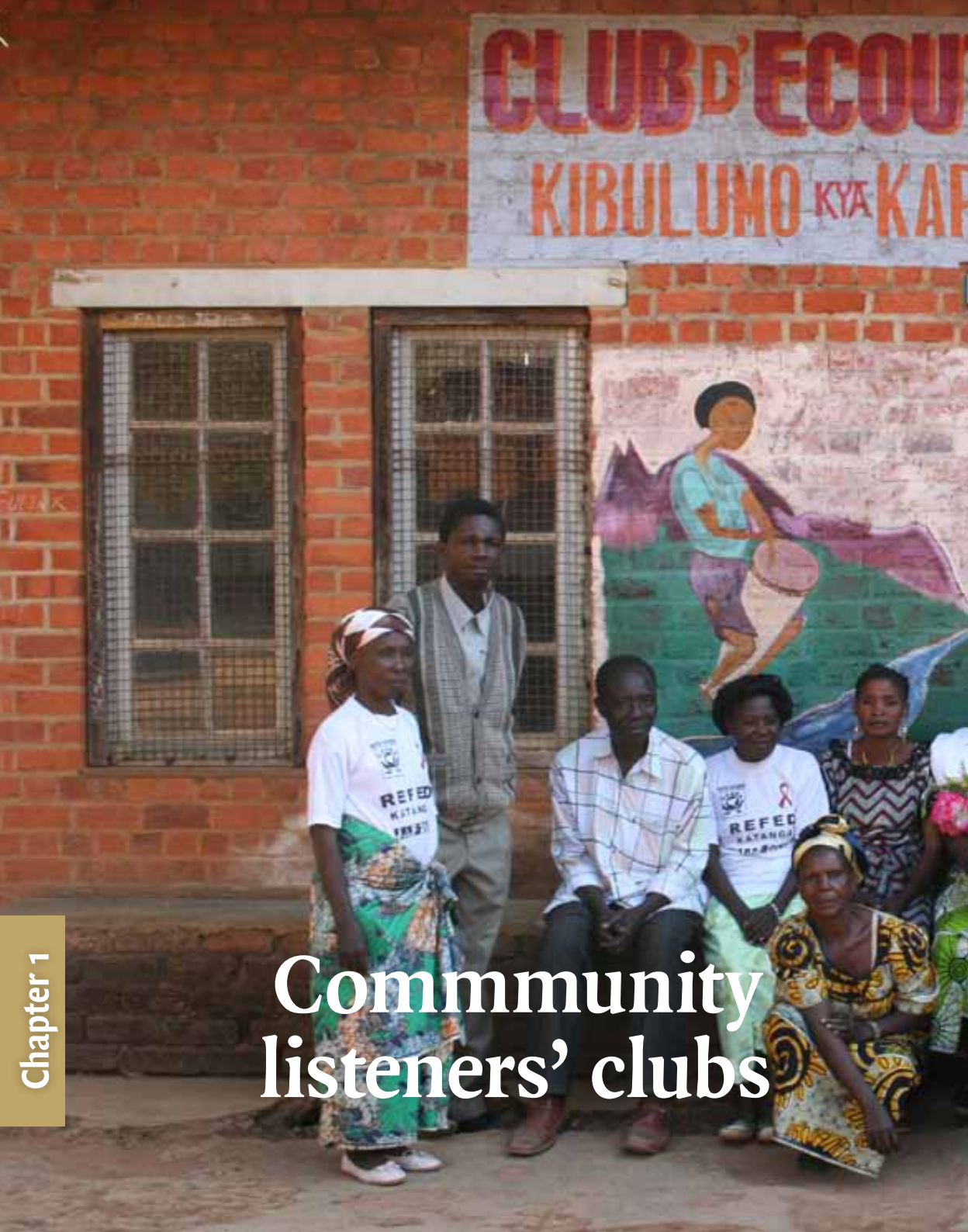


CLUB D'ECOU

KIBULUMU KYA KAD



Community listeners' clubs

**TEKIKI
POLOVE**



What they are, why they have been set up, how they work and, most important, the results that they have achieved.

This first chapter takes a close look at the community listeners' clubs.

“The last radio broadcast that I listened to? It talked about a real-life case: in a village, a young girl of 11 was going to be given in marriage even though she was still at school. In the first instance, there was an attempt to make the parents understand that it would be more sensible to let the child continue her education. Villagers also contacted the local authorities so they could give their viewpoint. People from other villages then reacted, using the mobile phones of the listeners’ clubs to recount their past experiences. Here, the effect was even more striking: it was all taking place there and then and the radio was having a direct impact.”

MOCTARE, ONG VIE KANDE NI BAYRA | NIGER

These words describe a radio broadcast aired as part of the community listeners’ club project in Niger, capturing in just a few phrases the importance and strength of these clubs.

The power of information and of using rural and community radio for development is well known. Radio is a media that can reach highly dispersed rural communities and be a tool for education, awareness-raising and agricultural extension, as well as a means of diffusing information and entertainment.

Perhaps less well known is the use of community radio as a participatory media for information and communication that focuses on action. This was the idea behind the community listeners’ clubs set up several years ago by the FAO-Dimitra project and its local partners in Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Did you say “listeners’ clubs”?

Inspired by the radio-clubs set up in the 1990s, today’s community listeners’ clubs go way beyond collective listening: they offer a mechanism for opening up dialogue and a tool for empowering rural communities.

The clubs are spaces that stimulate mobilisation, dialogue, sharing of experiences, collaboration and above all action among men and women stakeholders in development. Community rural radio is the preferred media channel for disseminating information and facilitating communication, sometimes together with mobile telephones (as in Niger). As a result, the listeners’ clubs become a catalyst for exchanging experiences, for expressing opinions on the information delivered and for taking decisions on how to act.

Why these clubs?

In a general sense, community listeners’ clubs seek to improve access to information in rural areas, especially for women, and to empower them.

What is a community listeners’ club?

A community listeners’ club is “a group of men and women who wish to listen to radio programmes actively and systematically with a view to discussing the content and above all putting into practice the lessons learned”.

– definition agreed on by participants at a workshop organized in 2008 by FAO-Dimitra in Lubumbashi (DRC), in preparation for the creation of new clubs.

Their goal ties in with both the FAO mandate (fighting hunger and malnutrition) and its strategic objectives linked to food, agriculture and gender equality in access to resources, goods, services and decision-making. Their objective closely matches the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), in particular “reducing by half extreme poverty and hunger” (MDG 1), “promoting gender equality and empowering women” (MDG 3) and “combating HIV/AIDS and other diseases” (MDG 6).

Striving for gender equality is an important prerequisite for viable and sustainable rural development. A strong awareness of gender is woven into all the clubs’ activities and much importance is given to strengthening the visibility of women and their ability to take part in decision-making. This approach is not therefore focused on women, but on the relations between men and women, with strong emphasis on encouraging the involvement of men and on the expression of the respective needs of women and men. Both play an active and equal role in the life of the community listeners’ clubs.

Their internal organization

Whether made up of women, men or both, the listeners’ clubs encourage their members to express needs and expectations in their daily lives, while radio is a channel to offer responses, either through the comments of an expert, or by broadcasting discussions which develop within the clubs. In this sense, community or rural radio is a media that is produced by and for local people.

It is not a question of knowledge being transmitted “one way” or “top-down” by a media or an institution to a community, but rather of knowledge that results from the exchange of participants or from discussions conducted by the community itself. Community listeners’ clubs therefore differ from groups of listeners organized into ‘radio clubs’, where there are usually more men than women and interaction with the radio is inexistent, except to create a ‘fan club’.

Thanks to the active participation of their members, the clubs become citizens’ groups where men



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Internal functioning of the community listeners' clubs



and women share their concerns and needs, obtain information that would otherwise be inaccessible and undertake joint action.

Their internal functioning varies according to the context and country, but it generally follows this pattern:

1. Identification of a subject/theme

Listeners' club members discuss their particular development priorities and choose themes they want to investigate in more detail. This process and the discussions that follow are facilitated by leaders, often women, who have been chosen and trained for this role.

2. Producing the programme

Once the theme has been chosen, the community or rural radio is contacted and the programme prepared by the radio staff. Radio stations also receive specific training to help them fulfil their role as a channel for discussion and provide the best possible response to the process as it develops. They deal with the selected issue so as to provide a response to the request made.

3. Active listening

The programme is broadcast and active listening can begin. Listening methods may vary (group, individual, live/prerecorded, etc.).

4. Dialogue and discussion

Discussions are organized within clubs and with other clubs, with local authorities and all other stakeholders. Support from an outside woman or man expert is sometimes offered, for example in discussions of themes such as HIV/AIDS, nutrition, agricultural inputs, etc. The radio records and broadcasts the exchanges to fuel the discussions.

5. Decision-making

Discussion and dialogue lead to decisions for taking action.

6. Finding means of action

Members investigate means of action (human and financial resources, partnerships, etc.).

7. Actions

The actions planned are put into practice.

8. Feeding back the experiences

The experience, including the results, difficulties and successes, are documented and restituted to the communities.

COMMUNITY LISTENERS' CLUBS IN FIGURES (April 2011)



Niger

- Implementation: ONG VIE Kande Ni Bayra, through its network of literacy training centres.
- 398 active clubs, of which 281 are exclusively female, 105 male and 12 mixed, with a total of 7,698 members (5,704 women and 1,994 men).
- 112 villages involved in 2 regions in the west and south of the country: Tillabéri (departments of Téra and Kollo) and Dosso (departments of Dosso, Gaya and Loga); nearly 27,000 people indirectly touched.
- 280 women leaders and 100 men leaders identified and trained.
- 9 community radio stations: Téra, Bankilaré, Dolbel, Dantchandou, Kiota, Garantchéday, Gaya, Falwal and Tanda.
- 304 solar and wind-up radios distributed, as well as 100 mobile telephones equipped with solar chargers.
- 20 radio reporting kits.

Technical and funding support: FAO-Dimitra with co-funding from UNDP, UNIFEM, UNFPA and the Canadian International Development Agency.

Democratic Republic of Congo

South Kivu

- Implementation: Samwaki, Sauti ya Mwanamke Kijijini, through its network.
- 9 federations of clubs, each with up to 900 members (of whom 400-500 are women), with a total of about 8,000 members.
- 8 rural territories in the province of South Kivu.
- 5 community radio stations: Radio Maendeleo (Bukavu); Radio Mitumba (Uvira); Radio Mutanga (Shabunda); Radio APIDE (Mwenga) and Radio Bubusa FM (Mugogo).
- 45 solar and wind-up radios distributed.
- 5 radio reporting kits (dual cassette radios, digital recorders).
- 10 mobile telephones.
- 1 bicycle.

Katanga

- Implementation: REFED-Katanga, Réseau Femme et Développement au Katanga.
- 7 active clubs, each with 30-60 members (most of them women).
- Territories of Kasumbalesa and Kapolowe (District of Haut-Katanga) and Mutshatsha (District of Lwalaba).
- 4 community radio stations: Vespera, Voice of Hope (Kasumbalesa); RTCM, Radio-tele communautaire Mutshatsha (Mutshatsha); Paradoxe (Kasumbalesa) and RCK-Likasi (Likasi).
- 57 solar and wind-up radios distributed.
- 8 mobile telephones distributed.
- 5 recorders.

Technical and funding support in the DRC: FAO-Dimitra, King Baudouin Foundation and GTZ-Santé.



Some results

In a short time, the listeners' clubs have developed at a remarkable rate, surpassing all expectations, becoming valuable spaces for expression and action. The numerous and diverse results recorded so far reflect changes – at times slight and at other times radical – in the behaviour, practices and perceptions of rural communities. These include:

Access to information and knowledge

Radio waves can convey the knowledge required to satisfy certain needs, even in the most remote rural communities. The benefits linked to information and knowledge acquired through radio and exchanges are extremely varied: improved knowledge of rights (in order to be able to claim them more effectively) and awareness-raising on themes that closely affect communities – agricultural productivity, horticulture, access to land and water, HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, environmental degradation, farming and livestock rearing, etc.

Changes in agricultural practices

Thematic discussions and listening to radio programmes generate new knowledge. Dialogue, information and knowledge sharing have a direct impact on changes in agricultural practices. Clubs promote the exchange of knowledge, information and techniques; they prompt reflection – and hence change – involving all actors in the community, both women and men, on questions relating to land access, crop cultivation practices and solutions to problems.

A window on the world

The listeners' clubs provide an opening to the world outside the rural community. Information and communication enable villagers to discover their region, the surrounding villages, local groups and officials, etc. These encounters act as a first step towards local synergies and partnerships.

Self-confidence and women leadership

A feature often mentioned by observers in the field is the remarkable increase in the self-confidence of the women members of the listeners' clubs, who take up their role as participants in their own right in village life.

What do the clubs talk about?

In Niger, as in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the clubs have chosen to deal with different themes, covering a wide range of issues:

- Food security and nutrition, HIV/AIDS, hygiene and sanitation, health, as well as more technical themes such as animal and plant health, horticulture, crops for the lean season, environmentally-friendly fertilisers, input supply outlets and warrantage (a credit system and tool for food security);
- Women's access to land and water, to information, to education, to local decision-making authorities, democracy, governance, a culture of peace, sexual/marital violence, early marriage of girls, human rights.

Speaking in public helps to empower them and increase their confidence. Men hear their wives on the radio and are proud of them. Not only do they express themselves, but they are listened to. Their place in society changes and the whole community becomes aware of the value of participating in the development process.

Solidarity and dialogue

Differences can be resolved through dialogue and exchange of opinions, sometimes involving people who do not normally speak to each other or who have an on-going dispute. So listeners' clubs are also 'clubs of mutual understanding', and can stimulate collaboration and strengthen dialogue and solidarity. Clubs can prompt discussions of taboo subjects, such as those linked to sexual violence or HIV/AIDS. With radio as the intermediary, dialogue can be established in and between communities, helping to overcome disinformation, prejudice and harmful traditional beliefs.

Collaboration and social mobilisation

The community listeners' clubs promote collaboration and social mobilisation between development actors. Listeners' club members become aware of their role as citizens with rights and duties in their community, and of the importance of getting organized, of joining together to have greater scope for taking action and changing their environment.

Organizing and listening capacities

At an institutional level, villagers must make their club work in a democratic way. This obligation strengthens the need for consensus and listening, as well as organizational capacities. In their search for common ground that will lead to action, listeners' club members strengthen their capacity to listen to the opinions of other actors – both men and women.

Pleasure in being together

This aspect is often forgotten, yet the simple pleasure of spending time together and listening to each other is a crucial factor in the success of the listeners' clubs.

