



# Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT



- © **New Listeners' Clubs in Katanga**
- © **Legal Empowerment and Farmer Field Schools**
- © **Managing one's field, managing one's life**

# Editorial

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Dear readers,

Welcome to Dimitra Newsletter No. 16! This issue is devoted – as all our newsletters are – to the empowerment of women and men living in rural areas.

FAO's efforts in the Great Lakes Region highlight the fact that Farmer Field Schools can be instrumental in addressing a range of problems such as food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and violence against women. In Kenya, a number of Farmer Field Schools in the Coastal Region around Mombasa have broadened their curricula to include – in addition to a module on reproductive health – legal empowerment activities for the local population, who expressed great interest in this kind of initiative in the course of a field survey.

In Lubumbashi (Democratic Republic of Congo), two capacity-building workshops on extension work, communication skills and development advocacy will pave the way for the creation of several radio listeners' clubs in the province of Katanga, following the success of similar projects in South Kivu.

In Ghana, for the past 20 years the African Centre for Human Development (ACHD) has been implementing SANKOFA, an integrated rural development programme which has fostered a sense of self-reliance and responsibility in local communities and contributed to job creation and the development of much-needed social infrastructures in Kadjebi, a deprived district in the Volta Region. Our Ghanaian project partner reports on these experiences.

In the field of ICTs, Dimitra's Focal Point in Kenya, ALIN, presents its Community Knowledge Centres, set up in rural areas in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. These centres provide volunteer job opportunities for young unemployed graduates and at the same time promote local communities' awareness of the benefits and advantages of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In Uganda,

WOUGNET organised a second Lango Forum on "e-agriculture", with a special focus on gender issues and the role of ICTs and information in agriculture and rural development.

In Senegal, the Manoaré FM community radio station addresses women directly and aims to provide a more realistic picture of women's multiple roles in society by giving them a voice and increasing their visibility in the media. We also present OrdiSpace, a satellite broadcast transmittal system for African radios developed by Radio France Internationale.

The FAO-sponsored Rural Finance Learning Centre (RFLC) has developed a dedicated website which may be of great value to all.

As part of its ongoing reform process, FAO aims to become an exemplary agency in terms of sharing knowledge and experience. Last January, in cooperation with its sister agencies in Rome (CGIAR, Bioversity International, IFAD and WFP), FAO organised a Knowledge Share Fair in the Italian capital. This meeting confirmed a principle that Dimitra has been upholding for years, namely, that real strength lies in the ability to share knowledge.

To conclude this editorial, we would like to inform you that this issue includes the first in a series of "Women's Portraits". The aim of this column is to introduce our readers to various individuals who, in different ways, are working to eradicate poverty and promote gender equality and sustainable development in their communities. Our first interviewee is Mariam Sow, Coordinator of Enda Pronat-Senegal, a longstanding partner of Dimitra.

Happy reading!

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OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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# Dimitra database: relaunching the information collection

Many of our readers know already that Dimitra is an information and communication project of the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division of FAO. The project is a tool for rural populations, particularly women, and their organisations to make their voices heard at the local, national and international level. Its main goal is to empower rural women and men through information dissemination and exchange of experiences and to improve their living conditions and status by highlighting the extent and value of their contributions to food security and sustainable development. The project also seeks to heighten gender awareness among development actors as a means of fostering equality between women and men.

Dimitra's working methods follow three main principles:

– **partnership** – working closely with local

partner organisations to highlight local knowledge;

- **participation** – involving the active commitment of civil society organisations;
- **networking** – promoting and supporting the exchange of good practices, ideas and experiences.

Since the start of the project in 1994, a large amount of information has been collected on rural development projects in Africa. This information is widely shared and disseminated through the Dimitra newsletter and on-line database.

The **Dimitra database** contains profiles on **African organisations which have projects or programmes involving rural women and/or adopting a gender approach**. The database aims to show existing trends in different countries through project descriptions provided by the organisations themselves.

Dimitra provides a unique opportunity for organisations working with rural populations, women in particular, to be part of a large network. All participating organisations receive the bi-annual Dimitra newsletter, as well as the project's other publications. They are also kept informed of any other activities organised by the project. End 2010, a CD-ROM will be produced which will contain the entire Dimitra database and website content.

**Your organisation is invited to be part of the network and have its data included in the database.** You can download the project's questionnaire from: [www.fao.org/dimitra/about-dimitra/join-the-dimitra-network/en/](http://www.fao.org/dimitra/about-dimitra/join-the-dimitra-network/en/). Alternatively, send us an e-mail ([dimitra@dimitra.org](mailto:dimitra@dimitra.org)) or letter (Dimitra, 21 rue Brederode, 1050 Brussels, Belgium), and we will send you the questionnaire.

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# Creation of community-owned radio listeners' clubs in Katanga

In November 2008, the Katanga branch of the "Réseau Femme et Développement" (REFED – Women and Development Network), Dimitra's partner in the Katanga Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), organised two training workshops in Lubumbashi. The workshops aimed to build participants' capacities in extension work, communication and advocacy for development.

The training workshops were held in the framework of the creation of two pilot radio listeners' clubs by the communities of Kasumbalesa and Kapolowe/Likasi with the support of REFED-Katanga, GTZ Health in Katanga and Dimitra. The radio listeners' clubs will be a particularly useful tool for these rural communities to identify together the development issues of their area and devise strategies and action plans to face these challenges. The emphasis will be on a range of issues relating to HIV/AIDS, gender equality and violence against women.

The general aim of both workshops – which lasted three days each – was to enhance participants' awareness of gender and development communication issues as well as to stimulate teamwork, synergy and networking to provide mutual and sustainable support.

The workshop activities focused on a number of themes. Each presentation was followed by small-group exercises and/or plenary discussions. All the themes presented gave rise to lively debates and questions from a highly attentive and motivated audience. At the end of each workshop, an evaluation of the issues discussed and the results achieved was conducted with the involvement of all participants.

In 2005, in partnership with SAMWAKI and with the support of GTZ Health, Dimitra started working on gender and participatory communication in South Kivu. Since then, eight radio listeners' clubs have been set up in the province. They are doing very valuable work in the fields of agriculture, rights, the fight against HIV/AIDS as well as in other development areas. This positive experience led to the decision to develop similar activities in Katanga Province, with the assistance of the project's partners in South Kivu.

The activities fall within the framework of the project Strengthening rural community radio stations and creation and strengthening of radio listeners' clubs in the South Kivu and Katanga Provinces, an initiative launched by Dimitra and its partners SAMWAKI and REFED-Katanga, and financed by the King Baudouin Foundation (FRB).

Co-funded by Dimitra, the FRB and GTZ Health in the DRC, the November 2008 training workshops were held in direct response to the recommendations made at the workshop held in Lubumbashi in June 2007 on Strengthening the information, communication and gender capacities of farmers' organisations and community radio stations in Katanga Province (see Dimitra Newsletter 13, September 2007).

## First workshop: Extension work and social advocacy techniques

The first workshop aimed to provide training in extension work and social advocacy techniques to 30 community leaders and extension workers of grassroots development organisations and to inform participants about different radio genres and the methodological approaches to set up a radio listeners' club:

### Techniques and methods for group extension work

After introducing some general notions, three specific techniques for group extension work were presented and put in practice by means of exercises: focus groups, video forums and brainstorming.

### Gender and development

Some basic concepts were explained in the course of a presentation on the overarching theme of gender and communication. The gender perspective in development activities was then clarified by reference to three specific issues: access to land, HIV/AIDS and violence against women. The knowledge acquired by participants was applied in practical exercises.

### Notions of social advocacy

Social advocacy involves a variety of strategies, actions and procedures used by civil society to solve certain kinds of problems in the community. It seeks to influence decision-makers so that they take into account the wishes, concerns, needs and priorities of the population, as expressed by them.

## The participatory approach to community radio stations

The fundamental principles, role and functioning of radio listeners' clubs were presented and then discussed.

Lastly, working in groups, participants prepared a participatory broadcast, applying the skills and knowledge acquired during the workshop. This enabled them to put theory into practice and raise questions to clarify specific aspects.

## Second workshop: Radio production and communication techniques for development

The second workshop trained 30 extension workers and community radio journalists in radio production techniques and development communication with a gender perspective. It also aimed to introduce them to a participatory approach to community radio, based on radio listeners' clubs for both men and women. Participants were thus equipped to deal more effectively with the issues raised within the community itself, with a gender-sensitive approach.

## Development communication

Some fundamentals of "communication" and "development communication" were clarified and small-group exercises were performed to gather ideas from participants – including "communicators" as well as "listeners" – about what makes a good communicator.



A second training session served to review the various methodological stages involved in setting up and organising a community radio station. A discussion on different types of radio stations highlighted the fact that what distinguishes a community radio station from other types is its content and, above all, the participation of the community.

Another important debate centred on the question of how to introduce a gender perspective in development communication. In this connection, the Dimitra project outlined a number of key gender and communication concepts which promote equality between men and women without falling into stereotypes.

### ☉ Radio production techniques

The workshop reviewed the most common types of programmes broadcast by community radio stations, including games, surveys, news and local events, reports, panel discussions, talk shows, etc.

Participants also examined different information gathering and processing techniques, focusing in particular on such aspects as identifying sources of information, the importance of interviews, how best to format information, etc.

### ☉ A participatory approach to community radio stations

Participants looked more closely at the basic principles, role and functioning of radio listeners' clubs. Starting with a definition of a radio listeners' club as "a group of individuals who wish to actively and systematically listen to radio broadcasts with a view to discussing their contents and, above all, drawing practical lessons from them", the discussion then moved on to the specific modes of intervention, characteristics and functions of a radio listeners' club. The functioning of a radio listeners' club was seen to be based on three fundamental principles: "See, judge and act".



*Radio Vespera, a community radio station of Kasumbalesa, partner in the radio listeners' club project.*

### ☉ Gender and development

The gender and development theme – i.e. how to mainstream gender equality into all development activities – was addressed by focusing on three specific aspects: gender and HIV/AIDS, gender and violence against women, and gender and development issues in Katanga Province.

#### Genuinely community-owned radio stations and listeners' clubs

One key aspect that was emphasised throughout the workshops was the fact that community radios are run **for** and **by** the community. Their *raison d'être* is therefore the community they serve. Similarly, a radio listeners' club is set up by a community, and the club's success depends, first and foremost, on the community itself.

Contrary to what their name may suggest, radio listeners' clubs are there not only to "listen", but also to promote discussions on the programmes broadcast and also, especially, to enable active participation in the life of the community by jointly analysing the community's problems and taking concrete action to ensure its sustainable development.

### Political commitment

Mr Juvéal Kitungwa Lugoma, Provincial Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock and Rural Development, addressed the participants at the close of the workshops, pledging his support to the follow up activities to the workshops. He also encouraged participants to assimilate and reflect on the results of the workshops in order to report back on them more effectively to their home communities and ensure an active and fruitful follow-up.

### What next?

Throughout the workshops, participants were encouraged to share with their communities the lessons learned from the experience and to engage in actions to set up genuinely community-owned radio stations and listeners' clubs.

Several participants expressed the need for more detailed written materials on the subjects discussed. To meet this need, Dimitra and SAMWAKI – its partner organisation in South Kivu – will produce an educational brochure on how to set up and run a gender-sensitive radio listeners' club.

REFED-Katanga and GTZ Health, backed by Dimitra, will ensure follow-up of the training workshops and provide assistance for local leaders and extension workers intending to set up pilot radio listeners' clubs in the region.



*The workshops raised the participants' awareness of gender and development communication issues and stimulated teamwork, synergy and networking.*

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# How to enhance people's lives through legal empowerment?

THE FARMER FIELD SCHOOL: A PARTICIPATORY AND INTEGRATED MODEL FOR DEVELOPMENT



The Farmer Field School (FFS), also called “school without walls”, is an FAO evolving concept for women and men farmers’ learning, discussion and experimentation on agricultural strategies for improving their food security and livelihood. In Kenya, the FFS and the Junior farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) have built on an innovative concept where, on top of agricultural practice, reproductive health issues as well as a number of legal issues have been added to the curriculum. In March 2009, an FAO mission went to visit several FFS-RH (Farmer Field Schools - Reproductive Health) in the areas of Taveta and Kilifi, in the Coast

Province of Kenya. They found the results very impressive in an area where the HIV pandemic is still in full force.

The dynamism, self-confidence and openness of the women and men farmers who attend the FFS-RH were striking. They said that their food production has increased, despite the current drought. They have received training on their health, HIV, reproductive rights and legal rights. They have managed quite well to transform this knowledge in skills and this empowerment process is helping them to change their lives.

## Legal empowerment: a missing link for the Farmer Field and Life School's cycle of empowerment, concludes FAO Workshop

Nairobi, 3-4 March 2009. Legal empowerment is a means for enabling the poor to address the insecurity of their assets and activities, and to protect the sources of their livelihoods by using the law, the legal system and legal services. “Together with other partners, FAO is at the forefront of putting this concept into practice at national and local levels,” said Mrs Carol Djeddah, Senior Officer at the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESWD) in her opening speech on behalf of the FAO Representative in Kenya.

About 30 experts met on 3 and 4 March at the FAO Workshop on “Tackling legal empowerment: the Farmer Field and Life Schools approach”, organized in collaboration with the African Woman & Child Feature Service (AWC Kenya), the Coastal Development Authority (Kenya), and the Women’s Association of Lawyers (FIDA Kenya). The participants discussed the preliminary findings of the case study and the field visit undertaken in the Coast Province of Kenya to determine the level of gender and legal empowerment achieved through the programme training courses and its impact on people’s livelihoods, and to identify the gaps that should be addressed in the future.

“The Farmer Field Schools approach has been developed by FAO to bring about participatory approaches to agricultural trainings. It put the emphasis on empowering farmers to implement their own decisions in their own fields based on a better understanding of their agro-ecosystem,” recalled Mrs Djeddah. Over time,

the approach has developed to also address other issues of concern to farmers such as reproductive health and rights (in collaboration with UNFPA), and today targets adults as well as vulnerable youth in the context of HIV and AIDS. Currently, there are 42 schools focusing on reproductive health issues in the Coast Province of Kenya. The approach is very popular not only among the enrolled farmers but also among other communities in the area. There is a need however, to expand its content. “Farmers demand training, in particular in the area of access to land and property, women and orphans’ inheritance, children’s labour in agriculture, and access to credit facilities and entrepreneurship skills. The approach should be adapted to also integrate elements of legal empowerment,” pointed out Mr Mwalugha, official in the Coastal Development Authority, in charge of the coordination of the programme in the Province.

The workshop discussions brought about a new model of integrating gender and legal empowerment into the Farmer Field and Life Schools’ methodology and tools.

A new model should enable farmers, women in particular, to address legal issues that affect their food and livelihood security, to make better use of legal services and mechanisms, both at the level of community and administration, and to avoid deprivation and conflicts. Sensitisation campaigns and workshops for community leaders, chiefs and local administration are also necessary to ensure that these bodies do appropriately respond to the needs and rights of citizens. Information and experience exchange and sharing as well as networking should be developed and strengthened, including through the FAO-Dimitra project.

The final report of the Workshop will be available from FAO ESWD, and from CDA/AWC, Kenya.





### Power to know and to act

The visiting FAO team was given several examples as to how people's lives have been transformed and cases of evidence of positive impact were provided as a result of their participation in the FFS-RH:

- Rape, once a cause of great shame, is acknowledged at all, is more openly recognized and the community knows that the first thing to do is to go to a health centre or hospital within 72 hours so that women can avoid sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and unwanted pregnancies. Then, they should go to report the case to the police, rather than accepting the traditional ways of settling the matter. In a few cases the rapist was put in jail.
- Various FFS-RH groups went together along with their family for voluntary HIV testing.
- The FFS-RH women's group and their facilitators are including JFELS in their villages and schools as they recognize that there are hundreds of orphans in their community due to HIV. Orphans and youth are particularly vulnerable in Kilifi and they are often lured into "sex tourism" from which they can't escape.
- More women give birth in health centres, under the supervision of qualified midwives or nurses. A woman proudly told the story of her daughter-in-law, who, ready to give birth, was told that she should continue walking to another health centre, as there was no water in the centre she had reached. The mother-in-law had been taught about her rights to health services and stood her ground, insisting that the midwife take care of the patient and the baby to be born. The future father went to fetch some jerry cans of water and the baby was safely delivered in the health centre.
- In Jaribuni, close to Kilifi, the FFS-RH group meets every Wednesday. It has 22 members, a large majority of them women. The group has initiated a savings and credit scheme thanks to their savings due to agriculture. The women and men farmers would like to buy some nearby farmland as a FFS group, and in a fairly short period of time they managed to save 100.000 Kenyan Shillings. The price of the land is 300.000 Kenyan Shillings and as they already have a third of the sum as



Farmer Field Schools: the capacity to transform knowledge into action.

collateral, they will be able to borrow the rest from the bank. This experience has greatly impressed the neighbouring villages which have shown a keen interest to enrol in FFS and do the same.

- In Boilwa, the FFS-RH bought insecticide-treated mosquito nets for their families.
- A widow, who had lost her husband to AIDS, related that the brothers of the deceased had come to claim not only his farm and land, but also all of his possessions. With the support of the community elders (customary law), she told them that she knew what she was entitled to by law and threatened to go to court. This was enough of a deterrent to stop them from violating her and her children's rights.

### How to remedy the remaining challenges

But in spite of these encouraging stories, not all of them end so rapidly and well. A woman being stripped of her property by her brothers-in-law went to the elders of the village, then to the chief and finally, with the support of Women's Association of Lawyers (FIDA Kenya), brought her case to court. She eventually settled the case with her in-laws.

In many other cases however, women who do not have the support of their FFS group and facilitators do not know where to go and whom to speak to if the local institutions do not respond appropriately to their claims and demands. In communities with high mortality rates due to HIV, women suffer from property

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The women are organised in Farmer Field Schools...

also start in Uganda. It will be complemented, where possible, with a communication campaign to promote its dissemination and understanding at the level of farming communities as well as of local institutions.

Dimitra and its partners in East and Central-Africa will work jointly with the FFS-RH and JFFLS and FAO's Emergency Services to enhance the necessary information exchange, networking and the use of a wide range of media needed to encourage behavioural change from within the community.

The experiences gained through this process can contribute not only to the FAO supported FFS and JFFLS, but also to other groups who are pioneering gender and legal empowerment in rural areas.

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grabbing, which leaves them totally dispossessed when their husband dies or when he takes another wife. A large number of women do not want to antagonise their in-laws and the community in which they live, and prefer not to fight for their land rights.

Wife-beating, alcohol and drug abuse by men and youth, sex tourism and transactional sex are also very common problems that pester life and which are being acknowledged by everybody, men and women alike. But how to make people change?

It should be acknowledged that men have been less (or not at all) involved in community organisations or projects such as the FFS-RH, and that their relative economic conditions have worsened. Women, on the other hand, have organised themselves and have generally managed to improve their livelihoods through their work. But their social status remains low. It is therefore necessary to make sure that everyone in the community is involved, so as not to end up with the "men of yesterday" and the "women of tomorrow". This is what the gender approach is about.

It is also necessary to integrate legal training courses on specific issues such as land and property rights and the prevention of child labour in the FFS and JFFLS curriculum, so as to increase the use of existing legal procedures and services (e.g. gender desks at police stations, district children's officers, etc.) by

the farming communities. This is what legal empowerment is about.

It was also noted that an effective information and communication strategy was lacking: documentation of cases, exchange of experiences, networking, links with (local) radio stations, information campaigns, etc. are key elements for a policy focusing on awareness raising of the rural populations, civil society and governmental institutions. Advocacy and sensitization of elders, chiefs and religious authorities must also be part of a communication campaign, so that all stakeholders of the community are involved and convinced of the new path to take toward gender equality, progress and poverty alleviation.

Building on the Kenyan experience and women and men farmers' requirements, the FAO Gender, Equality and Rural Employment Division has developed a new model for integrating legal empowerment in the FFS methodology and tools. This new model is in the process of integration in Kenya, and is expected to



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... with a module on reproductive health.

# Empowering Farmers over their Fields, Empowering People over their Lives

Using the Farmer Field Schools methodology to respond to food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence in the Great Lakes region

Over the past five years, the FAO Regional Emergency Office for Africa has been implementing an emergency project aimed at achieving improved food security, enhanced nutrition, and strengthened livelihoods while empowering women, reducing stigma and empowering and building the capacity of households affected by HIV and gender-based violence (GBV). The project was launched in 2004 and is supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). It initially covered Burundi, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and northern Uganda and later expanded to Rwanda in 2007 and Kenya in 2008.

This year, the project adopted an innovative and participatory learning approach called Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and its variation: Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS). The FFS brings together concepts and methods from agro-ecology, experiential education and community development and aims at 'empowering' farmers over their livelihoods. The FFS approach has been adapted to emergency settings, youth contexts, and HIV and gender-based violence issues. Already well-known and successful in several African countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Mozambique, this methodology gives participants – farmers or children – a central role in the learning process.

A Training of Trainers session on the FFS and JFFLS was facilitated by two Kenyan master trainers in Burundi in January 2009. It was attended by 33 participants coming from Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. These new trainers will be able to establish an average of two FFS or JFFLS each. Training of Trainers sessions are currently also being organised in Kenya and Uganda.

The testimony of Kaviraa illustrates the success of the project. Kaviraa is a HIV positive widow with nine children between 6 and 23 years old. She is one of the beneficiaries of the FAO project in North Kivu (DRC). Kaviraa says that the project has literally "saved her life" and given her new hope. Through vegetable gardening activities and small livestock breeding, Kaviraa has become self-sufficient and able to provide for her family. Through group activities, she has also gained confidence and learned to live openly and positively with HIV.



## What does the project aim to achieve?

### ☉ Fighting food insecurity

Providing beneficiaries with agricultural and small livestock inputs and technical support helps them increase and diversify production for their own consumption and generate income through surplus sale. Vegetable gardening is particularly promoted as it suits the limited labour capacity of HIV-affected households.

### ☉ Improving nutritional status

Through cooking demonstrations and nutritional and marketing training, households optimize the utilization of the food produced and generate income to satisfy their needs. The resulting improved and diversified diet ensures better nutritional status, thereby strengthening the immune system and slowing down the progression of HIV.

### ☉ Strengthening livelihoods

Extreme vulnerability may force people to adopt risky coping strategies such as withdrawing children from school, selling their assets or being forced to engage in transactional sex. Through increased and diversified agricultural and livestock production, families are able to satisfy their own needs and generate additional income thereby securing their livelihoods.

### ☉ Empowering women

Women are biologically, culturally and socially more vulnerable to HIV infection than men. The impact of HIV/AIDS on women is also

greater as they bear the traditional responsibilities of caring for both the sick and the orphaned. They often lack access to productive resources and are deprived of their rightful property and assets when their husbands die. The project is specifically addressing gender inequities and in particular gender-based violence.

### ☉ Reducing stigma

By participating in project activities, HIV-affected families are less isolated, increase their self confidence and become self sufficient. Thanks to these efforts they are perceived as active and productive members in a better informed community, thus reducing the stigma typically associated with HIV/AIDS.

### ☉ Building capacity and empowering

The beneficiaries are building or improving their technical capacity in various domains, from livestock and crop production to marketing but also on issues of acquired knowledge on HIV/AIDS, legal rights (e.g. inheritance, property) and gender inequities. This will now be channelled through the Farmer Field Schools approach.

In short, the FAO project's approach can be summarized by the famous saying "teach someone to fish rather than give him a fish".

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# ALIN Maarifa Centres – Improving Rural Community Access to ICTs

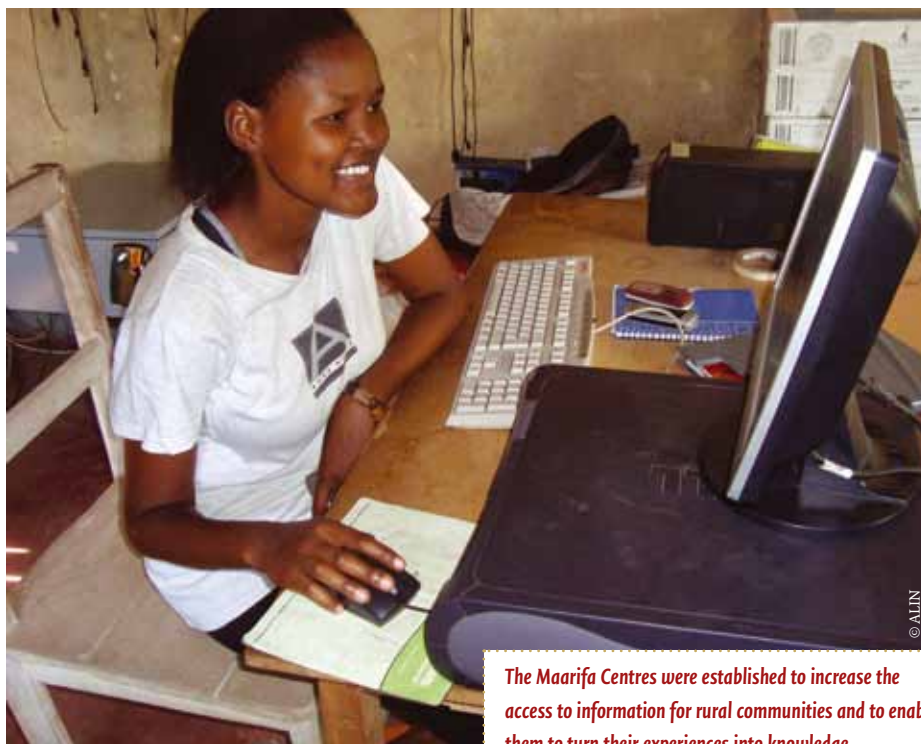
ALIN's Community Knowledge or Maarifa Centres were set up in the rural areas of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda to bring ICT services closer to rural communities and to enable documentation and sharing of local knowledge. The Centres are used by a wide range of community members – from development workers to rural youth – and are run by local volunteers.

Rural areas hold substantial human and natural development potential, primarily in the field of agriculture. However, there generally is a lack of information vital for the improvement of the livelihoods of rural populations. Where access to information and communication technologies (ICTs) is recognized as one way of reducing inequality and poverty and for promoting integration of rural communities into the global economy, ICT penetration remains very low across the rural areas of East Africa.

To remedy this situation, in 2007 the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN) and its partners began establishing Community Knowledge Centres (CKCs) in the arid, rural areas of Eastern Africa. The centres are popularly known as *Maarifa Centres* – *maarifa* is the Swahili word for knowledge.

## From information to knowledge

There are 10 centres at present – eight in Kenya, one in Tanzania and one in Uganda. They are equipped with basic ICT tools (computers and Internet access) to enable information generation, access and dissemination. They have a resource centre containing materials such as newspapers, journals, books, research reports, electronically stored information (CD-ROMS), audiovisual mate-



*The Maarifa Centres were established to increase the access to information for rural communities and to enable them to turn their experiences into knowledge.*

rials (DVDs), compendiums and all types of web-based resources.

The centres were established to increase the access to information of rural communities, enabling them to turn their experiences into knowledge and lessons learnt. They also intend to enhance the documentation of local development content and the exchange of knowledge across Eastern Africa, and offer ICT training.

## Who uses the centres and what for?

At the Maarifa centres, community members can access and share information on how to improve their livelihoods through new technologies for farming, livestock keeping and on coping with environment and climate change. They also benefit from accessing current marketing information. Other kinds of information are related to health, gender, and HIV and AIDS.

The centres offer basic ICT training to community members, often young people who have

graduated from secondary schools and primary schools pupils, many of whom have formed information clubs.

The centres also act as information access points for community development workers who provide agricultural and related extension services in the region. They use the centres to acquire free (online) development information and to send weekly reports to their ministries or organisations, but also benefit from basic office services such as typing, photocopying and free Internet access.

## Volunteer involvement

The centres are run by Community Information Volunteers who are selected and trained by ALIN. The volunteers work at the centre for one year and are supervised by the local host partner organisations. They are generally young graduates in communication, information technology, agriculture, environmental

“ The Nguruman Maarifa Centre, located in the remote Magadi area of the Rift Valley (Kenya), is the only place within a radius of 100 km that offers Internet services. Government officials and development workers use the centre to send their weekly reports, saving them 15USD in transport costs to the nearest town. Young people use the centre to apply for public service jobs online, to submit visa applications or to access other e-government services. Due to a lack of electricity supply in the area, the centre also serves as the only place for charging mobile phones and for watching Kenyan news online (TV clips posted on YouTube).



studies or community development. The volunteers manage the centre's activities, coordinating the collection of development-oriented local knowledge and experiences and training the local communities on the use of ICT tools. This work experience helps them to find a job more easily.

The information collected and submitted by community development workers, community members or by the volunteers, is shared through the Open Knowledge Network (OKN) platform, which links all the CKCs and is accessible across the ALIN network. To ensure continuity and knowledge transfer, the volunteers work with a local person, who acts as a community representative.

**Active involvement of women**

As a way of enhancing the capacity of women to play an active role in development initiatives and to reverse the trend of their insufficient inclusion, especially in the dryland areas, ALIN promotes the integration of women in development and information support. Of the volunteers recruited, 70% are female. These women volunteers act both as an inspiration to the

women members of the local communities and as a challenge to the men on the importance of education and empowerment of the girl child.

**Challenges facing the centres**

The lack of proper infrastructure such as power supply remains a key challenge to the successful implementation of the project. ALIN uses solar panels that can only power a few computers. Whereas laptops work better in such places, they are considerably more expensive than PCs. In a number of areas, especially among the pastoral communities, uptake of ICTs is slow. Also, cultural factors limit the opportunities for women to access the ICT services.

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“ I am one among many students who benefit from the internet services at Marigat Maarifa Centre,” says Richard Tumeiyo, a student taking distance learning courses from the University of South Africa (UNISA). “Previously I had to travel to Nakuru from my home in Baringo in the Rift Valley, about 100 km every weekend, to do my assignments and receive updates from the university. Free internet services at the Marigat Maarifa Centre have enabled me to save a lot of time and money. I am very grateful since I’m now connected to my college every day. The Centre has also helped me and many other young people to find scholarships and youth funds from the Kenyan government. We can easily download the forms and apply for the services at the Centre without having to travel for distances and incur costs that most of us cannot afford.”



*Young unemployed volunteers manage the centre's activities, coordinating the collection of development-oriented local knowledge and experiences and training the local communities on the use of ICT tools.*

# E-Agriculture, Gender and ICTs: The Role of Information in Agriculture and Rural Development

SECOND LANGO FORUM ON E-AGRICULTURE

APAC, UGANDA, 10 FEBRUARY 2009

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are drivers for change in rural and agricultural development. They can speed up the extension of development services in areas such as healthcare, education and agriculture and can be efficient tools for reaching out to rural and remote communities. ICT interventions can have significant direct and indirect impacts on enhancing agricultural production, marketing and post-harvest activities – therefore contributing to poverty reduction and the improvement of rural livelihoods.

The Lango Forum on e-Agriculture is a bi-annual event held by WOUGNET (Women of Uganda Network) in Apac district. It is part of its project “Promoting and improving access to agricultural information using ICTs in Northern Uganda”. The event attracts policy makers, the district local government officials, farmers, the project’s partner organisations and the general public. Simultaneously broadcast on the local community radio as it takes place, the event attracts a lot of interest.

The objective of the Lango Forum is to sensitise rural women, policy makers and the community on the role of ICTs in agriculture and rural development. The discussions during the forum are characterized by discussants presenting papers, followed by plenary discussions

and working groups. The second Lango Forum took place in Apac district on 10 February 2009.

## Do Ugandan ICT policy processes involve farmers?

One of the discussants at the Forum was the Vice President of the Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE), Mr Charles Ogang, who asserted that ICTs have so far not been fully enhanced to benefit farmers. He said that although the UNFFE has a national website ([www.unffe.org](http://www.unffe.org)) which contains current information on farming in Uganda and beyond, many farmers can not access the website, in a country where over 80% of the farming community lives in the rural areas and can neither read nor write. Also, emphasis on ICTs is often presented in terms of websites. But do ICTs only mean Internet-based technology?

Mr Ogang confirmed that ICT policy formulation processes in Uganda did not initially involve the farmers. The UNFFE is now working with the Ministry of Information and Technology to try and involve farmers, so that new policies could be developed taking farmers’ needs into account. For instance, if farmers were equipped with photography skills and materials, they would be able to take pictures of their affected crops and show them to the agricultural extension workers in their areas.

This would to a certain extent address issues of distance and illiteracy.

Furthermore, farming and production is done in rural settings, but the products end up in the urban and town centres. It is therefore imperative that farmers obtain information on the market situation, on improved seeds research, on diseases, new technology, and National Agricultural Advisory Services.

Among the proposed strategies that the UNFFE intends to put in place are:

- setting up a Farmers’ Radio Station;
- setting up Radio Listening Groups in the farming communities;
- producing cassettes containing important agricultural information;
- producing magazines and newsletters, especially at the level of the District Farmers’ Associations.

## Understanding the role of ICTs in an agricultural setting

Mr Eria Bwana-Simba, the Question and Answer Service expert from the Agriculture Research Information Services (National Agricultural Research Laboratories, Kawanda), reasoned that understanding the place and role of ICTs in an agricultural-based developing country depends on recognising that:

- knowledge is an increasingly significant factor of production;
- all actors in the agricultural sector are part of an evolving agricultural knowledge system;
- ICTs accelerate agricultural development by facilitating knowledge management;
- ICTs are essential coordinating mechanisms in global trade.

He also argued that expanding the use of ICTs in agriculture will demand a more active and empowered role of rural intermediate organisations so that they can increasingly act as local knowledge brokers and can provide feedback on the quality of existing agricultural knowledge services.

## The practical use of ICTs in agriculture

Mr Bwana-Simba also highlighted how the use of ICTs in rural areas can help farmers to access, store and share information, using multiple devices and media:

- Accessing information on potential buyers for farm produce: ICTs are already linking farmers’ groups or agricultural cooperatives to larger markets and are assisting farmers





to standardize their prices. The potential of using ICTs to promote rural development through agriculture lies largely in finding markets for the products through information provision and access.

- Access to markets and market information through ICTs like mobile phones is improving choices for the sale of agricultural produce, both on local and international markets. This is mainly due to enhanced information on prices and comparative supply and demand for products.
- ICTs are also facilitating access to information on economic trends in terms of prices and demand for a particular farm product. With the widespread liberalisation of markets, farmers are thus more protected against exploitation by unscrupulous dealers.

However, it should be said that although ICTs complement the current extension system promoted by the National Agricultural Advisory Services (through the use of model and demonstration farmers in the communities), not many farms are able to access information on best farming practices and training in agriculture and other development information.

### Rural women farmers' access to new ICT initiatives

Do rural women farmers have access to new ICT initiatives? The answer is both "yes" and "no".

Though most women farmers can neither read nor write, after four years of WOUGNET's project intervention, they have experienced many changes in their lives. The project has provided continuous training to rural women farmers on the basic use of ICT tools like using mobile telephone, operating a radio cassette to access agricultural information and radio presentation skills. The radio talk shows have



ICTs for development have been widened to include technologies and media that capture, store and disseminate data and information, and include tools such as video, teletext, voice information systems, radio, mobile telephony, fax and computer-mediated networks among others."



encouraged many women farmers to come and share their experiences, and this has greatly built their confidence in providing and seeking information.

During the forum discussions, the women farmers agreed that their farming methods had changed, with many embracing improved agricultural practices and using improved seeds. Apart from the collaborations formed with other farmers, the exchange visits exposed them to different farming methods and crop varieties, which they could now grow in their own gardens.

Among the ICTs used by the farmers, radio programmes were ranked as contributing the most to their farming activities. This was followed by mobile phones, which they use primarily for asking questions to the radio programme experts and agricultural extension workers. The exchange field visits were ranked third, as these exposed the farmers to different farming methods.

The strength of using ICTs at community level has been noticeable in the creation of linkages and networking among the women farmers, between the farmers' groups and the District Farmers' Association, and between farmers and agricultural experts. Before this exposure to the use of ICTs, farmers said they did not know each other or what other farmers in other communities were doing. Now, they are able to meet during training sessions, share information using the radio talk shows and have acquired mobile telephones for their personal use. However, the challenge still lies in the costs involved and skills needed to use ICTs.

It is therefore safe to say that although some rural women have been reached by this type of initiative, their number is few compared to those that need access to information and advisory services.

### Conclusion

The importance of ICTs to agriculture is nothing new, and many traditional methods of managing and communicating information will continue to be just as critical. Some recent ICTs are offering new opportunities to increase the availability and timeliness of critical information, improve its quality and relevance, and offer more cost-effective methods for empowering and ensuring feedback from previously marginalized communities. ICTs will continue to improve and enhance social networking at community, regional and national levels, bringing about a reduction in the cost and time taken travelling and pursuing markets and potential buyers for their farm produce, which will have a positive impact on household livelihoods.

The Lango Forum on e-Agriculture will therefore continue to raise awareness on the benefits of e-Tools in development and in agriculture.

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# “I gained my higher education on the ground.”

MARIAM SOW, COORDINATOR OF ENDA PRONAT, SENEGAL

In this issue, Dimitra starts a series of “Women’s Portraits”. The aim of this column is to introduce individuals who are working to eradicate poverty and promote gender equality and sustainable development in their communities. The first interview was conducted with Mariam Sow of Enda Pronat, longstanding partner organisation of Dimitra.

## How did you become a coordinator of Enda Pronat? Tell us something about your background.

I come from a “maison familiale rurale” (MFR – rural family household)<sup>1</sup>. I first followed a three-year training course to become a “rural monitor”. Then I worked for seven years as the person in charge of the MFR of Bayakh, in the Niayes region [a region close to Dakar], where pesticides are used intensively.

My boss at the time, in 1982, cooperated with Enda Pronat in organising a training and information workshop in Bayakh on the hazards associated with the use of pesticides by agricultural workers. The MFR is a farmers’ association which promotes young people’s training through the training of adults. During the preparations for the workshop with Pronat, the team of women which I led was marginalised by the male leaders of the MFR.

In line with traditional expectations, even though women are directly concerned by the use of pesticides, male participants saw our role as being mainly that of providers of meals during the workshop. At a meeting with Pronat, I found out that the preliminary surveys that served as a basis for the workshop had been entirely conducted by the female members of the MFR, that is to say, women from my team.

When I realised that the women had carried out all the technical activities while the men would

benefit from the workshop, I blew my top. I told them, “You must be joking! If this is how things stand, we won’t take part in the workshop, and slaving away in the kitchen is out of the question.” So several people stood up and maybe it would have ended in a fighting match if other participants in the meeting hadn’t pulled us apart. In the end, the women fully participated in the workshop, and the kitchen was run by professional caterers.

Following this episode, the coordinator of Pronat asked me to work for them for a few months to facilitate workshops. I’ve been working with Pronat ever since. In 1996 I was appointed coordinator. I owe a great deal to Enda Third World and to its founder, because he believed that everybody needed to be empowered, that to move forward we had to enable everybody to develop his or her individual capacities.

## What about your formal education?

Ah, this is the question on everyone’s lips! I was born in a rural community; I attended primary school and then obtained my BEPC<sup>2</sup>, so I completed four years of secondary education. Then, as I already mentioned, I was accepted into the MFR system and studied for three years on an alternating course which involved working on the ground for three months and then receiving two to three weeks theoretical training at the MFR headquarters in Thiès. Then I was appointed head of the MFR in Bayakh. This is why I say “I got my higher education diploma on the ground” – because, as an extension worker I was surrounded by farmers who have a great deal of practical know-how but I also worked in close collaboration with scientists and technicians. So in my work I had to deal with both types of knowledge and I strove to make them consistent with each other in order to benefit the farmers as much as possible. This was a real training school for me. I also followed some training courses, among others in France on agroecology, and several short courses to learn practical skills. I then

started attending important meetings with national, subregional and international experts.

“You must believe in your own capacities to cope, whatever your situation.”

After the agroecology training, I worked to organise a workshop on the subject. [...] This, too, was a very enlightening experience. Enda Graf – another Enda entity which is very strong in supporting and working with grassroots organisations – suggested organising the workshop jointly with the farmers and the technicians, saying that we would all learn from each other. At first I was not convinced that this was the right approach. When the technicians met the farmers, they had the same initial reaction as I did: they did not believe that, given the difference in educational level, they could learn things together, working at the same time in the same room as the farmers. In the end, however, we managed to bring all the participants together and held meetings in the shade of the trees over a one-month period. As we toured the local countryside, visiting dried-out riverbeds, deforested areas and land that had suffered the effects of peanut monoculture, the farmers enabled us to discover their actual real-life environment and we gained an insight into how it had been destroyed. We then understood that it was not up to us – technicians or agronomists – to provide solutions one-sidedly but that we had to work together with the farmers, who are familiar with the history of their land.

## What challenges did you face during your career and how did you overcome them?

Of course I encountered quite a few difficulties over the years. I’m now speaking rather confidently but I always felt that I needed to develop my skills and understanding. A higher education qualification is something very important for Africans. I have no diploma certifying my skills, so I have to speak up for myself or someone else has to speak up for me or people have to work with me to discover who I really am.

I’m also aware that some people tend to ignore me initially, because I’m not a coquettish woman who dresses differently [Laughter]. I



© Dimitra

was brought up in a certain way and believe in a certain way of doing things. But sometimes it is useful to make yourself noticed with a colourful wrapper, high heels and makeup ... But it's not my nature! And this can be an obstacle to people finding out who I really am.

I'm now following an evening course – at my age! [Laughter] – to obtain a formal qualification. I am studying for a degree in local development and I should be able to go on to a Master's degree. It's funny in a way – I'm surrounded by young people who are my children's age, I learn things as a member of the group but I'm also finding out that I have a store of experience that can be useful to them.

Perhaps my greatest challenge was when I was appointed to coordinate Pronat in 1996. It was not an easy task at first! Some people were doubtful about me. Given that until then I had been an extension worker, would I have the ability to sustain the development of Pronat? At Enda, it is up to the teams to raise funds to be able to carry out the activities and pay the salaries of staff. The question people asked themselves was, "Does Mariam have the ability to develop coherent programmes with her team to convince its financial partners?"

Jacques Bugnicourt [the founder of Enda Third World and Executive Secretary of the organisation at that time – Editor's note], who believes that everybody has something special to contribute,

**“We understood that it was not up to us – technicians or agronomists – to provide solutions one-sidedly but that we had to work together with the farmers, who are familiar with the history of their land.**



Mariam Sow (on the right) with her colleagues Fatou Sow (centre) and Tine Ndoye (left).

said “Let her do things her way”, so I went full steam ahead... I was very much helped in this by my network of social relations. When I arrived, there were only four of us; today we have a team of 18 people working together at regional level ...

Incredible but true, I performed – quite successfully – the duties of Executive Secretary of Enda Third World from May 2006 to September 2007! When they recruited a new Executive Secretary, I resumed work in my own organisation, Enda Pronat, with undiminished enthusiasm.

As a woman, I also faced the difficult task of bringing up my children. The good Lord helped me through, with the support of my husband and my parents, and I managed to balance my work life with my family life. In fact, having children provides an additional motivation to work. Their father and I shared responsibility for them – I couldn't fold my arms and sit back. All the more so since he took a second

**Enda Pronat is a programme of Enda Third World, an NGO dedicated to combating poverty by addressing its root causes. Since 1982, Pronat has been cooperating with grassroots organisations and research institutes to promote healthy, sustainable farming. This includes increasing farmers' awareness of the hazards associated with the use of agrochemical products, improving the management of natural resources on the basis of gender equality and struggling against certain agricultural practices.**

wife. All of this could have discouraged me, but it didn't! I turned every difficult situation into a source of strength. I'm a strong believer and I told myself, “It is God who presented me with these challenges and I must fight to overcome them – it is my task”. This motivated me to do my job properly.

**Do you have any advice to give our readers?**

Yes, you must believe in your own ability to cope, whatever your situation. You must not corner yourself into a position of weakness. You can learn something from everybody, wherever you are in the world. As a human being, you have a store of knowledge and experience. You must believe in what you do. Determination is essential!

\* For more information about Enda Pronat, consult: [www.endapronat.org](http://www.endapronat.org)



1. Originally created in France, MFRs began to spread to other countries in the 1950s. Today there are more than 1,000 MFRs, mainly in Europe, Latin America and Africa. Regardless of where they are located, MFRs function according to the same founding principles as in France: alternating work and training, empowerment of families, comprehensive approach to education and active participation in local development. For more information, visit [www.mfr.asso.fr](http://www.mfr.asso.fr)
2. This is the “brevet d'études du premier cycle”, a qualification awarded to students who pass a public exam after completing the first (four-year) part or “cycle” of secondary education. – Translator's note.

# Manooré FM, 'The voice of women'

Since the 1990s, when the airwaves were liberalised, Sub-Saharan Africa has experienced a burgeoning of new radio stations – among them many “women’s radio stations”. However, this general term encompasses a range of different realities and approaches. In this article, we focus on Manooré FM, a Senegalese community radio station that exemplifies women’s active citizenship.

Manooré FM is located in a central neighbourhood of Dakar, so its broadcasting area covers the entire city and surrounding region. Although no reliable figures are available, it unquestionably enjoys a wide audience, as apparent from the intense participation of listeners – both women and men – in its interactive broadcasts.

An average day at Manooré FM is just about what you would expect at any other community radio: journalists surf the Internet, prepare their broadcasts and re-read their scripts before going on the air. What distinguishes Manooré FM is its fundamental mission: “Our aim is to address women directly,” explains Oumy Cantome Sarr, the radio station’s Coordinator, “and to offer a more realistic picture of women – all women, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, for it is they who are usually most excluded from the mainstream media. We wanted to speak of their everyday lives, their experiences, their successes and failures. We wanted to show women’s activities on the ground. And this is basically what we have done.”

## Know-how

‘Manooré’ means ‘know-how’ in Wolof, the most spoken language in Senegal. The aim, then, is to highlight what women do, their involvement and importance in society.

The nucleus of the radio station was set up in 1997 by Altercom – an organisation for women and alternative communication, made up of

women leaders and intellectuals – but it was only in 2002 that Manooré FM was finally allocated a frequency. Initially the project was financed by Oxfam America and Oxfam Great Britain to meet the needs of Senegalese women.

Far from pandering to public opinion and external interests, Manooré FM is essentially a militant organisation fighting for the advancement of women. Its aim is to give women a voice and make them visible in the media. Oumy Cantome Sarr believes that, to achieve this purpose, the radio station must secure the involvement of, and recognition by, local women’s grassroots organisations: “You cannot work on women’s issues unless you are visible on the ground. If people don’t know you exist and women’s groups don’t recognise your commitment to women’s advancement, you won’t get anywhere. We believe this aspect is essential to our success. A women’s radio station must be, first and foremost, committed and militant.”

## The radio as social actor

Manooré FM is a fully-fledged social actor; it does much more than just broadcasting. At an early stage in its development, it became involved in advocacy and capacity-building activities. For example, in November 2007, when the Constitution of Senegal was amended in respect of women’s access to elected positions and voting rights, Manooré FM played a significant role in synergising the advocacy activities of women’s organisations.

As far as capacity-building is concerned, the radio station organises training schemes for women and/or communicators on such issues as leadership and communication, violence against women, information and communication technologies (ICTs) and journalistic ethics.

Manooré FM also provides capacity-building activities for its own staff. In-house further training opportunities are available, including not only training programmes on journalistic techniques but also small-group educational sessions on a variety of thematic issues.

## Manooré FM addresses women and men alike

Manooré FM is feminist, though without being exclusive: its staff is made up mainly of women but its programmes are not aimed solely at a female audience. In the words of Oumy Cantome Sarr, “At first, the initiators of the project wanted a women-only network, but after a while they realised that we must enter into alliances with men, that is to say, with men who support the women’s movement. Our message is not directed only at women. In fact, most listeners taking part in our interactive programmes are men. We build strategic alliances with them. They support us and that makes us stronger. We work on practical issues and strategic interests at the same time. It is important to combine both aspects. We want to move beyond just enabling women to get together and voice their complaints. Manooré FM strives to encourage women to put forward their own view of development, to make their voice heard.” This ‘open’ approach also underlies the radio station’s editorial policies. Manooré FM does not deal only with women’s issues. Rather, its strategy is to examine all kinds of issues from a gender perspective, to look at things through a ‘gender lens’.

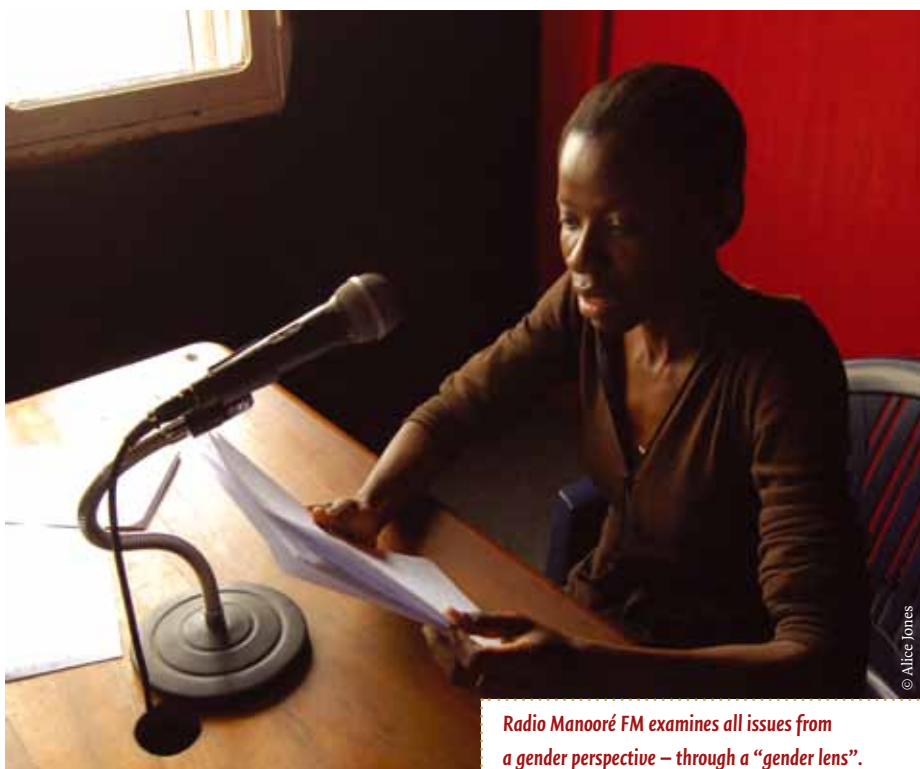
As in the case of other community radio stations in Senegal, funding is not assured. The existing legal framework prohibits community radios from generating revenues from advertising and although they clearly function as public service providers, the government has not made any subsidies available since 2007. Manooré FM’s resources therefore originate mainly from development actors and tend to focus on themes selected by them:

**Radio Manooré FM is a fully-fledged social actor, it does much more than only broadcasting.**



"When we deal with certain issues, we must always consider how they relate to gender, and play on that aspect. Until recently, we received technical and financial support from the two Oxfam organisations, but this has now ceased [Editor's note: These NGOs stopped financing radio stations for global strategic reasons]. We have also received support from the National Council for the Fight Against AIDS, the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), the National Alliance Against AIDS, the Global Fund for Women, the Synchronicity Foundation, etc." There is considerable uncertainty about the future, given that publicly-funded development aid will probably dwindle as a result of the global economic crisis, and support for the media is no longer a top priority for fund-providers. In spite of this, Manooré FM is determined (and will no doubt find the means) to continue to fulfil its mission, that is, to give women a voice.

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Radio Manooré FM examines all issues from a gender perspective – through a "gender lens".

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## RFI's OrdiSpace – Satellite Transmissions to African Radio Stations

In 2006, Radio France Internationale (RFI) set up a satellite radio transmission system for African radio stations. Since then, some 250 radio stations have been receiving daily broadcasts via their RFI-installed terminals. The OrdiSpace system is also open to other partners and enables the transmission of all kinds of electronic files.

The development of the Internet in Africa is proceeding at a rapid pace but is largely confined to urban areas. In rural communities, access remains limited due to a lack of telephone lines and electric power. OrdiSpace makes it possible to overcome the isolation of radio stations in such communities and provide them with information which would otherwise be unavailable. The radio stations have a wide local audience in rural communities, where they are often the sole source of information.

Thanks to its experience in Africa, RFI has developed a system tailored to local constraints. OrdiSpace is easy to install and to use. The receiving terminal consists of a central unit,



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a screen, a keyboard and a Worldspace mini-satellite antenna. It should be noted, however, that it does not replace an Internet-connected computer: it only enables users to receive and send files via the RFI satellite system. The OrdiSpace team is currently exploring the possibility of enabling interactive communication with the radio stations.

Though primarily a means of disseminating RFI programmes, OrdiSpace can also be used to send other types of files such as advertisements and publications. Partner radio stations are free to use the received programmes, texts and other files as they wish. They have no obligation to broadcast any of the materials.

Currently, the OrdiSpace network comprises radio stations in 38 (mainly French-speaking) African countries. RFI has plans to extend the network to non-French-speaking countries over the coming months and years.

### Partnerships

OrdiSpace is also open to external partners such as the International Criminal Court, the Independent Electoral Commission in the Democratic Republic of Congo and UN radio stations. For its part the "Agence Nationale



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pour l'Emploi" (ANPE, National Employment Agency) in Bamako sends written job advertisements twice a week, in both French and Bambara, to radio stations in Mali, which in turn broadcast this information to the general public on a voluntary basis.

It should be pointed out that the RFI also offers potential partners the possibility of producing their own programmes for dissemination on the OrdiSpace network.

✳ **For more information on this project:**  
[www.ordispace.com](http://www.ordispace.com)  
 Tel: + 33 1 44 30 83 94 (France).

# SANKOFA – Grassroots Community Partnership Reduces Poverty in Ghana

Kadjebi was an impoverished district in the Volta Region of Ghana. In 1989, an Integrated Rural Development Programme towards Poverty Alleviation, dubbed “SANKOFA” by the local population, was launched by the African Centre for Human Development (ACHD). Twenty years on, the initiative has provided a sense of self-reliance, community empowerment, rural employment, critically needed social infrastructure and rural renewal to the region.

In the 1980's, it was common to talk about rural development, people's participation, community empowerment, self-reliance, self-sufficiency and community ownership. There were many development projects to put these terms into reality. ACHD, a Ghanaian development organisation, started an Integrated Rural Development Programme towards Poverty Alleviation, with support from the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV). It used a new approach to development, where the people in the communities were strong partners and were directly involved in all aspects of the development process. SANKOFA means going back to your roots and culture to re-discover and bring back the good things for development. The programme was called “SANKOFA” by the local people, because the philosophy of the programme was to build upon the local knowledge, customs and traditions, and use the traditional methods of solidarity and community togetherness as the basis of sustained development.

## The location

The majority of inhabitants of Kadjebi District were rural dwellers (75%), 67% of them living in settlements of less than 500 people. The incidence of poverty in the district was quite high and had several dimensions: low income and low achievements in basic needs such as housing, health and nutritional status, subsistence farming.

The gender dimension of poverty was very important, due to a lack of access to and control of resources, e.g. land. Being food crop producers, cash crop prices did not benefit women. Children also had to take part in income generation for the survival of the family. The participation of the population in local governance was very poor.

## Building strategic alliances

The first strategy of the SANKOFA programme was to build alliances with local and traditional power blocs. Constant consultations were held with the Chiefs in their position of custodians of culture and the natural leaders of the people. They helped mobilize the people for involvement in their community's development, held community *durbars* (formal community meetings to discuss or collaborate



*“SANKOFA” means going back to your roots and culture to re-discover and bring back the good things for development.*

in an event; the chief presides over the proceedings) and decided democratically what the pressing needs were. Then actions were taken to solve these issues.

SANKOFA also worked closely with the District Administration, which brought much needed technical support and helped formulate an effective revenue collection system and 5-year development plans.

Local social groups, such as church, trade and youth groups, were formed to facilitate easy contact and assistance and as a platform for employment generation. Each identifiable community was encouraged to select community facilitators, who were given special training in all aspects of community development. They were to lead their people out of poverty by demonstrating leadership.

## Knowledge is power

A crucial aspect of the SANKOFA strategy was to transfer skills and knowledge to these community groups. Skills transfer was an important prerequisite for rural employment generation. Typical capacity building topics included: community decision-making; group

formation; holding the local government accountable; gender equality and the enhanced role of women; local fundraising; networking; and credit management.

Participants' feedback to the courses was very positive. An elderly lady once said: “It is a pity I did not go to school. I should have been a better person. I will send all my children to school. My eyes are now wide open. Illiteracy is a crime.” And a local leader remarked: “At first we were being spoon-fed. Now we are being treated as adults and we can feed ourselves. We have our self-respect and our dignity intact.”

SANKOFA started from the local knowledge level of the people and built upon it in a practical, step-by-step process. As an encouragement, the following analogy was presented: “If we give you cassava every day, you will go hungry when we are not there. If we teach you how to farm cassava yourselves, you will never go hungry.” This simple philosophy worked like magic.

## Focus on women's empowerment

One of the guiding principles of SANKOFA is to pursue gender equality and women's empowerment. During phase II of the programme's activities, ACHD became a local

partner to the FAO-Dimitra project, whose networking and technical support enhanced the gender dimensions of the work, with very successful results. An example...

Brafoanu is a small village located 30km north of Kadjebi town. All inhabitants are small-holder subsistence farmers. The women grow food crops such as corn, cassava, cocoyam and vegetables. The men cultivate cash crops such as oil palm and cocoa. Only men can cultivate these permanent crops, as only they have the right to own land, according to customary law.

In 1996, the plight of the 500 inhabitants of Brafoanu was brought to the attention of SANKOFA. A poverty analysis showed that the community was in a deplorable situation. There was no tarmac road, the nearest town was two hours by foot, and the only viable resources available were the villagers themselves. The women outnumbered the men. Through a process of sensitisation, the women decided to adopt the code of self-reliance and take their destiny into their own hands. Following a process of group formation, the women transformed their situation into a very dynamic one.

Fifteen women formed a homogenous group called "NORVISI" (togetherness). They attended a series of training workshops to build their capacity to improve their socio-economic status, and also to champion the cause of other women in their community. In order to reduce domestic workloads and save time to engage in other ventures, they were trained to construct simple but efficient home improvement tools with local materials, such as smokeless stoves, drying sheds, etc.

To reduce the two-hour walk to the mill, the group purchased a corn milling machine and a cassava processing plant to transform cassava into gari (cassava powder) and starch. To diversify their work, the women bought palm fruits and processed them into palm oil, palm kernel oil and palm kernel husks. The oil was stored and sold during the high season. The husks were used as cooking fuel.

*One of the guiding principles of SANKOFA is to pursue gender equality and women's empowerment. Rural employment generation has been the key to the success of the SANKOFA initiative.*

The resulting economic prosperity of these women translated into a high level of self-confidence. They networked with women from other communities and formed an association called "Women Torch-bearers". Together, they put their demands to the local authorities and lobbied them to influence local decision-making.

### Gender and rural employment

Rural employment generation has been the key to the success of the SANKOFA initiative. According to traditional customs, women are very disadvantaged in terms of land holding rights. Therefore for them, the safest activity was either subsistence farming or petty trading. SANKOFA introduced the women to the processing of agricultural produce to increase their value. They were also encouraged to establish food marketing associations in order to sell their produce in the big marketing centres around the country.

Rural employment generation can only be viable if supporting activities as well as new ideas and knowledge are introduced. Household livestock, ruminants and poultry rearing give a variety of choices to rural people. Considering the agricultural environment they live in, the best solution is self-employment and doing what they know to do best!

Rural communities should not be treated as "disabled" in business. However, they should be introduced, guided and encouraged to go through the rigours and accept harsh economic realities. Otherwise they will always be cheated by urban business tycoons and continue to be hewers of water and collectors of firewood. The SANKOFA experience broke this norm.

### Positive long-term impact

SANKOFA has no doubt had a very positive impact on the lives of Kadjebi people, youth in particular. Some of the employment created concerned the social and economic infrastructures provided by SANKOFA, such as:

- building of a District Library and Resource Centre;
- creation of a District Children's Park and several pre-school structures;
- construction of classrooms in ten communities;
- adult literacy evening classes for over 100 adult learner groups;
- Theatre for Development cultural troupes in several communities, to facilitate the communication of development information to the people;
- on-farm improvement of agricultural techniques to increase production of basic staple foods;





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- off-farm agricultural activities (fish farming, snail farming, piggery, poultry, ruminant farming);
- introduction and management of a rural savings and loans scheme for rural financial mobilization;
- promotion of linkages of farmers' groups to marketing centres;
- initiation of a rural newspaper for information dissemination at district level;
- renewal of rural housing and residential accommodation.

#### Conclusion

Among the important developments and positive changes the SANKOFA programme can be credited with are:

- The ability to bring a sense of hope and a better future to Kadjebi and halt the social decay, dejection and hopelessness.
- Rural employment opportunities have made immigration to Kadjebi an option again.

- Outsiders are investing in the region, creation further jobs.
- The District is positioning itself to be the “hub” of development in north-east Ghana.

As the programme celebrates 20 years of continuous and dedicated service to the people, it is now time to disseminate its experiences to other parts of the country. This will be done through the establishment of the SANKOFA Rural Training Centre and the SANKOFA Community Radio Station in Kadjebi.

#### \* For more information:

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## Securing Women's Access to Land: Linking Research and Action – an ILC Project in Africa

Despite being recognized as an important issue, women's access to and control over land and other natural resources is still insufficiently addressed, particularly in national policy contexts. In response, the International Land Coalition (ILC), with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is carrying out a research project in Eastern and Southern Africa aimed at **linking research**, to provide a better understanding of the need for improving women's access to and control over land, **and action**, to address obstacles and challenges persisting in practise due to gendered power relations.

The ILC is working in partnership with MISR (Makerere Institute for Social Research, <http://mistr.mak.ac.ug>) in Uganda and PLAAS (Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies, [www.plaas.org.za](http://www.plaas.org.za)) in South Africa, to carry out the research project, the results of which will be used in advocacy activities and linked to other ILC activities in Africa.

The research in this project is action-oriented, involves diverse partners through small grants, and is aimed at producing credible evidence to serve as a basis for influencing formulation and implementation of relevant policies in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Eastern Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda) and four in Southern Africa (Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe). Research topics in Eastern Africa include: the role of community watchdogs (GROOTS Kenya), realising women's property rights through legislative intervention (ULA, Uganda Land Alliance and Uganda Media Women's Association) and strengthening widows' property and inheritance rights (Young Widows Advancement Programme, Kenya). In Southern Africa, topics include: the impact of land reform on women's lives (WFA, Women Farmers' Association and CASS, Centre for Applied Social Sciences, University of Zimbabwe) and women's access to land under legal dualism in Malawi (WOLREC, Women's Legal Resource Centre with UNFPA and OXFAM).

The ILC is exploring how to link this activity to other organisations' work on women's empowerment and gender equality. Therefore it welcomes enquiries for information and suggestions on potential collaboration from organisations in the Dimitra network interested in similar issues in order to build a community of interest across Africa.

#### \* For more information, please contact:

Sabine Pallas (ILC Secretariat):  
[s.pallas@landcoalition.org](mailto:s.pallas@landcoalition.org)  
[www.landcoalition.org](http://www.landcoalition.org)

An inception workshop in Nairobi in May 2008 brought together representatives from grassroots women's organisations, NGOs and academic institutions from eight countries in the region, and provided training sessions on gender concepts in the context of land tenure, as well as on the development of research proposals. Further training in research practice is continuously given to the project's partner organisations as a form of support to the implementation of the selected research projects. A range of materials, from an annotated bibliography on women's access to land to a toolkit for research and action, are accessible online: [www.landcoalition.org/program/wrap.htm](http://www.landcoalition.org/program/wrap.htm).

Ten small research projects, involving a total of 19 organisations, are now under way, six in



© Sabine Pallas (ILC)

# The RFLC: a Website for Rural Finance Learning

We all need money. Even if we produce a lot of our own food we will still need money to buy many other things. Money is easy to carry around and can be exchanged for anything that is for sale. It is also a convenient means of storing up wealth for future use. Money also makes exchanging goods easier. Throughout the world as people engage in commercial transactions, small or big, diversify their activities and invest in their enterprises or in their homes, their need to **manage their money** increases.

Sometimes people have surpluses, sometimes they do not have enough. To deal with this, people **save or borrow**. There are many different ways of saving and borrowing. People who cannot save in a bank often buy livestock, jewellery or other physical assets that they can later sell, or save by just putting their extra money in a jar at home. However, these are not always the best and safest ways of saving. When people need to borrow, they often ask relatives, friends or local shopkeepers to help out. But this often turns out to be rather expensive....

When help to manage money is supplied as a business, it is called a **financial service**. Providers of such services may range from small village cooperative banks to big international banks. Very few people who run a business – farmers, blacksmiths, hairdressers, merchants, etc. – can do so without access to financial services. However, people living in rural areas are unlikely to find a bank nearby. Perceptions of high costs and high risk often discourage banks from operating in rural areas and particularly from doing business with small-scale farmers and other small rural entrepreneurs. **Rural finance**, as a field of work, is concerned with redressing this imbalance and ensuring that also people who live in rural areas have access to financial services – savings accounts, short term credit, loans, life and health insurance products and money transfer services.

Finding ways to increase the availability of and access to financial services in rural areas is a huge challenge and requires, among other things, a good knowledge of agriculture, investment opportunities and risks in rural areas, rural people's particular needs, etc.

The **Rural Finance Learning Centre (RFLC)** is a **website** that has been created to help people to learn more quickly what they need to know in order to contribute in a practical way to improving the availability of financial services



“

The Rural Finance Learning Centre is helping you learn, so you can help others learn.

get in touch with each other and increase the **networking** that leads to change and dissemination of ideas.

The RFLC is entirely **free of charge**. One does not have to register in order to access the resources it contains. It is managed by FAO but is a partnership. The most important partners are the users. The majority of users of the RFLC are individuals who either want to improve their own personal knowledge and skills or are planning to use the material to inform or train others working in their own organisation, project or elsewhere so that more people can more efficiently address banks and other financial institutions for the type of financial services they need.

in rural areas. It contains information about how financial service providers can operate efficiently in rural areas; about different types of financial services; about helping rural people to manage their enterprises better; about what donors and governments should or should not do to support the growth of rural financial services, and many other topics. It also contains training materials and opportunities to share experiences and knowledge. In the **training section**, you will find guides for trainers on specific topics. There are also self-study lessons for individuals, to work through by themselves as a form of distance learning. These lessons are interactive and informative and will help people to explain key issues to others. It also has a list of training courses and workshops worldwide relevant to rural finance.

A large part of the RFLC is a **library** of documents and multimedia such as videos which is organized into topics. The material in the library is selected to optimize its usefulness for capacity building and sharing of experience and innovation in rural finance.

A unique feature of the RFLC is the possibility for users to register as **members**. Registered members can suggest resources that they think should be included in the site. All the members are listed in the contacts section, together with organisations working in the field of rural finance capacity building. This helps people to

✳ **Visit the RFLC website:**  
[www.ruralfinance.org](http://www.ruralfinance.org)

✳ **For more information:**  
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# Knowledge sharing: a new challenge for the information society

KNOWLEDGE SHARE FAIR | ROME, 20-22 JANUARY 2009

FAO, CGIAR, Bioversity, IFAD and WFP<sup>1</sup> jointly organised a Knowledge Share Fair at FAO headquarters in January 2009. The three days of the Share Fair were packed with an abundance of events on numerous topics: interactive knowledge sharing strategies, good practices, policies and operational practices using case studies, anecdotes, hands-on new Internet wikkies, blogs, APPS, and also many face-to-face meetings.

The objectives of the Share Fair were to:

- show how knowledge sharing can improve the effectiveness, efficiency and impact of the participating organisations;
- demonstrate, share and learn from each other's good practices;
- create linkages and networks for future collaboration, within and across the organisations.

## Sharing, not managing knowledge

The first day of the Fair was marked by a fascinating keynote speech delivered by Geoff Parcell<sup>2</sup>, who explained that there is no way to “manage knowledge”: we can only “share knowledge”.

If knowledge management strategies are to be based on organisational results, the environment must be enabling to capture knowledge. This knowledge is only of use if people share it within their networks and if there is good leadership which will create this enabling environment and will allow the space and time for people to think about what they learn.

As we all experience the world in a different way, common models are important to be able to share thoughts. Actions are taken on the basis of what we are – we are not neutral and our beliefs influence the data we select and analyse. Hence the importance of sharing and coming together in a “common world”. This common reflection will help people to become more aware of their own ways of thinking and reasoning and will encourage them to inquire what and how others think and reason.

In other words, to work well together, we must have a set of **shared values**, a **facilitative leadership**, **people-driven responses** and the **willingness to share and listen**.

## Trust: the essence of learning

In another presentation, entitled “Information and Knowledge Management Strategies”,

Geoff Parcell insisted on the fact that a strategy is an ongoing process. In the case of knowledge management, **trust** is a key element. Trust depends on the good relationships between people and the ability to share knowledge. One can only learn when people can meet and trust each other to create communities of practices and when networks can start to institutionalize. There cannot be a bureaucratic control over this process.

## Factors for successful knowledge sharing

Geoff Parcell presented a short checklist of success factors, such as: trust, support, positive appreciation, transfer of knowledge, collect and share after the collection, face to face meetings, conversations, listening. The role of a knowledge manager is to make people or networks connect with each other. Traditional PowerPoint presentations should be avoided as much as possible, to leave room for person to person discussions.

To improve learning, one should never underestimate: the value of conversations; self-assessment as a crucial factor enabling ownership; and the importance of learning before doing. In any setting, people should share with each other what they know from their own context. The power will reside in the values and knowledge they find they have in common.

## Sharing knowledge empowers your work

Attendance to the Share Fair was high: there were about 700 participants and 112 sessions, more than 160 contributions, over 50 blogs created, 40 video blips, 150 tweets, 130 delicious' bookmarks, 250 pictures posted, 22 training sessions with 400 trainers and... three PowerPoint presentations.

Dimitra presented (in French and without PowerPoint!) its experiences in the framework of FAO's new “Knowledge Management and

“

**Knowledge sharing: a smarter way to do things better, to work less and to produce more.**

Enrica Porcari, CGIAR

Gender” Programme, implemented in collaboration with the Knowledge Exchange and Capacity Building Division, the Hortivar project (Horticultural Crops Group, Plant Production and Protection Division), the Agricultural Management, Marketing and Finance Service, and the Research and Extension Unit of FAO.

## When is the next Knowledge Share Fair?

Although the environment was very inviting and people enjoyed the Fair, some shortcomings were highlighted. Many regretted the predominance of English as the reference language and the difficulty to introduce other languages, which presented an important impediment for an enabling knowledge sharing environment.

There also was frustration as there were too many things to see and do at the same time – this was not a case of parallel events anymore, but of a multiplication of parallel events! This created numerous dilemmas: should you attend sessions on topics with which you are familiar already, in order to share your experiences with others? Or should you rather attend sessions on unknown topics, where you can learn but have no experiences to share?

All in all, however, this First Knowledge Share Fair was a major success and one that invites the organisation of a follow-up event soon.

\* [www.sharefair.net](http://www.sharefair.net)

## A few thoughts collected from the “tree of knowledge” created by the participants:

- Knowledge is not power: knowledge sharing is power
- The best gift one can give is knowledge
- Less e-mail, more face to face
- Right to share
- We all want to know about knowledge sharing tools, but we all say it is not about the tools
- Collecting versus sharing
- Share knowledge to empower your work

1. FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; CGIAR, Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research; Bioversity International; IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development; WFP, United Nations World Food Programme.

2. Geoff Parcell co-authored “Learning to Fly. Practical Knowledge Management from Leading and Learning Organizations” (2004, Geoff Parcell and Chris Collison). His keynote speech at the Knowledge Share Fair was entitled: “Networks and Effective Flow of Knowledge: how knowledge sharing tools maximize success in the working environment”.

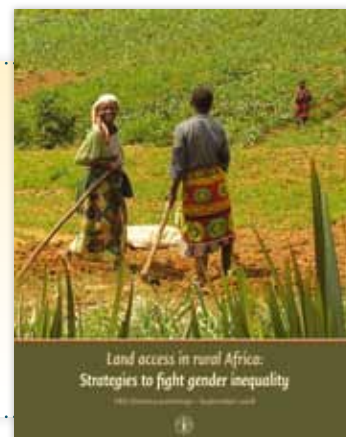
## Resources

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

In September 2008, the FAO-Dimitra project organised its third workshop with all its partners in Brussels, on the theme: "Information and communication strategies to fight gender inequality as regards land access and its consequences for rural populations in Africa".

A publication presents the synthesis of the workshop's activities as well as the different articles which were prepared for the workshop by the participants – the partners of the network and FAO colleagues.

The publication is freely available upon request.



## FUNDRAISING

### ⊙ AWDF, African Women's Development Fund - Main Grants Program

The AWDF (Ghana) funds local, national, sub-regional, and regional organisations in Africa working towards women's empowerment. The AWDF is an institutional capacity-building and programme development fund, which aims to help build a culture of learning and partnership within the African women's movement. The AWDF funds work in 6 thematic areas: women's human rights, political participation, peace building, health and reproductive rights, economic empowerment, and HIV/AIDS. Rolling deadline.

[www.awdf.org](http://www.awdf.org)

## WEBSITES

### ⊙ The International HIV/AIDS Alliance

The Alliance is a global partnership of nationally based organisations working to support community action on AIDS in developing countries. It emphasizes the importance of working with people who are most likely to affect or be affected by the spread of HIV – often the hardest to reach. The Alliance focuses on integrated responses to HIV that combine preventing HIV infection, facilitating access to treatment, care and support, and lessening the impact of AIDS. The website has online toolkits, a CD-ROM is available on request, and you can also sign up to receive the Alliance's e-bulletin.

[www.aidsalliance.org](http://www.aidsalliance.org)

### ⊙ Itrainonline - Resources for Women

The Resources for Women section of Itrainonline, offers links to resources specifically targeted at women. The resources are divided into the following categories:

- general women and gender-related training resources;
- women-focused ICTs resources grouped by topic.

The heading "Target audience" under each listing tells you at whom the resource is aimed.

[www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/women/index.shtml](http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/women/index.shtml)

## PUBLICATIONS

### ⊙ Failing the Rural Poor: Aid, Agriculture and the Millennium Development Goals

This briefing focuses on a sector that is critical in ending hunger – agriculture. In particular, it focuses on the role of aid to agriculture in developing countries. Aid is not the only instrument of inter-government policy that impacts on agriculture and the ability of people to feed themselves adequately – trade and private investment are also of central importance. This briefing shows the ways that aid has helped to cement the current food crisis. It also makes a series of recommendations to national governments and donors on how to reshape their support for this critical sector.

ActionAid, September 2008 (16p)  
[www.actionaid.org](http://www.actionaid.org)

### ⊙ Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook

Women play a vital role as agricultural producers and as agents of food and nutritional security. Yet relative to men, they have less access to productive assets such as land and services such as finance and extension. A variety of constraints impinge upon their ability to participate in collective action as members of agricultural cooperative or water user associations. In both centralized and decentralized governance systems, women tend to lack political voice. Gender inequalities result in less food being grown, less income being earned, and higher levels of poverty and food insecurity. Agriculture in low-income developing countries is a sector with exceptionally high impact in terms of its potential to reduce poverty. Yet for agricultural growth to fulfil this potential, gender disparities must be addressed and effectively reduced.

World Bank, FAO and IFAD, 2008 (766p)  
<http://worldbank.org/genderinag>

### ⊙ Gender: The Missing Component of the Response to Climate Change

Gender aspects have generally been neglected in international discussions and agreements on climate change. The authors see this as the result of a general preference for scientific and technological measures, rather than in policies which address behaviour and social differences. While poor people will face more

difficulties in relation to climate change, women are generally more vulnerable to its impacts. This report argues for the need to acknowledge gender differences, and the need to integrate gender in governments' and organisations' responses. On the basis of the key role which women have in development, these responses need to make sure that the effects of climate change do not further impoverish women.

FAO, 2006 (63p)  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

### ⊙ Growing Up Info

The purpose of this monthly newsletter is to provide AIDS workers with regular updates on knowledge, practices, initiatives and research concerning prevention, medical and psychosocial care, treatment and support of children living with HIV or AIDS in Africa. Each issue contains a brief article about a current care and treatment topic, a case study, a news story, and links to other sites or publications.

[www.womenchildrenhiv.org/wchiv?page=ch-06-00](http://www.womenchildrenhiv.org/wchiv?page=ch-06-00)

### ⊙ Growing vegetables for home and market

Vegetables that are easy to grow (potatoes, onions, tomatoes) provide economic, social and nutritional advantages and can make significant differences to smallholder livelihoods. With this booklet, policy-makers and development personnel will recognize the opportunities that are available for producing and marketing quality vegetables.

The purpose of the FAO Diversification Booklets is to raise awareness and provide decision support information about opportunities at farm and local community level to increase the incomes of small-scale farmers.

FAO Diversification Booklet No. 11, 2009 (102p)  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

### ⊙ Helping Women Respond to the Global Food Price Crisis

The current food price crisis has received widespread attention, but discussions to date have largely overlooked the gender dimensions of the crisis. More than 15 years of rigorous research on gender and intra-household resource allocation suggest not only that men and women will be affected

differently by the global food crisis, but also that, as both consumers and producers, they will have different stocks of resources with which to respond to rising prices. Although the current situation calls for an urgent national and international response, urgency is not an excuse for misguided policies that fail to address the gender implications of the crisis. Instead, decision-makers should take this opportunity to incorporate what is known about women's roles in agricultural production and household welfare, and the specific challenges they face, both to craft more effective policy responses and to enable women to respond better to the current challenges and opportunities.

IFPRI, Policy Brief No. 007, October 2008 (4p)  
[www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

☉ **The State of Food Insecurity in the World, 2008. High Food Prices and Food Security - Threats and Opportunities**

This report presents the latest statistics on global undernourishment. It reviews the impact of high food prices and concludes that chronic hunger in the world has increased rapidly, now affecting well over 900 million people, and placing tremendous pressure on achieving hunger reduction. It also examines how high food prices present an opportunity to relaunch smallholder agriculture in the developing world.

FAO, 2008 (56p)  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

☉ **Justice for Women: Seeking Accountability for Sexual Crimes in Post-Conflict Situations**

The systematic use of extreme violence, in particular sexual violence, in conflict and post-conflict situations raises the pressing question of how to end the cycle of impunity. Post-conflict reconstruction requires a combined effort by the international community and local actors to tackle issues such as military support, disarmament, and the creation of stable judicial frameworks. Daunting challenges are faced by women survivors of sexual violence – social rejection, impunity of the perpetrators, difficulties in access to justice, severe health problems, children born of rape and economic precariousness. Justice, in the widest sense, is a priority and some progress has been made regarding access to justice for women.

FRIDE, July 2008 (conference report - 20p)  
[www.fride.org/publications](http://www.fride.org/publications)

☉ **Mitigating the Effects of HIV/AIDS in Small-Scale Farming**

There are a number of ways in which farming practices can be adapted to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS. Aimed at agricultural extension officers, NGOs and development workers from international organisations, this manual explores practical methods for alleviating the difficulties. Strategies examined include switching from labour-intensive, high-input activities such as coffee and dairy farming to low-input sectors such as agroforestry, conservation tillage and poultry keeping. The manual highlights the importance of nutritious food, including fruit and vegetables, for HIV/AIDS sufferers and recommends growing medicinal plants to treat some of the symptoms of the disease. The need for knowledge emerges as a major theme, whether it be in relation to the illness itself or in coping with its effects.

Agrodok series n° 45, Agromisa, 2008 (76p)  
[www.agromisa.org](http://www.agromisa.org)

☉ **Land Tenure Security and Poverty Reduction**

Land is fundamental to the lives of poor rural people. It is a source of food, shelter, income and social identity. Secure access to land reduces vulnerability to hunger and poverty. But for many of the world's extremely poor rural people in developing countries, secure access is becoming more tenuous than ever.

IFAD, February 2009 (Fact sheet - 4p)  
[www.ifad.org/english/land](http://www.ifad.org/english/land)

☉ **Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women? Gender & Accountability**

This report shows that realising women's rights and achieving the Millennium Development Goals depends on strengthening accountability for commitments to women and gender equality. It demonstrates that for women's rights to translate into substantive improvements in their lives, and for gender equality to be realised in practice, women must be able to fully participate in public decision-making at all levels and hold those responsible to account when their rights are infringed or their needs ignored. The report presents clear evidence that women's empowerment and gender equality are drivers for reducing poverty, building food security, reducing maternal mortality, safeguarding the environment, and enhancing the effectiveness of aid.

UNIFEM, 2008(163p)  
[www.unifem.org/progress/2008/](http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/)

☉ **Radios et NTIC en Afrique de l'Ouest : Connectivité et Usages (Radio and ICTs in West Africa: Connectivity and Uses)**

This publication looks at how new ICTs and radio can be used in combination with each other.



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It presents the findings of research involving 220 radio stations in West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo. The objectives of the research were to: make an assessment of radio connectivity to the Internet and satellites in the sub-region, the use of tools such as mobile phones, CD-ROMs, USB drives, and digital audio production software; identify innovative uses combining new technologies and radios; identify and analyse the constraints relating to the use of ICTs (internet, satellite, in particular) by radios; identify capacity building needs in that field, as well as the relevance of that necessity. Based on the findings, it offers recommendations for various stakeholders.

PIWA, October 2008 (116p)  
[www.panos-ao.org](http://www.panos-ao.org)

☉ **Securing Women's Right to Land and Livelihoods - A Key to Ending Hunger and Fighting AIDS**

This briefing paper highlights the link between gender inequality and HIV and AIDS, through which women's unequal social and economic status creates situations of poverty, hunger, violence and abuse. Breaking that link requires taking action on women's rights to land and livelihoods and improving women's food security. ActionAid repeats its longstanding calls for governments to pay attention to small-scale agriculture and in particular to women's smallholder farming and the domestic work economy. The paper also stress the need to deal with HIV and AIDS from a human rights perspective and to break down institutional resistance to this approach.

ActionAid, July 2008 (31p)  
<http://www.actionaid.org> (Food Rights)

☉ **The Evolving Contexts of AIDS and the Challenges for Food Security and Rural Livelihoods**

This paper focuses on the changing context of the HIV epidemic, with the aim of generating new insights into what it means for rural societies. It argues that although there are signs that the epidemic is stabilizing or even declining in some highly affected countries, the socio-economic effects associated with HIV and AIDS will continue to be considerable for many years to come – and as such they require innovative, well coordinated and appropriately planned responses from the agriculture sector.

FAO, September 2008 (77p)  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

☉ **Women's Empowerment and Good Governance through Community Radio – Best Experiences for an Action Research Process**

AMARC has facilitated a significant amount of action research concerning the impact that women's empowerment can have on good governance through community radio in the last two years. This document includes articles on women and good governance, as well as practitioners' experiences gathered through several knowledge sharing and action research seminars held through the community radio network worldwide, in continuity with the action research project, the Social Impact of Community Radio: Removing Barriers, Increasing Effectiveness, held throughout 2006.

AMARC International, March 2008  
[www.amarc.org/wggtcr](http://www.amarc.org/wggtcr)