*. Paris: Chapitre V, pp. 85-95.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice-Hall.
- Le Boterf, G. (1983). La recherche-action: une nouvelle les relation entre experts et les acteurs sociaux ? *Pour*, 90, 39-47.
- Marcel, J.-F. (2002). Le concept de contextualisation: un instrument pour l'étude des pratiques enseignantes. *Revue Francaise de Pédagogie*, 138, 103-113.
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A Theory of Human Motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346>
- Miettinen, R. (2000). The concept of experiential learning and John Dewey's theory of reflective thought and action. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 19(1), 54-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/026013700293458>
- Monographie de Mangatsiotra Mars 2019*.
- Njoroge, F. W. (2019). *Processus de mobilisation de l'église et de la communauté-Manuel du facilitateur*. Tearfund.
- Olivier de Sardan, J.-P. (1995). *Anthropologie et développement, Essai en socio-anthropologie du changement social*. APAD; Karthala.
- PNUD. (2020). *Rapport sur le développement humain 2020*. Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement.
- Rajaonarimanana, N., & Fee, S. (1996). *Dictionnaire malgache dialectal-français: dialecte tandroy*. L'Asiathèque - maison des langues du monde.
- Ratzinger, J. (2005). *La foi chrétienne, hier et aujourd'hui*. Les Editions du Cerf.

- Roth, G. (2017). Le développement intégral doit inclure « le corps et l'âme », affirme le pape. Retrieved from <https://www.cath.ch/newsf/developpement-integral-inclure-corps-lame-affirme-pape/>
- Roy, M., & Prévost, P. (2013). La recherche-action origines, caractéristiques et implications son utilisation dans les sciences de la gestion. *Recherches qualitatives*, 32(2), 12-151. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1084625>
- Tearfund. (2018). Church and community mobilization in Africa. Retrieved from <https://learn.tearfund.org/-/media/learn/resources/tools-and-guides/2018-tearfund-la-Cours SEFALA et SAMM en 2019, Ambohitrahaba>.
- Webographic references