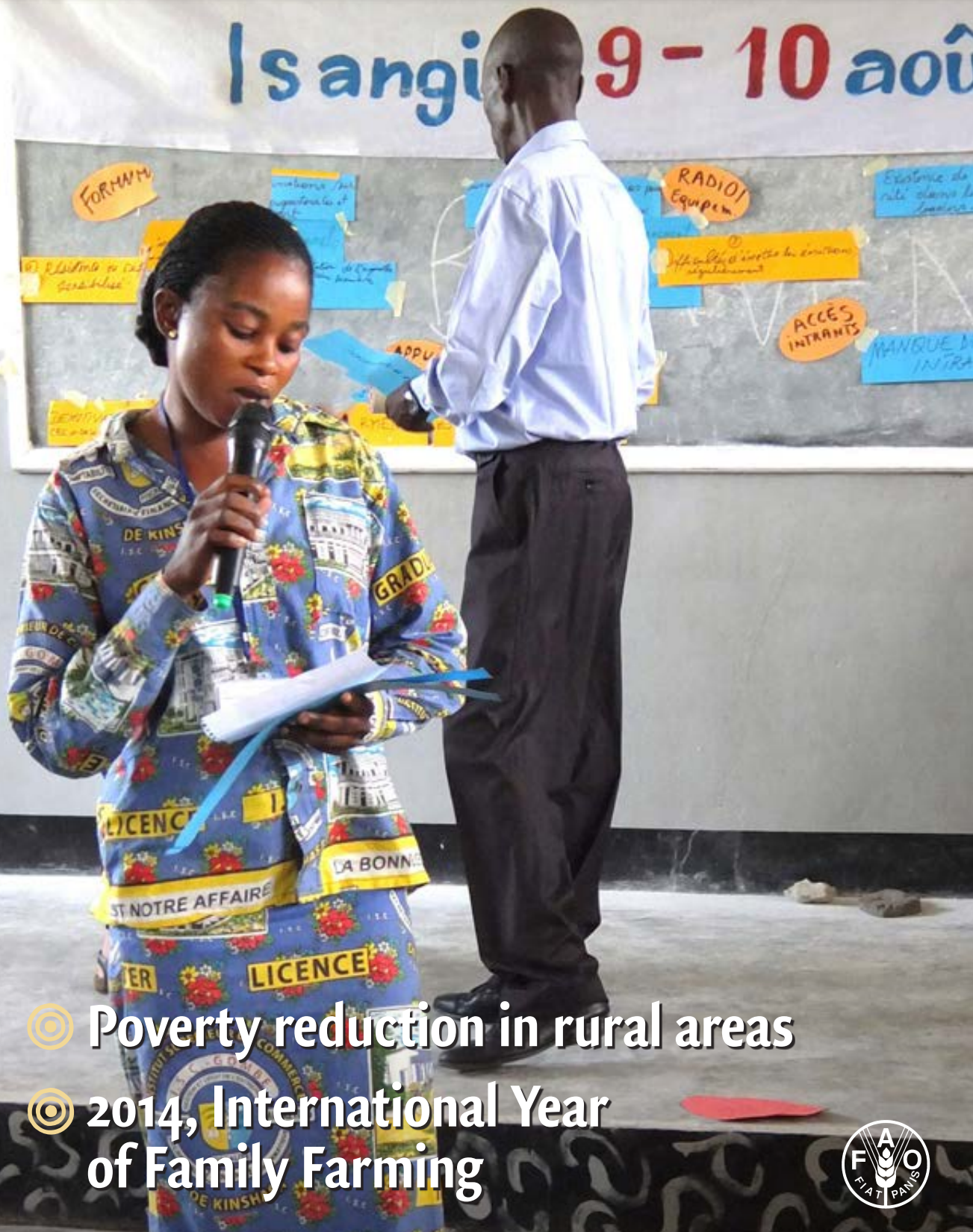




Dimitra Newsletter

GENDER, RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT



- © Poverty reduction in rural areas
- © 2014, International Year of Family Farming



Dear Readers,

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As always, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the Dimitra newsletter, especially to this latest edition. We take this opportunity to pay tribute to Phuna Mabika Dakeini our long-time colleague in the DRC, whose passing away has profoundly saddened us.

This issue highlights experiences of development approaches that are helping in the fight against poverty in rural areas. Reducing rural poverty is one of FAO’s strategic objectives for the coming years, to which the Dimitra project is making a special contribution.

Innovative methodologies have been developed which seek to place participation, gender and empowerment of rural communities and organizations at the centre of FAO activities.

It is in this spirit that, for several years now, the FAO-Dimitra project has been supporting community listeners’ clubs (CLC), which facilitate a process for strengthening rural communities, with a special focus on women’s leadership. At this stage in the project’s progress, we think it is necessary to take the time to capitalize on several years of experience with the clubs. So included with this newsletter is a fact sheet describing the key features that make the Dimitra community listeners’ clubs a unique approach.

You will also find in this issue a dossier which outlines the impact of the CLCs in the Orientale Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A listeners’ club forum in Isangi, which brought together members of 60 listeners’ clubs in the Province, offers a starting point to examine the results obtained.

Marguerite Atilomoi, a young woman leader from Orientale Province, was chosen to feature in this issue’s Portraits Series. Marguerite is the moderator of a Dimitra community listeners’ club, and also serves on the Board of a local producer organization and is Vice-President of the Producers Union for her area.

Several articles describe the launch of new clubs in Mauritania, Niger and Senegal with FAO’s regional Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) programme, as well as in Ghana. Ghana is the first English-speaking country where CLCs have been set up, in 18 communities of West Gonja District, in the north of the country, in the framework of a FAO regional

initiative planned as part of the organization’s strategic objective to reduce rural poverty.

The CoOPequity programme represents another approach, supporting the implementation of policies and measures that encourage the development of equitable and well-functioning producer organizations. An interview with the officers in charge of the programme sheds light on this approach, which is based on participation, good governance and gender.

The FAO “Capitalization of good practices in support of agricultural production and food security” project reviews its activities and achievements after four years of operation. It has tested and adapted methodologies for experience capitalization and the identification of good practices from a gender perspective.

Other articles describe initiatives using information and communication technologies (ICTs). In Kenya, the Sokopepe agricultural commodity trading platform is being used by small-scale producers to obtain information on market prices as well as agricultural advice. In Gujarat, India, a women’s NGO has set up an SMS-based market information system to help women farmers sell their products at a fair price. The U-Report application, developed by UNICEF in Uganda, enables young people in the country to make SMS contact, free of charge, about initiatives in their communities.

The year 2014 has been declared the “International Year of Family Farming” as a way of highlighting the important contribution made to food security and poverty reduction by family farming and smallholder farms. An article describes how, together with its partners, FAO is planning to encourage countries to adopt policies that support family farms, through programmes that offer social protection and supply rural services.

I hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter and wish you an excellent 2014!

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DRC | Dimitra community listeners' clubs and poverty reduction, a Forum to share results

The first Dimitra Community Listeners' Clubs Forum for Tshopo District was held on 9-10 August 2013 in Isangi, in the Orientale Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It offered a unique opportunity to meet, discuss and share experiences to the women and men representatives of 60 Dimitra community listeners' clubs (CLCs), seven community radios and various key actors, closely or loosely linked to the CLCs. The clubs have been set up in barely a year, in the framework of a gender-sensitive project to fight poverty and improve food security, implemented by FAO and financed by the Government of the DRC and by IFAD. This article talks about the Forum and provides some data and anecdotes which highlight the successful wager made by those who opted to bet on this innovative approach.



Elysée Otondja gets to her feet and announces, with a mixture of pride and astonishment: "I have been chosen as president of a Dimitra listeners' club. Me! I would never have believed it." Sitting next to her, Françoise Oleke rapidly nods her head: "And what about me! I had my head in the clouds, I had no idea, I never spoke out and now... I do!"

The role play is well under way. Everyone plays the role of a listeners' club member and shares ideas and impressions on the changes that the club has brought to their lives and to that of

their community, and to the efforts to reduce poverty in rural areas. Amid general enthusiasm, reactions follow on from one another: "The club has shown me how to eat properly, with more varied meals"; "You can work on your own, but there is strength in numbers. Here, we share ideas and work as a team, with everyone mixed together, even the poor!"; "Now we can eat together and there are fewer nutritional taboos for women"; "We have decided to repair the track so as to get farm products in and out"; "I was not used to speak-

ing out in front of men; it wasn't the custom". This enactment of the impact achieved by the listeners' clubs in Orientale Province took place as part of the first Dimitra Community Listeners' Clubs Forum for Tshopo District. For two days, gathered for the occasion 60 club representatives (roughly divided between women and men), the seven Tshopo community radio stations involved in the project as well as United Nations' Radio Okapi, ten government representatives at provincial, district and local level, several traditional chefs and social leaders, representatives of farm producers' unions and other project partners, such as the NGO Inades-Formation.



The voice of Phuna Mabika Dakeini fell silent

He was a radio man, and for many years he shared his enthusiasm and skills for the benefit of FAO's communication projects. Phuna's last contribution was to the Dimitra community listeners' clubs project in the Orientale Province. He worked with passion for what he deeply believed in: a development based on the voice of the people and using community radio.

Today, the Dimitra team, FAO and the listeners' clubs in the DRC are in mourning. Goodbye Phuna, your voice is silent, but continues to resonate with us all.

A forum for sharing, discussing and making decisions

The objective of the Isangi Forum was to share experiences and identify the changes brought about by the Dimitra listeners' clubs for the project's 18,000 beneficiaries in 167 villages. The Forum also enabled participants to highlight the difficulties encountered and to debate the future of the clubs.

The participants flocked to Isangi by canoe, ferry, bike, motorcycle and raft to take part in this unusual forum-meeting. The proceedings were marked by the use of methods that reflected the key principles and dynamics of



Photo exhibition of Dimitra community listeners' clubs in the DRC and other African countries organized during the Forum.

Access to information and expression

One issue raised by the majority of participants was the importance of access to relevant information as requested by the clubs from the radio stations. For many women living in rural societies, where often the men own and monopolize the radio sets, having access to a solar-powered radio – “No need to buy a battery!” – is already a victory. But many people also highlighted the privileged relationships with community radio stations and the chance to interact on themes of common interest through the medium of radio.

“Before, the radio did not come to the villages. Now, they are present and tuned in to the communities they serve and to the CLCs that discuss people’s problems and to which people listen”. People have begun to take ownership of the radio stations. In the words of one woman participant at the Forum, a member of a listeners’ club, what counts is giving everyone the chance to have their say. “There is more openness because you don’t have to have studied to be able to talk on the radio!” she says. Radio is not just a hobby: “Before, I did nothing but listen to music on the radio. Now, I am interested in programmes that talk about development issues,” comments a member of a youth listeners’ club in the Eastern Basin during a plenary session. “Not to mention the fact that it offers a chance to listen to programmes as a family and that the information benefits the whole community. Everyone follows the broadcasts”, he adds.

Recurring topics chosen and addressed by the clubs included malnutrition and food groups, health (malaria and sleeping sickness), sanitation, horticulture, group sales, buying inputs, livestock keeping, etc.

Behaviour change

Often, the discussions of the Dimitra listeners’ clubs lead to a rethink of everyday practices. This is a key factor since development is first and foremost a process of change aimed at producing better living conditions. Since rural development is at stake here, the changes produced by the clubs are varied, but they are always linked to the daily life of communities and households.

For example, it took just a few meetings and one “Mums and dads united” radio programme to convince families that a meal should be varied and that you can put rice and pundu (cassava leaves) on the same plate. And yet, it is not so easy to change dietary habits! One woman representative of a club from the Yanonge area remarks that previously, “people lived on purchased products. Now, many CLCs have small vegetable gardens”. There are many examples: in Lilanda, niébé (cowpea)

Achievements of the Dimitra community listeners’ clubs project in Orientale Province

Aster Bashige, the coordinator of the “Listeners’ clubs, fight against poverty, food security and gender” project, recalls that the Isangi Listeners’ Clubs Forum follows on from almost a year of activities to raise awareness, offer support and training to women and men listeners’ club members. These activities were carried out with the support of Inades-Formation DRC, in all the Basins and areas of intervention of the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme on Orientale Province (PRAPO), namely Isangi West, South, North, East, Basoko (Lileko) and the areas of Kisangani (Bengamisa, Ubundu and Wanyarukula). “I should emphasize the real enthusiasm of the communities invited to meet up through the listeners’ clubs and the remarkable dynamism of the club members and community radios that have embarked on this adventure,” he adds.

The figures speak for themselves: 240 villages were visited to raise awareness on the listeners’ club approach and gender, including the administrative, political, religious, traditional and municipal authorities; almost 18,000 people were directly or indirectly involved in these activities; 325 women and men listeners’ club members and facilitators of farmers’ organizations were trained in the approach,

as well as in gender and participatory monitoring; 23 people from 7 community radios were trained in participatory communication and production techniques for interactive programmes.

Today there are 60 Dimitra community listeners’ clubs in Tshopo District, covering 167 of the 317 villages, counting a total of 2,275 members, about half of them women. The listeners’ clubs meet once or twice a month, to discuss their needs and priorities. They contact the radio stations for additional information, listen to the broadcasts and debates of other clubs and, most importantly, take decisions and act together to improve their environment and livelihoods. In order to improve access to information and facilitate dialogue, each listeners’ club has received a solar-powered and wind-up radio set as well as a bicycle.

Aster Bashige points out the behaviour changes that he has observed: “The CLCs have promoted self-sufficiency and participation of women, households and communities. These days, people think about the community and the richness of their listeners’ club.” The project has gone a long way in a short time span!

the listeners’ clubs: self-organization, willingness to listen, freedom of expression, equality, concern for equal participation by men and women, building on experiences, action and creativity.

The two Forum days allowed the remarkable results obtained by the clubs to be put under the spotlight, ranging from the high level of female participation in a region where traditionally women never speak in public – especially not in front of men – to the visible changes seen in various aspects of daily life

(agriculture, diet, relationships), to collective and individual initiatives implemented by the clubs.

Restitution in plenary from the Forum’s working groups took place in a relaxed atmosphere. Words and ideas poured out thick and fast, but similar themes soon emerged as people talked about their ideas and experiences, revealing a number of common features as regards problems identified, issues addressed, activities undertaken and difficulties encountered.



seeds were a problem due to their low yields. The CLCs asked for support to improve their yields, which has increased their production and revenues. In Yabaondo, a listeners' club has collected funds to rent two rice fields. The club has subsequently produced 1800 kg of rice and seeds.

Observers have also been astounded by the collective initiatives undertaken by listeners' clubs: the Bosau CLC requested and obtained the loan of a community field. Members have taken turns to work in the field and the club reports that there has been an improvement in food security.

One club member from the village of Yanfole recalls that "the dirt road was very bad and the village isolated. With the listeners's club, a decision was taken to repair the road. The first vehicle to get through was that of the sleeping sickness programme. After the primary healthcare services, the traders have started to arrive". The same has happened in Weko, where the CLC has mobilized the community to develop access roads, and in the village of Yalibwa, where access to drinking water was a problem and the CLC has constructed two water points with local means.

The men pound the cassava while the women go out fishing!

The Forum's working sessions pinpointed another phenomenon in which no-one would have believed just a year ago: the changes in gender relationships, including task sharing within households. One listeners' club member, still astonished by this positive develop-

Radio stations: the voice of communities for communities

The dynamism of the community radios in Tshopo District and their collaboration with the listeners' clubs have been crucial. Seven radio stations – Radio Kulukoko, Radio Mabele, Radio Yanonge, Radio Bondeko in Isangi, Radio Boboto, Radio Mwangaza and Radio-Television Bondeke-Isangi (RTBI) have committed themselves to the CLC adventure. Especially striking are the collaboration agreements that have been signed between listeners' clubs and community radios. These charters enable the construction of solid working relationships and help both parties to work more effectively. Some 45 broadcasts on various subjects requested by the listeners' clubs have already been produced, compiled and broadcast by the community radios. Topics have included how a CLC works, sanitation, literacy, agriculture and livestock keeping, distribution of farmwork between men and women, aquaculture and horticulture.

The radios have played a very active role in the Listeners' Clubs Forum and several of them were keen to share their vision and express their satisfaction with the listeners' club approach.

Joseph Bassay, from the RTBI, stressed the CLC's role in bringing communities and radio stations closer together.

"For us journalists, the CLCs have revolutionized our work. Now, when we go into the communities, people know who we are and we feel like members of that community. And the communities participate in the radio broadcasts. The programmes have been reworked to take the community's suggestions on board. It's radio by communities, for communities!" Talking about the pro-

grammes, he continued: "They are more interesting when women are involved. They are richer and more participatory, there are lots of good ideas: people listen and like hearing themselves on the radio."

He insisted on thanking the CLCs which have organized themselves to support their local radio station. "There is still much to be done, but the CLCs have the will to solve problems. The question remains the material." The stations have received technical support, so to put them in a better position to answer the needs identified by the clubs, including recording kits and training in radio broadcasting production techniques. But other needs remain.

Joseph Bassay ended by observing that this is "the very first project that has brought communities and radio stations together". Today, he says, not only is there a symbiosis between the CLCs and the radio stations, but the CLCs have become something in which the entire community feels involved. "The radio also needs to support the clubs, to make sure they do not collapse."

Sylvain Loula, from Radio Boboto, observed that before "we spoke on behalf of the people. The training sessions were important in helping us to see and produce differently, in a participatory manner."

Henri Ngoie, from Radio Kulukoko, went even further, recalling the lack of participation before the existence of the CLCs. He echoed the representative from the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), who participated in the Forum and declared that previously there had been no interactivity between radio stations and the people.

ment, told at a plenary session of the Forum that "these days, the men pound the cassava!" And the audience reacted with warmth and laughter when a woman club member declared: "Before, the Lokelé women did not fish; now, we have our own nets and we too have become fishers. We have been waiting for this for a long time!" Even domestic and sexual violence have been discussed within CLCs. There is still much to be done, but it is an important step in the right direction to see that such sensitive subjects are now being talked about.

The public and traditional authorities are also playing a role, and important synergies have indeed been developed with the listeners' clubs. For example, in Yabaondo, the territorial administration has set up a local development committee and, under the influence of the CLCs, has decided to respect gender parity (14 men and 14 women) on the committee. In Yanonge, at the request of a listeners' club, the authorities have set up a gender and family service.

The State has arrived!

The CLCs are considered a valuable tool for the public authorities. These latter respond to the requests of the CLCs, especially on issues of health and sanitation. The government has supported such requests by offering hygiene advice on how to clean up farm plots. This has been followed by radio broadcasts and discussions with Dr. Ley from the general hospital of INERA Yangambi in an effort to combat diseases linked to dirty hands.

The Inspectorate for Agriculture in Tshopo District has recently supplied 15 listeners' clubs with hoes, spades, shovels and rakes to help maintain farm tracks so as to reduce isolation and get agricultural products to markets. These were listeners' clubs that had already carried out this kind of work.

With an exclamation of triumph, one participant summed up in four words one of the effects of the dynamic efforts of the clubs in their village: "The State has arrived!"

Collaboration with government services

In September 2012, during the launch workshop for community listeners' clubs in Kisangani, two government inspectors said they looked forward to seeing this new approach give "fresh impetus to the whole development system."

François Bassay Baloimba, District Inspector for Agriculture, convinced of the power of participatory communication, said that "the participation of everyone – women, men and even youth – makes sense. It is through everyone's contributions, in searching for solutions and taking action, that rural development will be supported." He also stressed the importance of government services working in synergy with the clubs, for "we cannot be everywhere, but thanks to the clubs, we will be kept informed by the grassroots communities."

For his part, Richard Azelito, Provincial Inspector for Rural Development, spoke

of the need to address gender issues, since "in rural areas, the bulk of the work falls to women. Reducing women's workload and increasing production are both ways of reducing poverty." He also underscored the role of "the valuable tool offered by community radio, which will make it possible to spread the listeners' club messages to other communities, based on an analysis of the clubs' experiences and decisions. If it works, it will have a knock-on effect throughout the District and the Province."

After one year of implementation, has there been such a knock-on effect? We put the question to François Bassay, who was in Isangi to take part in the Listeners' Clubs Forum. Constantly moving around Tshopo district on his motorbike, the government inspector told us what he has seen and experienced over the past few months. "The CLCs demonstrate that men and women are able to find solutions to

their problems. The CLCs have unleashed the spirit of creativity!" he confirmed.

"As an inspector of agriculture, I find that the CLCs facilitate our work with the population. There are exchanges and synergies between the agriculture services and the CLCs. Our technicians are trained, so they can offer relevant support to the community."

With a faint smile, he tells a story: "This really struck me. I was on mission in the field and everywhere I went, the first question anyone asked was if we could set up a listeners' club! Villages were arguing with each other to get a club. And when I asked the question: are you part of one of the Basin's farm-based organizations, people would often reply: 'No, I belong to a CLC!' Why all this enthusiasm? Because the CLCs have achieved a great many results, things have happened concerning taboos, behaviour. That is of interest to us, and it is a positive sign that things are moving."

Social mobilization

Working together – that was the overwhelming idea to emerge from the Forum's working groups. The participants reached agreement on the fact that "men and women must work together for development," as said Sister Berthe. It needs to be a collective effort, which will enable communities to mobilize, the CLCs to network and, ultimately, the entire population to participate actively.

The issue of social cohesion and unity within communities was also raised on several occasions. "Thanks to the CLCs, men and women are coming together and learning how to handle their differences."

The importance of breaking out of isolation was also considered to be critical. In the South Basin, "the CLCs have organized themselves entirely of their own initiative to meet and exchange ideas," observes Aster Bashige, the project's coordinator.

The CLC members themselves acknowledge that social mobilization has led to less of a wait-and-see attitude and more self-development for club members and the community in general. Some CLCs have even collected contributions to pay the fuel for the generators of some radio stations which were no longer able to broadcast due to lack of funds. Some members, such as Marguerite (see the Portrait on p. 8-9), go even further and believe that the clubs will gradually turn into producer organizations: "The listeners' clubs take action and don't make empty promises. They are producer organization and listeners' club at the same time and this approach also strengthens existing organizations and unions."



Célestin Banyanga of the Tosalisana listeners' club in Likango.

Women's voice and decision-making

Another significant aspect underscored on several occasions is the importance of giving a voice to women and encouraging women's leadership. This was perfectly summed up by a listeners' club member who said: «Women, once in the background, are now on the right path.»

In this respect, several CLC members observed that "the capacity of women to analyze their problems is more evident thanks to radio, and the traditional chiefs are increasingly asking

women to give their opinion during community meetings" – a first for this society! "Women are speaking out, and it's not just the older, wise women," added one of them. A female listeners' club member reported that the traditional chief of Kombe has even decided to prepare women for the upcoming local elections!

In the cité of Yanonge, women have formed an association in an effort to tackle discrimination issues and have approached the local chief, who has appointed a gender officer for the area.



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Group work at the Isangi Forum.

Difficulties too

The CLC delegates and other actors have also conferred to talk about the difficulties encountered, the solutions found and what still needs to be done in order to strengthen the existing clubs and ensure their long-term sustainability. Aside from questions linked to the functioning of the listeners' clubs, which members are learning to resolve together, all the participants commented on the importance of ensuring strong and regular support for the listeners' clubs.

The CLCs also observed that if greater empowerment is to be achieved, technical training needs to be made available on issues such as agriculture, sanitation, etc. Requests for these training initiatives are directed at all development actors working in the area.

It is important to reinforce the lessons learned, support changes, ensure sustainability and

monitor closely. That is what everyone is hoping for, and was summed up in the words of one participant, who said: "A man cannot father children from a distance."

One thing is certain, the Isangi Forum proved an important occasion for all the actors involved in the FAO-Dimitra project: community listeners' clubs, community radios and other development stakeholders. It offered an opportunity to build momentum and jointly reflect on the experiences so far, the problems encountered, the results obtained, the changes brought about by the listeners' clubs and the future they face. But it also provided an extraordinary opportunity for participants to meet one another, united by the approach and their enthusiasm, as well as the results obtained and current and future activities.

There can be no doubt that the strong involvement of women in both the clubs and the

Forum reflect an improvement in their status and an important shift in the attitudes of communities. Given their soaring membership levels, the positive momentum built up by the Dimitra listeners' clubs almost certainly heralds further interesting developments in the course of the next month.

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Collaboration with community leaders

Is there anyone who doesn't know Chief Guillaume Maingolo Bondjala? This chief of Babelada sector, Isangi District Territory, is a community leader in charge of 48 villages (about 60,000 inhabitants). There are 10 Dimitra listeners' clubs in his territory. He is also a member of a producer organization (Bolingolo) which has managed to put aside small quantities of stored crops and organize group sales. But Chief Guillaume is also known for the example he sets within the community since the CLCs were set up and he attended the decentralised training sessions on gender

and participatory communication. Today, he can even be seen sweeping his compound and bringing his children to school!

Asked about this unusual behaviour for a local chief, Chief Guillaume, who took part in the Isangi Listeners' Clubs Forum, replies that while travelling throughout the territory he has observed "a change in mentalities. As an individual, I take over from my wife, I look after our plot of land and I wash the children. Before the CLCs, I didn't do this. According to local custom, a traditional chief should not do such things!"

"Even in the fields, it is the man who clears the land and the woman does the rest. In my case, I also help with the sowing. Other villagers have started to do the same because it reduces the workload of the women."

"I am happy to contribute to the advancement of women. I was also proud to see my wife give a speech on 8 March last year. As for change, it will come about gradually. What is important is that other traditional chiefs have done the same thing: they are putting all this into practice," he concludes.

Recognising the contribution of women to households and communities

Nicknamed “Maguy”, Marguerite Atilomoi lives in Yanonge, 60 km from Kisangani, in the Democratic Republic of Congo’s Orientale Province. This dynamic rural woman is involved in an agricultural producer organization and in the Union of Producer Organizations of her area. She is also the moderator of a Dimitra community listeners’ club in Yanonge.

Could you describe your background?

I was born in Lokomba, 5 km from central Yanonge. That is where I spent my childhood. After completing the 5th year of secondary school at the Agricultural Technical Institute of Yanonge, I abandoned my studies to go and live with my boyfriend, who later became my husband. Very soon, I was expecting my first child, in 2008. Also very soon, I realized that I had made a mistake in abandoning my studies and I began asking my husband to help me finish my secondary education. Since he refused to pay my school fees, and was against me taking up my studies again, I left him for a while and returned to my family home, with the blessing of my parents and encouraged by my older brother. I obtained my state diploma at the end of the school year 2010 – 2011 and went on to become an agriculture instructor. In the end, I went back to my husband and today I am the mother of two children.

When did you become involved in civil society?

In 2008, the Agricultural Rehabilitation Programme in Orientale Province (PRAPO) was encouraging communities in Yanonge to form an agricultural producer organization (APO). I was enthusiastic about the idea and since I was the only woman on the steering committee, I was elected gender officer for our APO.

In 2011, seeing the very active role I was playing in the APO, members of other APOs which make up the Union of Producer Organizations of Yanonge, elected me to be the Union’s Vice-President.

In August 2012, FAO’s Dimitra project came to Yanonge, in the Eastern Production Basin, to carry out a baseline study and raise awareness about the Dimitra community listeners’ club approach. I found it very interesting and

I asked a great many questions. Then, three weeks later, I received an invitation to take part in the initial training workshop organized in Kisangani, on the Dimitra community listeners’ club approach, participatory communication and gender.

It was only then that I began to have a clear understanding of what the gender approach really means and I made the decision to support the project for raising awareness and setting up listeners’ clubs in our area.

How did you become the moderator of a Dimitra community listeners’ club?

As I said, I was the only woman on the various committees of the APOs in Yanonge. As the Union’s Vice-President, I had organized awareness-raising sessions for setting up and organizing community listeners’ clubs. That is why the members insisted that I take on the role of moderator of this new space for exchange and action, which would bring everyone together. We decided to call it “Etumba na nzala”, which means “fighting hunger”.

What are the goals and activities of the APO and the Union?

Since we are talking about the goals and activities of organizations in which I myself am active, I will just say that with the APO, we are seeking to improve agricultural production, in terms of both quantity and quality. In my role as gender officer, I try to highlight the work of women.

The Union of Producer Organizations aims to bring the APOs together, so that they are better equipped to deal with the various problems faced by farmers: seeds, cultivation techniques, etc.



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And the goals of the community listeners' clubs?

The Dimitra listeners clubs encourage the dynamic of participatory communication, women's leadership and women's empowerment to fight against poverty and improve food security. In short, they help boost the socio-economic development of women and communities who adhered to the approach.

What challenges have you faced and how have you overcome them?

In terms of challenges, my major concern is that society should acknowledge the contribution made by women to the daily life of households and communities. When I talk about society, I mean men, but also women themselves, who underestimate their knowledge and their power.

I have taken as a model two women who have left a mark on social life here in Yanonge: Irène, an agronomic engineer and facilitator for the Principal Operator of the East Basin (a group of agricultural producer organizations) and Sister Berthe, who works as a manager at Caritas and is gender officer on the management board of our Union. So I have decided – and this is what I try to do on a daily basis – to reach out to all women who can neither read nor write, so as to lift them out of ignorance.

Have you encountered family difficulties in working for women's emancipation?

No, aside from some resistance on the part of my husband, it must be said that my parents, and especially my eldest brother, have given me a great deal of encouragement. My brother often congratulates me when he sees that I have achieved one or other of my objectives.

And I feel invigorated, proud of myself and motivated.

Have you encountered any resistance when you have talked about gender issues?

Although my husband does not formally prevent me from taking part in the various activities of the organizations in which I am involved, he does sometimes disagree, because he thinks my behaviour is not in keeping with customs and practices. Many husbands still do not allow their wives to take part in public activities. These are not just traditional constraints; it should be said that there is also always an element of jealousy involved.

Were there any difficulties in your dealings with the authorities?

Oh yes! Very often. The intelligence service and the police always find a reason for insisting that we ask their permission, even to hold an ordinary meeting, and especially when it's a case of a major event, such as the annual ceremonies to mark March 8 [International Women's Day]. Sometimes, the authorities go as far as demanding taxes; otherwise we have to spend hours explaining the reason for holding a simple meeting!

How do you see the future for women in your country?

The future is promising, even if it is still going to take some time. A number of women have now joined different organizations with social aims (community listeners' clubs, tontines, agricultural producer organizations, etc.) that encourage and advocate the promotion and empowerment of women.

“Women underestimate their knowledge.”

Four listeners clubs in Yanonge started organising literacy courses, together with community radio, targeting women who cannot read or write. Nineteen women have signed up so far.

The Congregation of the Daughters of Wisdom has also just opened a social care centre in Yanonge, which teaches home economics and cutting and sewing. Twenty-seven young mothers have joined up.

As far as women's leadership is concerned, out of ten listeners' clubs that are in the process of forming a network in Yanonge, six have women as moderators, while in the other four, women occupy the post of deputy moderator.

Do you have a message for our readers on the issue of gender equality?

A child, whatever its sex, deserves special attention. And women require just as much special attention as men in terms of both rights and duties!

Burundi | Community listeners' clubs: "Little by little, the bird builds its nest"

Launched in early March 2013 by FAO in Burundi, with technical support from Dimitra, the community listeners' clubs are continuing to develop their activities, in collaboration with FAO Farmer Field Schools. The pilot area covers the provinces of Bubanza, Rural Bujumbura, Bujumbura Mairie and Muramvya.

For this pilot phase, several FAO projects, notably "Consolidated Peace Fund" and "Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture", together with two projects funded by Sweden, are supporting the activities of the community listeners' clubs. This phase aims to implement the Dimitra listeners' club approach in Burundi, in so doing helping to improve access to information and communication for rural communities, especially women and young people, so as to contribute to their socio-economic and political empowerment and to food security.

Official launch with a workshop

The launch workshop, facilitated by Dimitra, was organized by FAO at the premises of the Mount Sion Church of Bujumbura from 5 to 8 March 2013. It brought together men and women facilitators of Farmer Field Schools, journalists, FAO staff members and representatives of UN Women and UNFPA. The objective was to strengthen participants' skills and capacities in social communication and gender in rural areas, with a view to setting up and facilitating community listeners' clubs in Burundi, based on the Dimitra approach. The

aim was also to explore synergies with the participatory approach of Farmer Field Schools in Burundi.

Promising beginnings

Having taken part in the launch workshop, the facilitators of the Farmer Field Schools shared the potential offered by the Dimitra community listeners' club approach with other members of the Schools. The Farmer Field Schools have played an important role in raising awareness in communities where listeners' clubs have been planned. During the subsequent meetings dedicated to setting up the clubs, the project team presented the approach in detail, including the clubs' objectives, their usefulness to grassroots communities, the attention paid to gender equality and the space given to young people, as well as their features and internal working system.

The participants were enthusiastic, expressing high expectations from the community listeners' clubs. Régine Bandyatuyage, from the Batwa community in the province of Muramvya, said: "We Batwas have long been mar-

ginalized. Through the community listeners' clubs, I intend to promote the interests of my community, especially regarding access to education".

Between March and September 2013, eleven community listeners' clubs were thus launched and the same number of solar-powered and wind-up radios was distributed. These clubs have a total of 287 members, with an average of 26 people per club. Although in principle, the number of members should be between 15 and 30, this figure has been exceeded in some places, due to the high level of enthusiasm.

Clubs are helping to reduce gender gaps

Since community listeners' club activities have been up and running, both men and women club members have started to grasp the extent of the inequalities and discrimination that women face in Burundi. Their workload is heavy, and some burdensome activities, such as housework and especially work in the fields, remain invisible since they are unpaid.

During the initial listeners' club meetings, both men and women participants understood that these new spaces for action and exchange will offer greater freedom of speech and give people a voice in society. Women in particular showed great enthusiasm. They account for 63% of club membership. Without being a cause for offence to men, women outnumber their male counterparts on the community listeners' club management committees, which were elected by both men and women participants to the meetings.



Mrs Nkinahoruri Caritas was elected as representative of the Tubumwe ("Let's Unite") CLC of Mubone Zone, Kabezi Municipality, in Rural Bujumbura Province, during the establishment meeting of the club.



Group photo at the occasion of the setting up of the Twungurane (“Let’s help one another”) listeners’ club, in Ramba Zone, Kabezi Municipality (Bujumbura rural Province).

Farmer Field Schools and community listeners’ clubs: two complementary approaches

FAO has decided to adopt a strategic two-pronged approach based on Farmer Field Schools and community listeners’ clubs. As well as contributing to agricultural development, this new approach aims to help strengthen social cohesion, women’s leadership and the empowerment of rural communities.

Farmer Field Schools are described as schools without walls, where crop farmers and livestock keepers (between 20 and 30 people) learn through observation and experimentation in their own fields. This enables them to improve their management skills and become technical experts on their farms.

The community listeners’ clubs, comprised of volunteers who may or may not be members of a Farmer Field School, will support the schools by enabling them to interact at local level with the community and with local actors, at national level with other Farmer Field Schools, and at international level with other networks of community listeners’ clubs.

Lessons and challenges

While the activities of the community listeners’ clubs in Burundi are still in the pilot phase, and although a number of challenges have yet to be addressed, the first lessons learned show that there is fertile ground.

The people of Burundi have responded enthusiastically to the awareness-raising sessions about the community listeners’ clubs, signing up massively. Members have already come up with ideas on how they can help to change attitudes and contribute to social peace. In the words of one club member: “A listeners’ club is useful for our community! It will help us to find solutions to cases such as that of Ferdinand, who poses a problem for his household and for his neighbours. He has been jailed on several occasions for domestic violence. If cases such as this were discussed on club radio broadcasts, it would help to change attitudes”.

The existence of Farmer Field Schools, to which most new community listeners’ club members already belonged, has done much to help mobilize communities and raise awareness in favour of this new approach. The Farmer Field Schools have served as an entry point to the community listeners’ clubs and

are in turn hoping to draw benefits from this partnership in a complementary area: communication with the community as a whole and between each other.

Among the challenges to be addressed before further community listeners’ club activities are carried out in Burundi, the main one concerns building solid partnerships with local radio stations. In contrast with other countries where Dimitra listeners’ clubs have been set up, such as the DRC and Niger, Burundi does not have any community radios as such – if one defines community radio as a local radio station working towards local development or in the interests of a ‘community’. In Burundi, radio stations (private or national broadcasters) mainly have national coverage. The project team is currently working to define a new kind of partnership for producing and broadcasting community listeners’ club programmes. Other potential means of communication are also being explored.

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Mauritania and Senegal | Community listeners' clubs and Farmer Field Schools, a cross-border project

Following a Dimitra listeners' clubs pilot project in Mauritania, funded by the Global Environment Facility/UNEP, FAO's regional Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) programme decided to launch 50 new Dimitra community listeners' clubs in Mauritania and Senegal.

With technical support from Dimitra, the community listeners' clubs project aims to improve access to information and communication for rural communities, especially women and young girls and boys, so as to contribute to their socio-economic empowerment and improve their food security.

This initiative explores the synergies between community listeners' clubs and Farmer Field Schools, as is the case in Burundi (see article pages 10-11).

The community listeners' clubs launch workshop

The Dimitra community listeners' clubs launch workshop was held from 24 to 28 June 2013, at the Rosso Higher Institute of Technology (Mauritania). Organized by the IPPM programme, with support from Dimitra for the facilitation, the workshop brought together 35 participants – both men and women – from Senegal and Mauritania, as well as facilitators from Farmer Field Schools, representatives from radio stations (Radio Mauritanie, Pété FM, RTS St Louis, Dunya FM) and local leaders. The participants came from areas targeted for this cross-border project in the Senegal River Valley: Gorgol, Trarza, Brakna, Guidimakha (Mauritania) and Saint Louis (Senegal).

The workshop sought to increase participants' capacities and skills in the field of social communication and gender issues in rural areas, as

a foundation for the creation and/or facilitation of Dimitra community listeners' clubs in the region.

Although conditions are different in Mauritania and Senegal, women and young girls living in rural areas of both countries face marked gender inequalities in terms of access to productive resources (access to land, education, health, credit, information, etc.). During the workshop, sessions on the subject proved surprising to some people: "I was not aware of women's situation; the daily activity clock exercise showed us that they work far harder than I thought," said one male participant.

The workshop provided an opportunity to explore several specific issues: the interaction between Farmer Field Schools and community listeners' clubs, networking and partnerships (especially with radio stations).

FFS and CLC

The Farmer Field Schools and community listeners' clubs represent two complementary approaches by FAO, based on the participation of rural communities. In practical terms, participants have reached the conclusion that setting up listeners' clubs in places where Farmer Field Schools already exist is in the interest of both approaches. The Farmer Field Schools enable the clubs to have a strong local base, with close support. And the community listeners' clubs ensure that the issues dealt with in the Farmer Field Schools reach the entire com-

munity – both women and men – through discussions and radio broadcasts.

As one IPPM facilitator observed: "Since the Farmer Field Schools have raised many expectations, we often have to turn people away. The listeners' clubs will make it possible to communicate with everyone in the community!" The clubs also strengthen the gender dimension of the Farmer Field Schools and help them to network and share information.

An active and sustainable network

Following intense discussions about networking, a series of important features have been identified to ensure that the network of community listeners' clubs is effective and sustainable:

- there must be dynamic coordination
- members must have an interest in participating
- the network must be unique, with a clear purpose
- members must know and trust each other and believe in the project
- face-to-face meetings must be held on a regular basis
- participation must be voluntary and aim at gender equality
- the working rules should be clear

Partnerships

Regarding partnerships, the radios enthusiastically highlighted the common ground between the mission of the community listeners' clubs and that of the radio stations (supporting development at local level).

The coming months will see the creation of Dimitra listeners' clubs, the organization of a series of decentralized training initiatives (gender, facilitating discussions, participation) and the setting up of partnerships with radio stations. The experience should be replicated, with new partners, in other regions of Senegal and Mauritania, as well as in other countries.

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Ghana | Starting Dimitra community listeners' clubs in West Gonja

Ghana is the first English-speaking country where Dimitra community listeners' clubs are being created. Their establishment form an integral part of FAO's Programmatic Regional Initiative in Ghana, in particular where the strengthening of rural organizations and the empowerment of the rural women and men of West Gonja are concerned. The activities started with a four-day training workshop in October 2013. The listeners' clubs will be a tool for social mobilisation and good governance.

The Dimitra community listeners' clubs (CLCs) in Ghana are created as part of FAO's Programmatic Regional Initiative to Reduce Rural Poverty (PRI). This Initiative focuses on rural poverty reduction and strengthening rural livelihoods, using the cassava value chain as entry point. It seeks to promote decent rural employment and income creation. Using an integrated approach, the PRI looks at the linkages between social protection, agricultural production, strengthened rural organizations and people's empowerment, particularly of women and youth. It is piloted in 18 communities of the West Gonja District, in the Northern Region of Ghana.

The Ghanaian Association of Church Development Projects (ACDEP) is in charge of accompanying the creation and functioning of the CLCs in West Gonja, with technical support from the FAO-Dimitra team.

Start of the activities

The launch workshop took place in Tamale, capital of the Northern Region, from 8 to 11 October 2013. An official launch with words of welcome and encouragement by Hon. Kassim Ali Bakari, West Gonja District Chief Executive, Issahaku Shaibu Alhassan, West Gonja District Director of the Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Malex Alebikiya, Executive Director of ACDEP and the FAO team kick-started the workshop.

Two thirds of the workshop participants, 10 women and 10 men, had been nominated by their communities by virtue of their active participation to community life. Other participants included ACDEP staff and facilitators, representatives of the Gender Desk, an extension worker of the Ministry of Agriculture and two representatives of community radio stations (Radio PAD and Simli Radio).

Understanding by doing and participating

The workshop's main objective was to raise awareness on the guiding principles of the Dimitra listeners' clubs such as gender equality and participatory communication, and to build capacities regarding the establishment and functioning of the clubs.

Participation and learning by doing were at the core of the workshop, using group work and participants' concrete experiences as an

entry point. Several innovative learning techniques and methodologies were used such as collective reflection based on visual tools, graphic recording of discussions, a "radio talk show" as a knowledge-sharing tool on the Dimitra listeners' clubs in Niger and the DRC, etc.

On gender

As a basic principle of the CLCs, gender equality was a crucial subject of the training. A process of collective and individual reflection was launched through various exercises on the meaning of gender, men's and women's roles in rural societies and gender bias and stereotyping.

A well-appreciated exercise was that of the daily activity clock, where participants were requested to draw a 24-hour clock and fill in the activities – one clock for women's and one for men's activities. They were asked to compare the clocks in terms of household, productive and community-related activities, as well as the time allocated for relaxing and sleeping. This analysis clearly showed that both women and men are busy, but when looking more in detail, the balance tips and shows that on top of productive activities, women also bear the brunt of household chores and care giving, and hence have little time left for leisure!

So these clubs, how do they work?

After talking through the basic steps regarding the creation and functioning of the clubs, different scenarios were proposed to participants who were invited to act them out in a role play.

Two groups enacted the first meeting of a CLC and had to decide on a name for the club, appoint Committee members, discuss Internal Regulations, etc. Another group played a CLC discussion, with members identifying solutions to a local development problem. The last group discussed a radio programme on the importance of formal education for boys and girls, in the presence of a journalist.



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The role plays were extremely useful to represent concrete situations and provide participants with perspectives to be explored and discussed. Through this and other exercises, their understanding as to the "what and how" of the Dimitra listeners' clubs grew progressively.

Reactions and commitments

The final evaluation was resoundingly positive, both with regard to the content as the participatory methodology. Some quotes: "We learned how to bring community members together for development", "We learned about the importance of community listeners' clubs, and how to form them", "Women and men together can achieve success".

Participants also committed to transferring what they learned and setting up CLCs in their respective communities. Doing so, they will contribute to the social mobilisation of their communities and to their empowerment, both crucial objectives of FAO's Programmatic Regional Initiative.

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CoOPequity | An inclusive approach based on participation, good governance and gender

Funded by the European Union, FAO's CoOPequity programme supports the implementation of policies and measures that encourage the development of equitable and efficient producer organizations (PO), in partnership with the UPA, Union des Producteurs Agricoles (Farmers Union) of Quebec. We met up with Carol Djeddah and Dubravka Bojic, responsible for implementing the programme.



What is “CoOPequity”?

CD: It takes its name from “Cooperative”, “PO” for producer organization (OP in French) and “equity”. The approach is based on gender equality and good governance.

DB: It is both a programme and a global innovative approach, created on the basis of the experience of the actors. Before, there were good practices, but for specific areas. Here, we are involved in an integrated global approach which takes account of policies, organizations and individuals.

Which countries does the CoOPequity programme cover?

CD: In Niger, we have based ourselves on the work of Dimitra, and used the results of a study regarding the place of women in POs, which showed that although women are present as members, they play virtually no role in decision-making, and even less in terms of leadership.

We have also started to implement the CoOPequity approach in Kenya, in Ghana as part of a regional initiative, as well as in Ethiopia.

What is the history behind CoOPequity?

CD: The origins of the approach are to be found in the International Year of Cooperatives in 2012. There was a great deal of debate on cooperatives, their role in a global context, how they work, who participates, etc. From this starting point, and the fact that FAO had produced a joint publication with IFAD on good practices in rural institutions¹, it was decided that it was time to put into practice what had been developed.

The authors of the publication collected some sixty examples of good practices from organizations working well in various continents, POs, cooperatives and associations at various levels: at grassroots but also at regional level, such as, for example, the Network of Farmers' and Agricultural Producers' Organisations of West Africa (ROPPA).

DB: Together, these actors chose a certain number of practices considered to be the best ones to ensure the proper functioning of organizations. The conclusion was, that if organizations are to be able to develop and provide the services needed by men and women small-scale producers, in order to reduce poverty and improve their well-being, the following will need to happen: (1) there will have to be links between the men and women farmers, so

that the organizations are based on the common interests of everyone involved; (2) the organizations will need to interact with each other, exchange experiences and join together under the umbrella of federations or unions. That will enable them to speak with one voice, be stronger and represent the interests of their members; (3) the organizations will have to interact with other actors (the government, private sector, etc.) throughout the value chain. That is the basis of the CoOPequity approach.

CD: The observation was made that there were efforts at the level of the producer organizations, but that not enough was being done to link initiatives at all levels (individual, organizational and policy); this is known as working on an enabling environment. (...)

It should be said that we are working with Dimitra to explore how to make linkages at community level. The Dimitra listeners' clubs could be exactly what we need to raise awareness about POs among members, and inform them that, by joining a PO, community members, especially women and young people, can benefit from social and financial support.

DB: I would add that the approach looks at the situation as a whole. Although work done at a particular level is certainly useful, it is more



effective when the various actions are linked. An organization cannot develop properly without an enabling environment; an organization cannot provide services for its members if it does not communicate and is unaware of the needs and interests of those it represents. And the members will not be able to express their needs unless they have access to relevant information. Information exchange based on equitable relationships between different actors is crucial, particularly if they are to be involved at all levels.

CD: This is another specific feature of CoOPequity: facilitating the implementation of platforms for information exchange and dialogue between all actors, on well-defined issues. This involves devising consultation mechanisms where problems can be solved. Inclusive platforms make it possible to gather all actors around the same table – all the PO members, women as well as men.

The “Union des Producteurs Agricoles du Québec” (UPA) is a key partner for CoOPequity; what form does the collaboration take?

CD: It varies. UPA is a project partner in all respects. It has helped to set up a legal framework in Quebec, so that the voice of POs can be heard by the government. It is a union of producer organizations, which also runs cooperation programmes in developing countries. It speaks the same language as the POs and the unions that we work with, and that has a very strong impact.

DB: Yes, UPA has a great deal of experience. It has been working in Africa for 20 years. It is based on the idea that it is essential to have a thorough knowledge of a country’s background and engage in discussions before deciding the best approach to take.

What concrete activities does CoOPequity carry out?

CD: We work at country level. For example, in Niger we started with a workshop attended by all stakeholders (umbrella groups, unions, producer organizations, ministry departments, representatives of the 3Ns initiative – the national strategy for food security that reports to the President, technical and financial partners, etc.), during which an analysis was made of their performance in terms of governance and equity, and a plan of action was jointly developed. More specifically, it was

agreed that FAO should facilitate the process of strengthening dialogue and consultation and of building organizational capacities, especially on questions of governance and equity, as well as in specific technical areas.

Effective dialogue between POs and government authorities is considered essential for the success of strategies on food and nutrition security in Niger. In the same way, better consultation between the various POs, as well as stronger capacities for mobilization and making proposals, are crucial if they are to be in a position to represent small-scale producers when talking to political decision-makers. FAO and UPA support this process.

DB: Following the last meeting on consultation between POs, organized by CoOPequity, the stakeholders decided to meet among themselves so as to define an advocacy strategy. (...) This process should ensure the sustainability of the approach. After the foundations have been laid, the various actors must be able to continue without our help.

Are there no bodies doing this work in Niger already?

CD: Yes, several structures exist, but they are not very effective and often don’t respect gender equality. It has to be said that CoOPequity has not invented anything new here, but is supporting existing initiatives so as to strengthen them. The same is true outside Niger, though each country is at a different stage. For example, there are countries where there are a great many structures. Challenges have also been encountered in places undergoing decentralization: often there are platforms in the capital, but the actors also want them at decentralized level. Each situation is different!

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¹ Good practices in building innovative rural institutions to increase food security, FAO & FIDA, 2012.



Niger and Burkina Faso | Four years of experience with capitalization

As the “Capitalization of good practices in support of agricultural production and food security” project drew to a close in May 2013, it takes stock of its achievements and activities. For more than four years, the project team has tested and adapted methodologies for experience capitalization and to identify good practices.

These capitalization methodologies are based on a participatory learning process which was implemented with a number of partners. The theme of agricultural input management was re-examined from all angles, firstly from a gender perspective, subsequently from the angle of capitalizing on experiences. As a result, the project has designed a range of thematic products on agricultural input management and participatory methodologies which can be used by organizations and projects, so as to help them capitalize on their experiences.

In the beginning

The project team started out by identifying the innovative practices in agricultural input management that had emerged from the experiences of the FAO Agricultural Inputs Project (1999-2008), and which were partly adopted by the IARBIC project (Intensifying Agriculture by Strengthening Cooperative Input Shops 2009-2013). In so doing, it compiled useful information and relevant knowledge on the theme of agricultural input management in Niger and Burkina Faso.

As part of the Capitalization project, action research helped to identify key success factors and constraints linked to the practice of inventory credit (also known as “warrantage”).

The lessons learned led to approaches for improving practices. Documents in the form of experience fact sheets and case studies were developed.

From the outset, gender was integrated into the action research and documentation. To achieve this, the team and its partners participated in awareness-raising and training sessions on gender issues, particularly using the methodology developed by the Dimitra project in its publication “Communicating Gender for Rural Development. Integrating gender in communication for development” (FAO, 2011).

The participatory action research sought to better understand the gender component of various agricultural practices, so as to increase access to these practices for the most disadvantaged people, both men and women. The studies revealed factors favourable and unfavourable to equitable practice. The project has documented good practices so as to ensure more equitable management of agricultural inputs.

The project has also documented existing methodologies for experience capitalization, in order to choose one that is best suited to the needs of FAO and the nature of the project.

Key moment: the first Knowledge Share Fair

Project partners presented their methodologies for experience capitalization during a Knowledge Share Fair held in June 2010 in Niamey. The team decided to adapt the methodology presented by the Centre for Information on Low External Input and Sustainable Agriculture (ILEIA) in its publication “Learning from experience: A manual for organising, analysing and documenting field based information” (2007) and updated it. A concept note on the process of experience capitalization is the result of this work, which was tested and validated with partners in Niger and Burkina Faso.

Like all knowledge share fairs, the one in Niamey was not an end in itself, but formed part of a process. Unlike a conference or workshop, a fair is a place for meeting and moving around, where all participants have a chance to share their experience and their knowledge. It is an occasion for social networking and participation. Planned sessions alternate with informal exchanges. Rather than presentations which follow one another and which focus on content, knowledge share fair sessions are participatory and highlight the approach taken: how was the work carried out and why? What lessons have been learned from the successes and failures? The knowledge share fair in Niamey enabled participants to exchange experiences on methodologies for capitalization, but also on content, exploring technical themes such as agricultural input management. The encounters and contacts established have also led to new lasting partnerships.

Working in partnership

The partnerships have led to a process of experience capitalization, notably in the areas of inventory credit, group orders and the management of input shops. Exchange visits aimed at promoting knowledge sharing have been organized between different national partners, as well as between Niger and Burkina Faso. The partnerships have been created both within and outside FAO. The latter category includes partnerships with the Swiss Agency

Exchange visit on inventory credit in Burkina Faso.





for Development and Cooperation, the Italian NGO CISV and COPSA-C, a cooperative based in southwest Burkina Faso, for the creation of an information and training centre on inventory credit in the country. Another partnership is that formed with the Amelie Fund, in order to strengthen the capacities of the Cigaba Union of Konkorindo in Niger concerning the rural credit system (inventory credit), integrating income generating activities, gender equality and literacy.

The art of writing

Writing workshops are another concrete stage in the capitalization process. They give an indication of levels of knowledge, but also of elements that may be missing in the documentation approach.

The aim of these workshops is to set down on paper all the information relative to a practice, in a way that is readily understandable. During the workshops, the information has been presented in new forms, such as experience fact sheets, information fact sheets, good practice fact sheets, posters, radio broadcasts, plays and videos.

Action-Training

In December 2011, the project moved to the action-training phase for partners, so that everyone – men and women – would be in a position to use the methodology for experience capitalization. For one year, the partners put into practice what they had learned during training. After the first training session, the participants left with an action plan and the promise of meeting up again to share their good practice fact sheets. Each month, the project opened its doors to its partners so that they could present their products, ask questions and talk to the team. Gradually, the products have taken shape...

How to communicate? And how to share?

The good practices and the experiences documented took many different forms. First and foremost, the goal of capitalization is to improve the quality of work, share experiences, adopt new practices and scale them up. The information documented has been adapted to different target audiences and has used various communication channels. As well as written documents, such as case studies,



The knowledge share fair in Niamey.

experience fact sheets, information fact sheets, good practice fact sheets and methodology fact sheets, the project has also produced posters with more graphic displays of information. In an effort to reach out to rural communities, radio dramas were written and performed by a local theatre group, with the aim of informing listeners about good practices in an entertaining way. The programmes, made in local languages, were broadcast by a number of rural and community radio stations. The project has also produced videos, which use images to convey ideas that the written word cannot always express. This is an excellent tool for relaying information to farmers' associations.

To close the project, mini knowledge share fairs were organized in Niger and Burkina Faso as a way of sharing the results of the project with all the partners and stakeholders. Since December 2012, the project partners have continued the work of dissemination and appropriation. The manner in which they have taken up new good practices will be part of the next phase.

For more information on partners' experiences in the fields of inventory credit, group orders, input shops and Farmer Field Schools, visit: www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/capitalization-gp/theme-agricultural-input-management/en

For more information on methodologies for experience capitalization and documenting good practices, visit: www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/capitalization-gp/theme-experience-capitalization/en

For more information on methodologies to integrate gender in inventory credit, visit: www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/capitalization-gp/theme-gender/en

For more information:

- FAO Knowledge Management and Gender Programme website: www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/resources/en/
- Capitalization of good practices project: www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/capitalisation-bp/thematique-gestiondesintrants-agricoles/en/
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Kenya | Sokopepe, where producers meet buyers

For many years, farmers in Kenya have struggled to find markets for their agricultural and livestock products. Often, they resort to using brokers in an effort to find ready markets, especially those who grow perishable commodities. The brokers generally buy at lower prices and farmers hardly receive timely and reliable up-to-date market pricing information, therefore always ending up not getting the best deal. To help farmers address these challenges, the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) developed Sokopepe, an agricultural commodity trading platform that links small scale producers to end retailers or bulk purchasers.

Sokopepe (Swahili for 'virtual market') is aimed at harnessing the power of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to enable farmers to efficiently reach markets and obtain fair prices for their produce. At the same time, it increases the efficiency in the agriculture value chain by providing farmers with a platform to share information and execute electronic transactions.

How it works

The Sokopepe platform is accessible online (www.sokopepe.co.ke) and by mobile phone. A mobile short code is used to get information about prices of commodities in distant markets as well as farming tips. This information empowers farmers to determine the price of their commodities and how best to farm for quality.

The majority of the farmers do not own an internet-linked mobile phone, but most transactions on the platform can be completed using a basic mobile telephone through SMS, making it also accessible to farmers in remote locations. This has made it possible for people who did not have direct access to online agricultural information before, particularly women and youth, to use the system. In other words, it has brought previously excluded members of the community to the mainstream, enabling them to participate in the agriculture value chain at various levels.

Knowing the best price

Mr. Muthee Mwangi, a tomato farmer from Githima (Ol-moran Division, Laikipia West County) was introduced to Sokopepe through a series of ALIN capacity building workshops for farmers on ways to improve the marketing of their farm produce. He now uses Sokopepe to inquire about commodity prices and receives instant feedback on his phone. He therefore no longer has to rely on brokers to access the market. At one point, Mwangi and his farmers' group sold 14 tons of tomatoes through Sokopepe.

"I have made several connections with buyers from different parts of the country and I am presented with several options which enable me to choose the buyer with the best offer," said Mwangi.

"We have suffered for a long time from lack of timely information about the price of the commodities that we grow. With Sokopepe, we now always know the best price in the big towns and are able to negotiate better with buyers. I am also happy because I receive farming tips on pests and diseases control and I am able to buy the right drugs for my crops and animals just through my phone," says Ms Veronica Kemunto, a farmer based in Ng'arua Division in Laikipia West County.

Distinct differences

Sokopepe differs from existing agricultural marketing platforms in some distinct ways. In addition to providing real time prices of commodities, it avails tips on farming and livestock keeping and has an integrated mobile money transfer service to facilitate secure users' transactions. Developed with the support of the Ford Foundation, Sokopepe contains geo-coded locations for produce storage facilities such as cereal banks, stockists of farm inputs and providers of allied professional services including extension and veterinary services.

With mobile penetration in Kenya headed to surpass the 80% mark, it means that virtually every one can use the service. All one needs to remember is the short code!

"Our intention is to use technology to put farmers, pastoralists and entrepreneurs in the driving seat while making decision about where to sell their commodities and where to purchase their inputs," said ALIN's Regional Director, James Nguo.

ALIN has piloted Sokopepe in Laikipia West County. A cooperative named the Laikipia Pro-



duce and Marketing Cooperative Society has been formed with support from ALIN to help farmers increase their produce and take control of the market. Recently, Sokopepe was launched and spread out to all ALIN Maarifa centres¹ and nationwide.

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¹ A Maarifa centre is a place where communities access information resources. The centre is equipped with computers and internet access. It is an information hub where local knowledge is documented by communities with the support of field officers and shared widely.

Uganda | U-report spearheads the mobilization of youth

U-Report is a free SMS-based system that allows young Ugandans to speak out on what's happening in communities across the country, and work together with other community leaders for positive change. Developed by UNICEF Uganda and launched in May 2011, U-report is revolutionizing social mobilization, monitoring and response efforts. The initiative equips mobile phone users with the tools to establish and enforce new standards of transparency and accountability in development programming and services.

By sending the text message, "join", to a toll-free number and submitting a few personal details, anyone with a mobile phone can become a volunteer 'U-reporter', sharing their observations and ideas on a wide range of development issues. In less than a year, the population of U-reporters had grown to over 89,000, with 400 to 500 joining the network daily. Early October 2013, the number of members reached 238,702.

Engaging and empowering youth

Collaborating on the effort, UNICEF's U-report team and a group of nine partner organizations meet regularly to determine which issues to discuss with Uganda's youth, who make up the majority of U-reporters. Topics have included female genital mutilation (FGM), outbreaks of disease, safe water, early marriage, education, health and inflation.

Once a topic is decided, UNICEF sends a question via SMS text to U-reporters, who can respond either with a simple menu-based reply or with personal messages. The UNICEF team analyses and interprets the responses, sharing the results and often following up with additional questions or suggestions.

U-report has gained popularity because it has given Ugandans the ability to inform other Ugandans and to take action. UNICEF can ask questions about issues throughout the country and get answers right away – by district, by gender, by age. This helps the organization to know where to concentrate its resources and how best to advise government and aid partners.

UNICEF Representative in Uganda, Sharad Sapra: "U-report enables us to harness community information so we can judge the effectiveness of our programmes in meeting identified needs. It also engages our aid beneficiaries in monitoring programme progress."

Achieving equity for the hardest-to-reach

U-report was instrumental in addressing the recent outbreak of a mysterious epilepsy-related illness known as 'nodding disease', which mainly affects children under age 15. Over 3,000 cases have been reported to date. UNICEF noted an increase in messages about the disease from U-reporters in northern districts, and the U-report team was able to inform affected communities about symptoms and available treatment.

The programme offers a promising way to monitor education and child protection efforts as well. And U-report may also be a catalyst for more responsible and responsive governance. The initiative is garnering interest from Uganda's government and media, resulting in increased engagement by members of Parliament.

UNICEF is now working to increase access to the technology by creating versions of the app in Luo, a language spoken in northern Uganda, and in Karimojong, which is spoken in the north-eastern region. The initiative is also working with telecommunication companies to equip telephone booths with U-report service for those without access to a mobile phone.



"U-report offers a cost-effective, easy-to-implement means of assuring accountability by tapping community knowledge to learn the local and personal impact of policy and development schemes, health interventions and outbreaks," Mr Sapra said. "It is a 'killer app' for communication toward achieving equitable outcomes for children and their families."

✦ **For more information:**
www.ureport.ug

U-report Burundi – Coming Soon!

During a test phase in July/August 2013, U-report Burundi registered more than 500 U-reporters, and recorded a 70% response rate to the first live poll. More than 300 volunteers from key partner organizations – including the Burundi Red Cross, Scouts and Guides – have been certified as U-report trainer-of-trainers and are expected to drive user mobilization and registration efforts throughout the country. Live registration is scheduled to resume in mid-October 2013 – via the short-code "156" – with a public launch planned for early 2014.

U-report is made up of:

- Weekly SMS messages and polls to and from a growing community of U-reporters
- Regular radio programmes that will broadcast stories gathered by U-report
- Newspaper articles that will publish stories from the U-report community.

U-report's mission

- Inspire action within our communities to unite and share the responsibility of creating a better environment for everyone.
- Inspire action from our leaders: let them know what's going on and what action your community wants.
- Share info that U-report gathers through different media (radio, TV, community dialogue, website, and youth events).

India | How rural women farmers are solving problems in Gujarat

To celebrate the International Day of Rural Women on 15 October, FAO published four life stories on its gender website (<http://www.fao.org/gender> - Bite-sized stories). These stories illustrate how rural women farmers in Gujarat, India found solutions to some of the challenges they faced. They offer a timely look at how empowering rural women leads to improved food security, agricultural production, economic growth and well-being for families and communities. We feature two of the stories here...

When the price is right...

Like many smallholders around the world, the women farmers in rural Gujarat, India, lacked access to market information and disposable cash to pay for the transport of their products to local or nearby markets. They tended to sell their goods to local traders at whatever price the traders dictated. As a result, they received low returns for their produce, while the traders captured significant profits. Moreover, most of the farmers lacked access to storage facilities. This meant that many of them tended to sell the same agricultural produce simultaneously at harvest time, driving their prices down even further.

In response, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a non-governmental organization of poor, self-employed women workers across India, many of whom are rural women farmers, set up a simple market price information system to help rural women get better and fairer prices for their goods.

How it works

Each day, SEWA sends a text message to a few select members in each village, who have been provided with mobile phones. The messages include up-to-date spot and future prices for major cash crops or commodities in three or four of the nearest markets.

The members post the updated prices (in the local language) on a public chalk board that is easily accessible to the community – usually outside a local government office or health centre. Another member then uses a mobile phone to take a picture of the updated board and send it to SEWA headquarters in Ahmedabad, where the data is triangulated to verify its accuracy.

With this information the women farmers throughout the village are able to sell their produce at higher – and fairer – market prices individually. In addition, they are able to group together and reach consensus to bulk and transport produce to nearby markets, thereby skipping the middleman, increasing their income, and decreasing risk. Some of them have even begun using warehouse receipt systems to store crops while they wait for higher prices. These systems allow farmers to deposit their non-perishable cash crop at harvest time. In return, they have the option to obtain a loan against the deposit, or a partial payment (at a share they determine). Otherwise, they can leave the stock in storage until market prices rise, at which point they can sell it. This has reduced the profit margin that traders and middlemen had once made, but greatly increased the income of the women farmers themselves.

In the long term, the women are able to use the future pricing data to better plan their crops and make more informed harvesting decisions.

A different kind of library

Poor farmers often lack the basic tools and equipment they need for farm work. They may try to obtain such equipment on loan after other farmers have completed their work, but very often they have to do without it, or wait until the equipment is available. This can affect or delay planting and harvesting, thereby reducing their yields and increasing the risk of crises. In response, SEWA developed a tools “library” system for sharing equipment in groups.

How it works

In several districts, women farmers who are SEWA members come together to discuss, identify and agree on the tools and equipment they need most. The women pool their resources to buy a single farm implement or other tool. The equipment is then loaned to each member that needs it at a fixed low rate, on a rotating or as needed basis.

When the tool is not in use by SEWA members, it's hired out to other farmers in the village at going market rate. The income from these hires is used to pay for equipment repairs, or to purchase other tools that may be needed for the growing library. If no new tools or equipment are needed, the income is shared among the members.

The tools libraries stock basic farming equipment such as hand hoes, ploughs and oxcarts. In addition, they stock solar lanterns, solar panels and biogas generators, as well as first aid kits, water quality test kits, and even ropes and stakes for emergency rescue during floods. The library system provides farmers with access to tools and equipment they would otherwise not be able to afford, and helps them to improve productivity and income. There are now numerous self-sustaining tools and equipment libraries in community learning centres where SEWA operates.



Family farming – Recognizing the contribution of women and men

Family farming and smallholder farming are an important basis for sustainable food production through which rural livelihoods are improved. While family farms tend to be highly efficient in terms of agricultural productivity per unit of land, the small or medium scale have limited bargaining power and capacity to defend their interests in food systems. This is why the International Year of Family Farming in 2014.

Beyond an agricultural model, family farming is a way of life, where both men and women have different roles and responsibilities. As elsewhere, what men and women do and are responsible for is largely determined by what is socially considered acceptable. In many cultures, men serve more often as managers – making decisions about what crops to plant, how much land to use, whether to make by-products and where to sell the food. Their tasks on the family farm can also include preparing the soil for planting and harvesting, while women usually do the planting, weeding and post-harvest processing. It is the combination of men's and women's efforts that make family farming work.

The challenges family farmers, especially women, face also include the lack of a clear line to divide family life and work. National data from a number of countries show that most unpaid family farmers are women, who also work longer hours than men when both agricultural work and household chores are counted.

Family farmers, who tend to be unsalaried workers, miss out on benefits, such as retirement, maternity leave and child care. And here women face greater disadvantages. Female managers of family farms tend to own less

land and livestock than their male counterparts, and have less access to financial credit and services, markets to sell their products and time-saving technology. Climate change, food price volatility and economic globalization also create difficulties for family farms.

To highlight the important contribution that family farming and smallholder farming can make to food security and poverty eradication, the year 2014 was named the International Year of Family Farming by the UN. "FAO and its partners will hold consultations, encouraging countries to adopt policies that support family farmers with social protection programmes and rural services, including medical care and agricultural extension and training," says Ana Paula Dela O Campos, FAO Gender Policy Officer. "If agricultural policies are designed to respond to both women's and men's needs and consider their roles in family agriculture," she explains, "they will be in a stronger position to increase agricultural production and reduce rural poverty."



©FAO/Antonello Provo

What is family farming? Family agriculture, is a type of agriculture, forestry, and aquaculture production operated by a family and based on family labour, that of the family and the farm and combine economic, social and cultural

* www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/home/en

FAO Policy on Gender Equality



Gender equality is central to FAO's mandate to achieve food security for all by raising levels of nutrition, improving agricultural productivity and natural resource management, and improving the lives of rural populations. FAO

can achieve its goals only if it simultaneously works towards gender equality and supports women's diverse roles in agriculture and rural development. Gender equality is not only an essential means by which FAO can achieve its mandate, it is also a basic human right.

In pursuing its goals, FAO is mandated to promote and protect human rights and gender equality and to work in ways that ensure that it contributes to their realization, by addressing the underlying causes of human rights violations, including discrimination against women and girls. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is the overarching UN document that formally recognizes universally agreed human rights, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is central to the issue of gender equality. CEDAW obliges governments to promote, protect and fulfil the equal rights of men and women in their own jurisdictions.

The purpose of this policy document is to provide FAO with a framework for guiding its

efforts to achieve gender equality in all its technical work, and for assessing results; it calls on the whole Organization to contribute to these efforts. The policy specifies FAO's goal and objectives related to gender equality and delineates an accountability structure for ensuring policy oversight and achievement of results. This structure includes specifications of the roles and responsibilities for coordinating and supporting implementation of the policy. A separate human resource action plan addressing gender parity issues within FAO has been developed for 2010–2013, and a gender policy for human resources is planned for the longer term.

* FAO, 2013 - www.fao.org/docrep/regina.laub@fao.org



New FAO publications

All publications are available on www.fao.org/docrep

☉ **Gender Equality and Food Security – Women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger**

There is a strong relationship between gender-based discrimination and the different channels through which households and individuals access food – through own-production, access to waged employment, or social protection. The report shows that while equality of treatment between women and men and food security are mutually supportive, gender equality remains an elusive goal in many parts of Asia and the Pacific. A transformation of traditional gender roles is urgently needed. Such a transformation should build on improved information about the range of inequalities and specific constraints facing women. In addition, in order for gender equality strategies and food security strategies to complement each other and for their synergies to be maximized, a combination should be found between the recognition of the constraints women face, the adoption of measures that help relieve women of their burdens, and the redistribution of gender roles in the discharging of family responsibilities. The report explores how this combination can be achieved, identifying the best practices that have emerged both in the Asian and Pacific region and in other parts of the world.

FAO & Asian Development Bank, 2013

☉ **Partnering for Results – 29 success stories**

Looking towards a future of expanding populations and decreasing resources, the importance of FAO’s experience and know-how in the drive to end hunger increases even further. FAO shares its expertise by working with farmers, scientists and governments in seeking to improve agricultural production and the lives of rural people. The overall goal is to ensure that everyone has enough nutritious food to eat. Lessons learned stand as a further rich source of knowledge that FAO can draw upon and share. Of course, we cannot do this work alone. It is vital that we act in tandem with partners from the international community, the private sector and foundations to overcome food insecurity and malnutrition, increase agricultural production while protecting the environment, reduce rural poverty, support inclusive and efficient food systems, and increase communities’ resilience to threats and crises. The 29 stories show what can be achieved when FAO swings into action. They describe what FAO has introduced, what it has improved and, most of all, what it has left behind in working with its partners and contributing to food and nutrition security and sustainable resource management. One of the stories describes FAO-Dimitra’s community listeners’ clubs approach.

A short Partnering for Results video features five stories showing the many ways in which FAO has made a difference. One of them talks about the FAO-Dimitra’s community listeners’ clubs in Niger.

FAO, 2013

☉ **Passport to Mainstreaming Gender in Water Programmes – Key questions for interventions in the agricultural sector**

The purpose of the passport is to support development practitioners in mainstreaming a gender perspective during planning, implementation and management of agricultural water management projects and programmes. This implies assessing the implications of any intervention on women and men, girls and boys, through a participatory approach, while designing gender sensitive interventions. The expected outcome is improved performance of water management projects and systems, while strengthening the position of rural women or other disadvantaged groups.

FAO/Gewamed/GWA, 2013

☉ **Rural Women and the Millennium Development Goals**

This 12-page fact sheet highlights the progress of rural women against key Millennium Development Goal (MDG) indicators, pointing to some of the advancements made and gaps that still exist. It suggests that globally, and with only a few exceptions, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and men for every MDG indicator for which data are available. While data collection along these lines has improved in recent years – in part because of increased donor and government interest – there still remains a general lack of data not only disaggregated by sex, but also by rural and urban areas. This has an impact on our global ability to confidently monitor progress toward the MDGs for all people in all regions, urban and rural, and particularly where progress is needed most.

Inter-Agency Task Force on Rural Women (led by FAO, IFAD and WFP), 2013

See also: www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/rural-women/facts-figures.html

☉ **The State of Food and Agriculture 2013 – Food systems for better nutrition**

Malnutrition in all its forms – undernutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and overweight and obesity – imposes unacceptably high economic and social costs on countries at all income levels. Improving nutrition and reducing these costs requires a multisectoral approach that begins with food and agriculture and includes complementary interventions in public health and education. The traditional role of agriculture in producing food and generating income is fundamental, but the entire food system – from inputs and production, through processing, storage, transport and retailing, to consumption – can contribute much more to the eradication of malnutrition.

FAO, 2013

www.fao.org/publications/sofa

☉ **Training guide – Gender and climate change research in agriculture and food security for rural development**

Both women and men play a significant role in safeguarding food security, and their respective roles and responsibilities need to be well understood to ensure that men and women benefit equally from climate-smart agriculture practices. Little research, however, has been undertaken to understand how men and women are adapting to climate change, mitigating emissions and maintaining food security. As one of many steps toward addressing this gap, FAO and CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS) have developed this training guide. It provides a clear understanding of the concepts related to gender and climate-smart agriculture; describes participatory methods for conducting gender-sensitive research on the impacts of climate change; and offers guidance on different ways of reporting research findings so that they can be properly analysed. Using the guide will ensure that critical information on gender and climate change is collected, allowing researchers and development workers to formulate appropriate gender-sensitive policies and programmes for rural development. An Infographic “Equal access to resources and power for food security in the face of climate change” has been published along the training guide, showing women’s access to financial and productive resources, decision-making fora, knowledge, technology, land, water, services and markets, illustrating the link to food security and climate change.

FAO & CGIAR/CCAFS, 2013 (second edition)
www.fao.org/climatechange/micca/gender/en

☉ **Understanding and integrating gender issues into livestock projects and programme – A checklist for practitioners**

This booklet is designed to facilitate gender analysis in projects and programmes in the livestock sector. It identifies the main challenges faced by smallholder farmers, especially women, in small livestock management (particularly poultry and small ruminants) and in dairy farming. These specific livestock subsectors, including all activities related to dairy farming, have been specifically selected for this study because of women’s significant contribution and involvement. The booklet is intended to help livestock experts and professionals involved in field projects and interventions to identify the main constraints faced by women and men in accessing, controlling and managing small livestock and dairy farming and design projects and programmes that address these challenges.

FAO, 2013

Resources

Note: Most of the publications mentioned here are available on-line for free (unless otherwise specified). Most web links are too long to provide in their entirety. If the publications are hard to find on the organisations' websites, it usually suffices to do a google search.

◎ Chain empowerment: Supporting African farmers to develop markets

Using easy-to-understand language and richly illustrated with drawings and case studies, this book demonstrates how smallholder farmers can earn more by taking control of value chains. Providing numerous insights, the text shows the need to invest in improving the quality of existing products, developing new products, establishing market linkages and building farmer organisation and capacity.

CTA, KIT, Faida, IIRR, 2012
<http://publications.cta.int>

◎ Challenging chains to change: Gender equity in agricultural value chain development

This book explains how development organizations and private entrepreneurs have found ways to improve the position of women in value chains – especially small-scale women farmers and primary processors. It outlines five broad strategies for doing this: (1) working with women on typical “women’s products” such as shea, poultry and dairy, (2) opening up opportunities for women to work on what are traditionally “men’s commodities” or in men’s domains, (3) supporting women and men in organizing for change by building capacity, organization, sensitization and access to finance, (4) using standards and certification to promote gender equity, and (5) promoting gender-responsible business. The book draws on dozens of cases from all over the world, covering a wide range of crops and livestock products.

KIT, Agri-ProFocus, IIRR, 2012
www.kitpublishers.nl

◎ From counting women to making women count: Focusing on women in media development programs

Women’s voices are essential to the development of societies; correspondingly, gender equality and female empowerment are necessary to finding solutions to the world’s most pressing development challenges. Although gender concerns have been part of development programmes for almost 40 years, a wide range of stakeholders report that it continues to be an afterthought, or just a box to tick during programme implementation. This paper argues that like other sectors, the media development sector needs to bring greater empirical rigor to its operations in order to bring about gender integration. It attempts to orient media development practitioners with both a historical and contemporary view of key policies, research and approaches to gender integration, as produced by media development scholars, practitioners and the donor community.

Internews, 2013
www.internews.org

◎ From marginalisation to empowerment: The potential of land rights to contribute to gender equality – observations from Guatemala, India and Sierra Leone

For many years, activists have campaigned for women’s rights to access, control, and, where context allows, own land. This is in recognition of the fact that land is important not only for growing food or as a place to build a home. Land is also a resource that can be used to generate other forms of livelihoods, a place to belong to, and an identity. This is true for both women and men. ActionAid’s hypothesis, therefore, is that if women have guaranteed, independent rights to land, they will be empowered to better enjoy all their rights. This report aims to set out initial empirical research that affirms this as a fact.

ActionAid, 2013
www.actionaid.org/publications

◎ Gender equality and economic growth: Is there a win-win?

To what extent does gender equality contribute to economic growth? And to what extent does the reverse relationship hold true? There are a growing number of studies exploring these relationships, generally using cross-country regression analysis. They are characterised by varying degrees of methodological rigour to take account of the problems associated with econometric analysis at this highly aggregated level, including the problems of reverse causality. Bearing these problems in mind, a review of this literature suggests that the relationship between gender equality and economic growth is an asymmetrical one. The evidence that gender equality, particularly in education and employment, contributes to economic growth is far more consistent and robust than the relationship that economic growth contributes to gender equality in terms of health, wellbeing and rights. From a growth perspective, therefore, the promotion of certain dimensions of gender equality may appear to offer a win-win solution but from a gender equity perspective, there is no guarantee that growth on its own will address critical dimensions of gender equality. Either growth strategies would need to be reformulated to be more inclusive in their impacts or redistributive measures would need to be put in place to ensure that men and women benefit more equally from growth.

IDS Working Paper 417, 2013
www.ids.ac.uk/publication

◎ Gender, poverty and environmental indicators on African countries

This is the thirteenth volume of this publication, which also provides some information on the broad development trends relating to gender, poverty and environmental issues in the 54 African countries covered. It is divided in three main parts: Part One presents a special feature article on “Facilitating green growth in Africa: Perspectives from the African Development Bank”. Part two presents comparative cross-country data on Millennium Development Goals, Gender, Poverty and the Environment; and Part Three provides detailed country-specific data for each of the 54 countries.

ADB, 2013
www.afdb.org

◎ Information technology and farm households in Niger

This technical report seeks to understand the impact of improved access to information technology on farmers’ agricultural production and marketing practices in sub-Saharan Africa, with a specific focus on Niger. Related research suggests that access to mobile telephony can reduce communication and search costs, thereby increasing rural households’ access to price and labour market information. Reducing information asymmetries should, in theory, allow households to better respond to shocks. The report finds that increased access to a mobile phone via an adult education program increases the diversity of crops planted, particularly marginal cash crops grown by women. This also increases the likelihood that these cash crops are grown, but does not increase the farm-gate price received.

UNDP, 2012
www.undp.org

◎ No accident: Resilience and the inequality of risk

Oxfam strongly supports the new international effort to build resilience. It believes that if those efforts are to have maximum impact, they must address inequality and power, which are too often overlooked. The report calls for a new approach to poverty reduction in order to deal with the range of risks that the poorest people increasingly face, be they systematic shocks such as food price hikes and ‘natural’ disasters through to long-term stresses from climate change and protracted conflict and household risk like unexpected illness. The report shows that vulnerability to many of these risks is higher in countries with greater income inequality. Women face an overwhelming burden because of their social, political and economic status. It is therefore crucial that resilience-building addresses the underlying causes of vulnerability, not just the symptoms.

Oxfam Briefing Paper, 2013
www.oxfam.org



☉ **Unlocking the potential: Women and mobile financial services in emerging markets**

Mobile financial services (MFS) are emerging rapidly in the developing world. Mobile operators, financial institutions, governments and other service providers are figuring out how to build attractive and user-friendly services, distribution networks and marketing approaches to embed MFS into their national infrastructures with viable, long-term business models. A consistently overlooked theme in these discussions has been women, including their wants and needs for and use of mobile financial services, as well as their critical role in the success of any mobile financial services deployment. This is not a surprise: there is a gender gap in terms of women's ownership and use of mobile services generally. Despite the proven role women's financial inclusion can play in advancing economic development and empowerment, and despite the role mobile might play, the linkages between women's financial inclusion and mobile financial services thus far have not been illuminated and elevated for discussion. This report offers insights on women's needs for financial management tools and use of mobile financial services in Indonesia, Kenya, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea and Tanzania. It also contains implications for action for mobile financial service providers in any emerging market.

GSMA, 2013
www.gsma.com

☉ **Women's collective action: Unlocking the potential of agricultural markets**

Development actors are increasingly prioritising 'investing in women' to ensure food security and sustainability—as well as equity—in agricultural development. In this context, collective action is a critical but poorly understood way for women small-scale farmers to strengthen their engagement in agricultural markets. This report provides rigorous new evidence, from quantitative and qualitative research carried out in Ethiopia, Mali and Tanzania, on the economic and empowerment benefits of women's participation in collective action groups across different agricultural farming systems and markets. The success factors and intervention strategies that have enabled women to benefit most are analysed in order to identify lessons for the future. The research highlights gaps in both current development practice and the wider policy environment which need to be addressed to ensure that collective action in agricultural markets is effective and empowering for rural women.

Oxfam International, Oxfam Research Reports, 2013
<http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications>
<http://womenscollectiveaction.com/>

☉ **Youth and skills: Putting education to work**

Many young people around the world – especially the disadvantaged – are leaving school without the skills they need to thrive in society and find decent jobs. As well as thwarting young people's hopes, these education failures are jeopardizing equitable economic growth and social cohesion, and preventing many countries from reaping the potential benefits of their growing youth populations. The 2012 Education for All Global Monitoring Report examines how skills development programmes can be improved to boost young people's opportunities for decent jobs and better lives.

UNESCO, 2013
www.unesco.org

☉ **One finger cannot lift a rock: Facilitating innovation platforms to trigger institutional change in West Africa | Putting heads together: Agricultural innovation platforms in practice**

Setting up and facilitating a multi-stakeholder platform in order to stimulate innovation or institutional change is more of an art than a science. These two volumes from KIT Publishers, based on contributions from practising facilitators working in nine African countries, provide plenty of valuable grassroots experience for those attempting the process. No two innovation platforms are likely to be the same, but the case studies presented here highlight the different ways in which they can work, and how facilitators can support different stages in the innovation cycle. The first publication focuses on examples from Ghana, Mali and Benin, while the second also includes experiences of facilitators working in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.

KIT Publishers, 2012
www.kitpublishers.nl

☉ **On Norms and Agency – Conversations about gender equality with women and men in 20 countries**

This study covered 20 countries in all world regions, where over 4,000 women and men, in remote and traditional villages and dense urban neighbourhoods, in more than 500 focus groups, discussed the effects of gender differences and inequalities on their lives. Despite diverse social and cultural settings, traits and expectations of the ideal "good" woman and "good" man were remarkably similar across all sample urban and rural communities. Participants acknowledged that women are actively seeking equal power and freedom, but must constantly negotiate and resist traditional expectations about what they are to do and who they are to be. When women achieve the freedom to work for pay or get more education, they must still accommodate their gains to these expectations, especially on household responsibilities.

The World Bank, 2012
www.worldbank.org/reference

☉ **Smallholder agriculture's contribution to better nutrition**

Food insecurity and under-nutrition remain pressing problems in the developing world. Despite their direct contribution to food production, small-scale farmers and their households are disproportionately vulnerable to these forms of hunger. This paper addresses the question of how smallholder agriculture that is sustainable can contribute to improving food security and reducing under-nutrition. With a review of the literature and using five country case studies – Ghana, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Zambia and India – it examines the contribution of smallholder agricultural development to attaining improved food security and nutrition, how development policy might strengthen its contribution, what complementary actions are needed, and what the political conditions for better policy may be. The report sets out 12 recommendations for food security and nutrition-sensitive smallholder agricultural development.

ODI, 2013
www.odi.org.uk

☉ **Transforming agricultural development and production in Africa: Closing gender gaps and empowering rural women in policy and practice**

This report shares the results of a joint programme of IFAD, the Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS), and the Belgian Fund for Food Security. The programme included participants from more than 20 countries, a majority from Sub-Saharan Africa, and represented a diverse range of stakeholders. Among other critical points, the stakeholders crafted a theory of change to help guide strategic decision-making. Participants also outlined a number of innovative approaches to help – jointly - improve rural agricultural development and empower women.

IFAD, SGS, BFFS, 2012
www.ifad.org/gender