

# A partnership between FAO and UN Women for Dimitra listeners' clubs in the DRC and Burundi

FAO and UN Women, both United Nations agencies, signed a memorandum of understanding recently. It is a joint effort to contribute to the socio-economic empowerment of men, women and young people in rural areas of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). To reach this objective, participatory information and communication are being promoted through the Dimitra listeners' clubs.



The members of the Rhushangire listeners' club in Makwale, Walungu Territory (DRC) receive their solar-powered and wind-up radios.

ties of Buterere and Kanyosha) and Bujumbura Rural (municipality of Isale). In South Kivu, they are located in Mudaka (Kabare Territory) and in Walungu, Ludaha and Kaniola (Walungu Territory).

## Networking and the search for synergies

One of the unusual and innovative features of this project is linked to the fact that the clubs support other initiatives of FAO and UN Women. In the case of South Kivu, they rely on the network of existing Dimitra listeners' clubs and on the creation by UN Women of "listening houses" for victims of rape. In Burundi, they are part of a network of clubs set up by four FAO programmes (see article on page 5). This dimension of networking and creating synergies with other initiatives is an important factor in their success. For if being a member of a Dimitra listeners' club helps a person to have a better understanding of his or her surroundings, being part of a network of clubs also helps to be more effective and less isolated. This can only enrich the discussions and exchanges organized between clubs, including the decisions that are taken there.

In both countries, activities are supported by FAO-Dimitra, which organized a first training session in Bujumbura from 5 to 8 March on the Dimitra listeners' club approach, in order to strengthen the capacities of men and women participants in social and gender-sensitive communication. Three participants from UN Women Burundi benefited from the training session, namely field staff from Isale and Mpanda municipalities and the Programme Director for UN Women in Burundi. Similar training initiatives will soon be organized in Bukavu, South Kivu, by Samwaki, Dimitra's local partner NGO, which has supported the process and the Dimitra listeners' clubs since 2006. The participation of UN Women will involve issues linked to knowledge of and claims for women's rights in the DRC.

The partnership agreement signed between the two agencies should also be strengthened by an additional contribution from UN Women Burundi, which will enable people to benefit from decentralized training programmes, take part in a forum of Dimitra listeners' clubs, or participate in exchange visits.

In the framework of this collaboration, five Dimitra listeners' clubs have already been launched in the province of South Kivu (DRC), and ten others in the provinces of Bubanza, Bujumbura Rural and Bujumbura Mairie (Burundi). But it seems likely that the number of clubs will double or even triple in the weeks to come, given the enthusiasm with which communities have welcomed the initiative.

## Multiplication of Dimitra listeners' clubs

In the case of South Kivu, where solar-powered and wind-up radios have already been distributed, more than 100 people have been present for the first meetings of each club. However, it is known that to work in a participatory manner, a Dimitra listeners' club should have no more than 25-30 members. So more clubs will have to be created in order to accommodate all participants. A similar situation appears likely in Burundi, where the clubs have generated a dynamic response. In both countries, the clubs have been quick to organize themselves and

launch collective action, without even waiting for training!

The clubs will act as a stepping stone to stimulate rural community participation and citizens' governance for development activities. They will also serve as a space for speaking up and taking action with regard to needs as identified by the clubs' members themselves. As a result, these community members will be able to gain self-confidence and make their voices heard, whether at local policy level or in decision-making bodies of farmers' organizations, so as to improve their social, economic and political opportunities.

The choice of sites for the creation of listeners' clubs has been made on the basis of criteria such as the presence of local partner organizations to UN Women, and/or Farmer Field Schools or other FAO activities. In Burundi, the Dimitra clubs are situated in the provinces of Bubanza (municipalities of Gihanga, Mpanda and Rugazi), Bujumbura Mairie (municipali-

The members of a new Dimitra listeners' club in Mutimbuzi, Bujumbura rural province (Burundi). The club chose the name Abasangirajambo, "Those who share words".



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## ... and Dimitra listeners' clubs in Mauritania and Senegal

In Mauritania, a Dimitra listeners' club workshop, held in Nouakchott from 11 to 14 November 2012, brought together 25 participants from the four regions targeted, Assaba, Trarza, Brakna and Gorgol.

The workshop followed a request to FAO-Dimitra for technical assistance from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), prior to the launch of a pilot project for Dimitra listeners' clubs in the country, with funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF). It was facilitated by FAO-Dimitra, with support from Mauritanian resource persons for aspects linked to the environment and gender, and assistance from a representative of Radio Mauritania for communication. The NGO Rural Perspectives – Development Association (PRAD, Perspectives Rurales – Association de Développement) was responsible for organizing the training.

The case of Mauritania is particular in that the pilot project relies on several partner organizations: NGO PRAD (Nouakchott), Action (Gorgol), AFRES (Assaba), AMSTOP (Trarza) and CHDCD (Brakna). The project's first phase

will allow the structure to be refined so as to achieve maximum impact.

In addition, FAO will be launching a transborder (Mauritania-Senegal) Dimitra listeners' club project in the Senegal River Valley. The listeners' clubs will allow networking and sharing of best practices between the Farmer Field Schools of the regional Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Programme.

The media in Mauritania has yet to be liberalized. Cooperation with Radio Mauritania, the national state radio, has therefore been established through its local stations. The transborder project will also allow collaboration with local Senegalese radio stations, which are closely followed on the Mauritanian side of the border.

At the moment, the clubs are being launched and new opportunities are opening up in terms of joint activities with other FAO programmes, or with other units of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) or the International Labour Office (ILO).



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