



Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPEMENT

NEWSLETTER N° 3 – BRUSSELS, SEPTEMBER 1999

FAO *High Level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, Rome 4-6 October 1999*

FAO is organising a High Level Consultation in Rome from 4 to 6 October with a view to improving information for decision-makers, the media and the public at large on the essential role of rural women in agricultural development and their contribution to food security. Emphasis will be laid on the need to obtain and supply accurate information and on the importance of the dissemination strategies needed to convince planners and policy makers to formulate policies towards strengthening the input of rural women. The Consultation will also be an opportunity for a better understanding of the information needs of decision-makers and the media so as to enhance and improve the quality of the information on rural women's contribution to agriculture. This is essential if women are to be better taken into account in economic and social development plans.

Some 300 participants are expected to attend: Ministers of Agriculture and Ministers of Equal Opportunities (or the equivalent) from the 176 FAO member countries,

representatives from the media, NGOs and the UN agencies concerned, as well as information and communication experts and specialists.

The Consultation will be based on the debates of the three major protagonists – data-producers, political decision-makers and communication professionals. This meeting will be enhanced by the contributions of specialists in the information and communication fields and, of course, by the experience of those who work on gender issues.

Two panel discussions will be held during the Consultation, one dealing with the importance of improved information for gender-responsive policies and planning, and the other focusing on the need to ensure the generation and dissemination of gender-specific information. Emphasis will be laid on the necessary methods and means for producing and communicating information on rural women and the role of the media will be particularly stressed. The Consultation will be structured around the questions raised by the gathering on

the processing of relevant information and its transmission through communication channels reaching as wide a public as possible, the rural women themselves.

The High Level Consultation on Rural Women and Information is part of the overall strategy for implementing the Plan of Action of the World Food Summit and the FAO Plan of Action for Women in Development.

FAO already has several achievements to its credit in the field of information on rural women, one of which is the Dimitra Project. The overall results have been partial, however, and it is essential to recognise the tremendous importance of information and to encourage the development of networks and partnerships working on the gathering, exchange and sharing of information. □

*Marie Randriamamonjy
Chief, Women in Development Service (SDWW)
FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations*

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foreword

*Dear Readers and Friends,
We are delighted to welcome an ever-growing readership. Thank you for your letters and suggestions, which are always most useful. In the present issue we present the FAO High Level Consultation on Rural Women and Information, which is to be held in Rome from 4 to 6 October. The main issues to be discussed at the Consultation are detailed in the editorial of the present Newsletter, which also contains further presentations of our local partners in Africa and the Near East – more specifically, CARDNE (Jordan), PRODDER (South Africa) and ZWRN (Zimbabwe). And on the last page of this issue you will find a summary of the particulars of all of our partners. We also present this year's winner of the King Baudouin International Prize for Development, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, chaired by Mrs Asma Jahangir.*

In a different vein, the Gambian NGO BAFROW describes its strategy for fighting female genital mutilation in the Gambia.

The FAN, our partner in the project for East Africa, informs us of the unconventional methods used by GADECE (a Kenyan NGO) to promote literacy amongst women and to boost their empowerment through awareness of their rights. In the field of information and networks, the report of a SARDC conference on ways and means of strengthening networks and partnerships in southern Africa evaluates the criteria for the efficient running of exchange activities and information-sharing. And, finally, we give you a calendar of the forthcoming conferences as well as news in brief. We hope you will all enjoy the Newsletter! □

*Join us on our Dimitra website:
<http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>*



FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

In this issue, we would like to introduce you to three more partner organisations of the Dimitra Project.

They are based in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Jordan and have started the information collection in their respective sub-regions.

The following articles will tell you more about their activities, objectives and goals.

our partners

PRODDER

Programme for Development Research

The Programme for Development Research (PRODDER) at the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in South Africa is a Southern African development information medium which collects and disseminates information on Southern African development issues and role-players.

■ PRODDER's mission

It is PRODDER's mission to provide an appropriate, comprehensive and dynamic development information service to people and organisations. To this end PRODDER utilises various mediums in collecting and disseminating development information. Established in 1987, PRODDER has gained recognition throughout Southern Africa, as well as internationally, as a reliable source of information on the region's development issues and role-players. These organisations and institutions do not only utilise PRODDER's development information services, but PRODDER collects information on their activities on a continuous basis for inclusion in PRODDER publications and databases.

■ PRODDER and the Dimitra Project

Since 1 April 1999 PRODDER is responsible for compiling information on 8 Southern African countries (Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa and Zambia) in support of the African extension and implementation of the Dimitra project.

PRODDER's efforts complement the work done by Enda-Pronat in West Africa, FAN in East Africa, CARDNE in the Near East, POSDEV in English-speaking West Africa, CREDIF in North Africa, IRED in the Sahelian countries and ZWRN in Zimbabwe.

On 6 April 1999 PRODDER sent an e-mail message to about 3000 subscribers of the e-PRODDER-mail electronic newsletter, informing them of the Dimitra project and requesting them to forward their contact details to PRODDER in support of the distribution of the project's questionnaire.

More than 800 questionnaires have already been distributed and by the end of June 1999 38 completed questionnaires had been returned to PRODDER.

During June 1999 PRODDER also facilitated a 1-week contact visit to South Africa for the Coordinator of the Dimitra project. The visit enabled her to inform major role-players of the project and to get their support in this regard. While in South Africa, she met with representatives from 28 organisations involved with rural and women's issues, e.g. Rural Women's Movement, Com-

mission on Gender Equality, African Gender Institute and Gender Advocacy Programme. During August and October 1999 representatives of PRODDER will undertake research visits to the Southern African countries which are part of PRODDER's responsibility. These visits will be used to publicise the Dimitra project and to collect information for inclusion in the project database.

■ The South African Development Directory

In November 1999 PRODDER will publish the new edition of its biennial development directory which focuses on Southern African development organisations. Given the geographical focus and contents of this project, the Dimitra project will directly and indirectly benefit from PRODDER's information-generating efforts in this regard.

In view of the vast development needs and challenges facing Southern Africa, PRODDER has not only a critical and important role to play in disseminating information in support of regional development efforts, but this situation also has the potential to further widen the scope and nature of PRODDER's activities. The successful implementation and completion of the Dimitra project will therefore make an important contribution to achieving these objectives. □

If your organisation is located in Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, South Africa or Zambia and you would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook, please get in touch with PRODDER at the address below. They will send you a Dimitra questionnaire.

PRODDER

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ZWRCN

Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network

The Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network is an NGO working in the area of Gender and Development (GAD). It was established in 1990 by a group of women with the main objective of enhancing the position of women in Zimbabwe through the collection and dissemination of materials and information on GAD issues.

■ Networking in Gender and Development

Since its inception the ZWRCN has established contacts with women's organisations, NGOs, research institutions and community-based organisations (CBOs) working in the area of Gender and Development.

The ZWRCN has also established a database which links people within the same area of interest. It is therefore quite a natural extension that ZWRCN is involved with the Dimitra project in trying to establish contacts with organisations working in the area of gender and rural development. This exercise will not only strengthen ZWRCN's networks but will also ensure a much wider outreach in the provision of gendered information to women at community level. At ZWRCN we believe that information is a means of enabling women to make informed choices on issues that affect their lives. Therefore one of ZWRCN's main activities is the collection and distribution of information. To date our Documentation Centre has over 5000 pieces of information on issues of women, gender and development, as well as a comprehensive collection of periodicals.

The strength of our collection lies in the fact that it has a wealth of unpublished or grey literature. Documents which have formed the basis of presentations, speeches or even desk studies and literature reviews, but which are either lost at the bottom of a drawer or under an ever-growing pile of books and papers. We try to make these documents available to our users in a systematic way. They are accessed by very vigorous acquisition strategies that are undertaken by all our staff and board members both nationally, regionally and internationally.

It is hoped that through the process of administering the Dimitra questionnaire ZWRCN will be able to locate some of this "lost" information and make it available to its users.

■ Strategies

Another major aim of ZWRCN is to initiate debates on Gender and Development issues. Diverse strategies are used to do this. One of the fora that has proved to be most successful is gender and development talks. These are held once or twice a month on topical issues or to profile an issue that needs some urgent action or follow-up. The aim of these talks is to provide a space for the Zimbabwean public to come together and discuss gender and development issues. We believe that these fora can be used to strategically take up and further explore any issues that are raised through the process of information acquisition for the Dimitra Guidebook.

As we approach the new millennium gender equity and justice are becoming increasingly important.

A service that ZWRCN offers is the provision

If your organisation is located in Zimbabwe and you would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook, please get in touch with ZWRCN at the address below. They will send you a Dimitra questionnaire.

ZWRCN

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of gender awareness and gender integration training for organisations. Furthermore ZWRCN facilitates research on current gender issues as well as on areas where there are identified information gaps.

■ Gender and Technology

In the last edition of the Dimitra Newsletter the project announced its new Website. Technology has certainly opened up a whole new world for the privileged few who are able to access it. At ZWRCN we are very aware of this; in harsh economic times women are struggling to keep their families above water and technology is furthest from their minds. Furthermore, technology has always been a male preserve and this needs to be challenged.

ZWRCN is in the process of establishing an Internet cafe for women. It is hoped that through this initiative women will be able to access technology in an unthreatening environment and it is hoped that women's groups/clubs, who do not have the means to purchase expensive equipment will also be able to access this service. ZWRCN is also in the process of designing a webpage and perhaps we can keep you updated on its progress!

■ Who benefits?

- Policy makers, implementers and researchers. We also assist them in ensuring that gender issues are addressed.
- Women at community level through the provision of engendered information.

■ What can you do?

- You can become a friend of the organisation and subscribe to the news bulletin. This will keep you up to date on the activities and publications of the ZWRCN and of interesting gender issues in general.
- You can ask to be included in our database, which links people with similar interests.
- You can become a member of our book review team.
- You can inform us about any interesting gender issues within your area of expertise. □

CARDNE

The Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East

CARDNE is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation with an independent legal capacity. It was created on the initiative of member states working through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to promote agrarian reform and rural development by identifying local needs and working with the people of the Near East to formulate appropriate responses. The member states of CARDNE are Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen and Tunisia.

CARDNE achieves its objectives through a variety of activities including the following:

- conducting and promoting research on various aspects of agrarian reform and rural development;
- holding consultative conferences which allow officials, researchers, planners, executives and local community representatives to exchange ideas and experiences and to identify opportunities for mutually beneficial joint efforts;
- organising regional and national training courses in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects;
- providing consultative expertise, technical support, and liaison services to national services and to other relevant organisations;
- serving as a databank for information on agrarian reform and rural development including dissemination, translation, and promotion of relevant information.

CARDNE's programme of work for 1998-1999 included activities in the following fields:

■ Regional Activities

These activities are organised by CARDNE in Amman, mainly with participants from the CARDNE member states, although sometimes there are also participants from non-member states.

Training of Trainers on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

This is one of several workshops organised by CARDNE on the PRA methodology. The workshop aimed at training of trainers from Jordan, Syria and Egypt on the different

tools of PRA. At the end of this workshop a guidebook on PRA was produced, which has been used as a draft guidebook in the regional workshop held in July 1999.

Methods of Local Communities' Participation in Assessing their Developmental Needs

This workshop aimed to train participants from Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Tunisia on methods for assessing the developmental needs of local communities in a participatory perspective and of considering the problems and developmental needs of the community as viewed by its members.

■ National Activities

These activities are organised at the national level: each of the CARDNE member states organises a workshop or other activity concerning certain aspects of rural

If your organisation is located in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria or Yemen and you would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook, please get in touch with CARDNE at the address below. They will send you a Dimitra questionnaire.

CARDNE

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development. The activities are sponsored and supervised by CARDNE, and at the end of each activity a report is submitted to CARDNE. In 1998/1999 these activities included:

- A workshop on "Methods of Implementing Rural Development Programmes through Training and Educational Institutions" (Syria);
- A workshop on "Youth and Rural Development" which was organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and the Near East Foundation (Jordan).

■ Studies and Research

- A Review Study on "Land Tenure Legislation, Organisation and Operations in some countries of the Near East and North Africa".

This study was started in the second half of 1998 in collaboration with FAO. It aims to enhance the role of organisations and improve their performance in achieving the objectives of sustainable rural and agricultural development. The study covered 5 countries – Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen and Egypt – and was finalised and published in April 1999.

■ Participation in the Dimitra Project

As of May 1999, CARDNE has become a partner organisation of the DIMITRA Project, Rural Women and Development. CARDNE believes that the goals of the project meet CARDNE's objectives, which seek to improve the living conditions of rural people, and of rural women in particular. The project will enhance communication and dialogue between CARDNE and other rural development organisations in the region and will facilitate the exchange of expertise and information.

CARDNE collects information on NGOs, research institutes and information centres working with rural women in seven countries of the Near East, i.e. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. It has assigned focal points in each of these countries, which have set up a list of the organisations to be contacted and are distributing the questionnaire and information on the project to those organisations. *(continued on page 5)*

KENYA: GADECE

Gender and Development Centre

GADECE began as a Kenya Women's Literature Group. After a few years it changed status to that of a national NGO due to demand from the affiliated women's groups. They wanted the organisation to work with them in all areas of development and not just literature.

Two project examples:

■ **Women's literacy training through the pleasure of reading**

GADECE first advertised for short creative stories and folktales, requesting the women and girls to write the stories in the language in which they were most comfortable. They received over two thousand stories which took a year to review. There were volunteers ready to read and translate the stories into either English or Kiswahili. They selected the best 10 stories and published them in an anthology of short stories: 'Why a hyena has a crooked neck', 'The mother of girls and other stories', etc. They have also translated these stories into several Kenyan languages.

GADECE has contact members in several Kenyan districts. At least once a year these women leaders go out and hold women's reading days when women tell stories, sing, dance and share experiences. Learning to read and write is stimulated through the pleasure of gaining access to one's own culture. This is a very popular project, which also publishes a quarterly magazine called *Leso-Khanga*. The women leaders have home libraries where members can go and read or borrow books and magazines, and

the books are also being read in schools.

■ **Empowerment of women through the awareness of their legal rights**

The Legal Rights Awareness Creation project commenced in 1997 with a training course for 25 women group leaders as trainers from Nyando Division in Nyanza Province with funding from DFID and the British Council. The project has a staff of four, one of whom is a lawyer.

The 25 women were trained as paralegal or legal educators then sent back to their division. Nyando division has six locations so there were four paralegals per location, one larger location having five. These women chose fifty women as participants per location and held several 1-day seminars in their locations to train the fifty women on their legal rights using a small manual written in the local language. Two months later the project held 6 workshops in a secondary school in the division for 4 days running from 8.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. and attracting over 300 women. The workshops were so well attended that by the fourth day there were over 500 female participants; the organisers were

quite overwhelmed. The women gave testimonies of their experiences and it was amazing to see the kind of response the activity elicited.

One of the paralegals said how after the training course she was empowered enough to be able to go to the capital city – Nairobi – to collect her dead son's benefits from the Department of Defence (where he was working before he died). Since then many women have benefited a great deal and a week hardly passes without a woman with problems coming to the project offices to seek advice. The project has proved to be very successful and has created a very positive impact and quiet determination in the community. □

For further information please contact:

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All of the information on Near East organisations gathered in this way will thus appear in the *Dimitra Guidebook for Africa and the Near East*, to be published in the year 2000. Prior to that date, the data will be accessible through the Internet.

■ **Activities in preparation**

At present, CARDNE is preparing the following activities:

- A regional workshop on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) which will take place in late 1999, and will be funded by the FAO. Following this workshop, a comprehensive guidebook on PRA methodology will be produced.
- A regional workshop on Sustainable Development and Environment in

September 1999. This is a joint activity with the Centre International de Hautes Etudes Agronomiques Méditerranéennes, CIHEAM (International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies) based in Montpellier, France.

- A regional workshop on the Integration of Environmental Concepts in Sustainable Rural and Agricultural Development Programmes, to be held at the beginning of the year 2000.

■ **Future Projects**

CARDNE submitted proposals for the following projects:

- identification of the training needs of workers in rural development in the

governmental and non-governmental organisations in the CARDNE member states;

- addressing environmental issues through Strategic Extension Campaigns;
- a regional workshop on Marketing Training for rural women;
- establishing a training centre on the CARDNE premises;
- a sustainable agriculture project. □

The King Baudouin International Development Prize.

The King Baudouin Foundation, which provides support to the Dimitra Project, has recently awarded its bi-annual International Development Prize to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP). The award highlights the importance of the work undertaken by this organisation.

Since 1978, the King Baudouin Foundation has awarded the King Baudouin International Development Prize every other year to individuals or organisations that are making a significant contribution to the advancement of less-developed countries or to the solidarity between industrialised and developing countries. Particular emphasis is placed on the multiplier effect of the proposed initiatives, and the opportunities they give the people of less-developed countries to take control of their own development. The former winners of the Prize have included the Landless Peasants' Movement (Brazil, 1996), the Aids Support Organization (Uganda, 1994), the Grameen Bank (Bangladesh, 1992), and the Kagiso Trust (South Africa, 1990).

On 21 April 1999 the 1998 King Baudouin International Development Prize was officially presented at the Royal Palace in Brussels to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, chaired by Mrs Asma Jahangir, for its commitment to the rule of law as a precondition for the development of civil society, and for its contribution towards a global vision of development including the dignity of every individual, particularly in the case of women and children, who are the most vulnerable.

■ The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)

Respect for the rule of law is one of the prerequisites for development and for the prevention of the exploitation of individuals by those in positions of authority. It is not just because the dignity of the individual can be considered as one element in overall development, but also because human development – as defined by UNDP – takes place “for, with and by the people” when they organise themselves and take the initiative in defence of their interests.

Human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. Defence of human rights as a whole undeniably constitutes a contribution to development, and this is pre-

cisely what the HRCP believes. In a country where extreme religious and traditional social structures continue to influence the establishment of a political, economic and social system that fulfils the democratic aims of its founder, the HRCP has set itself the primary objective of raising awareness and providing information about human rights from the grassroots level right up to the top. This process involves several activities, including the establishment by the HRCP of a human rights information and training network, which covers virtually the entire country. It observes situations at the local level, circulates information, and runs programmes to train trainers. The HRCP has set up the Centre for Democratic Development in Islamabad, which organises training sessions on such issues as the electoral process, freedom and child labour.

The most spectacular of its activities consists in extending legal services to individuals and protecting victims, who generally belong to the most disadvantaged groups, by ensuring that existing laws are enforced by the courts. The HRCP furthermore defends prisoners, acts as a documentation centre and source of legal advice and assistance, and formulates and supports proposals for the modification of legislation. In 1992 the organisation contributed to the passing of a law prohibiting forced labour in agriculture.

■ The situation of women in Pakistan

It is fair to say that the emancipation of women has undoubtedly taken place at the most privileged levels in Pakistan. On the other hand, the process of change has not

trickled down to the majority of women, especially in rural areas, where poverty, lack of education and the weight of tradition are not conducive to the emergence of a modern society based on justice and equality. In its fight for more justice, the HRCP thus pays special attention to two vulnerable groups: women and children. It is in this context that Asma Jahangir helped set up a shelter for distressed women and questioned the practice of keeping women in judicial custody in cases where they are victims of a crime.

The HRCP was set up in 1987. Its head office is based in Lahore, but there are six other centres in the four provinces of Pakistan. It currently has 1,500 members organised in local committees, which form part of the community life of their region and establish links with other NGOs.

Asma Jahangir was instrumental in setting up the HRCP and has chaired the organisation since 1993. She will continue in this role until 1999. As a lawyer, she also heads a legal firm and organises an office providing free legal advice for victims of injustice. She is nationally and internationally recognised for her work. The United Nations Commission for Human Rights recently appointed her Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions. However, the activities of the HRCP are not based on the personality of Asma Jahangir alone, and will not be jeopardised when she relinquishes the chair in 1999.

The HRCP, its Chairperson and representatives are subjected to several forms of pressure and threats as a result of their resistance to the influence of orthodox religious laws over civil law. Promoting the predominance of civil law is a particularly difficult task because of the growing influence of extremist religious elements. The main achievement of the HRCP and its Chairperson is to have made human rights in Pakistan an issue which cannot be ignored and to have done so under extremely difficult circumstances. □

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP)

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THE GAMBIA:

Campaigning against Female Genital Mutilation

*BAFROW,
Foundation for Research on Women's Health,
Productivity and the Environment*

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a deep-rooted traditional practice. In the Gambia, over 70% of female children are genitally mutilated: three main types of FGM are being practised: circumcision (Sunna), excision and sealing.

FGM may be a cultural and traditional practice, but there is no medical, hygienic or religious reason to support it. It carries many immediate and long-term adverse effects, some of which are irreversible and can have serious physical, psychological and emotional consequences. The reasons for the perpetuation of the practice are entirely unfounded and BAFROW aims to create awareness and bring about a change in attitudes with a view to eradicating these harmful traditional practices.

■ The replacement of FGM as a rite of passage to womanhood

BAFROW has used awareness-raising methods through information, education and communication as a strategy for combating FGM. BAFROW has intensified this activity to reach the entire population, at the individual and group level. It is one of BAFROW's on-going activities and it involves training and education through workshops, seminars, debates, drama and development of educational materials for different target groups, i.e. policy makers, community/religious leaders, circumcisors, parents and young people.

However, over the years, BAFROW has come to the conclusion that awareness-raising is insufficient to stop the practice; first of all because FGM provides a power base and income generation for most circumcisors, and secondly, because women in general believe that the rituals and ceremonies involved in this practice empower young girls and create a system that sustains social interaction among groups. The practice of FGM is very closely linked to the rites of passage of girls or initiation to womanhood. It is through the rites of passage that young girls are provided with knowledge and skills for self-empowerment. This phenomenon gives the community

and its people a great sense of cultural identity and cannot be disregarded. This is an additional factor that makes FGM such a well-organised institution. It is an occasion that is seen as an important festivity, and it should be conserved with its rites of passage but without the harmful parts.

■ Restructuring the rites of passage

It is against this background that BAFROW has embarked on a programme for restructuring the rites of passage of girls where positive past and current ceremonial practices associated with those rites can be sustained and enhanced without FGM or any other practice detrimental to the health of the girls.

The programme for restructuring the passage rites started in July 1995 with sensitisation and training of policy makers, circumcisors, community and religious leaders who set up and composed a technical and monitoring committee. They designed a new restructured passage rites curriculum to guide the activities of the converted circumcisors. The curriculum has been developed and translated into 3 local languages and includes aspects of health, culture and religion in a way that takes account of the realities of the various ethnic groups. This strategy is a major breakthrough in the history of the anti-FGM campaign in the Gambia. Many Gambian communities respect the concept because it recognises

and identifies with the indigenous cultures.

So far, trained converted circumcisors, with BAFROW's community-based mobilisers, have conducted a number of awareness-raising activities at their community levels and have started to identify children who are being prepared for the new passage rites ceremonies which are not harmful or detrimental to their health. Only the traditional and cultural practices that promote the human race and the development of women and the girl child are preserved.

■ BAFROW

The aim of BAFROW, an NGO founded in 1990, is to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework on gender and development and to facilitate dialogue among interested partners on the empowerment process, focussing specifically on major interrelated factors significant to the development and sustainability of women and the girl child.

Its objectives are:

- to provide empirical data and analysis on women's health and the environment and women's productivity; through action research, case studies and pilot projects, qualitative as well as quantitative data will be provided for policy formulation and programme planning.
- to identify empowerment strategies and to ensure that there is access to power and an improved quality of life for everyone;
- to facilitate and develop the capacity of the Foundation and to expand inter-agency cooperation and networking. □

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SOUTHERN AFRICA:

Strengthening Networks and Partnerships for Effective Information-Sharing to Advance the Regional Agenda for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equity

WIDSAA, Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness

This was the theme of the workshop organised by Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness (WIDSAA), a programme of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC). The workshop was held from 18 to 20 May 1999 in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The theme was chosen in line with developments around the region, especially the realisation that there was lack of communication among countries and organisations in the region as regards mutual updating on activities, plans and experiences so that together they can work towards the advancement and empowerment of women and achieve gender equity.

The workshop is held on an annual basis with a network of partner organisations identified from 13 of the 14 SADC (Southern Africa Development Community) countries: Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

■ Conditions for good networking

Participants noted that there could not be any networking if there was no available information to share with others, adding that availability of information would be the main tool for strengthening networks. Throughout debate on how best networks can be strengthened, participants agreed, inter alia, to:

- set up mechanisms for collecting, documenting and disseminating information;
- identify areas (issues) of common experience and share information among the networks. This could be done through mailing lists, annual reports, workshops and a calendar of events.

■ Evolutions since Beijing

The workshop reviewed developments in gender at the national level since Beijing. Since Beijing countries in the region have established, consolidated and strengthened national women and/or gender machinery as well as the drafting of gender and/or women's policies. For instance, in Zambia, the Department of Women has been upgraded to a Gender in Development Division based in Cabinet Office. Botswana has also seen its Women's Affairs Division elevated to a Department under the leadership of a director rather than a coordinator, as was previously the case. Botswana and Zambia are also two countries which are reported to have finalised their gender policies.

■ Other issues discussed at the workshop

- sharing of the forthcoming handbook on gender reporting in the media, which was an output of the Media Workshop held in Lusaka in November 1998, discussing ideas on its usage and dissemination; the aim of the book is to guide journalists on balanced reporting on gender in the region;

- review of the progress made on compiling the directory of Gender Experts and Organisations, which aims to enhance information-sharing and to guide researchers on gender expertise and resources in the region;
- organisation of national seminars for parliamentarians in the respective countries so as to familiarise them with the available information on gender and develop their skills for using it.

■ Recommendations

The workshop came up with recommendations for sharing and exchanging publications among institutions and gender networks in the different countries and at the regional level. It was also recommended that umbrella organisations from the respective countries work closely with WIDSAA to ensure that their issues and concerns are taken up to the SADC Gender Unit (SGU) through the Regional Advisory Committee and that there is feedback from the SGU. This two-way flow of information will strengthen partnerships and networking in the region.

The WIDSAA partners took the responsibility of ensuring that these channels are opened up by consulting with the relevant organisations in their countries so that national partners can form coalitions in the respective countries for easier access to information.

The partners also undertook to act as Media Watch at the national level and to monitor the media in the region to ensure positive and balanced reporting on gender. □

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conference calendar

14-17 october 1999:

Gender and Rural Transformation in Europe: Past, Present and Future Prospects, Wageningen, The Netherlands

15 October is World Rural Women's Day. This 4-day international conference will focus on rural women and gender issues in agriculture and rural development across Europe. The conference represents the first time in history that people from Eastern and Central Europe and from Western Europe (North and South) will come together to discuss gender in rural transformation processes throughout the region in 14 paper sessions presenting a total of some 75 papers, with abstracts available on the internet. This conference will also overstep the traditional boundaries of academia. Not only will scientific researchers present and discuss their work: development practitioners from ministries, international and regional development organisations, and NGOs will also be present, discussing and exchanging experiences, problems and ideas with one another and with the scientists. There will be special presentations, eight round tables, various practitioner exchange sessions and ample room for ad hoc sessions to meet this end. Special workshops at the end of the conference will provide the opportunity for scientists, practitioners and policy-makers to advance networking and cooperation throughout Europe.

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Website: http://www.sls.wau.nl/crds/cent_gs.htm

18-22 october 1999

The economic role of rural women in rural and agricultural development: the promotion of income-generating activities

The objective of the seminar is to promote the exchange of information and experience on the economic role of women in agricultural and rural development and, more specifically, on the problems encountered by rural women in developing income-generating activities. Specific objectives of the seminar: to identify and promote the role of women in income-generating activities in the agricultural sector; to increase the awareness of political leaders, decision-makers and donors on the present

and potential role of women in the realm of income-generating agricultural activities; to better integrate the promotion of women's income-generating activities into the sector-based strategies of rural development; proposals for strategic frameworks; to integrate women's income-generating activities into strategic frameworks; to identify non-traditional women's income-generating activities in rural development; to construct and/or develop networking and methods of association as well as partnership modes.

Venue: Athens, Greece

This Seminar is coorganised by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Greek Ministry of Agriculture and the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), in collaboration with the University of Helsinki, the Ministry of Agriculture of South Africa and the Tanzania Home Economics Association.

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11-14 november 1999:

The 8th International AWID (Association for Women in Development) Forum: Leading Solutions for Equality and Justice

The conference is organised around the following 6 sub-themes: women transforming development and economics; trading women's human rights; technological changes and choices; politics of the global women's movement; women organising and organisational transformation; leadership and the next generation.

Venue: Washington DC, USA

More information: AWID, 1511 K Street, NW, Suite 825, Washington, DC 20005, USA

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E-mail: awid@awid.org

Website: <http://www.awid.org>

22-27 november 1999:

Sixth African Regional Conference on Women

The month of November 1999 will mark five years since the adoption of the African Platform for Action for the Advancement of Women. On this occasion, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) will host the Sixth African Regional Conference on Women in Addis-Ababa. The central focus of the Conference will be the assessment of the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, in preparation for the June 2000 Global Mid-Term Review.

Venue: Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia

More information: <http://www.un.org/Depts/eca/news/brochur2.htm>

research

Gender on their agenda? NGOs fail fairness test

Gender is a hotly debated issue in development policy and practice. But how successfully have NGOs based in the UK incorporated gender issues into the mainstream of their institutional agenda? Results of a recent University of Birmingham study suggest that implementation of gender-aware practices and policies are no simple matter. In most non-governmental development agencies it has proved a complex and contested process that tends to be relegated to the margins of their policy and work agenda. The study report suggests benchmarks for improvement, based on the experiences of those few agencies that have successfully applied gender aware practices and policies.

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journal

African Journal of Reproductive Health / La Revue Africaine de la Santé Reproductive

The African Journal of Reproductive Health was co-founded by the Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC) in Nigeria and the Department of Population and International Health at Harvard. It is a multidisciplinary and international journal, which publishes original research, comprehensive review articles, short reports and commentaries on reproductive health in Africa. The Journal aims to promote the study of reproductive health in Africa, to provide a forum for African authors as well as others working in Africa, and to provide a scientific understanding of the reproductive health needs in the Africa region. The Journal will be published twice annually in English and French, with papers written by and for researchers, service providers, policymakers, women's health advocates and those in related fields with an interest in reproductive health.

Website: <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/ajrh/index.html>

new books

Women's Information Services and Networks: a Global Source Book

by Minke Valk, Henk van Dam and Sarah Cummings

This third volume in the Gender, Society and Development series of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) reviews women's information services and networks in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the former USSR. The impact of information technology, including the potential of electronic networking is also considered. A directory provides a quick reference to women's information services throughout the world. Coproduction with IIAV (International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement, Website: <http://www.iav.nl/mapping-the-world>).

ISBN 90 6832 711 9, Dfl. 35.00

For more information or to order the book:

KIT Press, P.O.Box 95001,
1090 HA Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Tel: +31-20-5688711

Fax: +31-20-5688286

Website:

http://www.kit.nl/ibd/html/gender_society_and_development.htm

Missionaries and Mandarins: Feminist engagement with development institutions

by Carol Miller and Shahra Razavi (Editors)

This book looks at the various strategies employed by women working to transform the bureaucratic structures of development organisations to make them more gender-equitable. These strategies involve combining the task of changing things from within bureaucracies, i.e. of being 'missionaries', while adapting to the techniques and practices of the bureaucracy as a 'mandarin' would have to do. There are studies from many different countries, including Vietnam, Australia, the United States and Morocco, illustrating both the variety of institutional strategies adopted by feminists in different political and cultural settings, and the highly diverse forms of political action by women which can be seen to constitute feminist politics. Missionaries and Mandarins has much to say to all those feminists working within bureaucracies – whether state or civil society institutions – with the aim of promoting women's concerns.

Published by IT Publications in collaboration with the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, November 1998, ISBN 1-85339-434-3.

A Guide to Gender-Analysis Frameworks

by Ines Smyth and Candida March (1998)

This is a guide to all the main analytical frameworks for gender-sensitive research and planning based on a recent pack developed for Oxfam staff and partners. The book draws on the experience of trainers and practitioners, including step-by-step instructions for using the frameworks and summaries of advantages and disadvantages in particular situations. Critically, an introductory section places the frameworks in the context of gender-transformatory development work and research, emphasising that a tool is not a substitute for commitment.

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electronic magazine

news in brief

La Toile d'Elles

"La Toile d'Elles" is an element of the programme "Inforoutes au féminin en Afrique francophone" (women's information highways in French-speaking Africa), developed with the support of the Fonds Francophone des Inforoutes by ENDA-SYNFEV (Dakar, Senegal), in partnership with Inter-Press Service, Service francophone (Cotonou, Benin) and Les Pénélopes, Agence française d'information des Femmes dans le Monde (Montreuil, France). "La Toile d'Elles" aims to present, at the beginning and middle of each month, the following items:

- Women in Africa: African women's organisations involved in sustainable development, on-line contacts, websites, electronic lists, bibliographic references, information and training sources, in particular concerning tools and techniques which are useful on the information 'highway' (Website: <http://www.famafrique.org>);
- Women and French-speaking organisations in the world: websites, electronic lists, bibliographic references, information sources, events;
- Women in the world: websites, electronic lists; international organisations and events in the field of women and sustainable development;
- The use of the information highway: websites, documents which help in the use of the possibilities offered by the information highways for the promotion of sustainable development.

To subscribe: send an empty e-mail message to toiledelles@enda.sn. In the subject line, please indicate: "Abonnement La toile d'elles <your_email_address>"

women in partnership against aids

South Africa is experiencing one of the most serious HIV epidemics in the world. There are an estimated 3.2 million people in the country who are infected by the disease. 18 out of every 100 sexually active adults in the country are HIV positive, including pregnant and elderly women. The rate of new infections is estimated at 1,600 per day. About 9,000 children a year are born HIV positive.

The problem facing the country is that most people fail to see any evidence to suggest that HIV/AIDS poses a major threat to the nation. Most persons with HIV have no idea that they are infected, and continue to lead normal and productive lives. A culture of silence and fear has also developed around the disease.

There is evidence that where the epidemic has led to re-assessment of basic human relations, including women's rights and powers, there is more chance of prevention working. It is recognised that any action that tends to improve women's health has an impact on a nation's ability to control its destiny. Women, who are educated, informed and free to decide what to do with their lives constitute an efficient weapon in the fight against health problems such as HIV/AIDS. The fight against HIV/AIDS must become an assertion of women's basic human rights. Women must break the silence of the taboos around and the violence of HIV/AIDS.

All women – in religious and secular institutions, non-governmental and community-based organisations, private and public structures, urban and rural organisations – are encouraged to start to get organised for a more active role in the fight against HIV/AIDS. All human and material resources must be mobilised to combat the disease. Viable strategies must be geared to mobi-

lising women at every level in the community. Sustainable programmes aimed at empowering women and their organisations to fight HIV/AIDS at grassroots level must be encouraged.

Dynamic partnerships must be forged to promote public awareness, prevention, disclosure, family care, education and training around HIV/AIDS. Men must be encouraged and drawn in as partners in the fight against AIDS.

Women in Partnership Against AIDS forms one of the five partnerships in the national campaign 'Partnership Against AIDS' which was launched on 9 October 1998. A national programme of action is being developed to ensure that, firstly, prevention begins much earlier in life and should be applied to all social groups, especially those who are marginalised in poor and remote communities; secondly, sustainable programmes are put in place to empower women to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS at community level; thirdly, a culture of disclosure, prevention and support emerges in the country; fourthly, national events are used to galvanise women into programmes of mass action at grassroots level; and fifthly, women are mobilised for mass action in the course of 1999 and in 2000.

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partner organisations of the dimitra project

new e-mail address:
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If you are interested in participating to the Dimitra Project and would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook on Africa and the Near East, please contact the organisation covering your country and they will send you a questionnaire. If your country is not covered by any of them, please contact the Dimitra office in Brussels.

Below you can find the addresses and contact persons of all our partner organisations, with the list of countries they cover:

If your organisation is located in...

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