

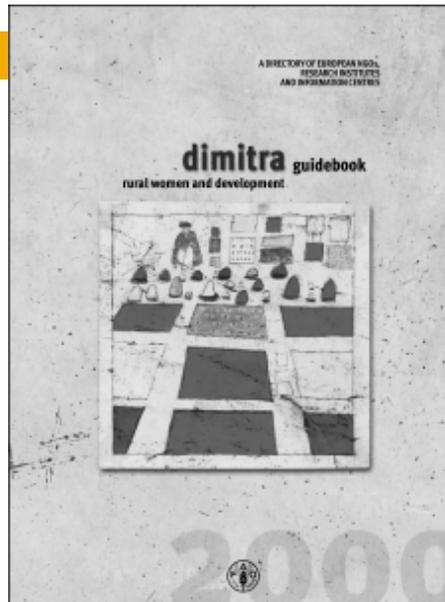
Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

NEWSLETTER N° 4 – BRUSSELS, MARCH 2000

Dimitra Guidebook 2000

Since its inception, the project has devoted considerable effort to collecting and exchanging information about rural women and I therefore take great pleasure in announcing the publication of the second edition of the Dimitra Guidebook. This new edition is an update of the previous directory published in 1996, and covers NGOs, research institutes and information centres based in Europe. It contains detailed information on the projects run by these organisations, which work with and for rural women in the South. The guidebook has been designed for those involved in development in both North and South and is intended to promote the exchange of experience and good practice throughout the world. It also provides information on the organisations' objectives and philosophy, together with a list of publications on issues relating to women/gender and development.



The project also works with eight local partners to collect and disseminate information relating to rural women in Africa and the Near East. This information will shortly be included in the database on the project's Website. The project descriptions were supplied by NGOs in the South and give details of the activities under way in

many countries. The projects described also provide an indication of the priorities of local organisations. Certain issues are recurrent, such as health, land tenure and conditions governing access to land for women, and education about political and economic rights. Readers will find several examples of projects relating to land tenure in this issue of the Newsletter.

The Dimitra Guidebook Africa/Near East, which will bring together all the data available on the Website, will be published in 2001. We would invite you to get in touch with our local partners (or the Brussels office) if they have not already contacted your organisation and if you would like it to be included in the next directory.

We hope you will enjoy reading this Newsletter. □

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

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foreword

Dear Readers and Friends,

In this issue, we conclude with the last two presentations of our local partners with a description of CREDIF, covering North Africa, and of POSDEV, covering a number of countries in West Africa. Ruth Ochieng, from Isis-WICCE in Uganda, presents the work undertaken by her organisation, which strives to empower women.

This Newsletter also gives us the opportunity to present some of the many projects, which have been sent to us by our partner from Southern Africa. More particularly, they address the issue of land rights for women and the promotion of their social status. The projects describe the efforts made by NGOs to inform rural women on their legal, econo-

mic and political rights and to influence the policy makers and transform traditional laws. In an article written for the Panos Institute, Pat Made describes recent developments in women's access to land in Zimbabwe. Finally you will find an agenda with the dates of the next important conferences, a list of some African websites dedicated to gender, and the titles of a few interesting new publications. Enjoy your reading. □

We would like to remind our readers that all of the information provided in this Newsletter can also be found on our Website at the following address:

<http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>



FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

In this issue, we would like to introduce you to the last two partner organisations of the Dimitra Project. They are based in Tunisia and Ghana, and have started to collect information in their respective sub-regions. The following articles will tell you more about their activities, objectives and goals.

our partners

CREDIF

*Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes,
de Documentation et d'Information sur la Femme*
(Center for Research, Studies and Documentation on Women)

A pioneer in the Arab-Islamic world and Africa, Tunisia has since its independence deployed considerable efforts to promote women and enhance their social and legal status. Initiated by the promulgation of a Code of Personal Status (13 August 1956) and confirmed by many legal reforms in recent years, this policy places women at the heart of its strategy in the field of human development and gives a modernist orientation to society as projected by Tunisia's national elite. It is within this framework that CREDIF was created in 1990 and placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Women's and Family Affairs in 1993.

■ The Observatory on the Status of Women in Tunisia: an instrument for permanent evaluation

The idea of establishing an Observatory on the Status of Women in Tunisia answers a number of needs, the most pressing being to provide reliable objective and scientific information on how the status of women is evolving.

The methodology adopted by CREDIF in this respect is standard, and consists of considering research as an information process through which the researcher encodes and decodes the messages expressed by the object under study.

At a practical level, the Observatory on the Status of Women consists of three fundamental components:

- the elaboration of reports;
- the constant input and updating of the statistics of databases;
- regular reflection on the pertinence of indicators which are likely to reflect how the status of women is evolving.

■ CREDIF: a bridging structure in international cooperation

The training activities in the framework of South/South and North/South cooperation are becoming more and more extensive at CREDIF. Two aspects of these activities should be mentioned here:

The UNESCO Study Chair on the status of women

This Chair was created in 1997 with the objective of:

- reinforcing the national capacities for the elaboration and implementation of programmes for the promotion of the status and equal rights of women;
- stimulating researchers and students to take an interest in these issues;
- promoting cooperation between countries in the North and the South in the field of the promotion of the status and the rights of women;

■ A pole of excellence and centre of influence on gender in Tunisia

In its present status, CREDIF is a public non-administrative establishment. Its main mission is to participate in the promotion of the status of women and to contribute to changing attitudes and images regarding women. This is done by furthering better integration of the rights of women into human rights, by taking women into account to a greater extent in the democratic process and by making women's contribution to national production more visible.

As a permanent structure for observation and evaluation, the Centre is an interface between civil society and the authorities. Besides its role as a scientific body at the disposal of decision-makers and of the various actors in the field of the promotion of women, it aims to be a place for reflection and to provide an institutional basis for the national debate on the relevance of current policies and on gender and equal opportunity issues in Tunisia.

To accomplish its mission, CREDIF conducts studies and research and issues reports on the status of Tunisian women, their position in society and their contribution to the economic development of the country. It collects and disseminates data on the

situation of women (information leaflets, scientific works, popularised publications, etc.) and provides information highlighting their rights and increasing their participation in public life, economic production and scientific and cultural creativity.

Furthermore, particularly in the framework of planning, CREDIF is called upon to participate in an advisory capacity in the work of government departments and organisations on issues concerning women with a view to studying the feasibility and pertinence of measures targeting various sectors of the female population.

Contending with action although it is not a scientific space for fundamental research, CREDIF collaborates with various university departments on issues concerning the development of social gender relations in contemporary Tunisia (in a comparative context) and on the impact of determining factors such as education and economic integration on the lives, roles and status of women, taking into consideration the multiplicity of social environments and levels of observation.

The following two examples can be cited from the abundance of activities characterising the scientific life of CREDIF:

- sharing the benefits of the Tunisian experience with other developing countries.

International training on «Gender, Population and Development»

This training structure was established in 1996 in the context of the follow-up to the Cairo Conference on Population and the Beijing Conference on Women. It has catered for senior staff from French-speaking African countries to date. The training, which is supported by UNFPA, consists of 7 modules:

- legal issues;
- gender analysis and statistics;
- women in development and population programmes;
- Plan of Action: approaches and methodologies;
- how to introduce IEC (information/education/communication) techniques into development programmes;
- women and management;
- rural women.

■ The cooperation of the Centre with the Dimitra Project on Rural Women and Development

CREDIF's cooperation with the Dimitra Project

is merely an extension of its activities highlighting women in general and rural women in particular.

CREDIF has been and continues to be the focal point of the REMIF, Réseau Maghrébin d'Information sur la Femme (Maghreb Information Network on Women) which was established 5 years ago. The Dimitra Project extends the scope of action of this network by specifying the type of information it conveys, in this case information on rural women. Furthermore, the Project allows CREDIF to consolidate its role as a focal point and service centre.

After publishing the Maghreb Directory on Information Centres on Women, the CREDIF Documentation Department is now collaborating on the development of the Dimitra Guidebook on North Africa (Algeria, Libya, Morocco and Tunisia). This Guidebook is regarded as a means of sharing information, since it will enable a large number of users to obtain information resources which could lead to cooperation and partnership. It is imperative to highlight the role of rural women, and, as a service centre promoting women's image and disseminating information on women, CREDIF wants to guarantee this action. It has already published a

report on rural women in Tunisia. Through the Dimitra Project, it is accomplishing its own development, expanding its scope to rural women in North Africa. □

If your organisation is located in Algeria, Libya, Morocco or Tunisia and you would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook, please get in touch with CREDIF at the address below. You will be sent a Dimitra questionnaire.

CREDIF

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POSDEV

The Pan African Organisation for Sustainable Development

The Pan-African Organisation for Sustainable Development was founded in 1997 by eleven African national NGOs committed to grassroots development of the African populations. Its membership now stands at twelve. Members are drawn from national NGOs in Niger, Burkina Faso, Mali, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Ghana, Benin and Sao Tome and Principe.

The vision of POSDEV and its members is one of an African continent which can assume its rightful place in development and the eradication of both poverty and all of the socio-economic ills prevalent in our societies; a vision of an empowered and self-reliant community which is based on grassroots movements which participate fully in its upliftment.

In this regard POSDEV has a mission:

- to promote and advocate a participative self-reliant grassroots movement that is empowered to take charge of its development needs;
- to promote and advocate cooperation among member organisations so as to create a self-reliant Africa, based on grassroots movements;

- to mobilise the resources needed to implement and attain holistic and sustainable development programmes and make them available to member organisations;
- to strengthen and maintain a culture of self-reliance in each member organisation, based on the pursuance of a high level of professionalism and efficiency.

To achieve its goal POSDEV will assist in the development of grassroots organisations which share the same vision of a self-reliant and sustainable African continent; it will contribute to the creation of a favourable environment that is conducive to the development of viable grassroots organisations and member organisations; it will provide support and services and assist and

reinforce member organisations in their institutional development, expertise and professionalism; and it will create, stimulate and reinforce synergies amongst those member organisations.

■ POSDEV activities

POSDEV has designed and is implementing a capacity-building programme for its members. Under this programme, it organises workshops on strategic planning and organisational development, financial management/reporting, programme design and formulation. POSDEV also provides technical assistance to its members in project evaluation and formulation.

In pursuance of its stated objectives, POSDEV organises exchange visits and study

tours for its member organisations to enable them to share experiences and best practices and offer expertise to each other. POSDEV also promotes visibility and brings it to its members through such visits. POSDEV recently organised a study tour to Segou and Sikasso in Mali for its member organisation ZATONA ADIL of Sao Tome & Principe. The main objective of the visit was to enable Zatona-Adil to appreciate socio-economic activities undertaken by farmers' groups in the region.

POSDEV also offers technical assistance to members and other NGOs. POSDEV usually draws on local expertise from the Africa region and makes these services available to requesting organisations for a specified period. A recent example is the request by Christian Aid for a Microcredit Adviser for the Association of Rural Development, a national NGO based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which runs an urban-based credit facility.

Through the diversity of the areas of specialisation of its members, POSDEV has the following fields of competence: Micro-enterprise development, Micro-Finance, Natural Resource Management; Micro-credit; Natural Resource Management (including Sustainable Agriculture/Food Security); Democracy, Decentralisation and Good Governance; Women in Development; Literacy; Health (including water and sanitation).

■ Posdev and the Dimitra Project

Given the need to establish organic links with other development partners, POSDEV executes programmes for other institutions and organisations in a spirit of partnership. It is within this context that POSDEV is in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the DIMITRA Project in order to collect information on NGOs, research institutions and information centres working with rural women in seven West African countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville and the Central African Republic.

POSDEV makes its expertise available to the Dimitra Project through its network of member organisations and partners who are already present and active in the project countries. In this way, the project becomes cost-effective and mutually beneficial.

Organisations participating in the Project, including POSDEV, gain in-depth knowledge of institutions and organisations working with rural women. The Project will also promote the world-wide visibility of POSDEV and its members via the Internet

The information gathered will enable POSDEV to access a wider range of development information and facilitate the creation of bridges between all sectors of development. It will also provide useful information for planning programmes on gender by enhancing women's contribution to society and the role they play as agents of development.

In spite of its relatively short existence, POSDEV and its member organisations are increasingly gaining recognition as credible partners in development. This is evidenced by the fact that POSDEV is accredited with UNCTAD and serves on the Advisory Committee of the USAID/Interaction African Liaison Program Initiative, which seeks to improve the tripartite partnership of USAID, US PVOs and African NGOs.

POSDEV membership is open to all African NGOs that share the same vision and have a grassroot constituency. □

If your organisation is located in one of the following countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Sao Tome and Principe, Cape Verde, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville or the Central African Republic, and you would like to be included in the Dimitra Guidebook, please get in touch with POSDEV at the address below. You will be sent a Dimitra questionnaire.

POSDEV

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POSDEV member organisations as of December 1999 are:

	ACRONYM	FULL NAME	COUNTRY
1.	APIC	Action Pour des Initiatives Communautaires	Benin
2.	MWANGAZA-ACTION	Promotion et Appui aux Organisations de Base	Burkina Faso
3.	ACHD	African Centre for Human Development	Ghana
4.	ACOD	Association Conseil pour le Développement - netasso	Mali
5.	SABA	Solidarité pour l'Autopromotion à la Base	Mali
6.	G-FORCE	Groupe de Formation, Consultation et Etude	Mali
7.	INAGEF	Institut Africain de Gestion et de Formation	Mali
8.	APOR	Action pour la Promotion des Organisations Rurales	Niger
9.	KOKARI/SCIR	Kokari - Service d'Intermédiation en Crédit Rural	Niger
10.	ZATONA-ADIL	ZATONA - Apoio ao Desenvolvimento de Iniciativa Locais	Sao Tome and Principe
11.	MEDET	Mangaung Education and Development Trust	South Africa
12.	ORAP	Organization of Rural Associations for Progress	Zimbabwe

Enhancing women's emancipation

BY RUTH OJIAMBO OCHIENG

Isis-WICCE is an international women's organisation that values fairness and tolerance. It was established by a handful of women activists in 1974 in Geneva-Switzerland, to respond to the communication needs of women worldwide and to share information and ideas as a means of creating solidarity networks to overcome gender inequalities.

After two decades of successful support of women's emancipation in the global North, the organisation decided to relocate to Uganda in Africa in September 1993, with the aim of empowering women, and especially the disadvantaged rural poor, with the ability to access information and acquire knowledge for their day-to-day development. This is done through various means where the organisation's activities ensure that women attain self-determination by strengthening their skills and acquiring more ideas and knowledge through the sharing of information.

■ The necessity of networking

Isis-WICCE believes that "strength is in numbers", and networking is therefore central to all its activities. Isis-WICCE collaborates with other women's movements both locally and internationally as a means of making significant progress in the promotion of women's self-determination. This can be seen in the successes of the past decades, which have given women worldwide the potential to fight injustice and inequality.

The Exchange Programme Institutes run by the organisation at both local and international level have given women activists, especially those from the underprivileged regions, the opportunity to meet and share ideas, exchange skills and interchange experiences of their specific achievements and plights in a given area. This interaction and sharing has enhanced women's ability to form effective advocacy strategies against discrimination and the violation of the human rights of women and girls. It has also imparted appropriate skills to women who have contributed to

the global women's movements' call to recognise and respect women's human rights.

The Local Exchange Programme Institute that was launched in 1999, on the other hand, is taking on a new dimension in Uganda, where rural women in leadership, especially from areas affected by armed conflict, have been able to break their isolation and have resolved to form a strong network to inculcate the culture of peace in their communities. These women are also exposed to different skills, mostly in the areas of gender, leadership and trauma management.

■ Communication: a key to understanding

Communication is a key to understanding one another and thus to developing positive perceptions. Monthly debates on gender and development organised by Isis-WICCE are geared to achieving this by raising gender awareness among men and women. The talks are very popular with both urban and rural communities. It is important to note the reactions by both men and women when contentious issues such as control over land and the sharing of power between men and women are discussed.

Making women's contribution to such debates visible and accessible to the Ugandan society and the world over is another strategy Isis-WICCE uses to enable women achieve equity and equality.

■ An active Information and Documentation Programme

The Information and Documentation programme using an integrated approach can make these debates known to communities

as well as to policy makers. The methods used include the use of e-mail and the Internet as well as collaborating with the mainstream media and the gender-specific media services provided by the Uganda Media Women's Association. Development of drama in major indigenous languages depicting several solutions to contentious issues in society is a new approach which Isis-WICCE has established. The aim is to have indigenous drama groups travel from village to village giving performances as

information and communication

an effective way of informing and educating communities on various issues concerning women and the girl child.

On the other hand, the establishment of rural information units is seen as an appropriate strategy for bringing new ideas closer to rural women as well as providing space for them to meet and share knowledge. These units have become homes which generate and disseminate knowledge and information on and about women in these communities.

One of the reasons for Isis-WICCE to relocate to Africa was to try to provide an outlet for the voice of African women. Documenting women's experiences and lives has become one of the major activities carried out by the organisation. The public's response to the findings is so overwhelming that Isis-WICCE is approached with requests to document issues outside its mandate. The

successful accomplishment of documenting women's experiences in situations of armed conflict in Uganda has changed women's perception of many issues. They now know that talking about their lives and experiences is the only way to attain redress and hence self-determination. The findings of such documentation has not only brought out the physical abuses women face but has also been an eye-opener to factors that have continued to affect women in post-war situations. The most striking factor is the food insecurity most households face which has resulted in high rates of malnutrition especially in war-affected communities.

■ Women and food security

A number of initiatives are currently under way which have been launched by both government and non-government agencies and address the issue of food security in various ways. Realising that women in Uganda account for 82% of the labour force in the agricultural sector and more than 80% of food production, Isis-WICCE believes that if the food security situation is to be remedied it is important to find out what the women (who are both the suppliers of labour and the producers of food) have to say. Hence Isis-WICCE's decision to focus the documentation of women's experiences and lives on "Women and food security in Uganda for the 2000-2002 period". The aim of the documentation is to reveal the

extent to which armed conflict has contributed to the present poor food production. The findings will also identify other factors that contribute to low food production by women. Above all, the documentation will aim to bring out the voices of those who contribute so much to the sector probably without receiving much support, not to mention eating less, and to show that this in turn results in permanent poor health and thus less production. The findings would be useful data for planners and policy makers at both household and national level. The essence of this strategy is to reveal the tremendous gaps in the flow of information among women especially those in rural areas, who, ironically, contribute most of what fills the national food baskets.

Linking women's ideas, views, experiences and achievements is a vision Isis-WICCE strives to achieve. This is done effectively by compiling feminist and gender-specific material from various regions of the world and disseminating it through several publications in addition to posting some of the voices to the Isis Website.

In this way Isis-WICCE has been able to contribute to the building of a society which is well informed and gender-sensitive and which values women's contribution to society, by ensuring that their views are fully integrated into policies and used for positive development.

Please visit our Website for an update on what is going on in the Africa Women's Movement:

<http://www.isis.or.ug>. □

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conference calendar

WORLD MARCH OF WOMEN
Marching for hope, equality, peace
and democracy
Date: 8 March - 17 October 2000

The 8th of March, World Women's Day, will also be the starting point for the World March of Women. This day will mark the beginning of a signature campaign aimed at sensitising and mobilising people against poverty and violence against women. More than 50 countries have officially launched the World March of Women on 8 March and over 130 countries are represented with 2000 groups which have signed up. Close to 40 national coordinating bodies have been established.

The World March addresses poverty and all forms of violence against women. It is

proposing concrete solutions to both of these scourges. Its demands make up a programme that is basic and will no doubt be necessary for many years to come. In this sense, the world rally at the UN on October 17, 2000, will be both a culmination and a beginning, for other stages are sure to follow.

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**WOMEN 2000: GENDER EQUALITY,
DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE FOR THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY -
UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SPECIAL
SESSION**

Date: 5-9 June 2000

Venue: New York, USA

The Special Session will review and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, adopted in 1985, and the Beijing Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It will also consider future actions and initiatives for the year 2000 and beyond.

The General Assembly requested that UN Member States, the United Nations system and NGOs provide information to assist in the review and appraisal.

For more information, check:
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/followup/beijing5/index.html>

Some project examples from Southern Africa

Below are some descriptions of projects run by Southern African NGOs, which have been collected by our partner organisations in the region. It is to be noted that NGOs are using an increasingly wide array of strategies to address the problems women are facing in their community or country. They are working on all fronts, but some issues are common to all regions: health, education and training, access to land and economic and political empowerment.

It thus is not surprising to see a progressive shift from the financial autonomy of women to their economic and political empowerment. The projects dealing with access to land are good examples of the close link between political and economic spheres. The article "Putting gender on the land agenda" (see page 10) gives detailed information on the present situation of women in Zimbabwe as regards access to land. As our friend Ruth Ochieng from ISIS-WICCE puts it, "strength is in numbers" (see page 5), and the fact that NGOs and women's groups are becoming more and more organised and informed is changing the nature of their activities and is having its impact on the traditional power structures. This is very much the case in Southern African countries and the few following projects are good examples of how this development is taking place.

Zambia

ZARD, Zambia Association for Research and Development

■ Training women in community-based research

ZARD is training rural women to undertake their own community-based research, data collection and record-keeping in order to counteract the inaccuracies which researchers from outside the community may find. When researchers approach women in rural areas, they often have a preset agenda and do not know the most appropriate questions to ask or how to phrase those questions. As a result, interviewees tend to tell researchers what they believe is expected of them rather than what they actually think or feel about an issue. Once the women themselves have been trained to carry out such research, they will be able to identify the issues affecting them and gain more specific responses from the community, resulting in more relevant and more useful information.

■ The political empowerment of women: Women and their legal rights

It has become clear from discussions with rural women's groups that the women would appreciate some training in gender issues. ZARD intends to provide that training. Women have also informed ZARD that they would benefit from information about their legal rights, since many local courts seem biased against women. They are confident that if they were well informed about their rights they could organise advocacy and lobbying activities at the level of both local courts and the government in order to improve the gender equity of the decisions and policies they make.

□

ZARD, Zambia Association for Research and Development

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South Africa

SDCC, Social Dimension CC

■ Land Reform Project

Social Dimension CC is currently involved in a South African Land Reform Project in a rural community in Mpumalanga Province. The project entails the transfer of previously white-owned land to a group of rural households in order to provide land ownership for poor rural communities and especially for women. Traditionally, women do not have access to land and cannot own land. The project endeavours to reverse this situation by encouraging women to participate in the Land Reform Programme and to engage in small-scale commercial agricultural activities. The specific task of Social Dimension CC is to make a social assessment of the project, which includes a rapid appraisal of the community in general and an assessment

of the issues related to land ownership and tenure and land use, including current residential arrangements and housing needs, the social profiling of beneficiaries, and the determination of expectations, perceptions and attitudes with regard to the project. □

SDCC, Social Dimension CC

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AFRA, Association for Rural Advancement

■ Facilitation of the formation of a rural women's movement

The existence of a rural women's movement will enable women in KwaZulu-Natal to exchange problems and solutions and have a platform for voicing their needs. Activities include gathering data about existing women's structures and asking about their needs, informing women's groups about the Programme of Action emanating from the Beijing Conference and the Commission on Gender Equality, and giving presentations on gender and development.

Despite the difficulties in traditional communities and the suspicion surrounding political activity, 50 focus-group meetings have been held with women, at which considerable excitement has been expressed about this initiative. □

AFRA, Association for Rural Advancement

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CRLS, Centre for Rural Legal Studies

■ In-depth case study of a land reform project from a gender perspective

The micro focus of this in-depth case study will augment previous research in order to document problems of gender bias in the land reform project structure, in related institutions, and in the outcome of land reform. The project is directly connected with another CRLS research and advocacy project currently under way, entitled 'Promoting Long-Term Tenure Security and Housing for Farm Workers in the Western Cape'. This 'parent' project is aimed at ascertaining the various ways in which government grants for land and housing purposes have been used in practice. □

CRLS, Centre for Rural Legal Studies

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Botswana

MWIC, Metlhaetsile Women's Information Centre

■ Legal aid programme

The Centre has, since its inception, operated a legal aid clinic for women. This clinic sees on average 20 new clients a week. Some are given once-off advice, while the majority require court representation.

The Centre's legal team has gained family law experience, resulting in it being considered one of the foremost experts in the field of family law litigation in the country. The main problems for women continue to be related to relationships, both marital and non-marital. Other re-occurring issues of concern are issues of violence, access to property, inheritance rights of widows and female children as well as children born out of wedlock, and child support.

■ Test case

This programme stems from the Legal Aid Clinic cases. From the nature and frequency of the types of these cases, the staff of the clinic got an idea of the type of legal reform and litigation needed to change the interpretation of the law. Litigation as a strategy for change in laws affecting women's rights has only really been used by MWIC's Legal Aid Clinic. Its effectiveness was demonstrated by the case of Unity Dow versus the Attorney-General, the case that pronounced for the first time that Botswana's Constitution does grant women rights. □

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SAW, Society for the Advancement of Women

■ Raising gender awareness and sensitivity

Since its establishment SAW has been implementing projects in the rural areas. Its awareness-raising programme began in 1994 throughout the country. This programme sensitises women and the general population on the rights of women enshrined in the Malawi Constitution and the International Conventions on the Human Rights of Women. It uses workshops, seminars, meetings, drama, video and radio discussions. SAW has also lobbied policy-makers to formulate gender-sensitive policies, budgets and resource distribution programmes. SAW has also worked with the police institutions based in the rural areas to encourage them to be gender sensitive and to respect women's complaints and treat them confidentially. SAW meets the police once a month to evaluate their activities on women's rights and their treatment of women offenders.

■ Legal Counselling

Since 1995, SAW has been providing counselling services for women victims of violence. Most of its clients are women from rural areas, widows who have had their property confiscated by their deceased husband's relatives, housewives battered by their husbands, divorce and property-

sharing cases. The services include free legal advice and legal action on behalf of its clients. Plans are under way to establish a Refuge for victims of violence.

SAW visits the rural areas once a month to collect information on violence against women and to hold meetings with women to educate them on how to identify and report violence.

Women victims must know what their rights are so that they can identify and report violations when they occur. SAW's projects are designed to empower women and concentrate on women who have been oppressed, so that they achieve equality with men. Yet at the same time SAW does not neglect the custodians of cultural values; it makes sure that the traditional leaders are included in all of its activities so that they can be more aware of the problems of women's rights. □

SAW, Society for the Advancement of Women

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FIDA, Federation of Women Lawyers

■ Legal aid programme

FIDA has a legal aid clinic that provides legal services for women and men who cannot afford the services of a lawyer. Most of the clients are rural women who are involved in disputes over maintenance and desertion, which is especially prevalent in the rural areas where most husbands work as migrant workers in South Africa or find work in towns away from home. Questions of inheritance also come up, because most people do not write out wills and the wives especially find themselves sidelined by the family of their late husband. The clinic also provides counselling for women who are victims of family violence. In this, FIDA works together with Selibeng, an organisation which offers counselling and support to victims of family violence,

especially women. FIDA also provides mediation and conciliation between parties and families at the clinic. Also provided as part of this programme is paralegal training for rural women and men in the areas of law that are really close to their needs, such as family and inheritance law. □

FIDA, Federation of Women Lawyers

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WAD, Women's Action for Development

■ Training women in the socio-political field

WAD actively empowers women, with excellent results. Training in the socio-political field empowers women to stand together as a united force and to address the social problems in their regions themselves, by putting pressure on the decision-makers, community leaders and traditional authorities to elicit assistance in solving their problems and obtaining what they need in their villages.

■ Equipping women with lobbying techniques for empowerment

For example, when there is no ambulance available in a village, WAD members are trained in how to go about getting that ambulance. They put pressure on the decision-makers whom they have put in power, lobbying them for an ambulance. If they are unsuccessful, they are trained to elicit response from the community by sending petitions or lobbying the media, which play a decisive role in influencing decision-makers. Other areas on which they concentrate are educational and health problems, drug abuse, alcoholism, Aids awareness and family planning. □

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WOMEN'S LAND RIGHTS IN ZIMBABWE

Putting Gender on the Land Agenda

President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe has a well-known land agenda for the majority black population: confiscation without compensation – unless Britain helps bankroll repayment of the over 800 largely white-owned farms.

Capturing international headlines, he has announced: “We are going to take the land and we are not going to pay a cent for the soil.” What hasn't made the headlines is that 70 percent of the agricultural labour force in Zimbabwe are women who work the soil but cannot own land in their own right. Critics argue that the beneficiaries of this controversial government scheme have mostly been Mugabe's middle-class cronies – all men.

■ A precarious access to land

Farmers Virginia Manyange, a 30-year-old mother of three, and her sisters-in-law are officially landless. They live on the Jompani government resettlement area (RA), 250 km west of Harare, where government permits to work the land are usually not issued jointly to spouses but to men only. The extended family grows cash crops. Each woman also cultivates a *gandiwa*, a one-acre plot traditionally granted by husbands for their wives' exclusive use. They grow crops for their families, some of which they sell locally to meet school fees and to supplement family expenditure.

The Manyange women's access to land is precarious. Should a husband die, a land permit does not automatically transfer to his widow unless both spouses have insisted

on joint registration. If she is abandoned or forced to leave an abusive marriage, she must go – and her own family may not always welcome her back. Neighbour Monica Makubalo agrees. “It's worse if you get divorced and are chased away from your husband's plot, because back home your own family does not even want to see you. They, too, are scrambling for land.” Unable to register for resettlement elsewhere, a divorced woman may be left in limbo – and economic hell. Pleading for anonymity, one Jompani woman says that she and other divorced women are treated “like beggars”.

“What is very shocking is married women's pervasive fear of being chased away from their marital homes,” says Maia Chenaux-Repond, a former civil servant investigating gender issues and land rights. “Wives are acutely aware of how vulnerable they are. As a result they tend to be unassertive within the marriage.”

In 1996, the Harare-based Musasa Project, the first Zimbabwean non-governmental organisation to investigate and confront violence against women, conducted a survey in rural Midlands Province. Of the 966 women (of all ethnic backgrounds) interviewed, one in three had been sexually abused, sexually harassed or forced to have sex against their will, and one in 12 had been assaulted (beaten, kicked or hit) while pregnant. Most had tolerated abuse for fear of being driven out of the marital home and off the land. “If I am thrown out by my husband and with only my Grade 3 education, where would I go and what would I do?” asked one woman.

■ Land is a political issue

“Land is such a political issue,” says Shereen Essof, Programme Coordinator at the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRNCN). “The government seems totally closed to land rights for women.” But women lobbyists and other civic organisations are banding together to “put gender on the land agenda”.

Women's rights to land were jeopardised in 1998 when the minister in charge of resettlement, Joseph Msika, rejected women's demands for land permits to be automatically registered in the names of both

spouses, and for the 5 million hectares earmarked for redistribution to be given to single, unmarried women or women heads of households. His reason: such policies would lead to the break-up of homes. This fear is echoed by some men in Jompani. “I totally disagree with a [land] quota system for women; it will lead to increased divorce,” says Sabelo Makubalo, 31. “A single woman has no capacity to run her own land. What happens to it when she decides to marry and move to her husband's village?”

Various categories of land exist in Zimbabwe: fertile commercial farmland traditionally owned by whites (now also by members of the black middle-class), overcrowded communal lands allocated by the former British colonial regime to the black majority population, and resettlement areas where land has been redistributed to the black population since independence in 1981. Although less than one percent of the black majority population lives in RAs, these have become a focus for the women's land rights campaign. The non-governmental organisation Women and Law in Southern Africa (WLSA) argues that because there is “little that is traditional about resettlement” – where people willingly uproot themselves and begin a new life away from ancestral lands and traditions – “resettlement schemes are a good place for government to remove discrimination as regards land rights for women.”

■ Social status and power relations

At the heart of women's low status in Zimbabwe is the traditional system of *lobola*, or bridewealth where a husband acquires rights, including sexual rights, over his wife. Husbands believe they are entitled to make unilateral reproductive decisions: about family size, contraceptive use and marital faithfulness, which leaves women vulnerable to HIV, the virus which causes Aids.

Rumbidzai Nhundu, of the Women's Action Group, believes that land policy reinforces old stereotypes. “Heads of households should no longer be defined as just men,” she says. Experts and activists argue that women's land rights are integral to national development. “Gender differences in ownership and control of land might be one

African sites focusing on gender

BY PAT MADE

of the most important factors [explaining] the gap in economic well-being, social status and empowerment between men and women," Angela E.V. King, Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women, told 1,500 policy makers gathered at the 6th African Regional Conference on Women in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in November 1999. Although pressure for land reform has come mainly from women, a substantial minority of male farmers also support it, rejecting men's fears that with legal rights women might control cropping and income and spirit away profits to their parents. Although Sabelo Makubalo, of the Jompani RA, is a critic of land rights for unmarried women, he affirms, "It's best that land is registered in both our names because my wife is aware of our family needs and there is no way she will siphon income from our fields to her own relatives. I trust her." □

Sub-headings by the editorial staff.

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Abantu for Development

<http://www.abantu.org>

Abantu for Development is an international NGO established in 1991 by African women. Based in England, Abantu also has offices in Kenya, Ghana and Nigeria. Abantu focuses its programming in four areas: training and capacity-building; advocacy, public awareness and networking; research, information and publications; and the institutional development of Abantu. *This site is available in English.*

African Gender Institute

<http://www.uct.ac.za/org/agi>

The African Gender Institute (AGI) was established in 1996 at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, following a consultative process involving stakeholders in many parts of Africa. AGI's mission is to further gender equity in Africa by contributing towards transformation of inequitable institutions and social practices that constrain women's leadership potential and the furtherance of gender equity goals in Africa. In addition to information about AGI's programmes, including papers and reports published by AGI, the site contains a good list of "Electronic Gender Links." *This site is available in English.*

Famafrique

<http://www.famafrique.org/>

FAMAFRIQUE is part of the ENDA group of activities, and is located in Dakar, Senegal. This Website, the first of its kind in French-speaking Africa, has been created to reinforce the visibility and capacity for action of feminist organisations in the region. *This site is available in French.*

ENDA-Synfev

<http://www.enda.sn/synfev/synfev.htm>

ENDA-SYNFEV is an entity of ENDA Third World – Environment and Development of the Third World – a non-profit international organisation based in Dakar, Senegal. ENDA-SYNFEV aims through networking to dynamise women and gender components within ENDA's activities, in partnership with associations, groups and networks active in the same fields. *This site is available in French and English.*

Women'sNet

<http://www.womensnet.org.za/>

Women'sNet was initiated by SANGONet and South Africa's Commission on Gender Equality in 1998. Although the focus is heavily on South Africa, Women'sNet has carried out a number of training activities for women throughout the continent. Women'sNet is a networking support programme designed to enable South African Women to use the Internet to find the people, issues, resources and tools needed for women's social action. *This site is available in English.*

Flame: African Sisters Online

<http://flamme.org/>

Flame is a network of African women online, committed to strengthening the capacity of women through the use of ICT (information and communication technologies) to lobby, advocate, and participate in the Beijing +5 process, regionally and globally. The links page takes you to full-text documents about the Beijing meeting and related activities. *This site is available in French and English.*

Femnet

<http://www.africaonline.co.ke/femnet/>

FEMNET stands for the African Women's Development and Communication Network. The Network, based in Kenya, is concerned with the sharing of information and ideas between African NGOs so as to enable a better and more effective NGO focus on women's development. The site provides information on FEMNET areas of activity, collaborative projects, FEMNET's contribution to the Beijing process and more. *This site is available in English and French.*

Women in Development Southern Africa Awareness (WIDSAA) Programme

<http://www.sardc.net/widsaa>

WIDSAA provides access to information, working closely with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and national partners in the 14 member countries. Regional in focus and action-oriented, the WIDSAA programme aims to act as a catalyst and a service for governments, NGOs and agencies in the region, as well as for the media and the public at large, in the formulation of policy affecting women. *This site is available in English.*

**Beyond Inequalities
Women at Work
Crossing Borders**

ZWRN has launched three books on women's issues in Africa:

"*Beyond Inequalities*" is a publication that highlights the status of women in Southern Africa and the initiatives being made to mainstream gender in development processes in the area.

"*Women at Work*" is a complete resource directory profiling women of the region. "*Crossing Borders*" looks at the relationships between women, culture and development.

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Fax: +263-4-720331
E-mail: zwrn@zwrn.org.zw

**Women and Microcredit in Rural
Bangladesh: An Anthropological Study
of Grameen Bank Lending**

Aminur Rahman, 1999

This book is the first anthropological study on Grameen Bank lending to women in rural Bangladesh presenting a borrowers', rather than a lenders', account of lending. The findings of this research challenge conventional understanding and orthodox views about the success of the micro-projects and bring new dimensions for examining and understanding the impact of microcredit projects on clients.

The book examines women borrowers' involvement with the microcredit programme of the Grameen Bank, and the grassroots lending structure of the bank; it illustrates the implications of Grameen lending for the borrowers, their household members and bank workers. The focus of the study is on the processes of village-level microcredit operation; it addresses the realities of the everyday lives of women borrowers and bank workers and explains informant strategies for involvement in this microcredit scheme. The study is on the power dynamics of the everyday lives of informants as they affect women borrowers' relationships within the household and the loan centres, and bank worker relationships within the loan centres and the bank.

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new books

**Infobank of Gender and Gender-
Related Institutions in Kenya**

This volume contains 132 profiles of Nairobi-based gender institutions and other institutions which include gender concerns in their programmes and focus. The book is designed for 'identifying potential collaborative partners for the enhancement of the social, political and economic status of the Kenyan woman.'

Academy Science Publishers, Kenya, 1999
ISBN 9966240373
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Women, Land and Agriculture

Caroline Sweetman, 1999

This collection of articles from development practitioners and feminist activists considers women's access to land and their role in food production in developing countries. Articles in this collection assert that women's contribution to global agricultural production for food and for profit continues to be largely unacknowledged and undervalued, and that their ability to farm is constrained by lack of control of land, agricultural inputs, credit, and other essential resources. Thirty years after the first studies, women's role in farming remains underestimated and misunderstood by development planners and policy-makers.

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**Measuring the Immeasurable.
Planning, monitoring and evaluation
of networks**

*Edited by Marilee Karl, with Anita Anand,
Floris Blankenberg, Allert Van den Ham,
Adrian Saldanha, 1999*

What is networking? Who networks? Is networking successful? Can it be measured? Networks began in the late 1960s and they have become a force both in and across nations, regions et continents. Using a case study approach, the book provides a valuable insight into how networks function, what they achieve, and how they do, or can, monitor themselves and set up instruments and systems for evaluation and planning.
Order from: Women's Feature Service,
1 Nizamuddin East, New Delhi 110 013, India or Novib (The Netherlands)

FAO publications

**Figures for Bookkeeping –
Facilitator's Guide 1 & 2**

With this training document, illiterate men and women learn how to hold a pencil, write the figures and do complicated calculations. Adults not only become numerate by participating in this training, but they also gain self-confidence in their ability to learn. The numeracy training was developed in view of exposing economically active adults to simple accounting methods.

**Simple Bookkeeping and Business
Management Skills –
Facilitator's Guide**

Ria Meijerink

This is a training document to teach small-scale entrepreneurs how to use their numeracy skills in improving their businesses. This document is one of a series and provides follow-up training for people who have completed the 'Figures for Bookkeeping' numeracy course for illiterates. 'Simple Bookkeeping and Business Management Skills' was developed and tested in Ghana. However, experiences of people who had trained small-scale entrepreneurs, and especially women's groups, in various African countries were incorporated into the material. For information on these publications, please contact:
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**FOOD AND
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