New Phase of the Project

These positive reactions to the Dimitra Guidebook Europe prompted FAO-SDWW (Women in Development Service) to proceed with the project and extend it, in an initial phase, to the regions of Africa and the Near East. The project is now executed by FAO with funds from the Belgian Administration for Development Cooperation (BADC). It is still located in Brussels at the King Baudouin Foundation, which continues to provide office space and material support.

The new phase consists of updating the Dimitra Guidebook Europe and its extension to NGOs, research institutes, information centres and networks in Africa and the Near East. The project will again aim to make the information provided relevant and easily accessible to all. We hope that it will contribute to gender awareness raising among policy makers and practitioners.

In this new phase the project has added two very important components:

1. Accessibility of the information on line, via the Internet, under SD Dimensions, FAO Homepage in the coming weeks.

The information collected on Europe, Africa and the Near East will be freely accessible on the Internet. The project will also use the Internet and e-mail for obtaining, communicating and sharing information between Southern and Northern organisations. The project endeavours to make the database an on-line information exchange forum and to let information circulate through its Website and the dissemination of a Newsletter published twice a year (in English and French).

2. Partnership with local organisations for the collection and processing of information in the Africa and Near East region.

Local organisations in Africa and the Near East will collaborate on the collection and dissemination of information with the project. With this strategy we hope to ensure that the information will remain relevant for all development actors and that the priorities defined will indeed be their own since Southern organisations will take part in the process of identifying and selecting the issues to be treated.

The data collected on the 3 regions will also be published in book form, since many people (especially in the South) are not yet connected to the Internet. These publications will be widely disseminated. The publication of the second Europe Guidebook is scheduled for the year 2000, and the Africa/Near East Guidebook for 2001. At the end of the project, a CD-ROM will allow cheap and fast updating for all regions.

Is your organisation located in Africa, the Near East or Europe? Are you interested in providing information on your projects or research studies? Do not hesitate to send us your information.

It is my great pleasure and privilege to present the first issue of the Dimitra Newsletter, produced by the Dimitra Project, named after the ancient Greek goddess of agriculture, which is supported by the Service for Women in Development (SDWW) of FAO. This project is the continuation and extension of the Dimitra Project on Rural Women and Development, previously operated by the King Baudouin Foundation with the financial support of the Commission of the European Union.

One of the main objectives of the project is to systematically emphasise the multiple roles and the essential contribution of rural women to the development of their country and to contribute to information exchange among development actors. The history, aims and objectives of the project are detailed in this Bulletin and I will not proceed further in this matter.

This project supports the priorities set up by FAO’s Plan of Action for Women in Development (1996-2001). It constitutes a handy working tool for increasing collaboration between FAO, NGOs and civil society organisations. The Dimitra Project also fits well with FAO’s Plan of Action for Women, as it will allow the dissemination of information on the nature of projects implemented with or by rural women. FAO’s Special Programme for Food Security mentions one of its main principles “the respect of women’s contribution” and “to emphasise their important participation in food crop production as farmers and agricultural workers”. The project will shed light on the role of rural women and will enable their organisations to participate in an international network. And, last but not least, by describing the multiple activities of rural women, the project will reinforce their essential role as protectors of the environment and guarantors for food security.

This year, the theme of FAO World Food Day is “Women feed the world”. I see it as a good omen and I wish the Dimitra Project and its numerous participants good luck and success.

Marie Randryamamonjy
Chief, Women in Development Service (SDWW)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
Project Descriptions and Research Studies

To contribute to the celebration of World Food Day, this edition of the newsletter will provide several examples of development projects or research studies which deal mainly with food security. You will find more details in the database and in the future Dimitra Guidebooks.

■ WOMANKIND WORLDWIDE, United Kingdom

Ghana, Bawku (Upper East Region): Credit scheme. Aim: providing women farmers with greater access to credit, resulting in more stable and reliable forms of income. This region is one of the most deprived parts of Ghana, from where many emigrate to find work in more prosperous regions. As a result, many households with dependent children in Bawku are headed by women. Income-generating projects are an obvious solution for women to support themselves and their families, but, with no access to credit, it is impossible to set up a small enterprise. In fact, access to credit through formal banking structures is very limited in rural areas. It is even more limited for women, who are often illiterate and lack collateral.

Members of the Bawku East Women’s Development Association (BEWDA) received assistance from WOMANKIND in setting up a Revolving Loan Fund to meet their need for credit. With these loans women have been able to establish small farming, food-processing, pito-brewing and marketing enterprises. From their profits the women make repayments which can then be given as loans to others. Training programmes help individual women and groups administer and manage their loans well.

BEWDA has also set up different programmes to improve the standard of living of people in the community: literacy classes; health workers provide advice on birth spacing and raise awareness of health institutions to organise educational workshops; (i) the effects the project has had on the roles and needs of women in the area.

Contact person: Dr. Kate YOUNG
3 Albion Place, Galena Road
London W6 0LT, United Kingdom
Tel: 44-181-5638607 Fax: 44-181-5638611
e-mail: womankind@gn.apc.org
http://www.womankind.org

■ VETERINAIRES SANS FRONTIERES, France

Guinea, Bissikrima: animal husbandry and natural resource management programme. General objectives: to work towards food security by increasing livestock and income; to work towards professionalising organisation of animal breeders; to work towards natural resource management by the villagers. This project is not specifically oriented towards women, but they are involved in all of the activities. The project intervention is based on a global strategy that consists of:

- training in basic animal health, food complements, and literacy for the whole rural population, and for women in particular;
- specialised training for villagers (men and women) chosen by their communities: animal husbandry assistants, group managers, village literacy trainers, village leaders;
- support for the establishment and consolidation of rural organisations.

Contact person: Bernadette GUION-BENOITE
14 Avenue Berthelot, 75014 Paris, France
F-69361 Lyon Cédez 07, France
Tel: 33-4-76897959 Fax: 33-4-76897956
e-mail: vsf@globalnet.org

■ CARE DANMARK

Bangladesh: uplift, Local Initiative for Farmer Training. The objective is to improve the financial security and nutrition of small-scale farmers. This is achieved by means of bio-intensive production of vegetables, fruit and trees as well as by establishing systems for local supply and distribution of e.g. seeds and seedlings. The strategy of the project is to develop a network of local advisors to educate the other farmers in sustainable production techniques. Today 528 small farmers, including 262 women, work as local advisors. They introduce sustainable farming methods such as composts, raised beds, mulching and crop rotation. The local advisors receive only a small fee for their work. Their main motivation is the extra income from selling their own crops and seeds to the other families in the project area, as well as the higher status which their new role gives them in the community.

Contact person: Niels TOFTE
Noerrebrogade 68B
D-2200 Copenhagen, Denmark
Tel: 45-35-368858 Fax: 45-35-368878
e-mail: care@care.dk

■ THE HUNGER PROJECT, Switzerland

India: access to fishing for women in Bihar. In 1990, at a national strategy conference held in partnership with the Planning Commission of the government of India, The Hunger Project was given the mandate to begin its Strategic Planning-in-Action (SPIA) process in various states, beginning in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra. After launching the SPIA process and catalytic projects in 6 states, SPIA extended in 1994 to Bihar. In that state, the Hunger Project Council decided that empowering women was the most critical action to be taken, since they had little opportunity to earn money. The participating Ministry for Fisheries informed the group that the government of Bihar was eager to increase fishing. It was then suggested that women should be trained to fish and be given access to government-owned fishing ponds. This was impossible, since women were prevented by law from forming the cooperatives, necessary for fishing in government ponds. The Hunger Project was able to get this law changed and there are now 60 women’s cooperatives (expanding to 800!) with access to fisheries. The women cleared the ponds of excess dirt and The Hunger Project established a fish nursery to provide fingerlings and trained women in fish cultivation. The participation in this programme has transformed the formerly powerless, poverty-stricken women, who were not permitted to uncover their faces or raise their voices, particularly not to men. They have an income, their children are no longer hungry and they take part in the decision-making concerning their villages. A proud Bihar fisherwoman described how they have improved their fishpond and now assert their rights if necessary even by pressurising the police until they took action to stop poachers: “We dig the pond and carried the mud on our heads until all our hair fell out and we went bald. Now, we will fight for it.”

Contact Person: Renata BEGUIN-BUCHLI
1 rue de Varembé, BP 35, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland
Tel: 41-22-7346519 Fax: 41-22-7339203
e-mail: thp@compuserve.com
url: http://www.thp.org

■ CDS, CENTRE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES, Ireland

Research Projects
1. Ethiopia: Research on the Impacts on the Role of Women of the Meki Windmills Project. Both primary and secondary data were collected for this research. Secondary data was collected from the Ministries of Agriculture, Housing and Health concerning the Meki area. Random samples of 54 women were interviewed using structured questionnaires alongside interviews held with the project staff. The questionnaire attempts to find out the following information: (i) the respondents’ background characteristics; (ii) the amount of time, money and energy saved as a result of the installation of the Windmills wells; (iii) the effects the project has had on the roles and needs of women in the area.

The study found that respondents had saved an average of 4.4 hours daily as a result of the water well installation. 74% of the respondents spent the extra time working on their farm. The practical gender needs of the Meki women have been met to some extent; however, had the women been included at all stages of the project cycle, the meeting of these needs would have been greatly improved.

2. Tanzania: The Role of Farm Women in Agricultural Development. This research focuses on the legal, political, economic and social factors that determine gender contribution to agricultural development in this country. The policy frameworks, which provide women with the right support, are also examined. The main findings of the research take the following form: more research is needed on rural women’s actual contribution to the various types of agricultural production (i.e. their involvement in cash crops, vegetables, livestock, etc.). Efforts should be made to find ways of reducing the heavy workload of women working in agriculture. Participation in agricultural extension training programmes should take account of women’s role in farming and in decision-making regarding farming and non-farming activities within households. Legislation towards improving the position of women in society must include measures
Women feed the world is the theme chosen by FAO to mark on October 16, the 53rd anniversary of the Organisation and the second Telefood, a global telecast in support of the campaign to end hunger around the world. The theme will serve to highlight the significant contribution women make toward household and national food security.

When given the opportunities and resources women have proven to be active partners in development: efficient, dynamic and open to innovations. They represent a formidable potential that could help in meeting the challenges of food security in the 21st century”, said FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf.

According to FAO, women produce more than half of all the food grown. In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, they produce up to 80 percent of basic foodstuffs, while they provide from 50 to 90 percent of the labour for rice cultivation in Asia. In countries in transition, the percentage of rural women working in agriculture ranges from about a third to more than half. Women in rural areas are almost exclusively responsible for the nutrition of their children. Women are also the principal producers and processors of food for their families.

Despite their contribution to food security, women’s work is poorly understood and often underestimated in official statistics and, as a result, women tend to be invisible actors in development. There are many reasons for this. Prevailing attitudes make the plight of rural women worse by denying them political power and social representation. Gender-biased legal and social structures and illiteracy, are other factors that prevent women from improving their economic situation, thus increasing the feminisation of poverty. All too often women’s work is not recorded in statistics or mentioned in reports. When data is collected for national statistics, gender is often ignored or the data is biased in the sense that it is collected only from males who are assumed to be the heads of households. However, with more men migrating to urban areas in search of work, many women have become heads of household. In some regions of Africa, women now head 60 percent of households.

Women may feed the world today but, given all the obstacles placed in their path, will they be able to produce the additional food needed for a world population expected to grow by three billion by 2030?

World Food Day and Telefood form the vanguard of FAO’s follow-up to the World Food Summit of November 1996, in which FAO was charged with raising public awareness on the issues of food security and mobilising people to work to end world hunger, malnutrition and food insecurity.

This year’s World Food day and Telefood 1998 activities will provide a timely reminder to governments and all sectors of civil society and the international community to reassess and reaffirm the commitments taken at the World Food Summit. They will represent a renewed appeal to all men and women to stress their responsibility for achieving food security and for ensuring that “food for all” becomes a reality. These commitments cannot be fulfilled without first recognising and reinforcing the invaluable contribution of that half of the world’s population which is being celebrated with the slogan “Women feed the world.”
Amsterdam, 22-26 August 1998,
Know How Conference on the
World of Women's Information

The mission of the Conference was to improve the visibility and accessibility of women's information at the global and local level and to develop a strategy whereby women involved in information could promote the empowerment of women at the global level. The Conference gathered around 300 women and men from 83 countries and seven continents. A common Draft Declaration, based on the results of many workshops held during the Conference, was prepared and adopted by all participants, who represented the global community of information specialists, librarians, archivists, politicians, development specialists, women and gender specialists in the field of women's information. IIAV (International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement) which organised the Conference, has started a new database called “Mapping the World of Women’s Information” which is an inventory of women’s information services available throughout the world. It also provides gender-specific information and connects government policy agendas with those of civil society. For access to the minutes of the Conference, the Draft Declaration and the database “Mapping the World”, check the following website: http://www.iiav.nl (under Know How Conference).

We are pleased to publish the following information for the Women’s World Summit Foundation

World Rural Women’s Day - 15 October

Global Awareness Campaign to increase knowledge and empowerment

Following the 4th UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, three NGOs - all equally concerned with the situation facing women in rural areas - proposed to designate a specific day each year to highlight the largely unrecognised contribution of rural women - mainly farmers - to world over, to food security and to the development of the rural areas.

Because of their key role in the production, management and use of food and natural resources, it was suggested that World Rural Women’s Day fall on 15 October - the day before World Food Day. Celebrated for the first time in 1996, the two organisations, IFAP in Paris, and WWSF in Geneva, have launched a world-wide awareness and information campaign to make World Rural Women’s Day a truly global event. Using different networks to ensure as wide an impact and as broad an outreach as possible, this information drive is an essential first step to make the Day an annual and ongoing global event to raise the profile of rural women and bring them out of obscurity, to sensitize governments and the public to their crucial role, and to promote action in their support.

For more information on the 1998 campaign and to order your poster, contact the coordinator:
Women’s World Summit Foundation - Fondation Sommet Mondial des Femmes
Elly Pradervand
P.O. Box 2001
CH-1211 Geneva 1, Switzerland
Tel: 41-22-7386619 Fax: 41-22-7388248
e-mail: wwsf@iprolink.ch
url: http://www.woman.ch

15 October 1998, World Rural Women’s day
22-27 October, “Women in Africa”, Indianapolis University, IN, USA
Enquiries: Professor Obioma Nnaemeka
Tel: 1-317-2740062 Fax: 1-317-2742347 e-mail: nnaemeka@iupui.edu
14-16 November 1998, “International Conference on Women and the Child”, Loní, India
Enquiries: The Conference Secretariat
Tel: 91-2422-73600 Fax: 91-2422-73413

New book: “Woman, Know Your Place”

This research report from the Women in Music Project provides a fascinating insight into Zambian popular song lyrics. The team analysed 94 songs - reproduced in full English and vernacular - to ascertain how gender relationships, morality and social networks are depicted in song. This lively and entertaining book suggests action which musicians might take to change their musical outlook on women.

First published in 1990 and just reprinted by the Zambian Association for Research and Development (ZARD), P.O. Box 37836, Lusaka, Zambia.
Contact: Salma Ginwalla, Librarian
Tel/Fax: 260-1-222883
e-mail: zard@zamnet.zm.

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION UPDATE OF THE DIMITRA GUIDEBOOK EUROPE

To all European NGOs, research institutes and information centres

Please do not forget to fill in and return the questionnaire on your organisation to us promptly, so as to be included in the forthcoming Guidebook.

In the next issue of the Dimitra Newsletter: projects or research studies of African NGOs and research institutes, particulars of partner organisations in Africa and the Near East, etc... Do not hesitate to send us articles, comments and suggestions. This Newsletter is meant to be Yours!

CONTACT US
Eliane Najros, Project Coordinator
Tel: 32-2-5490310
Maartje Houbrechts, Project Officer
Tel: 32-2-5496168
Fax: 32-2-5490314
e-mail: dimitra@agoranet.be

FAO Dimitra Project (GCP/INT/673/BEL)
21 rue Brederode
B - 1000 Brussels
Belgium

With the financial support of the Belgian Administration for Development Cooperation and of the King Baudouin Foundation

Printed by édition & imprimerie, Brussels