

Dear Readers,

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As always, it is a pleasure to welcome you to the Dimitra newsletter, especially to this latest edition. We take this opportunity to pay tribute to Phuna Mabika Dakeini our long-time colleague in the DRC, whose passing away has profoundly saddened us.

This issue highlights experiences of development approaches that are helping in the fight against poverty in rural areas. Reducing rural poverty is one of FAO’s strategic objectives for the coming years, to which the Dimitra project is making a special contribution.

Innovative methodologies have been developed which seek to place participation, gender and empowerment of rural communities and organizations at the centre of FAO activities.

It is in this spirit that, for several years now, the FAO-Dimitra project has been supporting community listeners’ clubs (CLC), which facilitate a process for strengthening rural communities, with a special focus on women’s leadership. At this stage in the project’s progress, we think it is necessary to take the time to capitalize on several years of experience with the clubs. So included with this newsletter is a fact sheet describing the key features that make the Dimitra community listeners’ clubs a unique approach.

You will also find in this issue a dossier which outlines the impact of the CLCs in the Orientale Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). A listeners’ club forum in Isangi, which brought together members of 60 listeners’ clubs in the Province, offers a starting point to examine the results obtained.

Marguerite Atilomoi, a young woman leader from Orientale Province, was chosen to feature in this issue’s Portraits Series. Marguerite is the moderator of a Dimitra community listeners’ club, and also serves on the Board of a local producer organization and is Vice-President of the Producers Union for her area.

Several articles describe the launch of new clubs in Mauritania, Niger and Senegal with FAO’s regional Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) programme, as well as in Ghana. Ghana is the first English-speaking country where CLCs have been set up, in 18 communities of West Gonja District, in the north of the country, in the framework of a FAO regional

initiative planned as part of the organization’s strategic objective to reduce rural poverty.

The CoOPEquity programme represents another approach, supporting the implementation of policies and measures that encourage the development of equitable and well-functioning producer organizations. An interview with the officers in charge of the programme sheds light on this approach, which is based on participation, good governance and gender.

The FAO “Capitalization of good practices in support of agricultural production and food security” project reviews its activities and achievements after four years of operation. It has tested and adapted methodologies for experience capitalization and the identification of good practices from a gender perspective.

Other articles describe initiatives using information and communication technologies (ICTs). In Kenya, the Sokopepe agricultural commodity trading platform is being used by small-scale producers to obtain information on market prices as well as agricultural advice. In Gujarat, India, a women’s NGO has set up an SMS-based market information system to help women farmers sell their products at a fair price. The U-Report application, developed by UNICEF in Uganda, enables young people in the country to make SMS contact, free of charge, about initiatives in their communities.

The year 2014 has been declared the “International Year of Family Farming” as a way of highlighting the important contribution made to food security and poverty reduction by family farming and smallholder farms. An article describes how, together with its partners, FAO is planning to encourage countries to adopt policies that support family farms, through programmes that offer social protection and supply rural services.

I hope you will enjoy reading the newsletter and wish you an excellent 2014!

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