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Have the chiefs in the areas where you are active changed their attitude in this respect?

Yes, a great deal has changed since 2003! Today, we work with them. They are involved in all our programmes and collaborate. That, in itself, is a great achievement for our organisation.

What moved things forward was that we always involved them in our meetings and activities. For instance, in the case of the lines of communication every time we went into a village, Samwaki tried to get the local chiefs interested or at least keep them informed. And we also served local interests by cleaning roads or schools. To raise their awareness, the solution was always to reach out to them...

What is your message to our readers?

One thing is that you should never let yourself be put off attaining an objective you have set yourself. Naturally, there are hurdles to overcome, but you have to persevere and be courageous. Nobody is capable right from the outset, but gradually we learn. We learn by doing. Everyone should support action taken by women. We live in a society of both men and women, so we have no choice.

My message to men is to always support women in their actions: there isn't one society for men and one society for women. We need to find ways to complement each other. We must combine our efforts to achieve development. Let me close by wishing good luck to all women striving for a balance in the relations between women and men.

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Radio Bubusa FM and the South Kivu community listeners' clubs honoured

Radio Bubusa FM and the South Kivu community listeners' clubs recently received the second prize in the Best Mass Media Initiative category of the 2010 Annual Award for Excellence in HIV and AIDS Communication in Africa. The award was bestowed by AfriComNet, the African Network for Strategic Communication in Health and Development, in the framework of a competition which aims to identify and honour innovative African initiatives on strategic HIV and AIDS communication.

The mission of AfriComNet, which is based in Kampala (Uganda), is to strengthen capacity in, and commitment to, strategic communication for health and development in Africa. The attention of the award organisers and jury was drawn by the originality of the South Kivu community listeners' clubs and their joint action with Radio Bubusa FM. The winner in the Best Mass Media Initiative category went to the Abugida Radio Show (BBC-Ethiopia).

The award ceremony took place in Johannesburg (South Africa) on 12 August 2010, and, keen to share this recognition with all the active members of the community listeners' clubs, Samwaki organised an official event in South Kivu on 4 September. Over the course of the day, the award was officially presented to the local authorities, Radio Bubusa FM staff, and members of the community listeners' clubs and Samwaki.

During the day's proceedings, Josseline M'Mawinga, who chairs the Rhuinduke community listeners' club in Mugogo, reminded the participants that before the community listeners' clubs and Radio Bubusa FM had been set up, AIDS had been deemed a taboo subject, whereas "today people freely discuss and debate topics like HIV and AIDS in their families, churches, schools and at work in common fields or down by the river, etc. The fact that our initiatives broke the silence

around HIV and AIDS is what prompted AfriComNet to honour the strategies of Radio Bubusa and the listeners' clubs for combating the devastating virus."

To fittingly mark the international recognition it had received, on 4 September 2010 Radio Bubusa FM broadcast programmes non-stop on the theme "Rhucikebuk'Esida Rucibikule Lyo Rhyuilwisa" (in Mashi language) which means "Lets Avoid AIDS – let's speak up and fight it effectively!"

What distinguishes Radio Bubusa FM is the gender sensitivity of its broadcasts and its way of tackling AIDS, a previously taboo subject that nobody dared to discuss in family circles or in groups. Furthermore, it is the only community radio station in the region powered by renewable energy (solar and wind power), which has a positive impact on the population in both socio-economic and environmental terms.

For more information on Radio Bubusa FM, see page 11 of Dimitra Newsletter 17, published in November 2009.

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