

## **CASE STUDY: ENGINEERING TRUST & RESILIENCE**

### **A BEHAVIORAL APPROACH TO PEER LEARNING**

- **Project:** ROSE (Renforcement de la Société Civile Émergente) – Peer Learning & Network Building Component
- **Client:** OXFAM Tunisia
- **Key Expertise:** Capacity Building / Organizational Psychology / Civic Engagement

# THE "PARTENAIRE RELAIS" ECOSYSTEM

Acronym	Region	Focus Area
<b>I WATCH</b>	Tunis	Transparency & Anti-Corruption: A well-established watchdog organization acting as a "locomotive" for the group.
<b>RAYHANA</b>	Jendouba	Women's Empowerment: Community development focused on female leadership in rural areas.
<b>FIDEL</b>	Gabès	Local Development & Youth: Focused on youth engagement and local governance.
<b>ADDCI</b>	Zarzis	Sustainable Development: Association for Sustainable Development and International Cooperation.
<b>AL BACIKAT</b>	Kébili	Environmental Protection: Focused on environmental advocacy and sustainable practices.

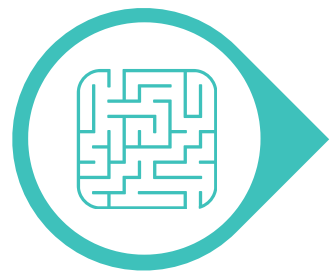
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Situation



The ROSE project aims to position emerging CSOs as drivers of rule of law and socio-economic progress. To achieve this, OXFAM sought to implement a "Peer Learning" methodology, moving away from vertical, top-down training toward a horizontal "Relay Partner" model where CSOs learn from each other. SRB & Co. was mandated to design and facilitate this transition.

## The Challenge



Our initial diagnosis revealed a critical "Readiness Gap." Trapped in the "Pre-Contemplation" stage of change, participants viewed collaboration with skepticism due to systemic competition for funding. Proceeding with a standard technical curriculum would have resulted in high attrition and the creation of "Empty Shells" - structures devoid of organic life or sustainability°.

## The Resolution



SRB & Co. executed a strategic "Behavioral Pivot." We moved from a "Training" logic to an "Inspiration & Trust" logic. Using Human-Centered Design (Interest Mapping) and Immersive Co-Creation (Edutainment), we built the psychological safety required for genuine exchange. The result was the organic emergence of the "Partenaire Relais" model and a spontaneous, participant-led governance workshop.

# CONTEXT & STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## The "Zero-Sum" Dynamic

Tunisian CSOs operate in a constrained civic space where the scarcity of international funding creates a structural "Zero-Sum" mentality. Organizations perceive knowledge sharing as a loss of competitive advantage rather than a collective asset. This **Systemic Disincentive** has historically resulted in a fragmented ecosystem where actors operate in silos, leading to duplication of efforts and the collapse of initiatives once donor funding cycles end.

The Challenge

## The "Partenaire Relais" Node

OXFAM commissioned SRB & Co. to solve this sustainability crisis by operationalizing the "Partenaire Relais" model. The objective was not merely capacity building, but **Systemic Architecture**: transforming individual CSOs into decentralized "nodes" of expertise capable of mentoring peers and mobilizing resources. The goal was to shift the ecosystem from a vertical dependency on donors to a horizontal, self-sustaining community of practice.

The Mandate



# **PHASE 1 – THE BEHAVIORAL DIAGNOSIS**



# METHODOLOGY – HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN (HCD)

## The "Person-First" Diagnostic: Beyond Organizational Capacity

To penetrate the professional armor of the participants, we deployed a radical **Interest Mapping Questionnaire (IMQ)**. Unlike standard capacity assessments that treat participants as data points, the IMQ mapped the individuals behind the logos—capturing personal passions, creative aspirations, and learning styles. This signaled to the cohort that the program was tailored to their human reality, not just their organizational output. This approach immediately established a **foundation of Relational Capital and reciprocity**, differentiating this intervention from standard, impersonal donor-driven trainings.

## Edutainment as a Mechanism for Flattening Hierarchy

We integrated Edutainment (Education + Entertainment) as a core pedagogical strategy to manage group dynamics. By incorporating theater and collective music into the Co-Creation Camp, we engineered **"Psychological Safety"**. These activities served to dissolve the rigid power asymmetries often found in the sector (e.g., between a large CSO like I WATCH and a smaller regional one). In these creative spaces, hierarchical posturing became impossible, allowing for authentic, **horizontal peer-to-peer dialogue** to emerge.

# BEHAVIORAL DIAGNOSIS – TRANS THEORETICAL MODEL (TTM)

## The Hypothesis vs. Reality

Standard capacity-building programs often fail because they operate on a **"one-size-fits-all" assumption**: that beneficiaries are in the "Action" stage, actively seeking new tools. However, our initial behavioral audit revealed a critical misalignment. The cohort was cognitively situated in the **"Pre-Contemplation" stage**.



## The "Pre-Contemplation" Trap

Participants **did not yet perceive peer learning as a strategic asset**. Instead, they viewed collaboration as a "nice-to-have" distraction from their operational survival. Introducing a technical curriculum at this specific cognitive stage would have triggered defense mechanisms (rejection/attrition) rather than adoption, resulting in wasted resources and "tick-the-box" compliance.

# STRATEGIC RECALIBRATING : FROM "TRAINING" TO "INSPIRATION"

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## De-Risking Execution through Adaptation

Leveraging the TTM insight, SRB & Co. executed a rapid Adaptive Management cycle. We recognized that proceeding with the original plan would lead to failure. Consequently, we paused the delivery of technical frameworks (the "How") to focus entirely on "**Consciousness Raising**" (the "Why").

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## Shifting the Intervention Logic

The strategy shifted **from Skill Transfer to Value Alignment**. We redesigned the initial phase to focus on inspiring the cohort about the survival value of collaboration in a shrinking civic space. This rigorous **calibration** ensured that we first built the psychological demand for the tools before supplying them, thereby securing the project's **long-term ROI** and **participant retention**.

# PHASE 2 – THE IMMERSIVE CO-CREATION CAMP: ENGINEERING TRUST

[Link to the After Movie](#)

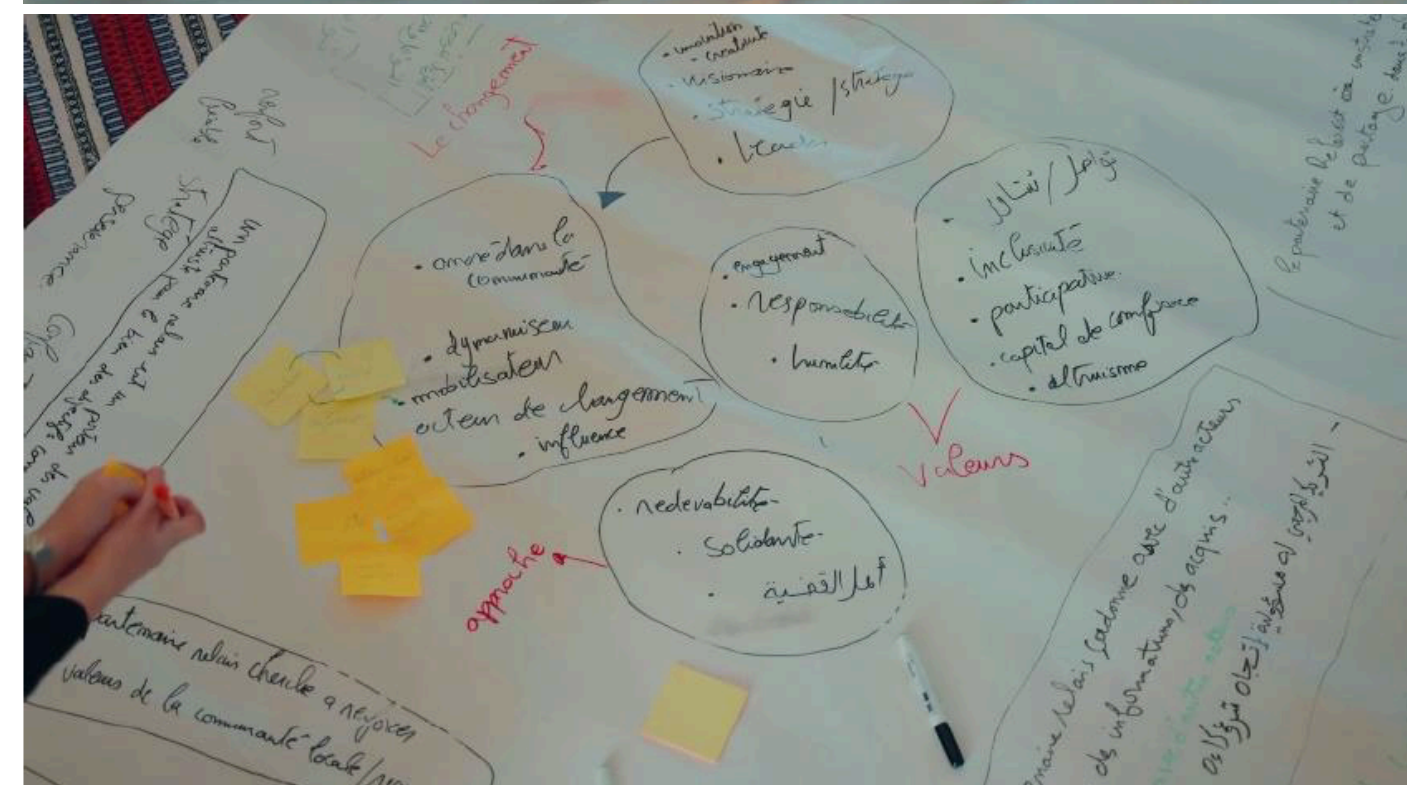
# DAY 1: "COLLABORATE" (DEFINING THE IDENTITY)

## The "Wallpaper Exercise": A Mechanism for Co-Definition

To operationalize the "Partenaire Relais" role, we utilized the "Wallpaper Exercise," a **collective visualization tool**. By physically mapping the role's functions on the floor, participants were forced to negotiate meaning in real-time. This tactile collaboration transformed the abstract concept into a concrete, shared identity defined by intermediation, community mobilization, and trust-building.

## The "Edutainment" Unlock: Flattening Hierarchy

By integrating **theater classes** and **collective songwriting**, we bypassed professional rigidities. When a Director and a Junior Officer are tasked with a creative challenge together, the formal hierarchy dissolves. This engineered "Psychological Safety" allowed for the first honest conversations about the structural inequalities and power asymmetries within their sector, laying the groundwork for genuine trust.



# DAY 2: "CO-CREATE" (DESIGNING THE MECHANISM)

## The Log Frame Co-Design Session

Building on the trust established on Day 1, the second day shifted focus to **structural design**. Participants were tasked with co-designing the Log Frame for their own future Restitution Workshop. Instead of SRB & Co. setting the agenda, the cohort negotiated roles, learning objectives, and outcomes. This was the critical moment of "Appropriation," where they stopped being attendees of an OXFAM project and **became the architects of their own network**.

## Agile Adaptation to Attrition

When faced with sudden participant attrition—a predictable reality in volatile civic spaces—we re-designed the workshop in real-time. Rather than forcing a rigid agenda on a smaller group, we doubled down on the committed core, turning the "crisis" into an opportunity to **deepen the bond** among the remaining "Champions" and validate their leadership.

# THE OUTCOME: WHAT'S A "PARTENAIRE RELAIS"

## From Abstract to Operational

The most critical intellectual output of the Co-Creation Camp was the cohort's own definition of the "Partenaire Relais" role. This process transformed an abstract concept into a **tangible, three-dimensional mandate** for a new kind of CSO leadership:



### **The Ecosystem Weaver**

Actively combats sector fragmentation. It takes ownership of mapping the local landscape, brokers access to resources, and serves as a trusted conduit for vital information, ensuring no actor is left isolated.



### **The Catalyst for Peer Learning**

Dismantles the "single expert" model by championing the mutual expertise that already exists within the network. It pioneers a culture of reciprocal knowledge exchange, connecting specific needs to the relevant peer who holds the solution.



### **The Architect of a Sustainable Legacy**

Ensures the project's gains endure beyond the funding cycle. It becomes a source of local intelligence and actively works to embed the tools, networks, and collaborative culture into the permanent fabric of the community.



# **PHASE 3 – RESTITUTION & SUSTAINABILITY**

# FROM GUIDED PRACTICE TO AUTONOMOUS ACTION



## The "Café Relais" Cycle

The primary challenge following any immersive camp is **sustaining momentum** once participants are geographically dispersed and consumed by their daily operational pressures. To bridge this critical gap, we immediately instituted the "Café & Partenaire Relais" sessions : **a cycle of four structured, online convenings**. These were not top-down trainings, but **peer-led learning circles** where CSOs rotated the responsibility of presenting "Best Practices." This structure embedded reciprocity into their remote interactions, successfully transforming the energy of a singular event into a sustainable, distributed habit of knowledge sharing.

## The Ultimate Validation: Spontaneous Collaboration

The definitive proof of the behavioral shift occurred without our facilitation. Unprompted by OXFAM or SRB & Co., the participants **self-organized a series of three virtual meetings** to design and prepare a half-day Governance Workshop. They independently assigned roles, took minutes (procès-verbal), and developed a full curriculum, including producing an animated video and a theater play to illustrate complex governance challenges. This emergent, **autonomous action** is the ultimate evidence that the cohort had transitioned from passive beneficiaries to active leaders.



# TURNING CRISIS INTO PROOF: THE MODEL'S ULTIMATE STRESS TEST

## The Test: 60% Participant Turnover

The Restitution Camp that took place two months after the first camp faced the ultimate stress test for any development project: a 60% participant turnover between the initial co-creation and the final restitution. The risk was a total reset, invalidating months of progress and trust-building. A standard, rigid intervention would have failed here. Instead, it became our most powerful proof point.

## The Proof: A Self-Regenerating System

We transformed this crisis into a live demonstration of the model's sustainability. The four original members were elevated **from participants to mentors**, embodying the "Partenaire Relais" role to induct the newcomers. We leveraged the assets they had co-created (the animated video and theater script) as institutional memory, allowing the new members to inherit the culture directly from their peers. This agile response proved that **SRB & Co. had not just trained a group of individuals; we had built a resilient, transferable system with its own capacity for regeneration.**

# THE LEGACY: THE CO-CREATED TOOLKIT

## The Mechanism for Sustainability

To ensure the project's longevity and create a replicable model, the final phase focused on empowering the cohort to codify their own learnings. The ultimate legacy is not a consultant report, but a Peer Learning Toolkit co-created entirely by the participants. This transforms their journey from a one-off project into a shareable resource for the wider Tunisian civil society.

## The "Secret Sauce": Distilling the Ingredients of Trust

This toolkit is not a technical manual; it is the "genetic code" of the network's success. It distills the essential behavioral ingredients that the cohort themselves identified as critical for effective peer learning:



**Solidarity**  
(Shared Purpose & Empathy)



**Willingness**  
(Intrinsic Desire vs. Coerced Participation)



**Team-Work**  
(Collaborative Spirit & Fair Workload Distribution)



# MEASURING THE MINDSET SHIFT: PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIALS



## From Project to Paradigm

*"I came to see this initiative not as a project, but as a vital methodology for ensuring the 'durability of the civic space.' It was a trial, an active process of 'conceptualizing' how we can survive and thrive while staying true to our values." - **Wael Fourati (IWATCH)***

## From Activity to Awareness

*"I became aware that 'peer-learning' is a distinct methodology, not just another workshop. While the structure was important at the beginning, I saw that the real key to success was our own commitment to the process." - **Mariem Zrouga (ADDCI)***

## From Skepticism to Advocacy

*"I'll be honest, I was skeptical at first; I thought, 'I didn't think that I will learn.' My biggest realization was how important it is to share information—even details you think are simple can be incredibly valuable to someone else." - **Khouloud Salhi (RAYHANA)***

# CONCLUSION : BUILDING SELF-SUSTAINING ECOSYSTEMS

## Behavioral Diagnosis as De-Risking Strategy

By applying academic frameworks like the Transtheoretical Model, **we de-risk donor investments.** We avoid the critical development error of "training people who aren't ready to listen," ensuring resources are deployed at the point of maximum impact.

## Trust as an Engineered Outcome

Through **Human-Centered Design** and **Edutainment**, we build the psychological foundations and flatten the power asymmetries that are required for any technical cooperation to succeed. We create the human conditions for collaboration to emerge organically.

## Autonomy as the Ultimate Metric

**Our goal is our own obsolescence.** The fact that the network became self-organizing and created its own tools is the ultimate measure of success. This proves that we don't just build projects; we catalyze self-sustaining movements.