

Dear Readers,

Table of contents

- 3 | Democratic Republic of Congo – Listeners’ clubs in Orientale Province to tackle poverty
- 5 | Burundi - New Dimitra listeners’ clubs, an example of synergy
- 6 | A partnership between FAO and UN Women for Dimitra listeners’ clubs in the DRC and Burundi
- 7 | ... and Dimitra listeners’ clubs in Mauritania and Senegal
- 8 | Portraits Series: Ali Abdoulaye, ONG VIE
- 10 | Niger – From information to action. The multifunctional platform in Gasseda
- 11 | Accelerating economic empowerment for rural women - Joint IFAD, FAO, WFP and UN Women programme in Niger
- 12 | CoOpequity: Promoting governance and gender equality in producer organizations in Niger
- 14 | Mini-fairs for the exchange of good practices in Niger and Burkina Faso
- 16 | Benin – Micro-gardens against malnutrition
- 17 | Togo – Crocheting against waste
- 18 | Ethiopia – Dr. Bogaletch Gebre, Winner of the 2012-2013 King Baudouin African Development Prize
- 20 | Mali – Empowering women herbalists in Bamako and Segou
- 21 | New FAO publications
- 23 | Other resources



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A warm welcome to Dimitra newsletter 23, which outlines the project’s most recent activities and achievements, especially the development and growing impact of the Dimitra listeners’ clubs. These successes are producing growing recognition for the Dimitra approach and a strong increase in the number of partnerships. This issue also presents examples of good practices reported by organizations in our network.

The Dimitra listeners’ clubs project in Orientale Province (Democratic Republic of Congo, DRC) is taking off – already 43 clubs have been formed. Their launch has been welcomed with enthusiasm by rural populations in this very isolated region. Now, the men and women club members, together with the farmers’ organizations of the region, can start to dream of a better future, make their voices heard and take action for a more equitable and sustainable rural development.

In Burundi and in DRC’s South Kivu province, a dynamic partnership has been formed. FAO and UN Women are working together to set up a network of listeners’ clubs to contribute to the economic empowerment of rural women, men and youth. Similar initiatives are under way in Mauritania and Senegal, where FAO is launching a transborder Dimitra listeners’ clubs project.

The Dimitra listeners’ clubs approach has very concrete impacts. In Gasseda (Niger), women members of the listeners’ club have benefited from a multifunctional platform, provided by UNDP. The women say they were able to obtain this equipment as a result of advocacy and leadership skills acquired at their listeners’ clubs. These new skills helped them to organize their own advocacy, explain their needs and demonstrate their motivation.

As part of our series of portraits of leaders, we feature an interview with an outstanding man: Ali Abdoulaye, coordinator the NGO VIE Kande Ni Bayra, Dimitra’s partner in the Sahel. Ali explains the strong influence that Dimitra – and especially the listeners’ clubs – have had on his professional and private life and on the

activities of his organization. He points to significant behaviour changes in terms of women’s empowerment in several villages and believes in a better future for all.

Also in Niger, a new FAO programme called CoOpequity is supporting the development of equitable and effective agricultural producer organizations (POs) for women and men.

FAO-Dimitra is part of the FAO-Belgium partnership programme “Knowledge Management and Gender”. The “Capitalization of good practices in support of agricultural production and food security” project – another component of the programme – recently organized two mini-fairs to exchange good practices, in Niger and Burkina Faso. Another article in this newsletter highlights the impact of a Knowledge Share Fair organized in Niger in 2010. One of the participants, Martin Tohou, Executive Director of the NGO GRAAB in Benin, was inspired by the micro-garden technique. He subsequently launched similar initiatives in his own household and among beneficiaries of his NGO. With great success.

In another example of knowledge transfer, five women trainers from Benin travelled to Togo to train local women in an activity that combines income generation with recycling – crocheting plastic waste. In Mali, Aidemet is an NGO working to financially empower women herbalists and help them gain greater recognition for the role they play in society.

Finally, in May 2013, the King Baudouin African Development Prize will be awarded to Bogaletch Gebre from Ethiopia, “for her inspiring leadership and determination, building on a remarkable personal journey to strengthen the position of women in Ethiopia and develop a real community-based movement for social change”.

I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter!

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