

Mauritania and Senegal | Community listeners' clubs and Farmer Field Schools, a cross-border project

Following a Dimitra listeners' clubs pilot project in Mauritania, funded by the Global Environment Facility/UNEP, FAO's regional Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) programme decided to launch 50 new Dimitra community listeners' clubs in Mauritania and Senegal.

With technical support from Dimitra, the community listeners' clubs project aims to improve access to information and communication for rural communities, especially women and young girls and boys, so as to contribute to their socio-economic empowerment and improve their food security.

This initiative explores the synergies between community listeners' clubs and Farmer Field Schools, as is the case in Burundi (see article pages 10-11).

The community listeners' clubs launch workshop

The Dimitra community listeners' clubs launch workshop was held from 24 to 28 June 2013, at the Rosso Higher Institute of Technology (Mauritania). Organized by the IPPM programme, with support from Dimitra for the facilitation, the workshop brought together 35 participants – both men and women – from Senegal and Mauritania, as well as facilitators from Farmer Field Schools, representatives from radio stations (Radio Mauritanie, Pété FM, RTS St Louis, Dunya FM) and local leaders. The participants came from areas targeted for this cross-border project in the Senegal River Valley: Gorgol, Trarza, Brakna, Guidimakha (Mauritania) and Saint Louis (Senegal).

The workshop sought to increase participants' capacities and skills in the field of social communication and gender issues in rural areas, as

a foundation for the creation and/or facilitation of Dimitra community listeners' clubs in the region.

Although conditions are different in Mauritania and Senegal, women and young girls living in rural areas of both countries face marked gender inequalities in terms of access to productive resources (access to land, education, health, credit, information, etc.). During the workshop, sessions on the subject proved surprising to some people: "I was not aware of women's situation; the daily activity clock exercise showed us that they work far harder than I thought," said one male participant.

The workshop provided an opportunity to explore several specific issues: the interaction between Farmer Field Schools and community listeners' clubs, networking and partnerships (especially with radio stations).

FFS and CLC

The Farmer Field Schools and community listeners' clubs represent two complementary approaches by FAO, based on the participation of rural communities. In practical terms, participants have reached the conclusion that setting up listeners' clubs in places where Farmer Field Schools already exist is in the interest of both approaches. The Farmer Field Schools enable the clubs to have a strong local base, with close support. And the community listeners' clubs ensure that the issues dealt with in the Farmer Field Schools reach the entire com-

munity – both women and men – through discussions and radio broadcasts.

As one IPPM facilitator observed: "Since the Farmer Field Schools have raised many expectations, we often have to turn people away. The listeners' clubs will make it possible to communicate with everyone in the community!" The clubs also strengthen the gender dimension of the Farmer Field Schools and help them to network and share information.

An active and sustainable network

Following intense discussions about networking, a series of important features have been identified to ensure that the network of community listeners' clubs is effective and sustainable:

- there must be dynamic coordination
- members must have an interest in participating
- the network must be unique, with a clear purpose
- members must know and trust each other and believe in the project
- face-to-face meetings must be held on a regular basis
- participation must be voluntary and aim at gender equality
- the working rules should be clear

Partnerships

Regarding partnerships, the radios enthusiastically highlighted the common ground between the mission of the community listeners' clubs and that of the radio stations (supporting development at local level).

The coming months will see the creation of Dimitra listeners' clubs, the organization of a series of decentralized training initiatives (gender, facilitating discussions, participation) and the setting up of partnerships with radio stations. The experience should be replicated, with new partners, in other regions of Senegal and Mauritania, as well as in other countries.

* For more information, contact:

- Ibrahim A. Hama, GIPD
+221 5151589
ibrahimabouacar.hama@fao.org
- Yannick De Mol, FAO-Dimitra,
yannick.demol@fao.org



© Ibrahim A. Hama