

Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

FOREWORD

Dear Friends,

Over the last months, the Dimitra team has undertaken several missions to Africa and the Near East to relaunch information collection activities with the partners situated in these regions, among which we have the great pleasure of welcoming SANGONeT/Womens'Net in South Africa and ONG VIE in Niger. All of these meetings confirmed that rural populations, and particularly women, consider new information and communication technologies as a fundamental factor for change, enabling links to be created and encouraging mutual support.

Faced with the amazing progression of Internet and the rapidity of information flows, all development actors, particularly women's organisations, but also governments and international and national agencies, are aware of the opportunities offered by new technologies as well as their limitations. It is necessary to fight against the common school of thought which says that Africa is not connected, that it has been overtaken by the information age and that African women are powerless victims. Let us underline the fact that Africans, and particularly women,

are getting involved in a particularly innovative, entrepreneurial and courageous way in information technologies, in spite of their limited access to resources and infrastructures. The women have let it be known that they consider access to information to be an essential factor for development, which they must dispose of and which they must be able to use and to own.

Numerous opportunities for meeting and reflection are arising to explore ways to adapt information and communication methods and to broaden the range of their use. The Know How Conference 2002, "A safari into the cross-cultural world of women's knowledge exchange," took place from 22-27 July 2002 in Kampala, Uganda. This is just one of several similar initiatives to which the Dimitra project has participated. This meeting allowed for a closer examination of the obstacles facing rural women, both to access information and to transmit their own information to decision-makers.

Access to information is a universal right and in a press release on 19 July, a few days prior to the opening of the Know How Conference, the FAO denounced the limited access of rural women to information. The text insisted

on the fact that "information technologies are not a luxury but an essential instrument for sustainable development." If information is not shared and relayed by groups and networks, it is difficult to fight against hunger and poverty.

Nancy Hafkin and Nancy Taggart show in their study 'Gender, Information Technology and Developing Countries: an Analytic Study' that empowerment also comes through information access, mastering communication skills and the openness of women to information and communication technologies – both modern and traditional. These will be referred to throughout the bulletin by their abbreviation: ICT (Information and Communication Technologies).¹

Rural women themselves are increasingly raising their voices to say and to repeat what they experience, what they know, what they want, and they are taking action consequently. Their daily life is hard and they confront it with creativity and imagination: they join together and become film-makers, as in Kenya, or they create their own radio, as in Burkina Faso. They want to see their rights respected, because their daily survival, their economic security and their physical integrity depend

... p. 2

CONTENT

2	Dimitra new partners
4	The right to information: – Know How Conference 2002 – Wougnnet Online Conference
6	Women's voices: – Women's videos – Rural radios
8	ICTs for women's empowerment
9	News in brief: more and more
10	Ufroa and Leisa
11	Traditional know-how: – The seeds of Kokopelli
12	Access to land, a human right
14	Resources: conferences, training, books, Internet sites

Editorial by Marie Randriamamonjy

The World Food Summit: five years later' was the major event for the FAO in recent months. It was the occasion on which to reiterate everyone's commitment to fight against one of the most scandalous inequalities and injustices: world hunger. It also gave the opportunity to recall that rural women are "key players throughout food production, from farm to fork", as was underlined by the Director General of the FAO, and crucial partners in the fight against hunger and poverty.

In all, more than 400 people, Heads of State, Ministers, high-ranking civil servants, representatives of NGOs and civil society, gathered on this occasion. The Gender and Population division organised a side event on 13 June with financial support from the Swedish government on the theme of 'rural women crucial partners in the fight against hunger and poverty'. Strong words were used in this debate. "In the battle against hunger and poverty, women, especially rural women, most certainly hold up the heavier half," began Mr David A Harcharik, Deputy Director-General of the FAO, referring to the old Chinese proverb, 'women hold up half the sky.' His Excellency Mr. Paul Kagamé, honorary President of the meeting and President of

the Republic of Rwanda, continued in the same vein: "In the present day and age, we must recognise the fact that women should have the right to land, access to credit, the right to share the benefits of agricultural output, the right to inherit property and the right to education."

The two keynote speakers invited to this meeting highlighted certain fundamental points. Rosalina Tuyuc, Coordinator of the Guatemalan National Organization for Widows (CONAVIGUA), former Vice President of Guatemala's Congress, a human rights activist and a Maya, recalled that "with our hands we work our land and make it productive, but this has not been sufficient to ensure food for all. Our land does not yield much, as the best land is in the hands of those who do not work." "It is time to take stock of who really feeds the world." "It is rural women. They are more in numbers, they produce more and they do it with fewer resources," added Vandana Shiva, Director of India's Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology, physicist, and environmentalist. Margaret Winberg, Swedish Minister for Agriculture, Food and Fisheries and for Gender Equality, co-President of the meeting, declared that, "poverty reduction and establishing food security

... p. 2

p. 1 ...

upon it; also they familiarise themselves with laws to be able to claim their rights, among which their rights to land, a crucial production factor. They analyse the texts to better understand them and to change them for greater equality and justice.

This newsletter sets out to sketch the broad trends of this movement carrying great hopes for change, which is devoted to a vibrant and positive world and to a better life for all. In this edition, you will also find the usual columns on new books, conference calendar, etc. In addition, inserted within this edition of the newsletter is a 2-page questionnaire asking you to detail the way in which your organisation has access (or not) to Internet and to e-mail. Thank you for returning this questionnaire which will help us to understand the difficulties you can face in terms of Internet and e-mail access. You are one of over 4 000 organisations receiving this mail and your response will provide a wealth of information which will be passed on to decision-makers at the next meetings on information society and the analyses of which will be transmitted to you with the publication of our next newsletters. As always, we will welcome your reactions and your contributions with great interest and much pleasure. Thank you for reading this newsletter. ¶

1 ICT (Information and Communication Technologies): ICTs are understood here as the range of information and communication technologies and techniques, whether traditional (theatre, newspapers, radio, etc.) and/or modern (computers, internet, television, telephone, etc.).

p. 1 ...

and gender equality must be seen as one coherent undertaking (and) that this has, so far, not been the case." These remarks were confirmed by Mr. Narend Singh, Regional Agriculture Minister for South Africa, the other co-President.

Speaking of the message from Rome to Johannesburg sent out during this meeting, she added that, "gender equality is a prerequisite for the eradication of poverty and hunger and for promoting growth and sustainable development for all"

All these discussions guided the message, drafted during this meeting and carried by the FAO to the World Food Summit in South Africa at the end of August 2002. The message from Rome to Johannesburg bears witness to the commitment of its Members to men and women contributing together and equitably to the sustainable evolution of the planet.

Marie Randriamamonjy,
Chief, Gender and Development Service
FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization
of the United Nations

New partners in the

Information within the Dimitra project is shared and updated thanks to the partnership established with regional and sub-regional organisations. Decentralisation of information collection, processing, and onward dissemination to regional partners both facilitates access to smaller and lesser-known organisations and provides them with a chance to give their own information. During the first project phase, PRODDER in South Africa and IRED in Niger were two of Dimitra partners. Their disappearance led to cooperation with new partners proposed by the two former ones. The new partners share a lot of common interests with Dimitra, both in terms of working methods and intervention philosophy: SANGONeT/Women'sNet in South Africa and ONG VIE-Kande Ni Bayra in Niger.

In South Africa SANGONeT and Women'sNet

Facilitating the work of civil society organisations through information and bridging the digital divide.

SANGONeT

Since 1987, SANGONeT (Southern African Non-Governmental Organisation Network) is the only Southern African network dedicated to providing information communication technology (ICT) services to the local civil society organisations. SANGONeT's mission is to be a facilitator in the effective and empowering use of ICT tools by development actors. SANGONeT provides networking and information technical services to broaden access to ICTs and empower grassroots organisations. This is particularly useful in forming links, sharing information and co-operating on crucial subjects. Its training courses are structured to accommodate both those who are exploring the possibility of using the Internet and/or who want to improve their knowledge of this domain. It develops advocacy and research to promote gender-aware ICT policy as well as implementation processes, (analyses, position papers, submissions on policy papers and draft legislation).

SANGONeT has already implemented:

- Africa Pulse, Internet-based information service on social and economic development in the Southern African region that will keep development workers and local communities informed and up-to-date. It provides a unique opportunity to many development organisations currently with or without any

Internet presence to have their content and views published online;

- Thusanang, a user-friendly "one-stop" Internet entry point to provide information on Southern African development funding issues;
- Pambazuka, a weekly electronic newsletter published by SANGONeT, in conjunction with Kabissa (Washington, D.C.) and Fahuamu (Oxford);
- SBNet, still in planning, it is envisaged that this website will have several components, including a database of small business service providers, jobs database, calendar/events database, thematic discussion forums, mailing lists, newsletter, 'how to' guides, etc. and
- Women'sNet, a "one-stop-shop" of information on a range of issues relevant to individual women and organisations working for gender justice in South(ern) Africa.

Women'sNet

Women'sNet, located within SANGONeT, was set up to provide an online platform for South(ern) African women's voices and concerns. It was established in 1997 as a joint project of the Commission for Gender Equality. Its vision is to use ICTs as a strategic and powerful tool to empower women in the region and in the world.

The project was initiated at a time – only a few years after South Africa's first democratic government was elected – when the country's women's movement was growing rapidly. Many new grassroots gender projects and organisations were emerging, but often these initiatives knew little about each other. Women'sNet was set up to facilitate information sharing and collaboration between the different gender projects and organisations. In 1999 and 2000, respectively, Women'sNet was instrumental in keeping women's and gender organisations in South Africa informed on the



» Natasha Primo, at the Know How Conference 2002



Dimitra Project

different political parties' electioneering platforms and the implications of their proposed policies for South African women.

Women'sNet addresses women's access to ICTs in the broadest sense, combining an information portal with capacity building, advocacy, and policy work. The Women'sNet model rests on three pillars: information generation linked to networking and capacity building. In the context of building networks for action, this is a tried and tested developmental model for ICT work, and has underpinned all Women'sNet capacity development and content generation activities. This approach also ensures the long-term sustainability of Women'sNet as it builds a community of users through its capacity development activities, while at the same time building locally relevant content that attracts users back to the site.

The project's mission is to make ICTs technology accessible to women, particularly those who have traditionally been disadvantaged; provide responsive gender-sensitive training and support; link projects, people, tools and resources; create a platform for women's voices and issues; and facilitate the dissemination of information in formats accessible to women who are not directly linked to the Internet, using more traditional ICTs like radio.

Information to advance gender and social justice

The Women'sNet portal site offers primers and links to information on HIV/AIDS, women and human rights, preventing violence against women, gender in parliament, health, new communication technologies, women and enterprise, etc. Information ranges from practical resources (where to get help if you are subjected to domestic abuse, where to get HIV/AIDS counselling) to resources for activists (running online campaigns).

While the scope of Women'sNet's work is largely focused on South African women and women's organizations, the project works in activity involved in global and regional networks that have similar activities. Women'sNet is part of the Association of Progressive Communications (APC) and of its support programme for women's networks. ♪

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In Niger ONG VIE - Kande Ni Bayra

Fighting poverty through literacy training.

The Niger NGO VIE-Kande Ni Bayra (Volunteers for Educational Integration), was officially established in 1998 as a result of the observation that poverty is one of the major challenges facing Niger as it enters the new millennium, and illiteracy one of its symptoms. By fighting illiteracy, ONG VIE intends to fight poverty.

Education is one of the current most pressing problems in Niger. There are neither enough schools, nor enough teachers, which could not bode well for the future of the country. Forced early retirement amongst primary school teachers and the State's difficulties in recruiting more than a certain number of civil servants per year risks leading to the privatisation of teaching. ONG VIE concentrates on training volunteers to get around this situation.

Second chance schools

VIE's traditional activities lie essentially in the establishment and running of literacy centres in rural and urban areas: extension work to develop partnerships; training trainers, and literacy extension workers; specific support training; follow-up and continued training; encouragement and support to grassroots organisations. Its expertise in basic education also extends to the establishment and management of community schools; establishment and management of schools for young drop-outs i.e. 'second chance schools' as well as analysis and support to local rural development initiatives.

Integrated education

VIE proposes an integrated educational approach in partnership with communities. It uses the Text Teaching Method and relies heavily on participatory approaches, both at teaching-learning level, and during ensuing theoretical and practical activities which take into account the overall and complex dimension of the participants.

The primary mission of VIE is to improve the standard of living of rural communities, especially of women and young people, by:

- fighting against illiteracy in the country and helping to prepare the way for responsible and efficient participation in the development process;
- helping set up and/or strengthen grassroots development organisations;
- finding, developing, encouraging and using appropriate technologies in the areas of environment, food security, local crafts,

human and animal health, and cultural and historical heritage protection.

An increasingly dense literacy network

- More than 300 literacy extension workers are active today in literacy centres, and community or 'second chance schools' in over 200 villages throughout six of the eight regions of Niger;
- More than 20 mainly women's grassroots organisations have been established and trained in organisational analysis;

Anchored in many partnerships

VIE has developed successful and active partnerships with several national and international organisations. It works together with village communities, such as Tillabéry, with local and international NGOs such as OXFAM, SNV-Niger, Ecoliers du Monde / Aide et Action and AQUADEV. It also works with bi-lateral cooperatives which support educational projects, for example, French cooperation through its 'Service de Coopération et d'Action Culturelle' (SCAC) (Cooperation Service for Cultural Action), the Canadian Cooperation through the 'Fonds Canadien aux Initiatives Locales' (Canada Fund for Local Initiatives) and with international development organisations such as UNESCO and the UNDP.

It also has very close contacts with Canadian NGOs, in particular with the humanitarian NGO Bayra, La Fondation des Parlementaires Québécois / The Foundation of MPs from Québec, la Commission Scolaire des Affluents / The Academic Commission of the Affluents, and the NGO Alternatives.

In addition it is a member of the Réseau des Organisations du Secteur de l'Éducation au Niger (ROSEN), (Network of Educational Sector Organisations of Niger) of which it holds the presidency. It is also a member of the African Network for the Campaign of Education For All (ANCEFA). ♪

For further information, contact:

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The Kampala Know How Conference 2002: A safari into the cross-cultural world of women's

The 5th conference of specialists in the collection and dissemination of information relevant to women took place from 22-27 July in Kampala, Uganda. Entitled the **Kampala Know How Conference 2002**, it was organised by Isis-WICCE (Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange),¹ assisted by the International Information Center and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV)² and Isis International-Manila³. The Kampala Know How Conference 2002 gathered together over 200 information specialists coming from 46 different countries.

This international conference on women's information brought together information and media specialists from across the world, linking information specialists with those who need information. The main objective of the conference was to improve the visibility of information on women at the global and local level. One of the main challenges is how to get the voices of rural women into the online debate. "Information for what and for whom? Why are we collecting this information and what difference does it make to the lives of women?". One of the conference's goals is to make sure that access to information becomes a reality to many women who are illiterate and who are facing obstacles such as language, time, cost, and lack of facilities among other things. Another objective was to establish and strengthen links between women's information specialists in Africa and the rest of the world.

The Know How Conference 2002 issued a declaration that will be carried to the COAIM⁴ Conference organised by FAO from 23-26 September 2002 and to the UN World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 (see box page 13). The message is that information is a universal right and an essential means to fight poverty.

Technology for the people and not vice-versa

The 2002 Know How conference is not only about determining policies that will provide an enabling environment for access to technology, but also affordable technology that is user friendly. As Dr Msimbi Kanyoto, General Secretary of the World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA)⁵ put it: "Africa needs technology to be like pots that women can carry on their heads, and technology that can endure dust and is insect friendly, such that we can carry it on bicycles or like jembes⁶ that we use everyday to go to the shambas⁷".



photo: S. Treinen

» Wall-hanging representing communication methods: Know How Conference 2002

Traditional and new technologies must interface

One of the strongest messages sent from the Conference was that new technologies can become relevant for African women if they are combined with traditional communication methods.

"There is a recognition that ICTs are here to stay and that both the rural women and workers in the field of information believe in its powers of emancipation", says Ruth Ochieng, ISIS-WICCE Director. She also added that "this challenges the Know How to seal the gaps between making these tools accessible, in packages that suit the needs of all women in an environment that is conducive to meaningful sharing." Radio is always perceived as one of the means with which to bridge the digital divide and CD-ROMs have been made available to rural women in local languages. It is always indispensable to continue recording women's information needs.

A content easily accessible and in local languages

Dorothy Okello, Director of Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), argues that

the problem is not so much bridging the digital divide as about making the content relevant using the appropriate technologies. WOUGNET organised an online conference on information access for rural women in June 2002, which was a great success (see article page 5). Dorothy Okello presented the results of this conference during the Know How Conference 2002. The online forum recommended ensuring rural women's access to relevant information on issues that directly affect them. It strongly suggested that women should be involved in the definition of goals, content and delivery mechanisms of these information programmes, as well having a say in whether or not ICTs are appropriate and feasible for rural areas. The online conference and its participation levels themselves make a case for ICTs as tools of empowerment but they must go hand in hand with the right approach, one that is appropriate, accessible, participatory and sensitive to gender issues.

ActionApps: (Almost) free software⁸

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) presented an affordable and adaptable software for non-profit organisations working in information in the developing world.

ActionApps is fast, easy, flexible and it allows NGOs to build sites together and share content. ActionApps allows anyone to publish online: no more web specialists needed. The software contains pooling technology, which enables NGOs to exchange articles with partner sites and therefore helps them to access new content and audiences.

FAO denounces limited access of rural women to information

In its press release of 19 July 2002⁹, at a side event of the Know How Conference 2002, the FAO underlined that the new information technologies "hold out a unique opportunity for women in the developing countries to speak out, and to be more visible and less isolated."

knowledge exchange

The FAO, with Sophie Treinen, Information Officer in the Gender and Development Service and Clare O'Farrell, Extension, Education and Communication Service, gave a presentation on "Gender and ICTs: How the FAO Fights Hunger and Poverty with Information". Eliane Najros, Dimitra Coordinator, explained the functioning of the network with a presentation entitled "Dimitra: how rural women and their organisations make their voices heard". This aimed to show how a network for exchange and dissemination can highlight the role of rural women and give them the means to express themselves, while reinforcing their organisations.

The Know How 2002 Conference provided the right environment for the women and men

present to share and learn from one another. The major challenge is for each person to go back home, to disseminate everything they have learned and to stay in close contact with each other. ¶

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e-mail: isis@starcom.co.ug - <http://www.isis.or.ug>
- 2 Web-site: <http://www.iiav.nl>
- 3 <http://www.isiswomen.org/>
- 4 http://www.fao.org/coaim/coaim2002_en.htm
- 5 <http://www.worldywca.org>
- 6 A jembe is an African drum
- 7 A shamba is a plot of land
- 8 <http://www.apc.org/actionapps>
- 9 <http://www.fao.org/english/newsroom/news/2002/7600-en.html>



» Know How 2002 Conference – podium.



© Kinou van Odenneel

Wougnet: Online conference on rural women's access to information

women. More must be done to make rural women's voices heard, and the experience of the Dimitra project, particularly in Senegal, is a step in the right direction. Dimitra's partner in Senegal, Enda-Pronat, acted as a relay for the country's rural women so that they could make their voices heard as principal parties concerned by the topic under discussion. Enda-Pronat organised three weekly meetings with the Réseau National des Femmes

Rurales du Sénégal (National Network of Rural Women in Senegal) during which all the points raised by the online conference were discussed. Once the discussions were over, Enda-Pronat echoed the thoughts of the rural women back towards the online forum. The rural women hence made their voices heard on the Internet.

Beyond the examples, the critics, the suggestions, the analyses, the guidelines and the recommendations which were developed and which are available on the WOUGNET website, it is clear, as wrote Fatma Alloo, founder of the Tanzanian Association for Women and the Media, that "we must recognise that information technology will endure... we must decide if we want... to play the game and use it to our advantage or lose out completely.* ¶

WOUGNET

WOUGNET (Women of Uganda Network) is a non-governmental organisation, established in May 2000 by several Ugandan women's organisations with the aim of increasing women's use of information and communication technologies to share information and to come up with common solutions to crucial problems which concern them all.

While WOUGNET mainly concentrates on modern ICTs it is also interested in ways in which these technologies can be linked to traditional information sharing and exchange technologies, such as radio, television, video, and the press. Its aim is to improve the living conditions of women by empowering them and giving them more opportunities for exchange and cooperation.

For more information, contact:

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* Women in the digital age – Using Communication Technology for Empowerment: a practical handbook. Society for International Development and UNESCO, 1998.

To consult the results of the on-line conference, visit the website:

<http://www.wougnet.org/Events/IARW/resources.html> (in English)
http://www.wougnet.org/Events/IARW/resources_fr.html (in French)

Between 3-21 June 2002 Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET), with the participation of Enda-Synfev (Senegal), organised an online conference on Information Access for Rural Women. The virtual conference was held in three languages: English, Spanish, and French. Over three weeks, 264 participants (out of which 210 women) exchanged, discussed, and reflected on the subject, making contacts and links stretching out beyond Africa to the rest of the world. The conference participants came from 53 countries and 5 continents. The results of this discussion were presented to the Know How Conference in Kampala, and aroused keen interest. The first week dealt with information needs and the role of ICTs for women in the broad sense. The second week looked at the challenges to be met in order to make ICTs available and the third week was devoted to lessons and recommendations arising from the discussions. One of the major lessons learnt was that the key to success lies in community participation to ensure suitability for the people concerned. ICTs should be a place to promote dialogue rather than a one-way communication channel towards rural

Putting a stop to poverty and accessing the political arena: creativity and innovation:

“Telling our story”

a video by Kenyan women awarded the 2001 APC¹ Betinho prize

Redeemed Village and Mathare 3B are two huge shantytowns surrounding Nairobi. Shelters in mud, in cardboard and in rusted iron sheets are crammed along the narrow lanes, which serve as open drains. Water and electricity are scarce. The risk of eviction is ever-present and the land is inaccessible. Violent crime, drugs and alcohol, AIDS and unemployment are all part of daily life for the inhabitants. The women in these areas, going against all their habits, decided to denounce this fate not as an inescapable fact of life but as a consequence of poverty.

Around twenty of them, of all ages, overcoming their fear and going beyond the impossible, did something they could never have previously imagined: produced a video film. They were supported by the **Women's Voices** project², of the **Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG)**³. The shock of their images, the weight of their words and the force of their voices were such that the APC Betinho prize was awarded to them in 2001.

We didn't know how to do it, but we did it

And yet, nothing was sure. These women were completely unfamiliar with information and communication technologies; the only one which seemed approachable to them was video. With enthusiasm and creativity, and the will to show what they had really experienced and their daily battle against poverty, they gathered together funding, borrowed old Betamax cameras, bought the additional equipment, and learnt how to write a script, shoot scenes

and put a film together. Very quickly, making rough-cuts about their neighbours, recording their families' opinions, shooting the stories and anecdotes of the people around them, no longer held any secrets for them. Direct contacts with representatives from the political world and from public services became matters of habit for them. Technological barriers were swept aside in an unexpected and novel way. The result was there to be seen, conqueror of reticence and doubt, proof that power can be acquired and that voices joined together can bring success and a stake in power.

Now we've made it

Today, the women from the Nairobi shantytowns, ignored and isolated for so long, are increasingly recognised and listened to in the political and civic debate, having acquired respect and the right to speak out. They have secured a contract with a local television station to provide regular news items on their living areas. They have been invited to present their film to gatherings where government, associations, and donors were present, provoking debate and arousing reflection. Transferred to CD-ROM, the video has been shown on television channels around the world. It is presently available on the website of ITDG. But above all, and this can in no way be outdone, they have acquired a strength and a confidence to deal with problems, they are respected by their families, those close to them and politicians, and they are happy with the pride shown by their communities.

Women's Voices represents exactly the type of

grassroots communication initiative that Betinho would have supported,” said Carlos Afonso, a Brazilian mentor of civil society social movements, and long-time friend of Betinho. “Betinho was a master at bringing NGOs' work to the mainstream media and believed it was a strategic and even ‘natural’ alliance”.

The making of this video and the enthusiasm which it aroused have opened the way for even more women on the edge of society to have access to information and communication technologies, and moreover to use them to make themselves heard, braving difficulties and contradicting prejudices. ¶

¹ See: www.apc.org/english/betinho/2001/bet_finalists.shtml

² Women's Voices is a project which supports the existing communication skills of poor urban women. It carries out its work in Kenya, Peru and Zimbabwe. The women in each country received brief training in video use before taking control in using it to reach, inform and influence those who have the power to affect their lives. Women's Voices is part of the Gender programme of the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG).

³ ITDG was created in 1966 by the economist E. Schumacher, author of “Small is beautiful”, a 1973 publication which put in question the overexpansion and scope of the economic structures and mechanisms in favour of technology and working units with a human face and of approachable dimensions. ITDG aims to demonstrate and advocate the sustainable use of technology to reduce poverty in developing countries. It works together with communities to develop appropriate technologies for their economic and production activities, bearing in mind that it is essential to concentrate on technologies which meet the needs and skills of the beneficiaries while valuing their existing knowledge and techniques.

For more information on the activities, programmes and publications, contact:

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What you're doing is interesting: make it known!

Association for Progressive Communications (APC) Prize

As you may recall, an article in the last newsletter (no. 6) was devoted to the Hafkin Prize and Kazanka Comfort of the Bayanloco Centre for Community Education in Nigeria to whom the prize was awarded in 2001. Today she says, “I never dreamt that what we were doing at Bayanloco would get heard even in Nigeria's capital city, and now we are getting solidarity greetings from all over the world. Your thoughtful consideration and recognition have strengthened my knees, and especially coming from fellow women.” The Hafkin Prize aims to affirm and inspire African initiatives as well as being a means to document African creativity in the area of ICTs for development and social and economic justice.

In 2000 APC created the Betinho prize in memory of the inspirational life and work of the visionary Brazilian social activist Herbert de Souza (called Betinho). Betinho devoted his life to fighting against inequality, questioning the very basis of poverty. In 1981, Betinho founded the Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE) which made much use of new information technologies. By his action, Betinho opened the way for a more democratic information society. The prize, rewarded with an amount of US\$7 500, is open to organisations, coalitions, groups, movements which have succeeded in using ICTs as an essential element of their action for development and social justice.

To get information on the dates of these prizes and submission of projects, contact:

APC Africa
PO Box 31, Johannesburg 2000, South Africa
Website: <http://www.apc.org/english/hafkin/index.shtml>

The Ma'Afrika Prize

Ma'Afrika is a contest which takes place each year in South Africa. It is open to any African woman living in Africa aged 25 and over who is devoted to the improvement and development of her community. In 2002, this competition will take place for the eighth time. It is supported by the Organisation for African Unity and is one of the projects of the African renaissance of President Thabo Mbeki. Ma'Afrika rewards projects which help to develop, teach and to uplift the communities by actions related to food security, health, energy and tourism.

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Forget about being shy: what you are doing is exceptional! Find out and dare to send in your application: you are all eligible!

Speak up and let your voice be heard:

Radio Munyu, voice of the women, gathers together more than 10 000 members¹

When radio promotes citizen's participation and defends their interests; when it appeals to the tastes of the majority, when it helps to solve the thousand and one problems of daily life, when during broadcasts, ideas are debated and all opinions are respected; when women transmit information and are not just decorative voices or a publicity attraction; when everyone's words are listened to without discrimination or censure: this radio is a community radio².

A community radio

Radio Munyu was inaugurated in Burkina Faso on 16 March 2002, la voix des femmes (women's voices), community radio station of the Komoé region, situated to the extreme south west of the country. From Banfora, it broadcast its programmes, in several local languages, over three rural provinces, inhabited by around 500.000 people, a large percentage of whom are illiterate.

"Munyu is our radio. It's the first time that radio allows women to talk about themselves." Bintou, a young mother, is listening to a programme on the agricultural activities of women. Like thousand of the listeners, Bintou hear an echo of her precarious way of life through the broadcasts of Munyu (which means "patience" in dioula).

Women's voices

Established in June 2000 by women gathered together in an organisation of the same name, this groundbreaking female radio station received financial assistance from the British NGO Oxfam to help it get started, through the association RECIF/ONG³. "Femmes et développement" ("Women and development"), "Magazine de la femme" ("The woman's magazine"), "Magazine du monde rural" ("The rural world magazine"), "One woman, one job", so many programmes dedicated to promoting women. "Our broadcasts deal with problems of violence against women, forced marriage, lévirat, excision of women in rural areas..." explains Adama Sourabié, Programme Director and one of four men out of 16 employees. "It is

a women's radio, but it meets the needs of all the communities", he emphasises. In fact the protection of the environment, education and health are also among the topics covered.

The station broadcasts in three time slots, coinciding more or less with the women's domestic activities (5:55 to 08:00, 11:55 to 14:30, 15:55 to 22:00), and 102 village correspondents act as a bridge between local people and the station. "In the villages the men and women often organise themselves into listening groups and settle down to wait for the broadcast of their programmes or the news", continues Mr. Sourabié.

The popularity of Munyu is still restricted by the financial inability of many women to buy themselves a radio, at a price of between 2.000 to 10.000 CFA francs (3-15 Euros). Six months after the launch of Munyu we realised that many women did not have access to a radio,"⁴ said Aïssatou Kassa, the station's director. In 2001, the management of Munyu launched an 'operation radio' which allowed for 1.000 radios to be sold at a low-cost price in the communities. According to Ms. Kassa, the operation brought an increase in the listen-

ing rate. An associative and community radio (see box below), 'Munyu' obtains the majority of its financing from listener's subscriptions and from the commercial activities of the association (management of restaurants, from accommodation centres, provision of services). We are working for a community that recognises our worth", explains Ms. Kassa proudly. 

¹ Banfora, AFP, 9 April 2002

² Manual urgente para Radiolistas Apasionados, José Ignacio Lopez Vigil, 1997 (see AMARC)

³ RECIF/ONG: Réseau de Communication, d'Information et de Formation des Femmes au Burkina Faso (Communication, Information and Training network of the women of Burkina Faso), an NGO active in training and informing women to strengthen their participation in the decision-making process. This organisation produces written and audiovisual materials as well as radio and television programmes which deal with topics related to women. Address: RECIF/ONG, 01 B.P. 6473 Ougadougou 01, Burkina Faso. Tel: +226 312 225 or +226 30 64 77; Fax: +226 313 019, e-mail: recif@fasonet.bf

⁴ According to the United Nations Programme for Development, UNDP, 45.5% of the Burkinabé population and 55% of women live below the poverty line, estimated at 72.690 FCFA (110.82 euros). More than 90% of the poor live in rural areas, where the agricultural sector employs 83.8% of women.

Community Radio

"The philosophical history of community radio is to allow the voiceless to express themselves, to act as the voice of the oppressed (whether it is racial, sexual or social class oppression) and in general to offer a tool for development."

"Community radio activity is defined by three criteria: it must be non-profit making, controlled by the community which is also the owner and characterised by the participation of the community".

"It should be very clear that the objective of community radio is not to do something for the community but rather to give it the chance to do something for itself, for example to own and control its own means of communication."

Extracts from 'Qu'est-ce que la radio communautaire? Un guide Pratique' (What is community radio? A practical guide). AMARC Afrique and Panos South Africa 1998.

AMARC is an international non-governmental organisation at the service of community radio, composed of around 3.000 members from 110 countries. It plays host to an exchange and solidarity network between community radio broadcasters and aims to co-ordinate and to facilitate cooperation between them. All the continents are represented on its International Board.

The International Women's Network is part of AMARC. It advocates amongst other things, the right of women to communication as a human right, and aims to improve the situation of women, empower them and strengthen gender equity supported by training and exchange programmes at local and international level.

To take part and for more detailed information on RIF as well as AMARC, contact:

For more detailed information contact:

Madame Aïssatou Kassa, Director

Community Radio Munyu, Banfora,
Burkina Faso
or the association RECIF/ONG

**AMARC (Association Mondiale des Artisans de Radios Communautaires)
(World Association of Community Radio Artisans)**

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Website: www.amarc.org

Information and Communication Technologies for Women's empowerment

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers"

(Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)^{*}

Nancy Hafkin and Nancy Haggart in their study, *Gender, Information Technology, and Developing Countries: An Analytic Study*², examine how information technologies can accelerate development and lead to gender equality after having studied the obstacles holding women back from entering the information age. These extracts from this study show that information and communication technologies have the potential to transform social, economic and political life in the world, if the digital divide between the information "haves" and "have nots" is reduced.

ICTs, powerful tools to improve governance and reinforce democracy

... Most women within developing countries are in the deepest part of the divide – further removed from the information age than the men whose poverty they share. Information technologies are not devoid of risks, but the greatest risk for women is not to be involved in information society.

... IT is a forceful tool to improve governance and strengthen democracy. It is particularly powerful for giving a voice to women who so frequently in developing countries have been isolated, invisible, and without a voice.

... Information technology can contribute to the political empowerment of women as tools for networking women to perform social and political advocacy, to strengthen women's participation in the political process, to improve the performance of elected women officials, to improve women's access to government and its services, to educate, and to disseminate indigenous knowledge.

Taking Advantage of ICT Opportunities

... The time is particularly appropriate to ensure the inclusion of gender concerns in national IT policy, as most developing countries are either in the process of, or about to, start elaborating these policies. However, in order to ensure women's ability to take advantage of opportunities presented by information technologies, policy makers need to be sensitised to the influence and impact

that these have on women. Moreover, information technology and gender policy makers need to enter a dialogue so that programmes meet the needs of women, enabling them to take part in the policy debate brought about by these technologies. A training element on using these technologies must absolutely be included in these programmes.

Improving the infrastructure

... Increasing women's access to information and communication technologies in developing countries involves increasing availability of communication in areas where women live. Extension of infrastructure, particularly wireless and satellite communications, to rural areas and peri-urban areas is crucial. To increase women's access to information technology, emphasis needs to be placed on common use facilities, such as telecenters, phone shops, and other forms of public access in places convenient and accessible to women.

Education, a key factor

... The single most important factor in improving the ability of girls and women in developing countries to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by information technology is education, at all levels from literacy through scientific and technologi-

cal education. Such improvement requires interventions at all levels of education. First, the concentrated efforts of the past ten years to ensure girls' and women's access to quality basic education should be continued and strengthened. Information and communication technologies must be integrated into girls' education and women's literacy programs. Exposure to new technologies from the earlier age and at every stage in life is indispensable.

Acquiring skills

... Besides access to basic education, girls and women must be equipped with skills to prepare them for a wide array of roles in information technology ranging from users and managers to creators and designers. Efforts should also focus on increasing the number of girls and women studying IT-related subjects and related areas in formal schooling and providing IT training outside of school.

ICT Access for Poor Women

... To date most of the women accessing information technology have been from the educated elite. However, poor women in development countries can overcome the constraints that presently prevent their access and can use these technologies to meet their

The Commission on the Status of Women pushes ICTs* forward

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), established in 1946 by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations has put two points on the agenda of its 47th session which will be held in March 2003. One of the subjects is that of women's access to and participation in media and information and communication technologies, the impact of these and their use as a tool for the promotion and empowerment of women. The report prepared for Beijing + 5 in 2000 by WomenWatch and WomenAction, will be considered. It encompasses many aspects, notably that women are, as they always have been, excluded from the realms of power and decision-making in

relation to ICTs, that those without the necessary skills to use ICTs will be increasingly marginalised and that ICTs can help women to communicate and to work.

These arguments underline the political stakes of ICTs, mainly: the lack of women's access to ICTs, the necessity for training and place for expression for women in the sector and the right to communication as a fundamental human right.

The considerations of the Commission on the Status of Women will contribute to the World Summit on the Information Society (see box page 13) which will take place in Geneva (Switzerland) in 2003 and in Tunis (Tunisia) in 2005.

* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/index.html>

In Kenya, more women on the web

A new site has just opened on the web: the Horn of Africa Region Women's Knowledge Network (Hawknet). Women from Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Sudan and Somalia will be able to benefit from Internet resources: discover, exchange, take part in debates, express themselves on national policies, give their point of view, etc. For Noeleen Heyzer, Director of UNIFEM, Hawknet is an example of an equality-friendly environment, for making links between countries, groups, men and women. The site was launched by UNIFEM with the support of the World Bank. It is housed at the African Centre for Women, Information and Communications Technology (ACWICT), the director of which confirms that the site contributes to the economic, social and political promotion of women. ¶

For more information visit the website: <http://www.acwict.or.ke>

In Uganda, more women using ICTs

Nakaseke Women Development Association (NAWODA) in Uganda aims to empower women by training and integrating ICT skills into their daily income-generating activities. The members of NAWODA have a telecentre, with library, IT and audio-visual equipment, telephone, and fax, which allows them to search for jobs, to undertake economic activities, learn about the markets, etc.. Nakaseke women, the majority of whom are poor and illiterate or semilliterate, were the pioneer testers of a new information tool that offers direct access to poor women with little or no reading ability. This tool is the CD-ROM *Rural Women in Africa: Ideas for Earning Money*, developed by the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC), working in partnership with the International Development Research/Eastern and Southern Africa Office (IDRC/Nairobi). Anastasia, a 73-year old farmer, was the first to try the CD and it is she who promotes it. She explains that besides the information it provides on various ways to increase your income, it allows women to discuss their problems together and to support each other to find solutions. NAWODA is searching for partners and donor organisations that can donate computers to NAWODA, invest in new projects and boost fundraising for sustainability. ¶



» Nakaseke telecentre

For more information, contact:

Henry Serunkuma, Coordinator, P.O. Box 1051, Nakaseke, Uganda,

Tel: +256-71-843308, e-mail: hmelanin@yahoo.com

Website: <http://www.wougnet.org/Profiles/nawoda.html>

In Jordan, more women in information careers

In order to bridge the gender gap in the nation's information technology (IT) sector, UNIFEM in partnership with several participants, including Cisco Systems, organised a two-month training on ICTs: 217 women took part. The training was specially designed to help female students build on their technological knowledge in order to improve their competitiveness in the job market. A job-placement program, established in cooperation with the private sector, will now help students put their newly acquired skills to use. The project also includes a tracking system to follow graduates' careers in an effort to evaluate the benefits of the training courses. ¶

For more information contact Deema Bibi, Director of the National Information Technologies Programme e-mail: unifem@nets.com.jo

In Kenya, more villages listening to the world

Arid Land Information Network (ALIN), helps rural development agents to install equipment able to download information from a digital broadcasting satellite. This new communication technology, put in place by WorldSpace Satellite Network, enables access to information in even the most isolated places, including those without telephone or electricity, thanks to a special radio connected to an adapter card in a computer. The data can be downloaded, broadcast, stored, printed. The ALIN channel concentrates on information related to health, environment, agriculture, small-businesses, and conflict resolution. ¶

For more information, please contact:

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Website: <http://www.alin.or.ke>



basic needs and exercise their fundamental rights. In fact technological and social solutions exist to the constraints that presently keep poor women from using information technology. Most of these solutions have been tested in pilot projects, which have not yet been widely disseminated. We can quote the example of Burkina Faso where spreading information to rural women on agricultural production and commercialisation was made possible thanks to info-shops; or that of India, where independent professional women's organisations open information technology centres to train women entrepreneurs in information management.

... The opportunities offered by information and communication technologies have to be seized deliberately because the cost of not doing so is very high. To approach this issue only from the perspective of avoiding women's marginalisation would be a mistake. Women must also play a role as actors for change using information technologies to push forwards their economic and social, empowerment as well as that of society. Moreover, the United Nations ranks access to information technologies as the third most crucial issue concerning women on a worldwide scale, after poverty and violence against women. (see box opposite) ¶

¹ <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>

² *Gender, Information Technology, and Developing Countries: An Analytic Study* By Nancy Hafkin and Nancy Taggart, June 2001, Academy for Educational Development (AED), Office of Women in Development, Bureau for Global Programs, Field Support and Research, US Agency for International Development (USAID). To obtain more detailed information or printed copies of the complete study or of the executive summary, please contact the USAID office, Office of Women in Development (WID), 1330 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20523, USA. An electronic version is also available on the WID website of USAID: <http://www.usaid.gov/wid/pubs.htm>.

Both the executive summary and the complete study can be obtained from AED/LearnLink, 1875 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20009, USA, or downloaded from the site <http://www.aed.org/learnlink> e-mail: learnlink@aed.org

Let's break the silence so we won't be forgotten: solidarity and exchange

by Rosalie Ouaba, Director General of CESAO

In March 2000 a new association was born, adding to the rural women's movement: **l'Union des Femmes Rurales Ouest-Africaines et du Tchad (UFROAT)**, (Union of Rural Women from West Africa and Chad). With this union women are getting together to come out of their precarious situation and challenge it so as to be able to take advantage of their socio-political and economic rights. It would only be a slight exaggeration to say that UFROAT can be described as the manifestation of refusal: that of the oblivion and silence of women.

The trigger

In 1996, during the first international meeting of the rural women of West Africa, organised by the **Centre d'Études Économiques et Sociales de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (CESAO)**, (West African Centre for Economic and Social Studies) something was triggered off amongst the women gathered there: a trigger to break through their isolation, to join together in a force of solidarity and integration, to organise and to regroup; a trigger to deal with problems, to dare to speak out and to take their place in decision making. The women gave shape to UFROAT: a structure to fight for their interests when faced with the increasing economic demands imposed by globalisation on their daily agricultural activities. By the end of the meeting the women had arranged to link up, initially in their respective countries and afterwards, all together within CESEAO¹. Decentralised meetings took place, one after another: from Kaolack to Senegal to Lokossa and Parakou to Benin, passing by Matourkou and Kaya to Burkina Faso, Segou to Mali, Maradi to Niger and Kara to Togo. These brought opportunities for exchange and

experience sharing in various domains: production, conversion, commerce and technological innovations. Four years later, in 2000, the women met again for a new international meeting called "Rural women speak out". They came in even greater numbers, from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Chad and Togo.

The decision

This meeting was an important landmark, when the findings on the isolation and the dispersion of female structures in the countries of the sub-region were underlined. The need for a concertation platform at sub-regional level was confirmed and made clear more than ever.

In fact, pushing back the limits of hunger, misery and the violation of women's rights was always as important, and the need to meet the numerous and acute challenges more urgent than ever: literacy, mastering the workings of the market, information management, regional integration, globalisation of exchanges. Faced with these challenges, the overwhelming feeling was one of abandonment and/or solitude. The women reiterated the need to work together to defend their rights, to exchange amongst themselves and with organisations at every level, to be informed and to trained on issues affecting them directly. UFROAT was born.

The first steps of UFROAT

UFROAT, a regional structure, to which 10 countries are associated, is attached to the

"Together we are stronger",
such is the motto of UFROAT

grassroots by its members at the national level. Since March 2000, six countries have created their relay-structures: Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Togo and Chad. It is open to all rural women's organisations and all mixed rural organisations working towards the promotion of women or also to individuals who, by their involvement, have shown a commitment to the promotion of women and rural women in particular.

While preparing to participate in the **Network of Rural and Agricultural Producer's Organisations of West Africa**, UFROAT concentrates on strengthening its foundations. In fact if little by little it becomes stronger and is emulated it aims to go beyond its good intentions and turn the hopes of its members into realities. ¶

¹ CESAO is a training organisation focused on support and accompaniment in advice, research-action, training, communication. Since its creation, it has been working for participative development, defining its actions with partners so as to make the most appropriate links between different types of support. Self-promotion is its favoured line of cooperation with rural organisations to strengthen civil society and improve the standard of living of the populations, especially women and young people. It works in West Africa, in particular the countries of the Sudan-Sahel sub-region.: Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Chad, Niger, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin. It publishes printed and audiovisual documents in French and in local languages. Contact: CESAO, BP 305, Bobo Dioulasso 01, Burkina Faso. Tel: +226 97 10 17; Fax: + 226 97 08 02, e-mail: cesao.bobo@fasonet.bf

For further information on UFROAT

contact:

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LEISA – a sustainable approach to promoting local interests

LEISA is the Centre for Information on 'Low External Input Sustainable Agriculture' – (LEISA) in the tropics and is based in Leusden in the Netherlands. Through its activities LEISA strives for the empowerment of both male and female farmers and communities, who are trying to build their future on their own knowledge, skills, values, culture and institutions. The focus of the LEISA concept is on finding technical and social options open to farmers who seek to improve productivity and income in an ecologically sound way. LEISA magazine is published four times per year and documents the diverse experiences of small farmers, with special reference to those in mar-

ginal areas – highlighting the importance of their knowledge for ecological sustainability and food security.

Time for review

In its July 2001 edition, the magazine included excerpts from a survey carried out by John Madely covering 39 developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America and looking at the impact of trade liberalisation on small farmers. The studies on Kenya, Ghana, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Jamaica and the Philippines all show how trade liberalisation is impacting heavily on women and accentuating gender inequality. Women, who produce 60-70% of food in most African countries, have been affected disproportionately by the elimination of subsidies, the drying up of credit and the surge of food imports as a result of trade liberali-

sation. The survey suggests a fundamental review of dominating trade policy in favour of protecting the livelihoods of small holders in developing countries and providing food security. Other recent issues of the magazine have dealt with themes such as agro-biodiversity, desertification, farmer innovation, and agroforestry. An issue planned for publication later this year will focus on the theme 'feminisation of agriculture'.

LEISA also maintains a specialised information database and an interactive website at <http://www.ileia.org> which provides access to other information sources on the development of sustainable agriculture. Local organisations and individuals in the South can receive the magazine free of charge on request. To subscribe: write to LEISA or send an e-mail to subscription@ileia.nl ¶

e-mail: ileia@ileia.nl
Website: <http://www.ileia.org>

Traditional know-how

The seeds of Kokopelli

Kokopelli, the hunchbacked flute player has been a well-known fertility symbol in America for thousands of years. The hump in his back is not a real hump but a sack of grain which he is scattering in the wind. He plays the flute, thus breathing life into each grain. The Kokopelli Association has been fighting for more than 10 years for the preservation of genetic resources in the food sector. It wants to revive and disseminate the many traditional seeds and promote food varieties which grow in harmony with their environment. It links itself to the agro-ecology concept and its seeds are produced in ways that completely respect the environment. It is a real living seed bank which offers gardeners a unique collection in Europe: 2 000 varieties of kitchen vegetables, cereals, herbs, among which, 550 varieties of tomatoes, 440 spices, 150 marrow, 130 salads.

Promoting the value of traditional seeds

In South Asia, Kokopelli has been the driving force behind the creation of a production, conservation and exchange network of traditional varieties of vegetables, cereals and all plants likely to promote sustainable agricultural production. This network, based in India in Tamil Nadu, bears the name of Annadana*, which means 'gift of food' in sanskrit in homage to the ancient traditions of Asia and to one of the essential spiritual principles of the Upanishads: "Multiply the food by 1000". So as to endow the Annadana network with solid foundations, a seed collection was undertaken. In a few months, 40 000 sachets of seeds were sent free of charge to Indian and Sri Lankan NGOs

working for sustainable development, as well as to villages of Tibetan refugees.

The Association is also present in Africa to establish, in partnership with civil society organisations, farmer networks for the production and exchange of seeds. It envisages launching a programme "Women sowers" in particular in Niger, Burkina Faso and in Senegal.

The Kokopelli Association has published *Les semences de Kokopelli: manuel de production de semences dans le jardin familial – Répertoire de variétés de semences*, (The Kokopelli seeds: seed production manual for the family garden – Directory of seed varieties'), written by Dominique Guillet. It is a magnificent 420-page publication in a large format (with 72 superb pages in colour). Above all, it is a seed production manual for the family garden which presents the Kokopelli collection of varieties. The book, written in French, and soon to be translated into English, gives precise information on independent vegetable production procedures and conservation of traditional seeds in the family garden. ♪

* e-mail address: annadana@auroville.org.in

To order the book or for more information on Kokopelli activities, please contact:

Association Kokopelli

131 Impasse des Palmiers, 30 100 Alès, France
Tel: +33 (0) 4 66 30 64 91;
Fax: +33 (0) 4 66 30 61 21
e-mail: kokopelli.assoc@wanadoo.fr
Price of the book: 32 euros

Better than modern techniques: organic farming methods

Georgina Koomson, a young farmer from Ghana, launched the project **Ideal Providence Farm** in 1998, with her own funding and support from GTZ. The project covers the central, northern and western regions of Ghana and provides training on the preparation of pesticides and natural fertilisers composed of locally available materials. It is aimed at female farmers who do not have the means to buy pesticides to protect their arable land in their fields and gardens. The training is completed by learning organic farming methods in order to increase the fertility of the soil and agricultural productivity. Since its creation, the project has trained 420 farmers who are convinced of the benefits of integrated pest management since they have seen their harvests and their incomes greatly improve. Progressively the project has spread to the sale of farm products and to management of economic activities.

Georgina and the women farmers do not plan to stop there; they plan to introduce a village bank system which they will be shareholders in. They also plan to find the means to access agricultural information: markets, production, techniques which, in addition to helping produce more at lower costs, would broaden their skills and their horizons.

Over and above the immediate advantages and the potential profits expected by the farmers, the practices they develop are in line with the concept of sustainable development. The ill use of chemical pesticides, the risks caused to human and animal health as well as to the environment often go against the expected effects. Integrated pest management is a sustainable farming practice combining different tools to minimise risks and maximise benefits. ♪

Cook your way around the world...

For any readers wishing to take their taste buds on a culinary world tour, the FAO's online cookbook contains all the right ingredients! This online cookbook gathers together almost 800 recipes for the preparation – in traditional fashion – of a range of local products from around the world. It exhales the strength of spices, the freshness of vegetables and the sweetness of fruits. From Pakistan to Peru and from China to Côte d'Ivoire there is something to suit every taste.

All of the information on the site is organised by country of origin of the recipe, dish type, ingredients used and level of difficulty.

To begin this culinary adventure go to:

<http://www.fao.org/inpho/en/informations/cookbook/>

And why not take a trip, for example, to Cameroon with meat in peanut sauce: 30 minutes preparation time, 2 hours of cooking time, easy to find ingredients: beef pieces on the bone: 1.2kg; peppers: 5 g – celery: 25 g – tomatoes: 217 g – onions: 100 g – peanuts: 370 g; salt, stock cube: 25 g – palm oil: 100 g and garlic: 10 g, and the journey is easy:

- Grill the peanut and reduce it to a paste, crush the tomato, peppers and other condiments;
- Cut the meat in small pieces and wash it.
- Heat the palm oil until it is blanched; cook the onion cut in fine slices, then the tomato, the condiments and the meat and let it simmer for a few minutes.
- Add the peanut paste and a sufficient quantity of water.
- Cook over a low heat.

Source: Bell, A., Rikong-Adie, H., Hagbe, B., Ndanga T., Nutrition Centre, IMPM, Yaoundé, Cameroon

The cookbook website is included within the Information Network on Post-harvest Operations (INPhO) which was created by the FAO in partnership with GTZ and CIRAD to speed up the development of activities in the post-harvest sector of tropical agricultural produce by facilitating access to technical data and encouraging information exchange.

While increasing the productivity and efficacy of agriculture is a good thing, it is just as important to take care of the losses which can result from the absence of correct post-harvest management. It is with the aim of helping to prevent the loss of millions of tons of cereals, of roots of tubers, of fruit and of vegetables caused by mishandling and inadequate storage, by predators and parasites, as well by transport and sales problems that the Information Network for Post-Harvest Operations (INPhO) was launched in 1998.

For more information contact

FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations)
Agro-industries and Post-harvest management Service
Agricultural Support Systems Division
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla, 00100 Rome, Italy
e-mail: inpho@fao.org
Website: <http://www.fao.org/inpho>
INPhO is also available on CD-ROM on request

For more information, contact: Georgina Koomson by e-mail: ginakoomson@yahoo.co.uk

Equal rights: one of the pillars of sustainable

These were the opening words of a document pronounced by women at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. From Rio to Johannesburg, from 1992 to 2002, from America to Africa they have spoken of their demands and put forward concrete proposals so that gender equality and social equity might be considered at the same level as respect for the environment and the quest for harmonious economic growth.

A major interest group among the nine groups defined in Agenda 21 at Rio, the women openly state that if they are not integrated into economic, social and environmental decisions, sustainable development is doomed to failure.

Integrating women is a concept which has caused much ink to flow and which provokes a multitude of reactions. Its reach touches the very roots of society. Sustainable development is based on a world where society, economy and environment interact and where rights are no longer a constraint but an element of balance and equality.

"We should not forget that one of the most pernicious signs of the degradation of the environment is not pollution, nor discharge from toxic waste, nor military fall-out, which are already so many stabs to the heart of our planet, but poverty" declared Bella Abzug, former President of the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), at the last Microcredit Summit. One of the causes of this poverty, among so many others, is the non-recognition of women's rights and the women's own ignorance of them. The right to land is one of the fundamental rights still under discussion.

"We women form a significant proportion of the workforce and sustain the majority of households and communities. We are consumers and producers, and make many relevant decisions. In every corner of the world women are change agents. Women of all ages and backgrounds show commitment, knowledge and skills to build a more sustainable society."

Women's right to land: a human right¹.

Imagine a woman in a developing country who has spent several years tilling a garden plot, making the soil fertile and rich so it can grow food for her family. One day her husband decides to take away the plot because the soil she has enriched is just what he needs to grow the fruit trees that provide the family income. He is the head of the household, and the decision is not up for discussion. She ends up with a less fertile plot farther away from the house, where she has to start all over again.

Millions of rural women around the world, have very limited land tenure rights -- the set of rights held by an individual or group to land, including rights to own, control and use the land. For women, control of land rights has always been difficult, but it has been made worse by the ongoing shift from food crops to commercial crops.

With globalisation, the demand for cash crops has grown sharply," says Zoraida Garcia, an FAO specialist on gender and land tenure. "As a result, the land on which women formerly grew food for their families is now being shifted to commercial production, which is generally controlled by men. Lack of rights and security regarding land is one of the most serious obstacles to increasing the agricultural food production and income of rural women."

While the proportion of women heads of rural households continues to grow, reaching almost one third in some developing countries, less than 2% of all land is owned by women. In many societies, tradition and laws are an obstacle to women's ownership of land, either through purchase or inheritance. And women's access to other resources crucial for food production -- such as water and credit -- is also limited

Ownership but no control

Access to land, whether privately or communally owned, is not always a matter of legal rights. "Security of tenure can be attained by ownership and access, but it also depends on control of the land and the right to use it. And this is often determined by tradition and economics," says Ms Garcia.

In Nicaragua, for example, laws dictate joint ownership by husband and wife. This legislation has provided a useful tool for improving women's access to land. However in practice, this is not enough, as the man is often the only one who can get credit to buy inputs such as seeds, tools and fertilizer. In many other countries women have the right to inherit and own land, but by tradition the use of the land is decided by men, who are the only ones officially recognized as farmers.

A human right

"What it comes down to is a failure to recognize women as farmers," says Ms Garcia. "This has repercussions on women's access to credit, to inputs. Rural women are among the poorest in the world, but this is not about

56th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, 19 December 2001 (extract)*

The General Assembly (...) invites the Member States (...) to create an enabling environment to improve the situation of women (...) notably (...) by designing and revising laws to ensure that, where private ownership of land and property exists, rural women are accorded full and equal rights to own land and other property, including through the right to inheritance, and undertaking administrative reforms and other necessary measures to give women the same right as men to credit, capital, appropriate technologies and access to markets and information.

* <http://www.un.org/ga/56/index.html>

Convention On The Elimination Of All Forms Of Discrimination Against Women*

Article 14: (...) States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development and, in particular, shall ensure to such women the right: (...) To have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.

* <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/index.html>

Commission on human rights on 'women and the right to land, property and adequate housing', April 2000, 52nd session (extract)*

The Commission on human rights (...) affirms that the discrimination faced by women with respect to acquiring and securing land, property and housing, as well as financing for land, property and housing, constitutes a violation of women's human rights to protection against discrimination.

* <http://www.hri.ca/fortherecord2000/documentation/commission/2000-13.htm>

charity. Land rights are human rights, and women and men should have equal rights," she said, adding, "governments need to recognize women as farmers and landowners, and this is important when land tenure reforms are initiated."

Strengthening the position of women

Research on the different ways in which men and women have been affected by existing land tenure systems is also an important part of the work done by FAO's Gender and Development Service. "This research aims to find out more about the consequences of different legislation and land tenure systems with a view to further strengthening women's position regarding land.

Another important task is to create awareness within development agencies and governments about the importance of recognizing women's right to land and to incorporate the gender aspect in all activities regarding agriculture and land tenure. In fact, as Ms. Garcia points out, "if women are not present in the meetings where the right to land and other resources is discussed and decisions taken, how will they know their rights or have influence?"² ¶

¹ FAO Gender and Development Service, extracts from a press release of 8 March 2002 entitled 'Women's right to land: a human right: <http://www.fao.org/News/2002/020302-e.htm>

² idem

Know your rights, understand them, claim them and reinforce them

It is not just the law which empowers women, but also the actions of women themselves. Once informed and aware of the law and its scope, the women will shape it to create a more just and equal society.

Many women, unaware of the law, undergo abuse and injustice and are denied their rights. Moreover, discriminatory and demeaning social practices continue and numerous legal instruments continue to institutionalise the marginalisation of women and their inequality in accessing resources. The question of women's rights has become a real society debate thanks to the mobilisation of women's movements. Lobbying activities to obtain legislative modifications and important policy changes are increasingly making an impact. Nevertheless, specific actions directed at women are still essential to bridge the lack of legal information amongst women.

This of course involves knowing the ABC of the law but legal education goes beyond this. In fact simply knowing about the law is insufficient. It is also necessary to

demystify it by making it understandable and accessible, i.e. once aware of the law's existence, it is essential to have an understanding of its strength, of its weaknesses and of its application to everyday life. This is the only way in which the law can be used as an instrument for social, economic and political change.

Legal education is an empowerment process

It aims to develop individual's abilities to assert their rights, criticise the law and its reach, and to go beyond the limits imposed. In addition to law enforcement, it also facilitates the examination and redefinition of the law and the ways in which it is applied. It is in this way that women participating in a legal education process are not only made aware of what the legal texts grant them but also become actors to ensure they are implemented and to modify them. They move from the status of victims to take on the role of deciders. The ultimate meaning of legal literacy is human dignity. ¶

Respect and knowledge of rights: priority themes for Dimitra's partners

"Women's right to land" and "Legal literacy of women, good governance and democracy", two themes which will be examined during conferences organised respectively by ENDA-PRONAT in Senegal and Women'sNet in South Africa.

The first conference will take place in February 2003 in Senegal and will look at the situation of

women as regards access to land, in relation to official legislation, customs and traditions etc.

The second conference will take place in October 2003 in South Africa and will focus on analysing the impact of women's legal literacy on their status and living conditions.

World Summit on the Information Society

More than 2000 participants from 51 African countries met in Bamako, from 25-30 May 2002, with the aim of stimulating Africa's participation to the World Summit on the Information Society, which will take place in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005. The objective of this Summit is to study the tools and policies to implement in order for all earth's inhabitants to have access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). This Summit will take place under the auspices of the United Nations.

Information society is an essential venture for Africa. It must make its mark right from the preparatory stages of the Summit and present a strong vision of information society, the place it intends to have in it and the role it wants to play.

By taking the initiative to organise the first preparatory regional conference for the Summit, Africa has launched a new type of partnership for international conferences by bringing together government representatives, the private sector and civil society and by laying the foundations for dialogue on an equal footing. It has also set the pace for

bridging the gap between the info-rich and the info-poor. Last April, at an interview given to the 'Tribune de Genève', the ex-President of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré stated, "The Bamako Conference will be the first of its kind to determine the ways in which the private sector and civil society can participate. Basically, it will allow 53 African countries to present common themes for discussion at the Summit*".

During the conference, the participants took the step of calling on Africans to produce content which draws on Africa's cultural and linguistic diversity, on traditional know-how, and on the creativity of all the social actors. The final adopted declaration confirms that Africans intend to fully participate in information society by bringing to it their original contributions and human richness. In return they intend to benefit from the new possibilities offered by information technologies.

The conference also underlined that arriving at a shared vision of information society implied certain principles, including the right to expression and to protection of data relevant to the global

public domain, in order to guarantee the right of every citizen to freely access information. It also insisted on the implementation of investment and financing strategies by assisting content creation and democratic access, with a special effort for women and young people.

The African states were also requested to adopt policies stimulating infrastructure development and universal access, particularly in rural and isolated areas, to ensure a better gender balance in ICT use and to implement programmes specifically aimed at women, particularly those from rural and marginal populations. ¶

For more information:

<http://www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002/afrique-02.html>

General Summit site: <http://www.wsis.itu.int>

Civil society consultation platform:

<http://www.geneva2003.org>

* Tribune de Genève, L'Afrique se mobilise pour le Sommet de l'Information, (Africa moves into action for the Information Summit) 5 April 2002

Resources: conferences, training, books, internet sites

Conferences

Third World Congress Rural Women

2-4 October 2002, Madrid, Spain

Around 1500 rural women from around the world, are expected to attend this conference, organised by the Instituto de la Mujer (Institute for Women), within the Spanish Ministry for Work and Social Affairs.

The provisional programme includes the following themes: rural women within the global village; gender; sustainable development and food security; women's role in agriculture and in rural development; leadership and participation of rural women; public policy support for rural women, rural women for world peace and people's development.

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Website: http://www.mtas.es/mujer/rural/mujer_rural/english/default.html (also available in Spanish and French)

Women's rights and development: Reinventing globalisation

3-6 October 2002, Guadalajara, Mexico

The 9th international AWID Forum, 3-6 October 2002, in Guadalajara, Mexico, will take an innovative approach to the central question of globalisation. This is a unique opportunity for the global women's movement to assess their successes and failures and

forge new strategies and good practices for the ongoing struggle for women's rights, empowerment and social justice.

Further information can be obtained from:

AWID

(Association for Women's Rights in Development)

96 Spadina Avenue, Suite 401

Toronto, Ontario M5V 2J6

Canada

Tel: +1 416 594 3773

Fax: +1 416 594 0330

e-mail: awid@awid.org

Website: <http://www.awid.org> (also available in French)

Gender, Citizenship and Governance Programme

30 October - 1 November 2002, Kerala, India

The gender team of KIT (The Netherlands) announces its Gender, Citizenship and Governance conference. The objective of the conference is twofold. Firstly to build international support for gender equitable governance and secondly to disseminate the key findings from the action research projects carried out by the 16 participating organisations in the Gender, Citizenship and Governance Programme. This should generalise the good practice being generated through the action research projects to bring about institutional change in favour of gender equality.

The Conference is aimed at activists, practitioners, politicians and donors concerned by questions of governance and gender.

For more information, contact:

Royal Tropical Institute (KIT)

Sofia Karnehed

KIT Gender

P.O. Box 95001

HA Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Tel: +31 20 568 8660

Fax: +31 20 568 8409

e-mail: s.karnehed@kit.nl

Website: <http://www.kit.nl/gcg>

Microcredit + 5

10-13 November 2002, New York, USA

To celebrate the fifth birthday of the Microcredit Summit more than 3000 delegates from 140 countries will gather at the Microcredit Summit +5 in New York City from November 10-13, 2002.

They will come out of a commitment to the Summit's goal of reaching 100 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, with credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the year 2005.

Microcredit practitioners, promoters, donors and other interested parties will evaluate progress in the domain since 1997, will discuss the difficulties encountered, identify new challenges and will develop strategies to meet them.

For further information see the conference website

<http://www.microcreditsummit.org/plus5>

(also available in French and Spanish)

ICTs and their impact as tools for the promotion of rural women

11-14 November 2002, Republic of Korea

The Division for the Advancement of Women: DAW, in cooperation with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the Secretariat of the United



© Kinou van Oldeneel

Nation's working group on information and communications technologies, is organising an experts meeting to look at the impact of ICTs on women, which will take place in Korea next November.

This expert group will examine in particular how ICTs can empower women, their participation in public life and their skills in the education and health domains.

In preparation for this meeting, an on-line discussion on the subject took place from 17-19 July, the results of which will be presented in November.

For more information, contact:

United Nations

Division for the Advancement of Women

2 UN Plaza, DC2-12th Floor

New York, NY 10017, United States

Fax: +1 212 963 3463

Website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/ict2002/index.html>

Training on gender questions

The G&DTC (Gender and Development Training Centre) proposes the following international training courses for the season 2002/2003:

- Facilitating gender equality: 20 October-2 November 2002 (in French); 23 February-8 March 2003 (in Portuguese)
- Gender, identity, conflicts and development: 1-15 December 2002 (in English)
- Gender, development and organisational change: 16-28 January 2003 (In French)
- Organisational gender, audit, follow-up and evaluation: August 2003 (In English)

For more information, contact:

G&DTC

Wilhelminastraat 18

2011 VM Haarlem, the Netherlands

Tel. +31 23 5342149

Fax: +31 23 5513260

e-mail: gen.dtc@inter.nl.net

Website: <http://www.gender-training.nl>

Events

World Rural Women's Day in 2002

This celebration will take place on 15 October, on the eve of World Food Day.

The theme of the event can vary from one organiser to another.

For the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), the theme will be 'Poverty is everybody's business: education and training, a key for poverty eradication.'

The Women's World Summit Foundation will take the theme 'Claim your right to safe water'.

For more detailed information, contact

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)

60, rue St-Lazare, 75009 Paris, France

Tel. +33 1 45 26 05 53; Fax: +33 1 48 74 72 12

Website: <http://www.ifap.org>

The Women's World Summit Foundation

P.O. Box 2001

1211 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel. +41 22 738 66 19; Fax: +41 22 738 82 48

Website: <http://www.woman.ch/women/introworldrural.asp>

Books

Getting Smart: strategic communications for gender activists in Southern Africa

Edited by Colleen Lowe-Morna and Lene Øverland,
Gender Links/Women's media watch



Prepared by a team of Southern African media and communication experts, the manual is written in a simple and accessible style, with lots of exercises and examples, simple steps, checklists and tips, to be used for training, or applied directly to advancing strategic communications in your organisation. It is based on the following principles:

- A systematic approach to communications is essential for all civil society organisations (CSOs).
- Networking among CSOs is no longer a 'nice to do'. It is essential to maximising impact.
- Giving women and men equal voice is essential to democracy, good governance and accountability.
- Consumers are not just passive recipients of information but active players in shaping what they receive, how they receive it, and how they use it.
- Think globally, plan regionally and act locally.
- Communication is fun!

Gender Links

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South Africa
Tel: +27 11 615 6624, Fax: +27 11 615 7724
e-mail: genderlinks@mwab.co.za
Website: <http://www.genderlinks.org.za>

Women's Media Watch

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Cape Town 8001, South Africa
Tel: +27 21 440 653, Fax: +27 21 424 0659
e-mail: lene@womensmediawatch.org.za
Website: <http://www.womensmediawatch.org.za>

L'Afrique parle, l'Afrique écoute, les radios en Afrique subsaharienne (Africa speaks, Africa listens, the radio in Sub-Saharan Africa) (available in French only)

André-Jean Tudesq, Editions Karthala,
Collection Hommes et Sociétés, February 2002,
315pp (ISBN: 2 84586 256 3)

Radio is the most commonly and successfully used media in Africa. In the space of a few years it has undergone a major transformation with the liberalisation of the airwaves. The author studies the changes, linked to political and also to technical evolution. Public radio stations, which are still very active, must take into account the growing influence of international and moreover of private radios: commercial, religious, associations, community and rural radio stations. Used as a popular education and social communication tool, the radios offer a fast means to inform, entertain, to bring democracy, to promote local identity, or on the contrary, to cultural integration, but from now on they are present everywhere, because through them, Africa speaks, Africa listens.

Les éditions Karthala

22-24 boulevard Arago, 75013 Paris, France
Tel: +33 (0) 1 43 31 15 59, Fax: +33 (0) 1 45 35 27 05
e-mail: karthala@wanadoo.fr
Website: <http://www.karthala.com> (in French)

Biodiversity and Traditional Knowledge. Equitable Partnerships in practice

Sarah A. Laird, Earthscan, 2002, 546 pp.
ISBN: 1 8538 369 82

This publication shows how it is possible to combine research on biological diversity and that on local knowledge, two domains which have often co-existed

without meeting. It gives some practical indications on the way to establish partnerships in the field of research and the outlook for biological diversity.

Earthscan publications Ltd.

120 Pentonville Road
London, N1 9JN, United Kingdom
Fax: +44 171 278 11 42
e-mail: earthinfo@earthscan.co.uk

Food Security in Africa: a development challenge (also available in French)

Dossier Agripromo, INADES-Formation, CTA-Solagral,
2001, 102 pp. ISBN 1 018 85 68

Food security is a complex subject area but explaining it can be made easier. This is shown by the Agripromo dossier which gathers together a collection of fact sheets, all dealing with a particular subject, such as the history of food security, global trends in the food situation, the role of politics, and that of farmer organisations. Little by little through the dossier, the fact sheets become increasingly technical and practical, dealing with questions such as how to improve food, how to evaluate the food situation at local level, and how to promote the storage of food products. Each sheet is illustrated with tables and with diagrams. Perfect material for development agents.

CTA (Centre for Agricultural and Rural cooperation)

Postbus 380
6700 AJ Wageningen, The Netherlands
Tel: +31 317 467100, Fax: +31 317 460067
e-mail: cta@cta.nl
Website: <http://www.cta.nl>

Gender perspectives on property and inheritance.

S. Cummings, H. van Dam, A. Khadar and M. Valk,
A Global Source Book, Vol. 5, Gender, Society and Development Series, KIT Publishers, 2001, 180 pp.
ISBN: 90 6832 714 3

If you are looking for case studies on the influence of the law and customs on women's rights and their access to resources, notably the land, or on the effect of gender relations on accessing land, this publication will be very useful for you. The bibliography also contains a wealth of information.

KIT Press

PO Box 95001
1090 HA Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Fax: +31 20 568 8286
e-mail: kitpress@kit.nl

Paving the road towards empowerment

Women's access to education and healthcare has increased considerably in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, the occupied Palestinian territories, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Yet the fight for gender equality remains a continuous battle, according to the recently published UNIFEM report, 'Paving the Road Towards Empowerment.' The report states that women's participation in the economy, environment and decision-making spheres is steadily growing, but that the patriarchy within Arab society is sustaining gender inequality through the socialisation process. It also shows that the proportion of men who are active participants in the call for gender equity is low and, regrettably, efforts to involve them have been limited. The UNIFEM report tracks the achievements made and challenges encountered by women's governmental and non-governmental organizations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action.

To obtain a copy of this report or for more information, contact:

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Fax: +96 26 5678 594
e-mail: dana_mkhan@unifem.org.jo

Produire sans détruire (Producing without destroying,) la Fédération des Agropasteurs de Fiender examines its agricultural production techniques (booklet n° 2) and **Acteurs de changement** (Actors for change), the story of la Fédération des Agropasteurs de Fiender et du Groupement des Femmes de Dara (booklet n° 4) (available in French only)

These two booklets are part of research carried out by la Fédération des Agropasteurs de Fiender et du Groupement des Femmes de Dara (the Federation of Farmers of Diender and the Dara Women's Group) the members of which, essentially market gardeners, are watching their environment, the very basis of their agriculture, change and their living conditions becoming increasingly difficult. The land has become poor, chemical products have no more effect on certain pests and the overall environment is deteriorating. The members have undertaken joint research on their history, their main activities, the difficulties encountered and the solutions they have tried out. Their wish is for healthy and sustainable agriculture. This requires good natural resources. This is the aim of the leaflet: to describe current production activities and at the same time to increase the fertility of the land and improve the ecosystem. The technical aspects of agricultural production are linked to other aspects of life: production methods, social balance in the rural area, the balance in the natural environment. They must then draw broad lessons from these in order to be able to feed themselves and their children.

In the series "Quel passé pour l'avenir?"

Fédération des Agropasteurs de Diender et Enda Pronat,
B.P. 3370 Dakar, Senegal
Tel: +221 8 225565
Fax: +221 8 235157
e-mail: dimitra@enda.sn

Internet sites

Siyanda

Siyanda proposes an electronic newsletter every month, presenting the latest news from its site in the field of gender resources. This site specialised in gender issues is on one hand a constantly updated database and on the other hand, a network reflecting the main trends in gender, where ideas, resources, experiences are exchanged. The database is organised into categories and types of data and each document is summarised, indicating where it can be found. It is a real mine of information.

Website: <http://www.siyanda.org>

OSIRIS

OSIRIS, 'l'Observatoire sur les Systèmes d'Information, les Réseaux et les Inforoutes au Sénégal' (the observatory on information systems, networks and information paths in Senegal), established in March 1998, produces analyses, spreads information and raises awareness on all subjects related to the use and suitability of information and communication technologies in Senegal. Since 1999 Osiris has been publishing BATIK: Bulletin d'analyse sur les technologies de l'information et de la communication (Analysis newsletter on information and communication technologies), a French-language monthly electronic newsletter which looks at news on ICTs in Senegal. This letter is free and is sent on request. Contributions to its content are welcome. OSIRIS is part of the consultative network for information strategies in Africa, better known by its English acronym ANAIS (Advisory Network for African Information Strategies).

Website (in French) <http://www.osiris.sn>

This poem was composed by the participants to the Know How Conference 2002 during a session devoted to the launch of the book "Getting Smart", and was compiled by Lindiwe Nkutha.

What do we want to say ?

we want to spread our voices over vast expands
reach out and talk to you, women and men of the world
in every way imaginable and possible

we want to talk to you about
things that concern us and occupy our minds:
hiv/aids and the pain it has brought to our world
we want to share the taste of the tears
it brings to the eyes of the young

we want to talk to you about peace
what it means to us, and the plans
our people have on how to bring it about

we want to talk to you about poverty
and how it bites, especially women
BUT we also want to tell you about the remedies
we have thought for it,
hear what YOU have done about it in your corner of the world.

we want to show you the other side of our faces
the side you have up until now not seen
the side that is powerful
the side that tills the shamba*
to feed ourselves, our families and our communities
with the grace with which we do,
every bit as capable as any man

WE declare:
no longer shall we continue to scream in silence
no longer shall we continue to whisper in spaces where we can't
be heard
WE commit to getting connected
so that we can be heard the world over
by anyone and everyone who will listen!

"This poem is the result of a collaborative effort by poets from various parts of Africa, whose names I am sad not to have gotten down, to who I would like to pass this message: Sisters I salute and celebrate the creative life that resides in your spirits, flows in your veins and through your hearts and feel entirely blessed for having been afforded the chance to create something so beautiful with you."

LINDIWE NKUTHA

* A shamba is plot of land.

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FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



photo: S. Treinen

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If your organisation is located in...

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The project is trying to progressively extend its activities to all the countries of the African continent. If your country is not included in any list, please contact the Dimitra Project in Belgium at the address opposite.