

Conclusion

Since their establishment, the community listeners' clubs have enjoyed a massive boom and engendered great enthusiasm, especially among rural communities, but also with local and national institutions and development partners.

They have gradually proved themselves to be an effective means for isolated rural communities to access information and engage in participatory communication, becoming stepping stones for action. As for development partners, they have quickly seized the potential offered by the listeners' clubs, both as a means of empowering rural communities and as a lever for change. They have seen the results achieved in various sectors, including the economic, technical, social and political fields and their impact on the perceptions, behaviour and sense of ownership of the communities.

The experience of the community listeners' clubs is unique, in the sense that they have rapidly had an indisputable effect on the life of people, especially women, who have been assigned a pro-active role in the development of their community and have received recognition for it too. Their success underscores the importance in development initiatives of mechanisms that focus on people, information, communication and exchanges and therefore on human values.

Furthermore, the listeners' clubs promote a form of action which, like "all forms of collective action can be an effective means of building social capital and addressing gender gaps in other areas as well, through reducing transactions costs, pooling risks, developing skills and building confidence" (FAO Report on the State of Food and Agriculture, 2010-2011).⁵





The considerable potential of the community listeners' clubs should be exploited so as to help improve nutrition and food security and strengthen the capacities of women and men to make their voices heard. It is important to promote their progressive development, taking care to include them in the global development context, by creating partnerships and synergies with development initiatives.

Another issue that is key to the development of listeners' clubs is the participation of young people of both sexes. It should be remembered that in Africa, 60% of the population is under 25 (UNFPA, 2008) and that young people are rarely at the centre of agricultural development activities or represented in civil society organizations. Listeners' clubs could serve as stepping stones to achieve greater visibility for young people, stimulate discussion on issues that

are important for them and strengthen their participation in the development of their community.

Participatory development will involve the use of innovative measures to strengthen the empowerment of rural communities, especially women, and narrow the divide between men and women. In this sense, the community listeners' clubs have an original role to play, not just in encouraging access to information for as many people as possible, but also serving as a framework for a form of collective and participatory involvement in development projects and programmes, while enabling isolated communities to take better advantage of new information and communication technologies.

Notes

- 1 Data from the following documents: UNDP, 2010. Human Development Report. The Real Wealth of Nations: Pathways to Human Development; UNICEF, Niger 2008. State of Women & Children; SDRP, 2007. Accelerated Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy; National Gender Policy, Niger, 2008.
- 2 Project “Listeners’ clubs for the empowerment and leadership of rural women and youth attending literacy training centres”, with the support of FAO-Dimitra, the Canadian Embassy in Niger (FAES), UNFPA, UNDP, UNIFEM, Swiss Development Corporation, BTC, Belgian Technical Corporation.
- 3 The Knowledge Share Fair, organized by the FAO Knowledge Management and Gender programme, of which FAO-Dimitra is a member, took place in Niamey from 15 to 17 June 2010.
- 4 FAO-Dimitra, 2011. Communicating Gender for Rural Development – First step, Analysing the context and the subject, p. 52-58.
- 5 FAO, 2011. The State of Food and Agriculture (SOFA 2010-2011). Women in Agriculture. Closing the gender gap for development, page 60.





To find out more

The experience of the FAO-Dimitra project with community listeners' clubs

- FAO-Dimitra website: workshop reports and various publications
www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-workshops/en
www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-publications/en
- FAO-Dimitra Newsletter (a number of articles in issues 12 to 19)
www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-publications/newsletter/en
- FAO-Dimitra, 2011. Communicating gender for rural development. Integrating gender in communication for development.
www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-publications/publications/en

Community rural radios

- FAO, International Workshop on Farm Radio Broadcasting, 2001.
www.fao.org/sd/2001/radio
- Special Issue n° 8: Plaidoyer pour l'appui des radios locales de service aux communautés en Afrique de l'Ouest. Guide à l'intention des ONG et des bailleurs de fonds. Edited by Stéphane Boulc'h (COTA) with the Panos Institute West Africa, December 2008. In French only
www.cota.be/SPIP/IMG/pdf/Hors-Serie_8.pdf

FAO-Dimitra Project



21 rue Brederode
B-1000 Brussels
Belgium
tel : +32 2 549 03 10
fax : +32 2 549 03 14
dimitra@dimitra.org
www.fao.org/dimitra



This publication summarises the unique experience of the community listeners' clubs set up in Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo by FAO-Dimitra and its partners. These action-based information and communication processes have proved so successful that Dimitra decided to share the experience.

The first chapter offers a brief overview of the community listeners' clubs, their goals and internal functioning and the results achieved. The second chapter tells the story of the listeners' clubs in the words of the stakeholders, explaining how they were established in the two countries. The third chapter sets out more practical guidelines on the stages involved in creating community listeners' clubs.