



Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT



- © Rural women's access to land
- © Economic empowerment of rural women
- © Alternative energy

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Dear friends and readers,

On 16 October 2008, FAO celebrated World Food Day with a parallel event entitled “Women have solutions to the food crisis: towards long-term structural changes”. This issue of the Dimitra newsletter focuses in particular on how – in an international context of rising food prices and raw material shortages – the livelihoods of the poorest populations, and of women in particular, are inextricably linked to their rights and their economic, political and social status within their community or country.

One of the most glaring examples of this is provided by the link between food insecurity and the lack of access to land for women. Two workshops – one held in Mbour, for Senegal and Burkina Faso, and a second one held in Brussels for Dimitra’s partners – discussed this issue at length and arrived at the same conclusions and guidelines for action. Effective advocacy, training and education, information, communication, and access to and control of land and economic production by women – there can be no authentic development without investing efforts and resources in these areas.

The one-week workshop in Brussels brought together all the partners of the Dimitra network as well as representatives of projects and departments of FAO and various ministries of agriculture and bilateral cooperation programmes which work in synergy with Dimitra. A brochure summarising the results of the Brussels workshop will be disseminated by the end of the year. As far as the workshop for Burkina Faso and Senegal is concerned, a brochure has already been published in French and will shortly be available in Wolof and Mooré.

Still on the issue of access to land, a number of activities in Tanzania show that equal rights for men and women have resulted in better livelihoods in rural areas in the Dodoma region, while in Kenya mobile phones are being used to uphold women’s and orphans’ right to land ownership.

In the articles reporting on recent developments in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), you will become acquainted with the women painters of Makwasha, a village close to Lubumbashi. You will also find out how women’s self-help groups are generating financial resources in Kimbanseke, in rural Kinshasa, and how the FAO urban and peri-urban horticulture project in the DRC can be a factor of development for women. The FAO has also engaged in a major effort to prevent bird flu in the Great Lakes Region. An information campaign has already been launched delivering key prevention messages to thousands of women and children, who are the highest risk groups, given that they are the least informed and most vulnerable in the event of an epidemic.

We also present the work of two NGOs that are promoting the economic empowerment of rural women in Ethiopia and Senegal.

In Niger, we visit a fast-track remedial education project that enables young people who have missed out on formal schooling to climb out of illiteracy. You will also be able to marvel at the ingenuity shown in the quest for alternative sources of energy in places where fossil fuels are unaffordable: a solar water pump and public lighting system in a village in Niger, a pair of oxen being used to generate power for a radio station in the Central African Republic, and a dynamo-powered battery charger for mobile phones in Uganda.

Just a few more words to inform you that the Dimitra Website has been revamped to provide easier downloads, a more user-friendly environment, and access via Mozilla. We hope you enjoy reading this issue and look forward to your comments.

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Design: Atelier voor grafische & aanverwante toepassingen, Ghent
Printed by Parys Printing, Evergem-Ghent



FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

With the financial support of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (DGDC) Belgium and of the King Baudouin Foundation.

The content of the articles does not necessarily reflect the views of FAO.

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Dimitra Workshop – Promoting women’s access to land as a means of combating food insecurity and poverty

In the context of the ongoing global crisis and an international economic environment marked by soaring food prices, relentless demographic pressure, alarming climate changes and an insatiable quest for raw materials, there is a growing trend toward the “feminisation of poverty” throughout Africa, especially in rural areas. In the face of these conditions, which are particularly hostile to the development of disadvantaged populations, it is urgent to provide women with the means of fulfilling their role as pillars of the community and key drivers of the economy.

From 22 to 26 September 2008, the Dimitra network held a workshop in Brussels focusing on women’s access to land in Africa and the information and communication strategies to be developed to combat gender inequalities in this area. The workshop – the fourth of its kind organised in Brussels – provided an opportunity for a fruitful exchange of knowledge and experience between Dimitra and its network partners, among them field practitioners from several regions of Africa (West Africa, the Maghreb, Central Africa and the Great Lakes Regions, East Africa and the Indian Ocean). The meeting was also attended by representatives of several technical departments of FAO as well as of bilateral agencies with which Dimitra collaborates on the ground, including the Swiss Cooperation Office in Niger and the Canadian International Development Agency and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The week-long process of reflection concluded at the King Baudouin Foundation – which has supported the Dimitra project from its inception – in the presence of the Foundation’s Managing Director, a Representative of the Belgian Minister for Development Cooperation and representatives of a number of national and international organisations based in Brussels. They all praised the quality of the work carried out by the Dimitra network, highlighting, in particular, the importance of the theme chosen for this year’s workshop.

Developing common policies on access to land and women’s status

The workshop enabled participants to share insights into the situation of women and their access to land in Africa in recent years, on the basis of a participatory approach. Each participant drew on his or her personal and professional experience to analyse women’s role in development in the current crisis context.

While the current economic crisis is a global one, the situation is particularly dramatic in Africa. As far as reducing poverty is concerned, the Millennium Objectives for Development remain largely unfulfilled. Furthermore, over the past few decades several regions of the continent have been severely affected by armed conflicts and long periods of political instability. Very often, these conflicts have resulted in the massive displacement of the civilian population, leading in turn – among other adverse consequences – to increased exposure to HIV/AIDS and violence against women and children.

Thanks to the discussions and exchanges of experience, participants were able to draw up a list of the causes and difficulties associated with women’s access to land. Fewer and fewer cultivable plots are available, both as a cause and a result of the increasing commoditisation of land. This process often involves land speculation by those who hold economic or political power, whether in the state administration or in the traditional power structures.

Difficulties in accessing resources. The risk of declining agricultural production

The analysis of the situation highlighted the huge deficit of information and communication on issues concerning women’s access to land. The inequalities inherent in the traditional division of gender roles prevent women’s access to power structures and influence, and limit women’s control over, and access to, resources. As a general rule, rural populations, particularly women, play little or no part in public decision-making, both in qualitative and quantitative terms.

While women bear the brunt of family and community responsibilities, they do not enjoy the same privileges as men. Women’s dependent status hinders the development of economic activity. To this we must add other factors that have an adverse effect on rural communities and women in particular, such as underinvestment in rural development and women’s restricted access to credit from financial institutions and to financial resources and income in general. The reduction or even complete absence of material resources explains in some cases the fall in agricultural production.



The workshop provided an opportunity to share experiences and views on the most effective methods and priority areas for action to implement effective information and communication strategies for access to land.



The participants to the workshop committed to implementing – each in their respective fields of action – the information and communication strategy jointly agreed. Networking promotes the synergies between field practitioners as well as horizontal coordination between different activities.

The resulting food insecurity has a significant negative impact on women's living conditions, their health and their children.

In an agricultural subsistence economy, the importance of women's role in production cannot be overemphasised. Women are therefore the first to suffer the effects of the lack (or limited availability) of resources and productive inputs.

What can be done to improve the situation? What arguments can women – and all those who support them – put forward to enforce their rights?

Trapped between inadequate legislation and discriminatory customs. What way forward for women?

In many countries, existing legislation has been drafted without the involvement of women and other stakeholders in the community. As a result, laws are often inadequately implemented, easily flouted and/or discriminatory. The conclusions of the workshop highlighted the educational deficiencies and "skills gap" which affect rural communities in a number of key areas, including the use of efficient agricultural techniques, business management, the creation of self-support groups, the organisation of economic activities, etc. In

particular, women – and even the community and religious leaders – are not familiar with the relevant laws and legal procedures concerning the use of land or with the family codes in force in their respective countries. This ignorance deprives women of a crucial instrument to uphold and enforce their rights.

Another obstacle to gender equality in rural areas is the fact that land is always distributed to the advantage of men, in keeping with a traditional patriarchal system which perpetuates inequalities.

Improving information and training in everyone's interest

In spite of all the efforts by governments, technical and financial partners, communities and civil society organisations, much still remains to be done.

Following the activities and exchanges carried out within various subgroups, participants in the workshop pooled their conclusions and views on the most effective methods and priority areas for action to implement effective information and communication strategies. It emerged from the discussion that action should focus on:

- **Capacity building**, particularly through training, literacy campaigns, exchange of information and the restructuring of local organisations, in order to provide rural populations, and especially women and children, with effective instruments to play a leading role in their communities.
- It is also important to provide children and young people with equitable **education opportunities**. In some cases, positive discrimination in favour of girls is considered legitimate. Providing education, both formal and informal, for young people who have missed out on school is also considered essential.
- There was also consensus among participants that **the laws and regulations gov-**

erning land ownership and management must be **publicised and disseminated more effectively** as an integral part of an effective information and communication strategy to combat inequality in access to land. Furthermore, it is essential to develop technical and legal assistance programmes as well as support schemes to strengthen the capacities of community NGOs.

- As regards **action-research**, the emphasis should be on developing efficient systems to gather information and statistical data as well to carry out an in-depth analysis of qualitative and quantitative indicators. Research in this field should be documented and the results disseminated widely.
- In this area as in others, a good communication strategy requires **mobilising** organisations to follow up the issues and carry out effective **advocacy campaigns** to influence decision-makers. This also implies ensuring the participation of women in policymaking and **lobbying activities**, particularly those targeting traditional community leaders and government authorities.
- Lastly, at a more general level, it is essential to **promote women's social and economic empowerment** in order to provide them with land tenure security, better access to resources and greater control of production. This task is directly linked to the aim of improving the status of women in each country.

Mobilisation and networking

Networking embraces many stakeholders and a wide range of organisations working at different levels, from the micro-level (rural communities, agricultural producers, decentralised institutions) to the intermediate level (NGOs, civil society) to the macro-level (public institutions, policymakers, donors). In order to ensure that the necessary resources are available (funds, human resources, skills, etc.), all of these stakeholders must work together. One essential aim of networking is therefore to promote synergies between field practitioners as well as horizontal coordination between different activities.

All participants made a commitment to implement – in their respective fields of action and at their level – the information and communication strategy jointly agreed by all of Dimitra's partners. For his part, the Representative of the Ministry for Development Cooperation reassured the FAO's Dimitra network and its partners of the Minister's continuing support and interest in their work.

* The results and conclusions of the workshop will be published in a special brochure by the end of 2008.



Women's access to land in West Africa: problems and suggested solutions in Senegal and Burkina Faso

Within the framework of the activities initiated by Enda-Pronat and Dimitra in 2003 to promote women's access to land, a round table was held on this issue in Mbour (Senegal) from 2 to 4 July 2008 by Enda-Pronat and RECIF/ONG-BF, with the support of Dimitra and the Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The meeting focused on the issues surrounding rural women's access to land in Senegal and Burkina Faso.

As with most other parts of the Sahel region, the economy of both countries is essentially rural, based on agriculture and stockbreeding. Women are the main actors in the agricultural sector and play a key role on family farms, where they supply most of the labour force. However, they do not enjoy the same rights as men with regard to access to land, in spite of the fact that land is essential to the performance of economic activities and that equitable access to land is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

For some years now, civil society has been calling on the authorities to take effective measures to remove the problems that still hinder women's access to land as well as to other natural resources. Laws have been passed granting women equal rights to land and property, but the reality on the ground is very different: access to land is still marred by inequalities, and a huge gap remains between the law and traditional practices.



Women are the main actors in agricultural production. Nevertheless, they do not enjoy the same rights as men with regard to access to land, in spite of the fact that equitable access to resources is a prerequisite for sustainable development.

“The land is too old to allow disrespect”

The situation requires concerted action with a view to exchanging experiences, identifying the existing obstacles and putting forward concrete proposals for more effective action to help improve women's access to land. It was with these aims in mind that the Mbour round table was organised. Participants included representatives of civil society, farmers' organisations, government departments and MPs, research institutes, universities and funders. This diversity enabled a fruitful exchange of views, highlighting the common ground and the complementarity of different approaches and the potential for synergy between them.

The gap between law and reality

In Senegal, Article 15 of the Constitution (2001) enshrines the right to land and property for both men and women. In principle, any restrictions based on religious beliefs or traditional practices are outlawed. But experience on the ground shows that, more often than not,

traditional land is still managed in accordance with customary law, which seldom recognises women's right to land.

Many women have never heard of the existence of laws which would enable them to exercise their rights and, even when they are aware of such laws, they dare not call into question the traditional social rules and relations between women and men.

In Burkina Faso, as regards the right to land and property, modern legislation and customary law coexist side by side. From a strictly legal point of view, the 1991 Constitution and the Agricultural and Land Reform Act establish the right to land for all, without discrimination. In practice, however, many obstacles stand in the way of rural women's access to land.

In rural areas, access to land is governed by customary law, which forms part of a set of social relations which place women in a dependent, “negotiated”, precarious position. Women are excluded from exercising any real control over the management of land. The argument is

that a woman comes from another clan, which owns land in her native village. Thus, in general, women have no right of ownership, but only an “authorisation” to make use of the land.

“A man without land cannot found a family”

The schemes implemented in the areas managed by the State do not always take account of women's specific needs. For example, the plots allocated to rural women's groups are often located on poorly levelled land, and their size does not reflect the number of persons in the group.

Inventory of the situation

The presentations and discussions held during the round table enabled participants to draw an inventory of the situation and to identify the existing obstacles and possible strategic guidelines for action.



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“No development without land and without women”

In the first place, the **contradictions** and **areas of overlap between customary law and modern law** were clearly pinpointed. Creating **synergy between women’s rights** was identified as an essential step to improve the situation.

Attention was also drawn to the increasingly complex and ever changing environment in the countries concerned. The latter are characterised by a diversity of **challenges: economic** (energy crisis, higher food prices, etc.) as well as **political** (development plans, agricultural policies, etc.), **socio-cultural** (migration, emergence of a middle class, changing lifestyles, etc.) and **environmental** (climate change, soil degradation, etc.) across different levels, from the local to the global. It is therefore necessary to address the issue of land management from a **global perspective**, taking into account **gender equality issues**, in order to ensure that the strategies developed to promote women’s access to land encompass all the relevant social, economic, political and environmental factors and contribute to sustainable development while at the same time protecting everyone’s rights.



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Participants agreed that a variety of **actions** – often backed by civil society organisations as well as by government measures – were being implemented to facilitate women’s access to land, but unfortunately these actions did not always receive the attention they deserved.

It was also observed that in many cases it is easier to take action at the local level, which is often the most appropriate place to enhance the impact of successful experiences, explore new avenues for progress and “multiply the exceptions” in the hope that one day such exceptions will become the rule! It is therefore essential to **increase the number of local initiatives**, highlighting good practices and giving attention to the interactions between the local, intermediary and national levels.

Proposed solutions

The debates and exchanges of the round table showed that good practices and successful experiences in the area of women’s access to land are basically geared to effective **communication, information, mobilisation and advocacy**. A cross-sectoral **gender perspective** and constant **exchanges** between the local, intermediary and national levels are essential to this approach. It is also important to **make the most of community experiences** by identifying, analysing, disseminating and capitalising on successful practices.

Participants highlighted, in particular, the importance of:

- Workshops, meetings and exchange visits as well as the importance of creating and strengthening solidarity networks, promoting the recognition of rights and awareness of established legislation, and promoting women’s empowerment;
- Access to information on land issues, rights and laws, in an easily understandable form and using the local languages, thus contributing to the spread of good practices and the emergence of local leaders;
- Lobbying and advocacy: it is important to convince and identify all players and stakeholders, set targets, establish alliances and address all levels, using appropriate bottom-up advocacy techniques for each audience and using NGOs, civil society organisations and democratic decision-making institutions as implementing partners.

Synergies and networking

The proposed guidelines emphasise the importance of synergies, alliances and cooperation between all levels of society to achieve the desired aims.

Participants pledged, among other commitments, to report on the activities of the round table to their respective organisations and insti-

tutions in order to increase public awareness, inform on developments, mobilise resources and disseminate the results of the process by different means, including e.g. the Internet, newsletters, publications and networks. They also expressed their determination to remain in contact and exchange relevant information on the issues under discussion. Lastly, it was suggested to organise further meetings to follow up on the conclusions of the round table as well as to support and promote new initiatives in the area of women’s access to land.

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Enda-PRONAT is Dimitra’s partner in West Africa (covering Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Gambia, Guinea, Mauritania and Senegal). RECIF/ONG-BF is Dimitra’s partner in Burkina Faso.

A brochure summarising the key ideas of the round table has been published by Dimitra in French, Wolof and Mooré and is available on request.

TABLE RONDE

L'accès des femmes à la terre en Afrique de l'Ouest : problématique et pistes de solutions au Sénégal et au Burkina Faso

Mbour | 2 – 4 juillet 2008

Good practices in the area of women’s access to land are in essence geared to effective communication, information, mobilisation and advocacy.

Electronic mentoring – The use of mobile phones to advocate for the right of women and orphans to access and own property in Kenya

GROOTS Kenya is a network of community based organisations and self-help groups in Kenya, affiliated to GROOTS International and the Huairou Commission¹. For over 13 years, GROOTS Kenya has been supporting women-led grassroots initiatives that centre on women's social and economic development. These initiatives include support for those infected with and/or affected by HIV/AIDS through the provision of home-based care, small grants for individual and collective enterprises, economic, educational and psychosocial support to orphans and widows, and so on.

Among the major challenges in implementing these initiatives have been property/land grabbing and disinheritance of families affected by HIV and AIDS, child abuse, domestic violence, and gender discrimination in employment opportunities, access to legal services, and appointments to decision-making bodies. In view of these challenges, and in order to better address them, GROOTS Kenya has been assisting the communities in Kakamega and Busia districts (Western Province), Kendu-bay and Kisii districts (Nyanza Province), and Limuru and Gatundu districts (Central Province) to organise themselves into "Watchdog groups".

Watchdog groups are community-led initiatives that bring together community leaders – including village elders, women leaders, community paralegals, religious leaders as well as government representatives – to deal with important community problems.

The number one issue the Watchdog groups have had to deal with is that of property and land grabbing by the relatives of a deceased, thereby expropriating his wife and/or children. Through the Watchdog groups, women and children with land-related court cases have received support to recover their property at community-level, at the level of land tribunals, land boards and even in law courts.

GROOTS Kenya has facilitated paralegal training and local-to-local dialogues with various stakeholders on governance issues and has, in collaboration with the Watchdog groups, initiated specific strategies to create awareness on women's and orphans' property rights, including the organisation of open forums, of radio listeners' clubs and of "electronic mentoring".

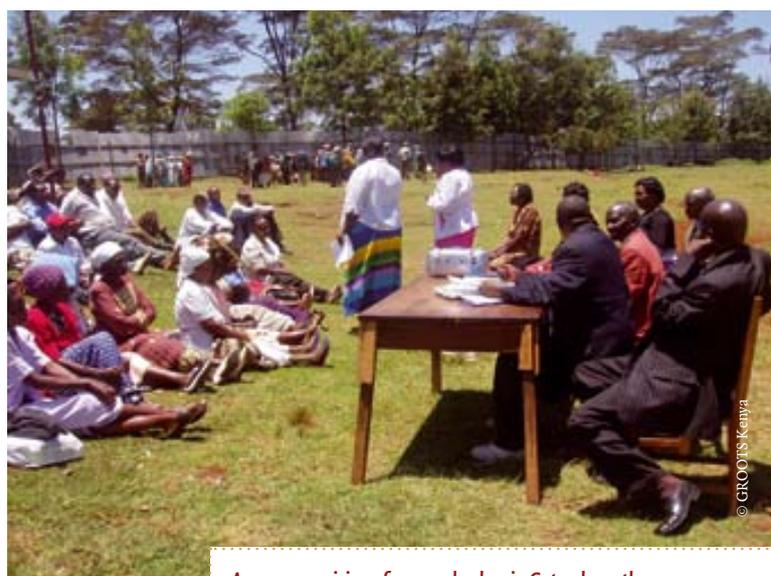
This last strategy involves the use of mobile phones to enhance the exchange of useful information between members of Watchdog groups in different regions of the country. Concerning land issues, for example, mobile phones are being used by women and Watchdog group members to report cases of land grabbing in their regions, and to facilitate interaction and knowledge sharing between the different regions.

To start the electronic mentoring process, GROOTS Kenya organised national and regional workshops for members of the local and provincial administration, paralegals and Watchdog group members (community, religious and women leaders) to share their challenges, successes, best practices and existing gaps.

During these workshops, participants were able to identify mentors across the regions who are working on similar issues. They exchanged mobile phone numbers and notes on the women's property and inheritance rights cases they were handling. The workshops provided an opportunity for the members of the Watchdog groups and local government to support each other, to clarify their roles and to provide alternative solutions to existing challenges.

The electronic mentoring process has also provided an opportunity for women to learn from each other on ways to strengthen their collective efforts. It has also enabled them to motivate themselves and each other. So far more than 200 cases in Kakamega, Gatundu, Limuru and Kendu-bay districts have been resolved through this process.

Major successes have been registered, particularly through the use of the electronic mentoring process. For instance, while Gatundu region had only one male and one female ombudsperson from each sub-location on its Ombudsperson Committee (a group of eminent persons selected by the community to aid in mediation processes), Shinyalu division selected a Committee of 10 – four women, five



Awareness raising of women leaders in Gatundu on the role of Watchdog groups in safeguarding women's land and property rights.

men and one youth. After sharing information on the composition of the Committee, Gatundu region understood the importance of incorporating some youth in its Committee to assist in identifying and resolving children's cases.

However, despite its success, technology presents a challenge for some grassroots groups who do not have telephone handsets or reliable telephone networks which would support information exchange in several regions at once.

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¹ The Huairou Commission is a global coalition of networks, institutions and individual professionals that links grassroots women's community development organisations to partners. The networks seek access to resources, information sharing and political space. At the same time, it links development professionals to on-the-ground practice. See: www.huairou.org

Tanzania: Gender equality in land and resource rights improves rural livelihoods in Dodoma region

In 1999, Tanzania promulgated a new Land and Village Land Acts Law (Land Law). Unlike the former law, inherited from the British, which did not recognize equal rights for women and men in land issues, the new Land Law is positive: all citizens of Tanzania, women and men, have equal rights to access, utilize and own land. To raise awareness on the contents of the Land Law among the population, the government called upon NGOs – among them the Dodoma Environmental Network (DONET) – to collaborate with government structures and communities on this matter through various projects.

The Women Land and Resource Rights Project

In response to a call by rural communities, women in particular, DONET undertook a survey to assess the level of need for information and knowledge on the Land Law. Results showed that this need was high among both women and men: 86% of the survey respondents indicated a need for more knowledge. This led to the development and implementation by DONET of the “Women Land and Resource Rights” project in 50 villages in Dodoma Region, funded by Norwegian People’s Aid Tanzania (NPA) since 2004.

The main objectives of the project are:

- to sensitize and educate members of rural grassroots communities and institutions about the new Land Law, so that they in turn can raise awareness among other members of their community;
- to create awareness among rural community based organisations and village leaders at grassroots level and thus promote good governance in village land administration;
- to let rural communities, especially women, know and understand their rights as stipulated in the Land Law, so that they can claim them when needed;

- to address gender equality issues in village development committees and village land councils¹ and involve equal numbers of women and men in these structures;
- to get balanced opinions when deliberating on issues pertaining to land administration;
- to help village leaders establish a system whereby community members can acquire customary land title deeds, so that any village member can legally own land.

Reaching communities through an integrated approach

To raise awareness, a number of integrated approaches are employed. Training workshops involving both women and men are conducted to enable participants to share ideas and exchange experiences. Village assemblies provide an opportunity to pass on relevant and targeted messages to the communities, as do drama, choirs, songs and traditional dances. Furthermore, brochures explaining the project and its activities, posters and summarized and/or simplified notes, as well as T-shirts with messages on the back are distributed to project beneficiaries, facilitators and staff.

Use of Information & Communication Technologies (ICTs)

To reach more people (also beyond the project area), **radio programmes** are aired through 2 local radio stations. The programmes tend to be very popular: “I feel to really be part of this project. It is highly participative. Last week I heard my sister Olivia from Songambele village being interviewed about the project by Radio Mwangaza. I was impressed and so was the whole group of people at the local shop in my village” says Elizabeth Rupia, one of the project beneficiaries in Ibwaga village, about 100 km from Songambele.



Occasionally, **television programmes** are broadcast through the National Television of Tanzania (TBC). The programmes are recorded on VHS cassettes and used for screening at village training sessions.

The project encourages its beneficiaries in the different villages to own and use **mobile phones** for easy and faster communication between them and with the project office in Dodoma town.

DONET owns five **computers**, two of them linked to the **Internet**. This gives project staff the opportunity to communicate with collaborators, like-minded organisations, stakeholders and the outside world at large and to collect information on other land projects.

Achievements & Impacts

- In collaboration with the local governments of Chamwino, Kongwa and Mpwapwa districts, the Tanzania Women Lawyers





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“Women have the right to landownership” – To raise the communities’ awareness, DONET distributes brochures, posters and simplified notes as well as T-shirts with printed messages, to project beneficiaries, facilitators and staff.

Association (TAWLA) and the Agricultural Research Institute (ARI), DONET has so far reached more than 120,000 women and nearly 100,000 men in 50 villages (in a period running from 2004 to 2007).

- Teams of about 10 village extension workers or animators, both women and men, have been formed in each of the 50 villages. Their role is to disseminate knowledge on the Land Law to their respective communities.
- Land management and administration structures have been set up in the target villages: one village land committee and one village land council in each of the 50 villages. Gender balance was strongly taken into consideration when forming the committees and councils, as stipulated in the Land Law: each village land committee comprises 9 members, with at least 4 women; each village land council consists of 7 members, with at least 3 women. No village committee or council meeting is conducted in the absence of any 2 female or male members.



This is a project that has touched the hearts of many, women and men alike. It has brought positive thinking and regard towards gender rights. There is need to expand the area of operation.”

Mr Hassan Dunga, Project beneficiary

- The women and men sitting on the village land committees and village land councils effectively work together as equals in their day to day village land management and administration tasks.
- For the first time, village assemblies directly participated in their own village land management and administration matters.
- Farm land border marking is gradually practiced in the project area by tree planting along the boundaries. The practice limits the occurrence of boundary shifting between neighbours.

- Contrary to before, when land conflicts were dealt with by the village governments, disputes between village community members are now sorted fairly and without bureaucracy.
- Women members of the village animation teams and other female beneficiaries have expressed satisfaction about the way men in their villages now treat them when it comes to property related issues (including land and resource rights).

Challenges

⊙ Mixed literacy levels

Project beneficiaries include literate, semi-literate and completely illiterate people. This requires a specific understanding and appreciation – one has to go down to the grassroots level and talk the language of the people, whatever their educational background. Luckily, Swahili (Tanzania’s national language) is widely spoken from the towns to deep in the rural areas and this is the language used in the project.

⊙ Government involvement

Due to resource constraints, local government field staff does not conduct formal in-village training workshops. They may sometimes use village assemblies to deliver messages, but usually they simply distribute information materials such as booklets, brochures and posters to the village government and leave again. To minimize this problem, DONET encourages working in collaboration with such agents: this will ensure the sustainability of the project activities also after the project finishes, in December 2011.

Lessons learnt

Gender equity in land administration structures has been obtained, but this does not mean that all women members are actively contributing during meetings. DONET has realised that they should be provided with special training to build their capacity and equip them with the knowledge and confidence needed to actively participate and lay out their arguments before their male colleagues.

It will also be necessary to lobby the District authorities for attention to areas without significant land conflict. It has been realised that due to resource constraints, local governments tend to give priority to land conflict prone areas for the communities to be sensitized. DONET is convinced, however, that all regions need to be informed, not only those where risk of conflicts is highest. On the contrary, sensitisation on the law will equip communities in peaceful areas with the knowledge to safeguard their lands against such conflicts.

Finally, proper land use planning should be implemented to enable communities to use their land effectively and to reduce poverty.

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1. Village development committees are responsible for education, water supply, health, security, etc. Village land councils are specifically responsible for issues related to land within the boundaries of the village - access, acquisition and utilization of land by members of the village community or by others from outside the village.

A selection of recent resources on access to land

From being property of men to becoming equal owners? Early impacts of land registration and certification on women in southern Ethiopia

Traditionally, the land tenure system in Southern Ethiopia may be characterised by patrilineal inheritance and virilocal residence. Young girls have very little influence over when and whom to marry. They have to go to a husband that their clan or family has identified for them, meaning that after marriage they move to the home of their new husband and inherit no land from their parents. Bride prices and dowries are commonly used, and girls are seen as the property of the husband and his clan. This also implies that if the husband dies, his wife is still the property of his clan. Hence, a brother of the late husband would then become the new husband of the wife. This report provides recommendations as to how women's land rights in Ethiopia could be strengthened by improving the quality of the land reform, followed by some recommendations for issues where further research is needed.

UN-HABITAT / Norwegian Mapping and Cadastre Authority, January 2008
www.statkart.no/Engelsk/Cadaster_and_Land_Registry/Property_Centre/Literature/

Fuelling exclusion? The biofuels boom and poor people's access to land

What are the impacts of the increasing spread of biofuels on access to land in producer countries, particularly for poorer rural people? Biofuels could revitalise rural agriculture and livelihoods – or, where there are competing claims on land – exclude poorer land and resource users. This study documents current knowledge on current and potential impacts of commercial biofuel production for access to land in Africa, Latin America and Asia, charting both negative experiences and promising approaches.

FAO/IIED, May 2008
www.iied.org/pubs

How title deeds make sex safer: Women's property rights in an era of HIV

One impact of HIV and AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa has been an increase in the number of poor, female-headed households. With particular reference to Kenya, this paper argues that under customary law, women's rights to own and inherit property are often limited and secondary to those of men. As a result, women who become widows are disproportionately likely to lose their homes, land, and other assets, placing themselves and their children at risk of destitution and exploitation. Modern systems of individual property rights offer women better legal protection, although such systems can discriminate against the poor, and

often lack social legitimacy. Collective action to demand women's property rights has been slow to develop in Africa, despite the support of international legal frameworks such as CEDAW. Paradoxically, the author suggests that the threat that HIV and AIDS poses to national development may spur activists and governments to make greater efforts to ensure women's property rights.

From Poverty to Power background paper, Oxfam International, 2008
<http://publications.oxfam.org.uk/>

La construction d'institutions locales légitimes de gestion foncière en milieu rural au Burkina Faso

(Building legitimate local institutions for efficient land management in rural areas of Burkina Faso)

In the context of land reform in Burkina Faso, following the adoption of the National Policy for Land Tenure Security in Rural Areas and the drafting of a new land bill, currently in preparation, Saïdou Sanou, a sociologist specialising in land management issues, provides a far-reaching analysis focusing on local land management institutions. The legitimacy of legal bodies, the role of traditional chiefs, the distribution of competencies and responsibilities between local municipalities and village and inter-village institutions are some of the issues addressed in this report. Drawing on lessons from the past, the author argues against attempting to standardise local land management institutions and recommends allowing time for experimentation before enacting new laws.

Saïdou Sanou, June 2008
www.hubrural.org

L'agriculture en quête de politiques (Agriculture: In search of effective policies)

Grain de sel review, No. 41-42, December 2007-May 2008

Le foncier, un enjeu crucial aux multiples dimensions (Land management: A crucial challenge with many dimensions)

Grain de sel review, No. 36, September-November 2006
www.inter-reseaux.org

Legal empowerment in practice. Using legal tools to secure land rights in Africa

In recent years, many legal service organisations have developed innovative ways for using legal processes to help disadvantaged groups have more secure rights over their land. The approaches, tools and methods used vary widely across contexts – from legal literacy training to paralegals programmes; from par-

ticipatory methodologies to help local groups register their lands or negotiate with government or the private sector, through to legal representation and strategic use of public interest litigation. While some of this experience has been documented, much of it has not. Only a very limited part of this experience has fed into international debates, and there have been few opportunities for lesson-sharing and cross-fertilisation among practitioners. In March 2008, FAO, IIED and the Faculty of Law of the University of Ghana jointly organised an international workshop to promote exchange of experiences among practitioners. Over the two days of the workshop, some 25 practitioners from different parts of Africa, together with a few practitioners and researchers from international institutions and from Europe, shared lessons and learned from each others' experiences with legal empowerment. This report captures the highlights of workshop discussions.

FAO/ IIED, May 2008
www.iied.org/pubs/

Secure land rights for all

This publication demonstrates how secure land rights are particularly important in helping to reverse three types of phenomena: gender discrimination; social exclusion of vulnerable groups; and wider social and economic inequalities linked to inequitable and insecure rights to land. It argues that policy-makers should adopt and implement the continuum of land rights because no single form of tenure can meet the different needs of all social groups. However, a range of land tenure options enables both women and men from all social groups to meet their changing needs over time. This study can assist policy-makers to understand and apply the practical ways in which people's land rights can be made more secure, while at the same time improve land policies as a basis for better, fairer and more sustainable urban and rural development.

UN-HABITAT / GLTN, April 2008
www.gltn.net

Women's equal rights to housing, land and property in international law

Women's equal rights to adequate housing, land and property are well elaborated under international human rights law but are often elusive in practice. This document is a reference guide to international human rights standards identifying both the substance of women's rights as well as the commitments made by States with regard to improving women's rights to adequate housing, land and property.

UN-HABITAT, 2007
www.unhabitat.org

The women painters of Makwasha

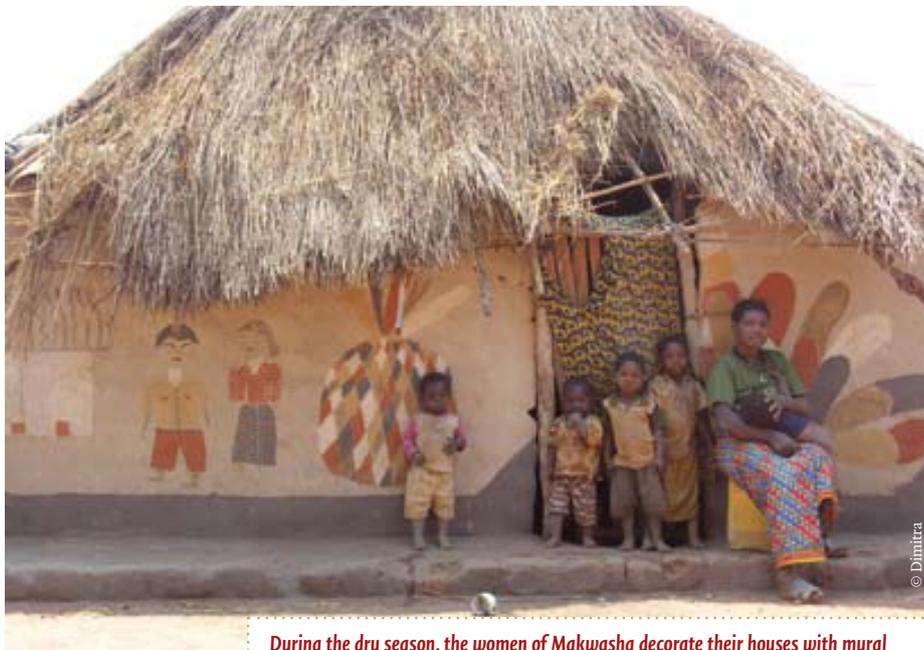
Ever since anyone can remember, every year during the dry season, when they have a little more time on their hands, the women of Makwasha – 45 km south of Lubumbashi (Katanga Province, Democratic Republic of Congo) on the road to Zambia – decorate their homes with astonishingly beautiful mural paintings. Each woman expresses herself in her own way, which results in a remarkable variety of themes and motifs: here you see a siren, there a riot of flowers and, further on, animals, a man drinking, a woman with a baby strapped to her back...

To create these impressive, albeit somewhat ephemeral masterpieces, which will last only one year, the women use pigments derived from local clays and they apply the paint directly on the walls with their fingers.

Makwasha and its women painters are beginning to be known within the country and beyond. In fact, they have already become the subject of a film, “Kushiripa, un art féminin” (Kushiripa, a feminine art), directed by Douglas Nt and produced by the Vicanos-Club, a highly dynamic group of young, talented artists from Lubumbashi.

The village, with its pretty, tidy look, has great potential as a tourist attraction. However, living conditions are difficult: there is no running water, no electricity, no school and no income from agriculture. A small health centre – soon to be attached to the Regional Health Centre of Kipuchi – has recently been opened in Makwasha. For its part GTZ-Santé (the Health unit of GTZ, the German Agency for Technical Cooperation), is examining the possibility of strengthening the capacities of health partners in the area.

The women of Makwasha grow fruit, vegetables and food crops, but in quantities that are barely enough to feed the community. Even though the soil is good and water is close at hand, everything is difficult because there is no water infrastructure. Young girls dig shallow wells here and there in the vicinity of the



During the dry season, the women of Makwasha decorate their houses with mural paintings, using natural pigments.

vegetable plots and scoop up the water with a bowl, which they use to fill buckets or drums. Hauling the water takes up much of the time of the girls, who carry it in heavy buckets on their heads, or of the boys, who fill cans and carry them on their bicycles.

Furthermore, there are very few tools available to plough and cultivate the land: without hoes and without sufficient seed for planting,

production is very low. Yet the tarmac road to Lubumbashi runs through the village, so that fruits, vegetables and other food crops could easily be transported to the city in just one hour, if the community could produce more and organise itself better.

The FAO-DRC, in particular through the UPH project (Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture), is currently estimating the cost of installing a more efficient water outlet system and intends to introduce farmer field schools locally to improve the technical skills of the village’s horticulturalists. Other FAO-DRC projects, such as the “Programme d’Action et de Développement communautaire” (PADC, Community Action and Development Programme) are also expected to contribute to this effort.

Let’s hope that the dynamism and creativity of the women painters of Makwasha will enable them to help their community to overcome poverty!

* The film “Kushiripa, un art féminin” is available on DVD from the Vicanos-Club: vicanosclub@yahoo.fr

The women of Makwasha village grow fruit, vegetables and food crops, but their work is difficult because there is no water infrastructure. Young girls dig shallow wells here and there in the vicinity of the vegetable plots and scoop up the water with a bowl, which they use to fill buckets or drums.



Kimbanseke: Getting to know the women's solidarity groups of rural Kinshasa

On 29 September 2008, a delegation of Dimitra and GTZ-Santé, accompanied by Ms Aimée Mwadi Kadi, Coordinator of SWAA (Society for Women against AIDS in Africa) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, visited a number of women's solidarity groups in Kimbanseke, a district of Kinshasa located some 25 kilometres from the city.

The "Elonga" women's solidarity group

A four-wheel drive vehicle is needed to negotiate the narrow path flanked by countless small shops which winds along the foot of the wall of Kinshasa's largest cemetery, in the municipality of Kimbanseke. A little further, we suddenly arrive in the borough of Kabamulumbae, an area with no running water and no electricity but whose well-tended vegetable plots are a delight to see.

We have travelled to Kimbanseke to visit one of the women's solidarity groups set up by SWAA-DRC. The "Elonga" (victory) group was born only six months ago and brings together 54 women. They meet every week and pay dues into a common fund, from which loans are made to members of the group. The loans are repayable within six weeks, at 10% interest.

The group has a set of rules or "constitution" and, given that most of its members are illiterate, each of them has learnt an article of the constitution by heart and recites it to the other members when paying her contributions.

Women who fail to pay their dues or to repay a loan are required to pay a fine next time (FC 500, equivalent to approximately USD 1). If they are absent without a valid excuse or arrive late, they also have to pay a penalty, of FC 200 and FC 100 respectively. The same applies if they speak ill of another member of the group: in this case, the fine is FC 200.

The money is kept in a cash box, which is in the custody of the President of the group's Management Committee. The box has three padlocks, the key of each being entrusted to a different member of the group. None of the three key-



The 54 women of the Elonga solidarity group meet every week and pay dues into a common fund, to be able to obtain loans and jointly organise micro-projects.

keepers knows the identity of the other two. The box can only be opened in the presence of all members attending the meeting, except in an emergency. Urgent loans are granted in the event of serious illness, death, etc.

At each meeting, once the contributions have been paid – which is a perfectly transparent process, with the Treasurer and Secretary counting the money in front of all participants, including the President – the loans are granted to applicants, who must explain the purpose of the loans.

On the day of the visit by the Dimitra and GTZ-Santé delegation, the group collected FC 14,600 in savings and FC 700 in fines, which were added to the balance brought forward from the previous week. Two women asked for loans, one to buy seeds and the other to buy inputs. Both loans were approved.

At the end of 26 meetings, the group succeeded in raising no less than FC 413,000.

Coordination Committees of the women's solidarity groups at the SWAA centre in Kimbanseke

The SWAA centre coordinates the activities of eight women's solidarity groups in the Kimbanseke municipality, with a combined membership of more than 300 women. Supported by SWAA extension workers, the groups aim to promote self-organisation, micro-credit and advocacy. During our visit, the women spoke

to us about how the groups operate and their underlying philosophy.

To be able to join a group you must – in addition to being a woman – live in the area, take part in a five-day training programme (comprising five modules) and practise six "virtues", namely transparency, solidarity, truthfulness, gratitude, mutual trust, and observance of the principles of the organisation.

The project leaders, who coordinate the groups' meetings, aim to combat five "evils": HIV-AIDS, TB/HIV co-infection, poverty, vulnerability and underdevelopment.

They follow an approach which they call the "chain of hope": Woman → family → local area → borough/municipality → town or city

They explained to us that, thanks to these groups, contribute a lot to the family economy and are gaining the admiration of men.

The women of the SWAA Centre contributed 10% (USD 3,100) to the installation of proper water taps in the area. This contribution was a requirement by the NGO financing the installation. Well done, ladies!

✳ For more information, please contact:
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Urban and peri-urban horticulture: A vehicle of economic development for women in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The cities and towns of the DRC have some striking features in common: on the one hand, we find urban and peri-urban areas where a high proportion of the population experience food insecurity; on the other hand, we find people who excel in the art of finding some job or another to survive in this environment which, despite appearances, offers many opportunities for informal employment.

One activity which is particularly profitable is the cultivation of fruit and vegetables for local markets. With an average daily consumption of 50 grams of fruit and vegetables per inhabitant, the city of Kinshasa alone requires 400 tonnes of produce per day. As a result, a large number of citizens are engaged in **horticulture**, whether full-time or as a side business. The sector is even considered the **main source of employment in the city!** Entire families rely exclusively on urban and peri-urban horticulture (UPH) for their livelihood. UPH is practised mainly by women, who can earn up to USD200 per month by cultivating a 1,000 to 2,500 m² plot.

Horticulturalists in urban or peri-urban areas face specific problems and require solutions that make it possible to adapt a “rural” activity to an “urban” environment. In fact, left to its own devices, the UPH sector might experience difficulties in terms of sustainability, product quality and hence long-term profitability. To prevent such difficulties, support – both institutional and technical – is needed.

The project implemented by FAO to support the development of UPH in **five towns of the DRC** is based on a strategy designed to place UPH within the broader context of a **sustainable management policy for the urban and peri-urban environment**. The strategy is implemented in accordance with the principles of decentralisation, accountability and participation in order to ensure the active involvement of all stakeholders.

The strategy – known as “**the 4S strategy**” – involves:

1. Securing access to natural resources (land and water);
2. Securing the quality and harmlessness of UPH products;
3. Securing ownership of the sector’s development process by all stakeholders;
4. Securing outlets for horticultural products.

The **actions** and **achievements** of the UPH support project in the cities of Kinshasa, Lubumbashi, Kisangani, Likasi and Mbanza Ngungu may be summarised as follows:

- 4,500 hectares identified as horticultural areas;
- > 500 listed horticultural organisations;
- 1,500 hectares targeted by the project, thus securing 45,000 direct and indirect jobs for



The cultivation of fruit and vegetables for local markets is very profitable, and is even considered the main source of employment in the city of Kinshasa. Entire families rely exclusively on urban and peri-urban horticulture, practised mainly by women, for their livelihood.

- some 22,000 direct beneficiaries and 110,000 indirect beneficiaries;
- 36 agricultural water schemes to improve water management in an area of 1,100 ha for 16,000 families;
- 15,200 recipients of micro-credit;
- 115 micro-credit loans granted to micro-enterprises involved in the manufacture of agricultural implements, product processing, the sale of agricultural inputs (seed), etc.;
- 12 local markets;
- 25 school gardens for 80 schoolteachers and 9,500 pupils;
- Various training activities (on management techniques, profitability, micro-finance management, etc.) for 2,136 people;
- 265 farmer field schools for 4,500 producers, with demonstrations and other activities to disseminate good agricultural practices (compost making, biopesticides, appropriate plant varieties, greenhouse cultivation, use of pedal pumps, etc.).



The project is implemented through decentralised bodies responsible for horticulture in the cities involved (“Bureau Municipal de l’Horticulture”) under the technical supervision of the “Service National d’Appui au Développement de l’Horticulture Urbaine et Péri-urbaine” (SENAHUP, National Support Service for Urban and Peri-urban Horticulture), which is attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. The aspects concerning land tenure and the coordination of activities in the urban areas are managed by municipal or community Coordination Committees chaired by the mayor of the relevant city or municipality.

The project has **benefited women and children** in various ways. Thanks to the regular income from fruit and vegetable growing, women are no longer dependent on external financial resources. They can thus improve their children’s nutrition and, more generally, the quality of family meals; and they can also meet certain household costs such as those associated with healthcare and children’s education. As far as educational opportunities are concerned, the project is of particular benefit to girls, who traditionally are the first to stay at home when a family cannot afford to send all the children to school.

✳ For more information, please contact the FAO’s Representative in the DRC: fao-cd@fao.org

The FAO's efforts to prevent bird flu in the Great Lakes Region

With the spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) type H₅N₁ – more commonly known as bird flu – into Asia (2003), Europe (2005), and Africa (2006), the pandemic has taken on global proportions. In view of this, the organisations responsible for monitoring, containing and eradicating avian influenza are providing assistance to all the countries where the risk of infection is high and/or the resources available to combat the disease are limited.

What is avian influenza?

Avian influenza – also called bird flu or pest – is a disease caused by an influenza virus which can infect nearly all domestic and wild bird species.

It can be highly contagious, particularly among chickens and turkeys, and can have a very high mortality rate, especially on industrial poultry farms. Other animal species, such as pigs and other mammals, may also be infected by the virus. The infection is transmitted between different bird species and, more rarely, to humans. Transmission occurs through close exposure to infected birds, objects or fluids.

Women and children are at higher risk

According to an FAO study on various population groups, households with a farmyard, which often have a high proportion of women and children, are the most exposed to the risk of bird flu infection. Certain high-risk behaviours – involving, in particular, the handling of poultry – were identified in this target group.

Women frequently breed poultry with the help of children and without any protective measures. Children often share their living space with poultry. Furthermore, chicken is prepared and cooked in unhygienic conditions, and children are often entrusted with the task of killing a chicken.

Women involved in fruit and vegetable growing who use fowl manure as a fertiliser are even more exposed to the risk of infection since they wear no personal protection equipment, such as boots, gloves or – more importantly – a mask.

Prevention project

At the request of the Congolese Government, Belgium is financing a regional project to monitor and prevent bird flu and strengthen the relevant veterinary services. The project is being implemented with the technical support of FAO in the three countries of the Great Lakes Region, namely Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Rwanda.

The project aims to:

- Strengthen the capacity of veterinary services to implement early warning and prevention



- strategies to deal effectively with cross-border diseases, including bird flu;
- Define and improve specific strategies, policies and methodologies for an avian influenza emergency plan and a public awareness campaign;
- Create a strong network bringing together veterinary staff and other experts in order to build capacity in new monitoring techniques.



Practical advice to the public

Bird flu has not yet been detected in the Great Lakes Region. However, there are several simple, practical measures that can help reduce the risk of infection in the event of an outbreak of the epidemic:

- Bird flu is a disease which affects poultry and can be transmitted to humans. Always make sure that poultry and eggs are cooked thoroughly before you eat them.
- Always wash your hands with soap after handling poultry.
- Chicken pens should be built away from dwellings.
- Do not allow your children to play with birds. Children should not collect feathers or touch birds' nests, eggs or droppings.
- When working with fowl manure, farmers and labourers should wear personal protection equipment.
- To protect passengers' health, transport operators should avoid carrying people and poultry in the same vehicle.
- Report any cases of more than five deaths of wild birds in the same area to your local authority or to the nearest health worker or veterinary.
- Report any suspicious sale of poultry or eggs to your local authority.

* For additional information on the project, please contact:

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HORTIVAR Horticulture Cultivars Performance Database



GCP/INT/697/BEL

With the support of Belgium

HORTIVAR is FAO's database on performances of horticulture cultivars in relation to agro-ecological conditions, cultivation practices, the occurrence of pests and diseases and timing of the production.

HORTIVAR addresses the needs of producers, public and private sector, seed companies and horticultural research centres for information management related to horticultural crop cultivars in different agro-climatic environments.



© Dimitra

HORTIVAR allows users to identify cultivars and cropping practices adapted to their specific requirements and environment.

HORTIVAR is:

- a tool for easy and quick retrieval of information related to horticulture cultivars all over the world;
- a standard methodology for data collection and record keeping on the performances of horticulture cultivars;
- a standard reference for educational purposes;
- a communication interface between researchers, extension workers and producers.

HORTIVAR covers six categories of horticultural crops: fruits, vegetables, roots & tubers, ornamentals, mushrooms, herbs & condiments.

HORTIVAR has two primary functions which are interdependent: data retrieval and data entry. Use of the database is free of charge. Data are retrieved by searching according to various parameters such as crop, species, cultivar, country, geographical references, pest resistance, eco-zone and production systems. Data registered in the database are site specific and therefore the database is geo-referenced.

HORTIVAR is accessible on the INTERNET, on CD-ROM, and on PAPER FORMS.

Good Morning Hortivar is a message board on the Hortivar website to share and exchange information on horticulture and its benefits for food, income and health. New messages are published daily.

The idea is to have a window where Hortivar partners can post news information items in different formats:

- Text
- Text with images/photos or video
- Information on new publications
- Information upcoming conferences/meetings

How to submit messages:

- Go to the portal www.fao.org/hortivar
- Click on **Good Morning Hortivar**
- Login with your username and password
- Go to the tab *Submit daily message*, then:
 1. Choose the message type
 2. Fill out the mandatory fields
 3. Preview /Edit your message
 4. Submit your message
 5. You will receive a confirmation e-mail with the date on which your message shall be published on the Good Morning Hortivar message board

Search messages:

You can also search past messages using different parameters and key words.

Hortivar version 3.7 -
 FAO Copyright: Last updated: Wednesday, July 29th, 2007
 Horticultural Crops Group, Crop and Grassland Service, Plant Production and Protection Division
 GCP/INT/697/BEL

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Women's economic empowerment: the route to enjoying rights

Ensuring the economic, social and political empowerment of poor women by organising them in Self Help Groups (SHGs) is one of the Women Support Association's (WSA) main areas of intervention in Habru District in northern Ethiopia.

Gender-based violence

WSA recorded a high prevalence of various types of gender-based violence in the *kebeles*¹ of Habru District (North Wollo, Amhara Region), when it conducted a baseline study about the factors contributing to the seasonal migration of women and girls to the capital Addis Ababa. Among the types of gender-based violence identified were domestic violence, rape, abduction, female circumcision, early marriage, polygamy, wife inheritance (inheriting the wife of one's brother), and wife sharing (giving the right to one's brother to have sexual relation with one's wife).

Another shocking practice in the rural *kebeles* of the district is *jebata*. In this region, if a girl menstruates before marriage it is considered as a curse and believed that she will not be able to get a husband. In order to preserve the family's honour and to increase the girl's chances of getting a husband, her parents will give her to a mosque-keeper (*deresa*), who will take the girl's virginity and then return her to her family. It is believed that this practice, called *jebata*, will take away her *eyene-tella* – that which hinders her from getting a husband. It is needless to explain the inhumanity of this practice, which affects girls in all aspects of their being – physically, psychologically and socially – and also contributes to the rapid expansion of HIV/AIDS.

Addressing gender-based violence in Self Help Groups

Fatuma, a member of one of WSA's Self Help Groups (SHG), talks about her experience:

"Ten years ago, nobody asked me for marriage because my family was poor, which made me to be a victim of *jebata*. Now, I'm asked for marriage because I'm no longer poor. Being involved in the SHG has created good opportunities for me. I've started income-generating activities and have joined the group's savings and revolving fund.

As we, women, are the breadwinners, we are now participating in the decisions with regard to major household affairs. We also learn about harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence and legal issues through the family dialogue organised for SHG members and their families. We now say no to

jebata and claim our rights when they are violated. In the by-laws of our SHG, we have incorporated the actions we will undertake against members who commit harmful traditional practices. Some 1300 poor women like me have been benefiting from the SHG project implemented in my *kebele* and its surroundings. You can imagine how many daughters of these women will be saved from *jebata*!"

The SHG approach

An SHG is an informal association of vulnerable community members, in this case women, with the objective of working together for their economic and social development and for the overall development of the area. The underlying idea is that economic and social empowerment will lead to political empowerment.

In a first phase, 15 to 20 women form an SHG. The SHGs organise income-generating activities and savings and credit funds. All members of the SHG receive literacy training during their weekly meetings, and through family dialogue they learn about different social issues related to the family and the community. They also develop their communication and leadership skills.

After six months to one year, eight to 12 SHGs located in the same geographical area form a Cluster Level Association (CLA), in which two members of each SHG are represented. The CLA plays a crucial role in the empowerment process, as it supports the SHGs in a number of important areas, such as lobbying with local bodies and institutions; crisis resolution; marketing and negotiation; establishing sustainable linkages with other CLAs, NGOs, and other service-oriented agencies; and expressing solidarity and mobilising collective action on wider social issues.

In a next phase, eight to 10 CLAs from the same geographical area will form a Federation, which will enable larger-scale awareness-raising networking and lobbying activities and will facilitate regular contacts of its members (2 representatives from each member CLA) with the police, the judicial system, local government and elected representatives at higher political levels.

Positive results & lessons learned

The SHG community development approach is believed to bring about an improvement of





The women belonging to the same Self Help Group have formed strong bonds. They wear the same dress during their gatherings and in markets. This uniform is a sign of their togetherness in thought, perspectives, and actions. A group achieves better than an individual!

the social, economic and political participation and status of women. So far, WSA has organised a total of 1373 poor women into 75 SHGs and eight CLAs in Habru District. The project is implemented with the support of Oxfam Canada, Danish Church Aid, the Spanish NGO Implicadas/Os No Desenvolvimento (IND) and the Geneva Global Fund.

A WSA internal learning review has revealed the significant changes brought about in Habru as a result of the project. Among them:

- The women members of the SHGs are involved in income-generating activities and their daily income has increased on average by 15 birr (about 1 Euro). They can also benefit from their group's savings and credit fund.
- They are more confident in expressing their needs and claiming their rights.
- They have formed strong bonds and help each other on social occasions such as mourning and funerals, births, weddings, etc. Interestingly, women from the same SHG wear the same dress during their gatherings and in markets. According to the women, their uniform is a sign of their

togetherness in thought and perspectives, and is indicative of their united actions against the violation of women's rights in the community. Their unity is the foundation of their success, because they believe a group achieves better than an individual.

- They have become strong partners in the fight against gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices by educating their community and peers, as well as by reporting cases to the police, justice and other government offices, and to the WSA field office.
- The concern of government offices towards women's issues has increased.

Habru District is chronically drought-prone and food insecure – a slight change in the climate could affect the project's results and increase the vulnerability of the community, and particularly of women. WSA has therefore realised that Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) should be integrated within the SHG project interventions, to reduce the vulnerability of women and girls to any form of violence and to sustain the gains of the project.

Conclusion

Overall, the lessons learnt from implementing the SHG approach are that organising women in groups and building their capacity with appropriate skills helps them to realise their potential, develop their confidence and self-esteem, and win the confidence of the local administration to advocate their issues effectively. It also makes them strong partners in the prevention and control of sexual and gender-based violence and HIV/AIDS.

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WSA is Dimitra's Focal Point for Ethiopia.

1 A kebele is the smallest government administrative unit in Ethiopia.

Rural women and economic development: A successful approach

Improving the living standards of disadvantaged populations and women in particular is a challenge which development partners must contribute to meet. In Africa, development is directly and imperatively linked to the emancipation of rural women. The French NGO Groupe de Recherche et de Réalisations pour le Développement Rural (GRDR – Research and Project Group for Rural Development) has tested such a gender approach in numerous projects, including notably through its “Programme d’Appui aux Initiatives des Femmes” (PAIF – Support Programme for Women’s Initiatives).

The PAIF aims to promote the economic initiatives of two local development organisations in the broader context of the economic development of a remote rural area in eastern Senegal. Based in Bocké-Mbaybé and Saldé, two villages located in the rural community of Pété¹, in the region of Saint-Louis, both organisations are mostly composed of women. Bocké-Mbaybé and Saldé have a population of 652 and 1,772 respectively.

The GRDR has been implementing a number of development projects in the area since 1982. Its principal aims are to provide support for migrants and to promote the development of their areas of origin. In 2005, the women of the rural community of Pété requested support to strengthen their economic initiatives. A challenge then arose: How can local economic development be promoted in a context of extreme poverty?

Backed by several partners², the PAIF can best be seen as the beginning of a response to rural women’s strongly-voiced request for support for local economic initiatives.

The programme, scheduled to last 24 months, aimed to improve women’s living conditions by:

- Promoting income-generating activities;
- Reducing women’s workload;
- Building women’s capacities.

Through the implementation of these objectives, which were decided in consultation with the women concerned, the following results were achieved:

Income-generating activities:

- Rehabilitation of a “community shop” offering proximity services.
- Rehabilitation of the fish market, including the construction of a new facility and the purchase of three fish-storage units. This market supplies fresh fish to the entire village.
- Rehabilitation of a traditional bakery; training of a baker to produce better-quality bread to cater for the needs of the village as well as to meet external demand. There are also plans to train an apprentice with the aim of producing even larger quantities of bread.
- Strengthening of market gardening activities in Bocké-Mbaybé: four reservoirs were built to improve irrigation; the fence enclosing the plantation area (1 ha) was repaired.
- Rehabilitation of an 8-hectare plantation by the women of Saldé: purchase of a portable

motor pump, basic restoration of the land and purchase of small agricultural tools. The net profits from market gardening activities in 2008 are estimated at FCFA 350,000 (approximately 520 euro). The women produced okra, onions, niebe (a local bean variety), cabbage and sorrel. With the portable motor pump, the men cultivated a 7-hectare rice field during the dry season (from March to June).

Reduction of women’s workload:

- A “multifunctional platform” with four different machines (including a cereal sheller, which is used to remove the bran of sorghum, as well as a peanut sheller, a sorghum mill and a rice sheller) was set up in Bocké-Mbaybé. These machines reduce the amount of labour required for tasks usually performed by women. Freed from some of their traditional chores, the women of Bocké-Mbaybé can carry out other productive activities (sewing, gardening, etc.). Over a period of 15 months, their net profits totalled FCFA 978,000 (approx. 1,400 euro). Thanks to these profits, the women are able to invest more in the improvement of the living conditions in their village.
- A sorghum mill was installed in Saldé, resulting in a significant reduction of the women’s milling workload.



“The multifunctional platform project was launched with the help of the GRDR. All aspects, including the community shop, the bakery, the fish market and the multifunctional platform, were successfully implemented. Apart from the difficulties involved in generating the required amount of electricity, the platform as such works well and we are very satisfied.”

Ms Haby GADIO, Deputy Treasurer, Bocké-Mbaybé

Capacity building:

- Two women’s management committees were set up and a number of training activities were carried out. The women attended three training sessions: two in business management and one in market gardening techniques.
- Several jobs were created: a miller, a fishmonger, a baker, a manager for the community desk and two part-time jobs for women (weighing goods, selling tickets). In total, six people have secured a regular source of income thanks to the women’s project.

From a qualitative point of view, the following can be observed:

- The emergence of a centre of economic activity, where numerous actors converge to supply and/or benefit from different services.
- A significant reduction of the distance that needs to be travelled to shell and grind the rice.
- A significant reduction of the workload of adult women as well as girls, who can now devote more time to go to school.

In terms of improving the livelihoods of the local population, the programme has had a very real impact. The PAIF has resulted in many positive changes, from increasing the supply of foodstuffs to providing support for market gardening activities to reducing women’s workload. A particularly important benefit is the fact that all the activities implemented are geared to creating wealth at local level, thus promoting sustainable development.

The PAIF has become a role model in the area. The women of Bocké-Mbaybé and, to a lesser extent, those of Saldé have certainly achieved greater self-reliance and are admired in nearby villages. The project has now been completed but the GRDR still provides ongoing support for the women’s groups. Following the successful experience in Bocké, which was aired on RFI (Radio France Internationale), the GRDR received numerous requests for support to set up multifunctional platforms in other rural communities it works with.

* For additional information, please contact:

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www.grdr.org

1 Pété is a rural community comprising 43 villages and some 57 hamlets, with an estimated population of 30,000.
2 Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), Swiss Michelham Foundation and French Committee for International Solidarity (CFSI).

Niger: A glance at an alternative education pathway

On 23 April 2008, the Global Education Campaign, which brings together teachers, humanitarian organisations and community groups from all over the world, mobilised thousands of people in several countries to urge governments to fulfil their promise to eradicate illiteracy and provide education for all. The aim was to beat the world record for “the largest lesson ever”.

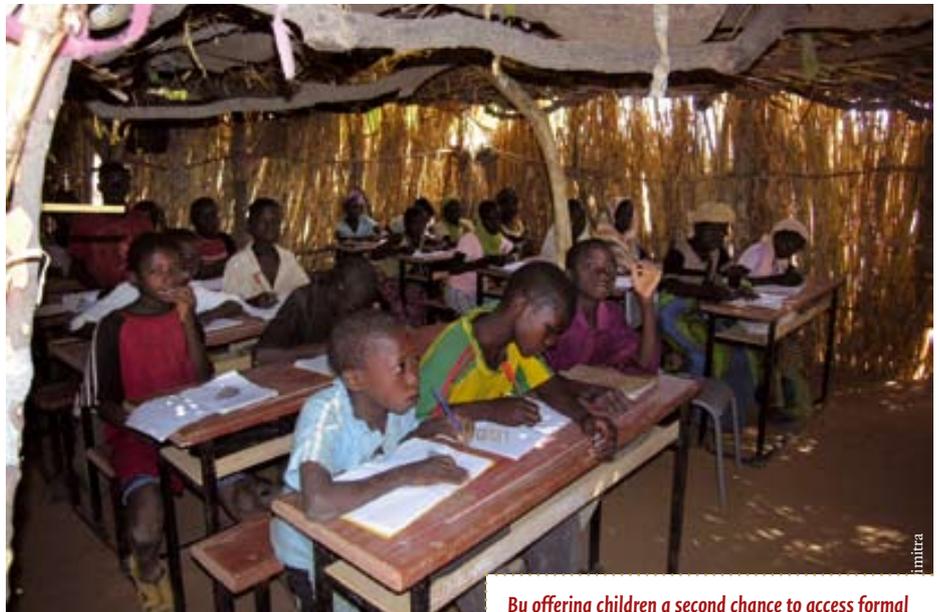
That day, in Niger, attention was focusing on Téra, a village in the far west of the country. The “large lesson” was taking place in the open air, against the background of cultural activities led by national and local celebrities, in the presence of government representatives and local authorities. Before the event started, a sudden silence fell on the gathering and then a hesitant but clearly audible voice was heard:

“My name is Jamila Mamoudou. I’m from the village of Doumba. I’m ten years old. Six months ago, I had no hope of going to school. Thanks to the Passerelle (fast-track) Initiative of the Stromme Foundation and the NGO VIE, I can now go to school. I can already read and write quite well and I look forward to joining my schoolmates in the second grade class when the next term begins, in October 2008. Without the Passerelle Initiative, I would probably be working in a household, doing boring and endless chores all day long.”

The crowd remained silent for a few seconds, touched by the little girl’s speech and at the same time deeply curious about this new form of education called “Passerelle Initiative”, which enables children to overcome illiteracy and hopelessness in a single year and rapidly move on to the fourth grade.

The same question was on everyone’s lips and everyone’s mind: What is this Passerelle Initiative? Launched by the Stromme Foundation (Norway), and implemented in Niger by the NGO VIE Kande Ni Bayra in Téra and by the NGO Tarbiya Tattali in Douchi, the Passerelle Initiative is designed to provide educational opportunities for children who, for one reason or another, could not access formal education or who dropped out from school early.

Like most other girls in the village, Jamila lives in a hamlet some four kilometres from the school. At the age of six, she was told by her parents that she was too young to walk



By offering children a second chance to access formal education, the Passerelle Initiative rescues them from exploitative labour, as well as from early or forced marriage in the case of girls.

to school alone through the forest. She must wait another two years. However, when she was eight – and already working as a vegetable seller at the market in Téra, ten kilometres from the village, to earn money for her family – her mother gave birth to her third little brother. No priority, principle or consideration, not even her right to education, could then free Jamila from the daily chores usually assigned to girls of her age: fetching water, cleaning, looking after her brothers, preparing meals, etc. as instructed by her mother, who was busy caring for the newborn baby. Thus Jamila passed the official age for school enrolment.

In rural areas, many children lose their inalienable rights and are put to work as adults’ servants at an early age. It was to remedy this situation that the Stromme Foundation and its partners, including the NGO VIE, joined forces with the government and submitted a plan for the creation of fast-track “Passerelle Centres” to the Ministry for National Education.

Each Passerelle Centre caters for approximately 30 children. The programme begins with a two-month induction period during which teaching takes place in the pupils’ mother tongue. This is followed by six months of instruction summarising the official curricular contents of the first three years of primary education. French is used during this second stage of the programme, at the end of which pupils must pass an assessment test to join the formal education system, either via the fourth grade or, where appropriate, the third grade.

The inspectorates responsible for basic education closely monitor the teaching/learning process in order to validate its contents, in reference to the official curricula. The assessment test leading to integration in the formal education system is also organised by the inspectorates.

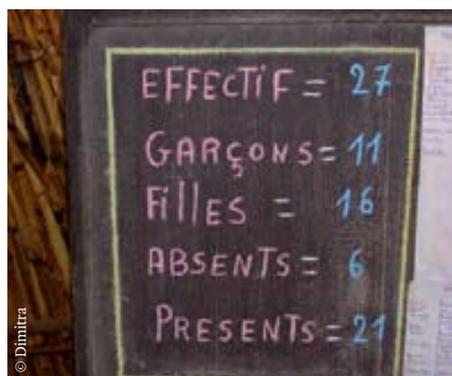
By offering children a second chance to access formal education, the Passerelle Initiative rescues them from exploitative labour, as well as from early or forced marriage in the case of girls.

Sixty centres, catering for 1,800 children aged 9 to 12, are expected to be operational in Téra and Douchi by October 2008. The Initiative is also being developed in Mali and Burkina Faso in cooperation with other NGOs.

✳ To find out more about the Passerelle Initiative, contact:

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The NGO VIE is a partner of Dimitra and covers five countries of the Sahel region, namely Benin, Chad, Mali, Niger and Togo.



Niger: Solar water pump and lighting in the village of Tallagué

In recent times, Niger has witnessed a remarkable upsurge of women's groups and organisations. In total, there are more than 12,000 women's groups registered with the municipalities. The structuring of the women's movement into identifiable groups greatly facilitates different types of actions developed for the benefit of women and provides a solid foundation for sustainable development.

In Tallagué, a village in the province of Oualam, women's groups are struggling for greater autonomy. However, they cannot rely on their efforts alone to achieve one important aim, namely that of developing off-season cultures in order to secure regular income and thus meet their families' basic needs. In this context, with the technical support of the NGO Doubani, the local women developed a project aimed at building a wind-powered water extraction pump for fruit and vegetable crops as well as a solar-powered lighting system, to the benefit of the members of three women's groups in Tallagué (rural municipality of Simiri). This project was financed under the Micro-Finance Programme of the Global Environment Facility.

The project aims to:

- Place special emphasis on income-generating activities for the benefit of women;
- Develop appropriate conditions for the participation of women in economic and social life by promoting their access to the means and factors of production;
- Reduce the domestic workload of women;
- Eradicate illiteracy among women;
- Raise the community's awareness of major issues, including HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, malaria, early marriage, the school education of girls, etc.

Activities carried out

☉ Installation of a solar-powered pump and construction of hydraulic infrastructures

The works included:

- Installation of a solar pump with a capacity of 3,000 litres;
- Construction of a large reinforced-concrete reservoir (30 m³);
- Construction of four smaller reservoirs (2.5 m³ each), including one for drinking water, one for cattle watering and two for crop irrigation.

These installations supply water to 1,253 inhabitants and hundreds of livestock. About 1.5 hectares were prepared to enable women to cultivate off-season crops, including tomatoes, lettuce, potatoes, gourds, carrots and cabbage. Thanks to these installations, women spend much less time collecting water – down from three hours to 30 minutes! What's more, the income they obtain from selling the produce enables women to meet basic needs. It is also noteworthy that the project has led to a sig-



Thanks to the installation of a solar-powered pump and the construction of reinforced-concrete reservoirs, the women of Tallagué spend much less time collecting water. They therefore have more time and energy to cultivate off-season crops. The income they obtain from selling the produce enables them to meet basic needs.

nificant regeneration of the vegetation cover in the area, with a variety of high-value trees and other plants now being nurtured in and around the vegetable plots.

☉ Solar lighting

This comprises the installation of:

- A photovoltaic array;
- Other equipment required for solar-powered lighting.

These installations have made it possible to light the school and the village main square as and when required. The 45 pupils in the sixth year of primary school, including 25 girls, are now able to do their assignments and revision work after dark in the well-lit classroom. Similarly, two literacy centres run by the NGO Appui au Développement Local (ADL – Local Development Support) can function in the

evenings thanks to the solar-powered lighting system. Furthermore, many women weave and knit at night by lamplight.

The solar power system also enables the villagers to watch television, which features frequent awareness and educational broadcasts on farming and stockbreeding techniques, storage and preservation of produce, etc. Finally, the system has significantly reduced household oil consumption, leading to lower fuel costs and, importantly, lower environmental pollution from CO₂ emissions.

☉ Trolleys

Trolleys are now available to carry water from the pump to people's homes, thus enabling women to save a great deal of time and effort. The trolleys are also used to transport the fruit and vegetable produce to the points of sale.



✳ For additional information, please contact the NGOs involved:

AFPEF / Doubani

Association Féminine pour la Promotion et l'Éducation de la Femme (Association for the Promotion and Education of Women)
ong_doubani@yahoo.fr

ADL

Appui au Développement Local (Local Development Support)
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Oxen and community radios: a powerful combination

It is 7 a.m. in Bouar, a small town in the west of the Central African Republic. Sylvère and his two oxen leave the pasture. Destination: Radio Maïgaro. Aim: to generate electricity for the local radio station. How? Take two oxen, yoke them to a long metal shaft which drives an electrical alternator connected to two truck batteries and, hey presto, you've got yourself a power unit!

As long as the oxen hold out, the system supplies some 1,000 watts, enough to power the microphones and mixing desk of Radio Maïgaro. Is this a joke? Not at all! At 8 a.m. the two journalists on duty greet their audience and announce the morning's programme. Within a radius of 50 kilometres, in the marketplaces, in the streets of the town, hundreds of listeners – tiny radios or headphones glued to their ears – learn about what is happening around the region. Women also benefit from Radio Maïgaro, since the community radio frequently broadcasts programmes and information on issues of special interest to them.

“Le bœuf qui tourne” (The Turning Ox), a project funded by the European Commission following a decentralised call for proposals (Decentralised Cooperation – Capacity-Building Programme for Non-Governmental Actors), was conceived by Max Bale, head of the Radio France Internationale (RFI) “Planète Radio” project and Guenaël Launay, an RFI technician. An Italian engineer with a passion for mechanical devices, Luigi, enabled the project to become a reality.

“I had the idea while I was in the Central African Republic,” explained Max Bale during interviews given to Libération and Le Monde as well as to the France 3 television channel. “People have been installing community radio stations in rural areas and war zones for years now,” he explains. “These radio stations are essential to keep isolated areas connected to the rest of the world. But securing a power



Radio Maïgaro frequently broadcasts programmes and information on issues of special interest to women.

supply is a recurrent problem for all of these projects. The problem of energy availability is at the centre of development issues in Africa, more so than in other regions. Community radio projects often flounder on the inability to supply power. Solar systems are expensive, as are power generation units running on diesel, which is in short supply in remote areas and war zones.”

Animal traction proved to be an economical solution to the problem of generating electricity. “The generator we designed consists of a belt drive and gear system which increases the rotational motive power provided by a draught animal. A truck alternator and a set of batteries complete the kit. It's the same

principle as a bicycle dynamo, except that we use the motive power of animals and salvaged components that can be easily found.”

The project, which is still in its infancy in the Central African Republic, can already be regarded as a success. Other uses are envisaged for the power unit, including, for example, powering small medical appliances in health centres, charging the batteries of mobile phones, or simply providing public lighting in villages. Women's groups could use this source of power for other purposes such as milling grain, etc. They could also offer services on a commercial basis: recharging the batteries of telephones, vehicles, etc. The possibilities are countless.

Several NGOs have shown a great deal of interest in the experience and we may soon be seeing “turning oxen or camels” in other parts of Africa and the world at large!

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Guenaël Launay: guenael.launay-g@rfi.fr



Animal traction proved to be an economical solution to the problem of generating electricity in Bouar. Apart from powering the radio station, other uses could be envisaged for the power unit, including powering small medical appliances in health centres, the women's groups' grinding mill, charging the batteries of mobile phones, etc.

Resources

ACCESS TO WATER

☉ **Water and the Rural Poor: Interventions for Improving Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Insecure access to water for consumption and productive uses is a major constraint on poverty reduction in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). For millions of smallholder farmers, fishers and herders in SSA, water is one of the most important production assets, and securing access to and control and management of water is key to enhancing their livelihoods. This report argues that the potential exists for well-targeted, local interventions in water that contribute to rapid improvement in the livelihoods of the rural poor in SSA and help attain the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. It discusses conditions for success and proposes water-based, context-specific, and livelihood centred approaches to poverty reduction in rural areas.

IFAD/FAO, July 2008
www.fao.org/nr/water/infores.html

AGRICULTURE / FOOD SECURITY

☉ **Gender and equity issues in liquid biofuels production – Minimizing the risks to maximize the opportunities**

Rapid increases in the large-scale production of liquid biofuels in developing countries could exacerbate the marginalization of women in rural areas, threatening their livelihoods, according to this study. The study notes that large-scale plantations for the production of liquid biofuels, such as bioethanol and biodiesel, require an intensive use of resources and inputs to which small farmers, particularly women, traditionally have limited access. These resources include land and water, chemical fertilizers and pesticides.

FAO, 2008
www.fao.org

☉ **Genre et sécurité alimentaire : les inégalités face à la faim**

(Gender and Food Security: Inequalities in Relation to Hunger)

Between February and May 2008, 'hunger riots' erupted in the South – particularly in African countries such as Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Egypt, Algeria, the Ivory Coast, Mauritania, Madagascar and Cameroon. The riots have provided a clear warning that populations can no longer face the increasing prices of basic food products. Women have been involved in these riots, as they have been heavily impacted by such price rises as mothers struggling to meet the needs to their families, as informal traders in the food market, and as the primary actors in African agriculture, representing nearly 70% of the labour force. The article analyses the structural barriers that impede women's empowerment, including: weak property rights, poor access to credit, difficulties in getting agricul-

tural inputs (such as pesticides and manure), denial of access to education, marginalisation in decision-making at all levels, and undervaluation of their skills and expertise.

Genre en Action 7, July 2008
www.genreenaction.net

☉ **Women and the right to food – International law and state practice**

This study looks at the right to food in the context of gender discrimination. It includes a brief overview of the position of women's right to food in international law and identifies gaps in both law and practice. Controversial issues are discussed such as: to what extent are women's hunger and food insecurity a matter of health alone and not one of life, survival and development? to what extent is denial of food for women a matter of violation of 'mothers' rights', or of 'children's rights' rather than one of women's rights? to what extent are food insecurity and eating disorders a matter of health and disease, or of violation of human rights

FAO, Right to Food Studies, March 2008
www.fao.org/righttofood

CONFLICT / GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

☉ **Because I am a girl 2008 – In the shadow of war**

This is the second in a series of eight reports examining the rights of girls throughout their childhood, adolescence and as young women. The 2008 report examines the state of girls in conflict situations around the world.

Plan International, May 2008
www.becauseiamagirl.org

☉ **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): Breaking the cycle of impunity**

Over the years of armed conflict in DRC, rape has been used by armed groups as a weapon of war, and is perpetrated with total impunity. As a result, rape has become trivialised and has increased throughout the country, including in areas where conditions are relatively stable. Victims include women, men and children of all ages, from six-months to over 70 years.

FIDH, March 2008
www.fidh.org

☉ **From invisible to indivisible: Promoting and protecting the right of the girl child to be free from violence**

(De l'invisible à l'indivisible : défendre et promouvoir le droit des filles à une vie sans violence)

The UN Study on Violence against Children explores a range of factors that make children more vulnerable to violence and suggests strategies for ending violence against children. As part of this analysis the study recognises that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women.



Violence against children has incalculable costs to present and future generations, and it undermines human development.

UNICEF, April 2008
www.unicef.org/ujwcaro

☉ **Women building peace and preventing sexual violence in conflict affected contexts: A review of community based approaches**

This study focuses on specific thematic areas of good practice in the areas of prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and women's participation in peace-building. The study looks at five areas of intervention: peace-building and conflict resolution initiatives; reconciliation mechanisms; increasing access to justice; access to support services; conflict monitoring systems. Each of these sections examines the barriers women face, and highlights examples of women's successful engagement in peace-building that were selected on the basis of being simple yet innovative and explicitly community-based.

UNIFEM, October 2007
www.unifem.org

EDUCATION & TRAINING

☉ **Paying the price – The economic cost of failing to educate girls**

This report presents a new analysis of the economic cost of failing to educate girls. It estimates the economic cost to 65 low and middle income and transitional countries of failing to educate girls to the same standard as boys as a staggering US\$92 billion each year. This is just less than the \$103bn annual overseas development aid budget of the developed world. The message is clear: investment in girls' education will deliver real returns, not just for individuals but for the whole of society.

Plan International, 2008 (12 pages)
www.plan-international.org/resources/publications/education/

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 on the title.

HIV/AIDS

Exchange on HIV/AIDS, Sexuality and Gender (magazine)

Issue 1-2008 “Harmful traditional practices” pays particular attention to the links between harmful traditional practices and HIV. Three examples of harmful traditional practices that impact on women and girls are highlighted: female genital mutilation, early marriage and widow inheritance.

Issue 2-2008 “Challenging stigma” is on HIV-related stigma, how it affects the health and well-being of people living with HIV and what can be done to reduce it. This issue highlights the role that people living with HIV, and the networks and organisations lead by them, can play in diminishing stigmatizing attitudes, discriminatory actions and harmful policies.

Issue 3-2008 “Gender Violence, HIV and AIDS” addresses the link between HIV and AIDS and violence against women. Violence, which is experienced by many women in their lives, increases their vulnerability to HIV in many ways. Rape can contribute to HIV transmission due to tears and lacerations resulting from the use of force whereas violence can prevent women from negotiating safer sex and accessing treatment. On the other hand, fear of violence prevents women from learning and/or disclosing their status especially if they are HIV-positive.

KIT, 2008

www.kit.nl (Resources)

Failing women, withholding protection – 15 lost years in making the female condom accessible

Policy makers lament women’s vulnerability to HIV infection, yet for 15 years they have failed to utilise a technology which can help women to protect and empower themselves. The female condom is the only female-initiated method which provides protection from HIV infection; it also prevents unwanted pregnancy. Studies have shown it is acceptable to users, increases the proportion of protected sex acts, and is cost-effective when provided in addition to male condoms. Yet most women cannot access female condoms. New female-initiated technologies such as microbicides will not be available for many years. Female condoms exist now; the push for universal access to them should begin now.

Oxfam International /WPF, August 2008

www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/health/

HIV/AIDS and women – A collection of resources to support policy and advocacy on HIV/AIDS

Women, Ink has compiled this collection of materials, comprising some 50 action-oriented tools as well as analyses, reports, and case studies. The resource pack was assembled to support informed participation on issues of women and HIV/AIDS at the UN General Assembly Special Session on HIV/AIDS 2008.

Women, Ink., IWTC, 2008

www.womenink.org/HIVAIDS.htm



HIV/AIDS Toolkit

This toolkit aims to educate young women worldwide about the disease and was created based on the experiences of association members addressing HIV/AIDS issues in Brazil, India, Kenya, Malawi and Peru. The toolkit’s format will enable young women to have conversations about HIV/AIDS in their communities and with their partners. The information included in the toolkit is presented through games.

WAGGGS, July 2008

www.wagggsworld.org

Myths, misperceptions and fears addressing condom use barriers

The purpose of this booklet is to provide factual information that can be used to foster a positive attitude towards condom use to overcome barriers of acceptance. The message is kept simple and focused on responding to common, reoccurring myths, misperceptions, and fears related to condoms and condom use. It provides evidence-based information to support consistent use of male or female condoms for preventing unintended pregnancy and the transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

UNFPA / WHO / IPPF, 2007 (88 pages)

www.unfpa.org/publications

RADIO

Using radio to help communities talk – A manual for community dialogue

This manual is about how to use radio to encourage community dialogue and explore various stages of creating programming. It was developed by a team of experienced radio journalists and designers. The language is designed to be easy to understand, with technical words explained.

STF (Uganda), June 2006 (33 pages)

www.straight-talk.or.ug

OTHER

Droits sexuels et reproductifs & genre. Où en sommes-nous? Etat des lieux et recommandations en vue de renforcer le plaidoyer

(Sexual and reproductive rights and gender. What has been achieved? Balance sheet and recommendations for more effective advocacy)

The Working Group on “Reproductive Health and Female Sexual Mutilation” of the Belgian Commission on Women and Development drew up this document which maps out the key concepts, definitions, question marks and issues in the area of reproductive health. The publication includes a CD-ROM containing the texts of core conventions and other international legal instruments concerning sexual and reproductive rights.

DGCD-CWD, May 2008

www.dgos.be/fr/cfd/publications.html

Gender Equity Index 2008 (GEI 2008)

More than half the women in the world live in countries that have made no progress in gender equity in recent years. This is the main conclusion of the GEI 2008, which shows recent evolution and trends in bridging the gap between men and women in education, the economy and empowerment. It illustrates that the greater equity levels to be found in education are not paralleled by acceptable levels in the economic field nor in the empowerment of women. Political empowerment is the area where most progress has been made in recent years as a result of active policies, yet economic equity shows disparate results, with as many countries regressing as making progress.

Social Watch, 2008

www.socialwatch.org/en