

Mini-fairs for the exchange of good practices in Niger and Burkina Faso

In December 2012, FAO's "Capitalization of good practices in support of agricultural production and food security" project organized two mini-fairs to exchange good practices. One was held in Niamey, Niger and the other in Founzan, Burkina Faso. These meetings enabled the men and women who attended these events to share and exchange the good practices documented during this four-year project on agricultural input management.

As the Capitalization project draws to a close, the mini-fairs in Niamey and Founzan offered valuable opportunities for exchanging and sharing good practices, while drawing lessons on how to identify, document, adapt and adopt them on a wider scale.

The good practices capitalized on by FAO and its partners took many different forms: best practice information sheets, fact sheets, concept notes, videos and radio broadcasts. Practices dealt with included inventory credit, farmer field schools, micro-doses of fertilizers, group orders and community listeners' clubs, with a particular focus on gender.

The mini-fair in Niamey

The mini-fair in Niamey was part of the process to capitalize on experiences and document good practices, undertaken together with partners since the project's launch in 2009. During training sessions on methodologies for capitalizing on experiences, partners pledged to implement capitalization activities, choosing formats suited to their target audience.

During the mini-fair, participants were able to show the products on which they had capitalized and share experiences on the methods used and the difficulties encountered. As the mini-fair was held in the capital of Niger, a

number of other organizations working in the field of food security and capitalization were invited to explain their working methods.

In common with the Knowledge Share Fairs, the mini-fair sessions were participatory and highlighted the approach. How was work conducted and why? What lessons had been drawn from successes and failures? The World Café sessions, during which participants answered questions, alternated with peer support sessions to jointly find solutions to the most pressing problems emerging from the World Café. Both men and women participants shared details of documentation, identification, dissemination and adaptation of best practices, paying special attention to gender issues.

The info-training centre in Founzan

In Founzan, the mini-fair took another form as it coincided with the inauguration of the info-training centre on inventory credit set up by the *Coopérative de prestation de services agricoles Coobsa* (Cooperative for the Provision of Agricultural Services Coobsa, COPSA-C). A day of festivities crowned the partnership between COPSA-C, the Italian NGO CISV (Comunità Impegno Servizio Volontariato), the Swiss

Development Cooperation and FAO's Capitalization project. Gathering from the Founzan area, as well as from Ouagadougou, Niger and Europe, the partners joined the women and men participants in visiting the centre and discovering the advantages of inventory credit.

COPSA-C is a farmers' organization set up in March 2009, with headquarters in Founzan, south-west Burkina Faso. It is made up of nine unions and its mission is to increase the agricultural revenues of its members so as to improve their livelihoods and food security. In 2009, COPSA-C members were already engaging in inventory credit.

The COPSA-C info-training centre aims to serve as a place for meeting, knowledge sharing and learning, so as to further best practices for inventory credit. The centre will enable producer groups of men and women farmers from within the region and beyond to carry out exchange visits in order to have a better understanding of fair inventory credit.

Following the inauguration of the centre and a visit to the cooperative and the inventory credit warehouse, a theatre play was staged at

“The Capitalization project helped us to improve our radio broadcasts. When we listened to the programmes with the Capitalization team, we realised that most of them did not take gender equality into account. For example, before this collaboration we assumed that horticulture was an activity restricted to men and we therefore only interviewed men. Now, we realise that this was a shortcoming, since the concerns of men and women are not the same.”

INOUSSA GANDA |
HEAD OF COMMUNICATION OF THE MOORIBEN
FEDERATION | NIGER

Participants answer questions during a World Café session in Niamey.





The women and men participants to the inauguration of the COPSA-C info-training centre on inventory credit.

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the mini-fair, titled “From selling off cheap to inventory credit”, together with a film called “At the heart of inventory credit”. There was also a session to explore gender issues and another on exchange visits. A presentation on the historic origins of inventory credit, titled “The path to inventory credit”, documented the practice in images.

Future perspectives

While the Capitalization project will come to an end in May 2013, the Knowledge Management and Gender programme, of which Dimitra is a component, will continue in 2013, particularly in the context of the crisis in the Sahel. Thanks to advances made by the project, the partners will continue to draw advantages from capitalized products and transform them into specific tools for their beneficiaries. The good practices will be disseminated through community radios, the Dimitra listeners’ clubs and grassroots farmers’ organizations, as well as through national organizations working in the sector of food security.

In Founzan, the info-training centre on inventory credit, which welcomed 13 exchange visits during 2012, is hoping to attract even more visitors in 2013. Using videos, theatre, a timeline and field visits, COPSA-C will enliven the visits in an entertaining manner while taking care to promote equitable inventory credit.

The outcome of the project, the programme and the partnerships will be marked by a regional Good Practices Share Fair, to be held in West Africa towards the end of 2013.

- ✳ **For further information:**
 Knowledge Management and Gender Programme:
www.fao.org/oek/km-gender
 Capitalization of good practices:
www.fao.org/knowledge/km-gender/capitalization-gp/en/

“ I was impressed by the methods and tools used for organizing the mini-fair. The documents on display helped me to learn a great deal about inventory credit and farmers’ experiences. (...) The info-training centre on inventory credit offers practical advice to men and women farmers for the organization and management of agricultural activities. Being local to the province, I am amazed by this initiative, which will definitely help my fellow farmers to fight poverty, since inventory credit enables both men and women producers to keep their crops safe after harvest, without having to sell them off cheaply to traders. (...)”

MOUSSA ISIDORE DABIRÉ |
 TRAINEE WITH THE RÉSEAU FEMMES EN ACTION
 (RFA, WOMEN IN ACTION NETWORK) | BURKINA
 FASO

The path to inventory credit

The “river of life” or the “road of life” is a narrative method for knowledge sharing which helps to visualise the past, present and future. Individuals can use this method to introduce themselves in an entertaining way; a group can use it to better understand and analyse the past of a project and imagine its future.

This method focuses on drawing rather than text, making it useful for groups that do not share a language. Based on collage and drawing, the chronological reconstruction of memories by different people within a group makes it possible to create a common vision and, in so doing, to understand how the project has developed.

Using this method in Founzan, COPSA-C and the FAO Capitalization project team were able to visualise the memory of the organization and document it through a timeline titled “The path to inventory credit”.



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