

Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

EDITORIAL

Dear friends,

The first half of 2003 has been a busy time for the Dimitra network. We are very happy to welcome Ms Tiziana Franceschelli as the new administrative officer in Brussels, with particular responsibility for managing the Dimitra database. A major highlight during this period has been the International Workshop on Rural Women's Access to Land in Thiès, Senegal from 25-27 February. This successful event merits special attention for two reasons: first because it was entirely organised by the rural women themselves through the Rural Women Network of Senegal, and secondly it resulted in them gaining a seat at the presidential committee on land reform in Senegal. The workshop's three days of discussions and debate produced recommendations and an action plan focused on empowering women and men living in rural areas through improved access to information. The issue of women's rights to land was also the focus of a workshop organised by the FAO Regional Office for Southern Africa (SAFR) and OXFAM-UK in Pretoria, South Africa in June 2003 and attended by Ms. Aso Balan, the Dimitra coordinator at

Sangonet. This event brought together participants from Eastern and Southern African countries, to share their experiences and to refine key women and land issues for action, including the impact of HIV/AIDS on women's access and rights to land.

While the UN Millennium Goals have set out strategic objectives to improve the situation in developing countries, rural women today remain in a highly vulnerable position. The UNDP's 2003 Human Development Report provides evidence of the lack of progress in development during the last decade and outlines the radical measures that should be taken if the Millennium Goals are to be achieved. In this newsletter, our partner Ali Abdoulaye from ONG-VIE Kande Ni Bayra explains the difficulties his country, Niger, is facing in the field of education to reach the goals of "universal primary education" and to "promote gender equality and empower women".

Positive changes are nevertheless coming about at institutional level. On 11 July 2003, the African Union adopted a Protocol on the Rights of African Women. If ratified by at least 15 countries, this text could bring about many improvements in African women's rights and in their everyday lives.

Ensuring that rural women's voices and needs are heard, listened to and acted upon is a key element in the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) to be held in Geneva in December 2003. At the Paris Intersessional meeting for the WSIS last July, Natasha Primo of Women'sNet delivered a presentation on behalf of the African Caucus which warned "You can have information without development but you cannot have development without information and the ability to communicate".

Information is an essential factor for development – whether in terms of land rights, reproductive rights or the right to take part in decision-making and economic and social development.

You will see that several of the Dimitra partners have contributed articles to this edition, describing important issues in their own regions, as well as the usual section listing new publications, conferences, upcoming events and useful information.

We hope that you will enjoy reading the newsletter and are always open to your feedback, comments and suggestions as well as articles for inclusion in future editions. ☺

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FOREWORD

It is a pleasure for me to sign the foreword of the Dimitra Newsletter for the first time. I take this opportunity to convey our thanks to Marie Randriamamonjy, former Chief of FAO's Gender and Development Service (SDWW) who retired last June. She was always strongly committed to the Dimitra Project and to the role of information and communication for rural populations and for rural women in particular. During this year, interest in the project has been steadily growing throughout Africa and beyond. As a result, Dimitra will be extending the network to the countries of the Great Lakes region. Organisations and associations from these countries are active in many areas and are keen to exchange their experiences with others and benefit from the support of the Dimitra network. Many farmers' and women's organisations in the Great Lakes region have expressed their wish to be linked to initiatives ongoing in the rest of the continent. The region counts over a million refugees and a further three million displaced people. Food insecurity in this region is the direct result of wars, pillaging, devastated infrastructures, absolute poverty, malnutrition, impunity for crimes, and the widespread use of rape to terrorise and kill, along with the devastating consequences of a rapidly spreading HIV/AIDS pandemic, and general disregard for human

rights. Rural women and their children are the first victims of this situation and they need support, information and solidarity from all development actors.

The Dimitra project could help break through the isolation of rural populations and particularly of rural women in this region by providing them with the back-up of the partner organisations in the network and a tool for voicing their needs, interests and aspirations.

FAO is aware of the urgent need to address the devastating impacts of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural livelihoods and is developing a comprehensive strategy for the agriculture sector. A new website dedicated to HIV/AIDS and Food Security has recently been launched on the FAO site. (<http://www.fao.org/hiv/AIDS/>)

In the context of the upcoming World Summit on the Information Society, FAO will continue its support to information and communication initiatives that contribute to improving food security and the livelihoods of rural populations by empowering rural women and promoting gender equality in all efforts to bridge the rural digital divide. ☺

Sissel Ekaas,
Director, Gender and Population Division, FAO

'Rural Women and Land'

International Workshop, Thiès, Senegal, 25-27 February 2003

"Women in Africa toil all their lives on land that they do not own, to produce what they do not control and at the end of a marriage through divorce or death, they can be sent away empty handed."

MZEE MWALIMU JULIUS NYERERE, FIRST PRESIDENT OF TANZANIA

From 25-27 February 2003, the International Workshop "Rural Women and Land" took place in Thiès, Senegal. This event met with great success and was unique because it was conceived and organised by the Rural Women Network of Senegal (a network of grassroots organisations) with the support of Enda Pronat and FAO-Dimitra. Its main goal was for rural women to speak out and let decision-makers know about the problems they encounter in accessing cultivable land, natural resources and land acquisition and transmission.

Rural women take the initiative

Around 100 participants from throughout the country crowded into the conference room in the Forestry Centre of Thiès. The overwhelming majority of whom – around 70 – were rural women and men.

The Dimitra network sent representatives of civil society and members of grassroots organisations and support organisations from other African countries (Burkina Faso, Mali,

Niger, Tunisia and Uganda) to participate in the workshop.

In addition, representatives came from FAO, Belgian Cooperation, Belgian and Swiss Technical Co-operations, UNIFEM, ENDA-TIERS Monde, Union of Women Members of Parliament of Senegal. The workshop also attracted a strong media presence (print, broadcast – international and national television stations, private and community-based/rural radios). Other participants included representatives of decentralised State services, interested Ministries, researchers, and artists committed to women's promotion and gender equality.

Facing up to the challenges

Rural women, the majority of whom are farmers, are crucial partners in the fight against malnutrition and poverty. But in spite of their important role in food security and poverty reduction, their work remains underestimated and is not always encouraged by traditions or laws, which can in fact be great handicaps.

In the words of Ms Awa Guèye Kebe, Minister for the Family and National Solidarity, as she officially opened the workshop, "As far as Senegalese women are concerned, their position in society neither reflects their demographic weight (52.5%) nor their actual contribution to the country's development, and rural women are subject to major restrictions. Therefore, in the area of agriculture, where women are most active (75%), the right to land use reverts to the family, and access to technology, to equipment and to credit is likely to be problematic for her. Socio-cultural weights still exist in our communities. These can be attributed to the symbolic status of land, but can also be due to current matrimonial rules.

With no access to land, women producers deprived of agricultural inputs and outputs show that the issue of land access is a question of respect. From now on it is necessary to have a clear political will and determined large-scale social mobilisation so that rural producers can develop their agricultural activities without restrictions. This is why the Senegalese government committed itself to improving the status of rural women. Our new constitution, adopted in January, explicitly recognises women's right to land."

The official opening of the workshop was followed by the screening of a documentary

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

To the rural women themselves it is recommended to:

- Brief grassroots organisations on the workshop results, together with extension workers who work in rural areas and with women in particular.
- Get organised in order to better participate in the Network.
- Ensure their existing or future groups become genuinely mobilised at grassroots level in order to raise awareness and exert pressure on policy makers, religious and traditional leaders and donors and ensure that they are consulted on decisions concerning them.

To the support organisations and the Board of the Network it is recommended to:

- Make the workshop report available to all of the participants.
- Submit it, as soon as possible, to relevant Ministries, to state extension services working in rural areas and with women, to embassies, donors, women Members of Parliament, UNIFEM and to all those involved in land issues.
- Ensure that the report (or at least its main points) is translated into local languages.

- Representatives from other African countries should also translate the report into their own languages.
- Develop information strategies through rural radios and the participants themselves, in all the Dimitra member countries of the sub-region.
- Develop and encourage exchanges of experiences between groups, and between countries in the sub-region, by networking, twinning etc. through the Dimitra Network.
- Publicise the women's work and activities in information materials and disseminate these through local newspapers, debates, and audio and video tapes.
- Promote legal information through functional literacy in each entity of the network, at local level. Train women paralegals.
- Build women's capacities by training them in:
 - Communication techniques;
 - Rights and duties of rural women;
 - Advocacy techniques;
 - Lobbying techniques;
 - Negotiation techniques.
- Representatives of the other African coun-

tries will identify and assess areas in which rural women need to be trained in their respective countries.

To governments, donors and international partners it has been recommended to:

- Help in carrying out thorough surveys in order to have quantitative disaggregated statistics on gender in relation to land access and resource management.
- Adjust financial support on rural women's strategic priorities in order to perpetuate their efforts and the robustness of their network.
- Facilitate the sale of women's produce on urban markets (notably in Dakar's markets), by reducing taxes and other difficult administrative aspects of the Forest and Water Services on national highways (Bargny check point for instance).
- Build capacities of support organisations so they can act as information sources and are able to identify local expertise and resource-persons capable of supporting grassroots organisations in all areas including land tenure.
- Build women's economic capacity by:
 - Implementing and developing income-

Time to speak out

The spirit of sharing and mutual encouragement amongst the participants throughout the workshop helped make it a particularly animated and dynamic event. Everyone had a story to tell, a lesson to share and the will to listen and learn. Below are excerpts from some of the presentations:

film produced by the Rural Women Network of Senegal, thanks to the support of Unifem and the Swiss Cooperation. The film entitled "Women and Land – Between Laws and Reality" ("Jigéen ak suuf" in wolof) draws together accounts and testimonies of women, men, youth, and traditional and religious leaders, clearly revealing disparities between the existing legal texts and the weight of religion and tradition. The francophone television network, TV5, also made a fifteen-minute documentary on the Workshop.

The Dynamics of the Workshop

The Recommendations and Action Plan resulting from the Workshop focus on very practical activities.

The overriding priority is to empower women and men living in rural areas through improved access to information.

Rural women must be brought out of their isolation by awareness-raising campaigns and training.

The methodology used to organise the workshop will be replicated in neighbouring countries in order for the populations concerned to be involved and able to make their voices heard. ♪

generating activities;

- Entrepreneurship;
 - Access to micro-credit;
 - Creation of mutual benefit societies (health mutual);
 - Training in processing and conserving farm produce;
 - Mutual help and solidarity.
- Organise information and awareness-raising campaigns on land issues.
 - Raise awareness of teachers and schoolchildren on gender issues (social justice).

The Technical Support Unit (which gathers together all the supporting organisations) and the Board of the Rural Women National Network of Senegal will translate the workshop recommendations into an action plan over a period of three years, with deadlines for implementing activities. They will set priorities according to the individuals and organisations concerned and the necessary means (budget and other resources).

This action plan will form the basic working document for the Network. The next meeting of rural women will be held in 2006 in order to evaluate the implementation of these recommendations.

Mr. Edouard Tapsoba

[FAO Representative, Senegal]

"It has been observed that there is a clear link between poverty and security of land access rights. Women's lack of control and access discourages them from making long-term investments on their land, and from committing themselves to more promising and long-term projects. This has repercussions at the levels of food security of households and of countries because it is women who are responsible for the whole food chain, from production onto our plates".

Ali Abdoulaye

[ONG VIE, Dimitra Partner for the Sahel]

"... According to the popular stories of the Songhaï-Zarma, the first occupants of a given piece of land had to make enormous sacrifices before being permanently granted land: bravery, heroism, courage, spiritual and supernatural powers were necessarily part of this. In honour of these qualities which the ancestors showed by often risking their lives fighting ferocious animals (lions, panthers...) or even against evil spirits inhabiting the coveted places, land is considered as a sacred good, indisputable and definitely not mercenary in the concepts and beliefs of the Songhaï-Zarma .

In order to preserve the ownership and the integrity of this commodity, the Songhaï-Zarma risk their lives. Existence is pointless for these men once dispossessed of this precious capital bequeathed by the ancestors.

Exploiting the resources of the land and carrying on a dignified fight to preserve its integrity according to the socio-cultural values of the songhaï-zarma, represents behaviour and social obligations which arise almost exclusively from the competence of the male sex.

This is therefore one of the main reasons why access to land for women as personal private property, is extremely difficult in the Songhaï-Zarma society."

Testimony of a rural woman in the Department of Linguère

"If in reality the management of the land by the livestock and pastoral farmers was problematic before the land reform, then today even with the reform problems persist and are sometimes even worse.

The confused farmers and stockbreeders blame



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corruption and politicking for their misfortunes.

But the most blatant ill is suffered by women whose husbands will not give them any opportunity to exploit the land, seeing this as unbearable competition.

We have even seen cases where a husband has taken back an area already planted with beans by his spouse and planted it a second time with millet or peanuts, without any discussion.

Sometimes the woman is beaten for having gone against the opinion of her husband.

These cases are so frequent that women resign themselves to their simple role of 'sourga'!"

Testimonies of women from the village of Kairé All

"Modern laws give women their share but in reality there is nothing. According to our habits and customs, when a married woman has a son, the land is more likely to go to the son than to the mother. A woman in my village owned a piece of land that her mother cultivated and that she herself continued to cultivate. The villagers began to throw their rubbish onto it. When the woman protested, the villagers, some of whom were leaders, made it clear to her that she did not own any land and that this land belonged neither to her mother, nor to her."

"Our problem is ignorance concerning our rights and often our lack of solidarity. If we were well informed on our rights we could fight effectively."

Testimony of Ms Thérèse Mbaye

"From 1972 to 1973, a big drought hit the largest part of the country. This crisis affected a lot of farmers. This is the reason why a lot of men and women tried to find other ways to make ends meet.

It was during this period that with my three children, I had the idea to recover one of the fields that was not occupied by my young brother. I planted it with mango trees. Immediately afterwards, a dispute arose between my younger brother and me. He told me that a woman cannot have a piece of land, because she must marry and join her husband. Therefore she cannot have an orchard or a personal field to cultivate, like men do.

I have always been opposed to this way of thinking because:

- a woman must prepare her future and take part in the development of her family and her country;
- I must produce food for my children and myself;

1 agricultural worker

– I must take care of my health and that of my family. The conflict with my brother lasted for several years. During the third year, at the time of cultivation, in the rainy season, I went to the village chief to explain the problem. The village chief convened a meeting of elders under the tree to discuss it. During the discussions, some people were on my side, while others repeated the same arguments as my brother: they said that since the beginning of time, a woman never inherited from her father,

therefore there was no reason for this to change. A woman must always be a woman and she must always take second place to the man. When I got home, I called my young brother to explain the issue better to him. I told him it is true I am a woman, but that I am here, always living with him in the village, and that I must enhance the value of land just like him, so that I can take care of myself and of my future. If I were never to get married again, I would have to take care of the children

that I already had on my own.

A year later, we reached an agreement. The two hectare field that I farmed was given to me. I planted 15 stems of mango trees and I continue to plant fruit trees there.

Now there is quite a turnaround as a lot of people have understood. But some continue to oppose it. Senegalese women fully participate in the development of their country and therefore they must have access to land.”

FAO-SAFR and OXFAM-UK Workshop

‘Women’s Land Rights in Eastern and Southern Africa’

17-19 June 2003 in Pretoria

by Aso Balan

The FAO Subregional Office for Southern and East Africa (SAFR) and OXFAM-UK Workshop on “Women’s Land Rights in Eastern and Southern Africa” was held from the 17-19 June 2003 in Pretoria. Both Eastern and Southern African countries were very well represented at the workshop with participants coming from UN agencies, government institutions and research institutions, NGOs, local women’s groups and individual researchers. The workshop’s primary objective was to share the experiences of different institutions and to refine key women and land issues for action, including further research and potential project/programme mechanisms for future collaboration.

Key issues presented and discussed concerning women and access to land included:

- Land Policy and Acts;
- Changing role of traditional institutions and women’s access and rights to land;
- Impact of HIV/AIDS on women’s access and rights to land;
- The relation between women’s independent access/rights over land and agricultural production and food security;
- Peri-urban and urban land tenure and women’s land /housing rights.

The various topics were presented and discussed with the help of videos, presentations and exchanges of “best practices”.

According to findings presented during the workshop, it is now well recognised that women are discriminated against in terms of their rights to land. The critical challenge is to halt the “dispossession” which has been exacerbated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Putting HIV/Aids on the Land Reform Agenda

“The need to look at HIV/AIDS as a serious policy issue, for land reform specifically, is just beginning to move onto research and policy agenda,” a report commissioned by the Food and Agricultural Organization noted. HIV/AIDS would “influence who gets land in the initial reform process, how the land is then used, and how it will be subsequently redistributed in future,” the report added.

This means women have to be supported to prevent further abuse and exploitation. HIV-positive women not only have to contend with the impact of the virus, but also the threat of land grabbing by relatives, prompting activists, practitioners and researchers to urge policy makers and governments to adopt appropriate land policies.

The workshop provided significant exposure to the issues surrounding Women and HIV/Aids and how this creates further problems for women’s access to land rights and property. Two women from Uganda presented personal testimonies on how HIV/Aids has affected their daily lives in their own communities, and how they have tried to overcome these obstacles.

HIV/Aids and Land Dispossession – A Reality

But for women like Constance Niwagaba, a member of the Bunono-Ihunga Group of Women Living with HIV/AIDS in Uganda, the impact of AIDS on land rights is more than an academic debate during a workshop – it is a reality she has experienced.

“My husband died of HIV/AIDS in 1995. We had been married for 10 years at the time of his death. After [he] died, my in-laws demanded that I leave the home where I had lived with my husband. They claimed that the land and the property belonged to them. They took away my property and I had to flee from the house,” Constance Niwagaba told delegates at the workshop.

Once she was strong enough, Constance sought help from the local land council. The district court eventually ruled in her favour and she was permitted to return to her land.

Edvina Kyoheirwe was a farmer and business-woman. “We had six acres of land near Kampala, where I used to grow food and supply to schools within the community. I was also raising pigs and rabbits,” she said.

When she discovered her husband was HIV-positive, he became hostile and accused her of having infected him.

“He started selling off land, and when he tried to sell the land which I was using, I went to

the local authorities. He said that he did not want to leave any property with his wife when he dies.”

“He became worse and started beating me and threatening to kill me. One day he got a panga (machete) and wanted to kill me. I ran away,” she confessed.

Edvina was advised to leave her land and is now renting a room in Kampala.

But despite the many obstacles they face, some women in rural communities have found different ways or means to cope. Constance and Edvina are both members of women’s support groups in their area. In light of the recent upsurge in property grabbing, women in rural communities in Uganda are using social networks to survive.

Where to from here?

It has been clearly shown that HIV/Aids have a direct impact on livelihoods and food security, land tenure, land administration, support systems and many other related issues.

Lessons learnt for replication, stories shared, networks set up... these are just some of the valuable outcomes of the workshop.

This workshop set the wheels in motion to drive the struggle for women’s access to land rights forward and will certainly encourage stakeholders, whether donors, researchers, activists, development practitioners or agencies and governments to reiterate their commitment to continue working for equality and progress. ♪

→ SANGONeT

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Setting the scene for the World Summit on the Information Society

From 10-12 December 2003, the world's nations will come together for the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) hosted by the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. On the agenda will be how best to deal with the challenges and opportunities presented by the information society. This first Summit in Geneva will address the broad range of themes concerning the Information Society and adopt a Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action. The process will then continue at regional and national levels before a second Summit in Tunis in November 2005 to review progress and identify a possible further plan of action.

“You can have information without development but you cannot have development without information and the ability to communicate”

Telling it as it is

“As we say in South Africa, all protocol observed... I speak on behalf of six southern African communications advocacy NGO's and the 57 institutional members of the WSIS Civil Society African caucus. More importantly I speak on behalf of the hundreds of African people whose stories we have recorded in an effort to build a platform for people whose daily burden of survival is far removed from the deliberations of WSIS. We appreciate that there is a clear intention here to create a better world for all, but we cannot see how a continent with limited capital, in monetary and capacity terms will attain equal opportunity for participation in an information society without a major shift in global economic imperatives and values.

Raphael Correia, 28 is a fisherman in northern Angola. He spends his days catching fish that are never more than 5cm in length. He must catch enough fish to feed 19 family members each night. Raphael has never made a phone call but knows that he could, if he had some coins and if he travels the eight hours by donkey cart to the nearest telephone.

Zenzile Shendembr in Malawi, teaches villagers to read. After completing school herself and being unemployed for four years she undertook a two-week long literacy training course that qualified her for this task. The school equipment consists of a log to sit on and a piece of stone to write on. The classroom is underneath a tree. Maria doesn't mention how a school building would improve learning conditions – no, she longs for a small library – a little box of books is how she put it – because books can be read at night by her students to non-literate people. Books can be read by candle or firelight, they don't require electricity.

Driving through the Caprivi Strip in Namibia a small television antenna in a village with no power was spotted. There in Kanzinzila village was Postrick, severely disabled by a condition

The following presentation was delivered by Natasha Primo of Women'sNet on behalf of the African Caucus on Day 4 of the Paris Intersessional meeting for the WSIS. The African Caucus took a deliberate decision not to follow the pattern of the previous days and comment on the Draft Declaration, but to tell some stories of reality in the continent.

that could have been corrected at birth, a self-taught mender of broken radios.

At 24, Postrick had never been able to go to school but had heard from his brothers, who did, about television broadcasts. Together they convinced the village Headman to purchase a television, a car battery and a solar panel.

Sitting on the sandy ground at night, the villagers are now able to watch television. The car battery powers the television for two to three nights. The battery is then re-charged through the solar panel. The tragic twist to this thirst for knowledge is that the solar panel was broken during the long distance over unmade road on the way to the village. It doesn't work very well and it takes two weeks to re-charge the car battery. So every two weeks the village watches television for two nights. Even then, the only free to air service available is the state broadcaster, which in turn has its own capacity and resource limitations. Content is largely comprised of cheap, old international programs. The village Headman lamented that he may have made a bad decision in allowing this development. He pointed to the feeling of inadequacy that has developed among the heads of households in the village, because they are unable to provide

the kind of life that appears in 'The Bold and the Beautiful'.

Estelle Mdlouvo, a young single mother who volunteers in a community radio station in Mozambique's Inhambane Province is patently aware that though she must walk many kilome-




tres each day to volunteer at the station, that this is an essential contribution to her community. She says,

‘Information that is worth the most is that which contributes to fulfilling our daily needs. None is better than that given by us, about us, for us.’

This is a grass roots struggle for communication rights. Estelle is fortunate to live in a country where regulation enables community based

radio. In the same area we heard groups of children singing ‘the chicken song’. This catchy and popular tune played by the community radio station, is about how to treat Newcastle disease, the number one killer of Mozambique’s number one source of protein.

Nine months ago, in the south of Zambia a small community radio station celebrated the establishment of what can only be described as a tenuous connection via radio link, to an ISP. The station can now send and receive news – about two sentences every evening. Station Manger Perfect Mbazima made it very clear – No fancy formatting or pictures in emails in or out – the connection cannot handle it. But the listener’s horizons have broadened considerably because they now hear and can discuss useful information that is selected by a volunteer based in the capital Lusaka.

Creating an environment for these communication initiatives to flourish leads to information exchange that gives people the dignity of contributing to their own development. Such an environment will not be created in a globalising world, without a real commitment to change and a visionary and realistic plan of action underpinned by a recommitment to human rights. It is not often that an opportunity to impact on the global agenda arises and we urge you to consider the realities of the people we have introduced here in your deliberations during WSIS. The African caucus asserts that you can have information without development, but you cannot have development without information and the ability to communicate.” 

The stories have been gathered in southern Africa as part of a project called ‘Speaking for Ourselves’. This multi-faceted project is being undertaken by five freedom of expression organisations and is aimed at building a platform for people who are not participants in the information society and who are not present in the WSIS process.

Images and more detailed information and recordings from people living in remote African places will be the basis of an installation at the December Summit to be held in Geneva, Switzerland.

The organisations driving the project are:

MISA – Media Institute of Southern Africa
SACOD – Southern African Communications for Development
APC – Association of Progressive Communications
AMARC – World Community Radio Association
ARTICLE 19

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The Seven Musts

During the second Preparatory Committee for WSIS (PrepCom 2), in Geneva, February 2003, the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group¹ identified seven priority issues, for gender equality. These seven points are fundamental to integrating gender as a cross-cutting issue in the WSIS process and provide a strong basis for discussions over the coming months and years. By taking these elements into account, information and communication technologies can become important tools for women’s empowerment and gender equality.

[1] An intersectional approach

Gender mainstreaming in the WSIS process needs a nuanced approach that takes into account the diverse needs and perspectives of women emanating from differences in geo-political, historical, class-based, racial, ethnic and other contexts. For gender issues to be said to be effectively addressed in the WSIS process, strategies and solutions for achieving gender equality must strike at the root of unequal power relations – not just between men and women, but more fundamentally between rich and poor, North and South, urban and rural, empowered and marginalised.

[2] Building on Global Consensus

The WSIS needs to place as its core mission to address the fundamental socio-economic and political inequities globally, through a process of consensus building. All negotiations and agreements made at the WSIS need to be based on a reaffirmation to furthering commitments made at previous United Nations conferences and summits, in particular the World Conferences on Women in Nairobi and Beijing, as well as those focused on the rights of the child, on environment and development, human rights, population and social development.

[3] People-centred development

Only development that embraces the principles of social justice and gender equality can be said to centrally address women’s needs and redress fundamental economic and socio-cultural divides. Market-based development solutions often fail to address more deep-rooted and persistent subordination that the poorest and most marginalised women face.

[4] Respect for Diversity

The sharp focus on digital technologies in the WSIS process has until now excluded the recognition of the importance of traditional and indigenous forms of media and communications that more accurately reflect the communications needs and preferences of the diversity of cultural, linguistic, ethics and value systems in our societies. Respect for our vast diversity needs to be reflected in the diversity of solutions and strategies, since the focus on one solution, i.e. the digital solution is antithetical to human opportunities and to the notion of democracy overall.

[5] Peace and Human Development


The current framework and premises of the WSIS is bereft of peace and security questions and the role of the information society

in building an environment that enhances the possibility of world peace, and the protection and promotion of human rights and democracy. Peace is inextricably linked to the goals of equality and development, and of crucial importance to women and children, who suffer the most dire consequences of civil and military strife. There is a dire need to commit to harnessing the use of information and communication channels, including mainstream and alternative media, in service of peace, and strong opposition to all wars.

[6] Human Rights Framework

A human rights framework needs to be applied in the issues analyses, strategies and solutions of the WSIS process. Women’s human rights instruments, and crucial communications rights such as freedom of expression, the right to information, and the right to communicate need to be reiterated in the final outcomes of the WSIS. Emerging concerns such as “information security” on the Internet should not in anyway infringe on people’s privacy and right to communicate freely, using information and communications technologies. Policies that seek to redress the growing use of the Internet for trafficking, violent adult pornography, and paedophilia rings, must not under any circumstances be used for centralist control of all other content development on the Web.

[7] Supporting local solutions

The current framework of infrastructure development of ICTS is heavily reliant on “creating stimulating regulatory environments and fiscal incentives” to encourage investments from multi-national IT, media, and entertainment corporations from the North in countries of the South. We need to encourage local, low-cost and open source solutions, and South-South exchanges that prevent the growth of monopolies in the ICT sector. There is also an urgent need to encourage local content producers, through public funding support to prevent “content dumping” from large entertainment corporations in the United States to the rest of the world. 

¹ Formed during the first WSIS PrepCom in July 2002 in Geneva as one of the Sub-Committees of the Civil Society Coordinating Group, the NGO Gender Strategies Group is currently composed of the African Women’s Development and Communications Network (FemNet), Agencia Latinoamericana de Información, Association for Progressive Communications/Women’s Network Support Programme, International Women’s Tribune Centre, and Isis International/Manila.

Comparing and contrasting WSIS and Beijing

As part of the efforts of the NGO Gender Strategies Working Group to engender the policy making process of WSIS, The International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) has produced an information brief, entitled "*The Beijing Platform for Action Meets the World Summit on the Information Society*".

This brief is a very useful reference tool for anyone following the WSIS discussions with an eye on the gender element, as it compares and contrasts points arising from WSIS preparatory events with the major issues highlighted in the Beijing Platform for Action⁽¹⁾.

A major outcome of WSIS is likely to be the drafting of a broad framework in which information and communication technologies (ICTs) will be considered, financed, developed and regulated at both international and national levels. ICTs are permeating virtually every aspect of economic, political and social life, and it is essential that women's voices, opinions and concerns are listened to in the policy negotiations.

In early 2001, women and women's organisations, who had worked together during the Beijing Plus 5 review process, began mobilising to put gender concerns on the WSIS agenda. While this group was initially comprised of women working in the fields of media and ICTs, there is now a greater push to engage women working on all issues from human rights and gender-based violence to issues of poverty and the environment.

Critical areas of concern

The IWTC information brief supports this initiative by linking WSIS discussions to the 12 "critical areas of concern" in the Beijing Platform for Action. Each page focuses on a critical area of concern and gives examples of how women are using ICTs in their programmes, as well as lobbying efforts by women at the WSIS Preparatory Committees (PrepComs). The 12 areas concerned are:

1. Poverty
2. Education
3. Health
4. Violence
5. Armed Conflict
6. Economy
7. Decision-Making
8. Institutional Mechanisms
9. Human Rights
10. Media
11. Environment
12. Girl Child

Access to Internet Survey – summary of results

Here are the results of a survey on 'Access to Internet' that was sent with our September 2002 Newsletter.

Out of the questionnaires returned (around 10%) the majority came from Africa. Around 60% of responses came from men and 40% from women. Of these 35% live in an urban area, 30% live in a rural area and 35% live in a semi-urban area.

The responses showed that 66% of the respondents have access to Internet or e-mail.

While few organisations have their own e-mail address, very many have set up public server accounts (hotmail or yahoo) and regularly access Internet at Cyber cafes.

The main reasons for connecting to Internet are: to access updated information on various issues (health, development, etc.); to save time and money; to exchange views with others; to seek online training and/or funding; to support partnership, cooperation, networking and sharing.

The main impediments to better access are: lack of infrastructure; connection costs; lack of computers in grassroots organizations; unreliable power supply

In summary it seems that most people are willing to make great efforts to be connected on issues they believe are important for their work or themselves. ♪

Online resources for following the WSIS process

International Telecommunications Union
website:

<http://www.itu.int/wsisis/>

African Civil Society Caucus on WSIS:

<http://www.wsisis-cs.org/africa>

For more information see:

<http://www.iwctc.org>

<http://www.genderit.org/CSW/musthaves.htm>



1 <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/confer/beijing/reports/plateng.htm>

African Union adopts Protocol on the Rights of African Women

On 11 July 2003, the African Union adopted the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa¹ – a step which potentially could herald important changes in women's lives on the continent. At least 15 member states of the African Union must ratify the Protocol for it to enter into force. It remains to be seen whether such a Protocol would actually be applied in all the 53 member states. The African Union is established on the model of the European Union and will apply the principle of parity within its organization. Five of the ten commissioner positions based at the Union's Addis Ababa headquarters will be occupied by women. If the Protocol should enter into force it would bring to an end many abuses against women's rights and human rights.

An end to inequality

Affirmative action to promote the **equal participation of women**, including the equal representation of women in elected office, is strongly endorsed and the new Protocol also calls for the equal representation of women in the judiciary and law enforcement agencies. The right of women to participate in the promotion and maintenance of peace is also recognized.

Included in the broad range of economic and social welfare rights for women in the Protocol are the right to **equal pay for equal work** and the right to **adequate and paid maternity leave** in both private and public sectors. It also calls on states to take effective measures to prevent the exploitation and abuse of women in advertising and pornography.

An end to violence

The Protocol also calls for **an end to all forms of violence against women** including unwanted or forced sex, whether it takes place in private or in public, and protection from sexual and verbal violence as inherent in the right to dignity.

An end to FGM

The new Protocol gives women the right to control over their own sexual reproductive rights. For the first time in international law, it explicitly states **the reproductive right of women to medical abortion** when pregnancy results from rape or incest or when the continuation of pregnancy endangers the health or life of the mother. In another first, the Protocol explicitly calls for the **legal prohibition of female genital mutilation**.

An end to vulnerability

Specific recognition is accorded to the rights of particularly **vulnerable groups of women**, including widows, elderly women, disabled women and "women in distress," which includes poor women, women from marginalized population groups, and pregnant or nursing women in detention.

Equality Now, an international human rights organisation, coordinated the lobbying of African governments by NGOs and networks all over Africa for the adoption of a text that would truly advance the rights of African women in international law. The final Protocol demonstrates how governments and civil society can use their collective resources to advance the cause of human rights.

"The adoption of this Protocol marks a significant step forward in promoting the rights of women within Africa and we hope lays the groundwork for further gains for all women around the world," said Faiza Jama Mohamed, Equality Now's Africa Regional Director.

❖ For more information see:
<http://www.equalitynow.org/>

¹ This is a supplementary protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which was adopted in 1981.

UNDP 2003 Human Development Report – development in crisis

Report provides stark evidence that the objectives adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000 will not be met in 59 countries if progress continues at the current pace.

On 10 July 2003 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) launched its 2003 Human Development Report at the African Union summit meeting in Maputo. Its main focus – the drastic measures to be taken if the poverty reduction pledge adopted by 147 world leaders at the Millennium Summit is to be achieved.

According to the report, the "desperate" and declining state of human development during the 1990's underlines the gravity of the situation. The figures speak for themselves. Out of the 67 countries for which statistics were gathered:

- 54 are poorer today than they were in 1990;
- 21 have a larger proportion of the population suffering from starvation;
- school enrolment dropped in 12;
- more children are likely to die before the age of five in 14 countries; and
- poverty increased in 37 countries.

Time to honour commitments

In the words of UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown during his presentation of the Report to the African Union, "We have the glo-

bal means, the know-how and the record of development success here in Africa as well as other regions to state categorically that if today Africa and the World make the commitment of will and resources, then tomorrow, 2015, we can reach the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty, removing hunger, putting every boy and girl in school and stemming the crisis in our health and environment."

The Report argues that the wealthy countries of the North must urgently deliver on their promises – including removal of unfair trade barriers, meaningful debt relief and support to democratic reform if the Millennium Development Goals are to be achieved.

Low levels of development aid

The EU nations have pledged to increase their development aid by 16 billion dollars from 0.22% to 0.25% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). While this was heralded as a crucial step forwards it is still a long way off the commitment made by industrialised countries during the Millennium Summit to increase aid to 0.70% of their GDP.

Gender equality – a key factor for change

Effective development assistance from rich nations and gender equality stand out in the Report as two basic requisites for overcoming the world's current acute development crisis and for meeting the poverty reduction targets set by the governments.

A number of studies are highlighted by the report as clearly showing how the dynamic of human development depends on equality between men and women. Educated women can contribute much more to the health and education of their children, and their participation in decision-making, especially in the home, is very important.

Unfortunately continuing discrimination against women in many parts of the world is still a key factor undermining progress.

"This Report shows that there are many countries where income levels are high enough to end absolute poverty, but where pockets of deep poverty remain, often because of worrying patterns of discrimination in the provision of basic services," noted Malloch-Brown. ♪

❖ To read the full report see:
<http://www.undp.org/hdr2003>

World Women Summit 2003

Promoting Women's Status

From June 28-30 Marrakech hosted the 'World Women Summit' bringing together more than 600 women leaders to exchange and share experiences.

For the first time, the World Women Summit has been held this year in an Arab state. The busy programme of events in Marrakech included a forum on economic development for participants from Arab states, a round table for women ministers and workshops on women's role in economic development and business opportunities in Morocco.

At the opening ceremony, H.M. King Mohammed VI pledged to continue working to promote the condition of women by involving them in efforts to improve economic development.

"I know it is essential to mobilise women and get them involved in the effort to achieve the targets of economic growth and sustainable

development we have set for our country," King Mohammed VI said in a message read on his behalf by Princess Lalla Hasna (the Sovereign's sister).

Improving the status of women

H.M. King Mohammed VI also conceded that "notwithstanding the fact that our country has made substantial headway in improving the status of women, we should not forget the difficulties being faced by a large number of women who live on the fringes of society, suffer from exclusion or are denied their rights."

"We have focused our interest, first, on rural women, the group most affected by the ills

of illiteracy and poverty, two issues I firmly believe to be at the heart of human rights, just as they may constitute structural obstacles to democracy."

Participants at the 2003 World Women Summit called for a clear political commitment to guarantee democracy and good governance and a favourable environment for greater political and economic participation of women. Women leaders further urged for national solidarity between women through training networks and increased opportunities to exchange ideas. ♪

Source: Maghreb Arab Press – MAP

A Gem of an Idea

Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) for Internet and ICT Initiatives to be released at WSIS

The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) Women's Networking Support Programme has developed the Gender Evaluation Methodology (GEM) tool to help measure to what extent ICTs are actually improving women's lives and gender relations.

After four regional workshops in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe during 2002 and early 2003, the GEM tool is being reviewed with plans to release a final version at December's World Summit on the Information Society.

While GEM is available online for anyone to download, since last year tester organisations have been providing feedback from a variety of ICT projects in order to test its versatility and durability. Projects range from a Mongolian distance education initiative to an urban telcentre in Bogota, Colombia.

The tool outlines suggested strategies and methodologies for incorporating a gender analysis throughout the evaluation process. It consists of four elements:

1. Setting an evaluation approach
2. Integrating gender analysis into evaluation
3. Designing methodologies
4. Putting evaluation results to work.

GEM can also be used to ensure the integration of gender into project planning processes. ♪

••• To view the GEM guide go to:

<http://www.apcwomen.org/gem/go4gem/index.htm>



Women at the Source of Life

The Experience of Kenya Rainwater Association



In rural Kenya, women and girls are responsible for water supply and provision of food. There may be several explanations for this. In many instances the men have relocated to urban areas in search of salaried employment, leaving their wives behind in rural areas to take care of the family land and children. In other cases, the customary division of labour puts women and young girls in charge of fetching water from rivers, while the men and boys attend to other duties such as grazing.

A risky experiment?

Kenya Rainwater Association (KRA), like many organisations promoting water for domestic use and agriculture in rural parts of Kenya, was faced with a unique challenge as a result of this division of labour. It is often women's groups that approach the association to request collaboration in water and agricultural projects. In the past most of this collaboration would inevitably take the form of tank construction for domestic water supply and installation of drip irrigation systems for crop production. In a country where women have hardly been involved in any construction work and where science and technology are revered as male subjects among girls in schools and colleges, attempting to undertake such projects with women groups was considered an unwise experiment.

Waiting for water

To further complicate matters, rainwater harvesting was not widely appreciated in Kenya a few years ago. Most citizens were still waiting for piped water to pass by their houses, as conduit water systems were still viewed as the more progressive system of water supply. In addition, during the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) the Government of Kenya had set itself the noble goal of providing all Kenyans with water 'at the doorstep' by 1990. Despite the absence of a clear strategy of how to attain this goal, politicians waxed indignant on the promise and inadvertently gave people false hope. Kenyans became complacent and waited for water.

A cheap and clean alternative

At the onset of the '90s, it became clear that piped water systems, while very appropriate for urban water supply, were not suitable for rural community water supply. Laying pipes and pumping systems was expensive and the system required regular maintenance for which communities had to pay monthly rates, which they could ill afford. Some communities were nomadic and required a more flexible system

of water supply that would be safe from vandalism in their absence. Ironically, however, rainwater harvesting, promised a cheap, clean source of water at the door-step. Since many Kenyans already had iron sheet roofs, which provided a suitable surface for harvesting rainwater, all that was required was storage for the rainwater. These were some of the reasons that motivated the formation of Kenya Rainwater Association 'to promote the harvesting and utilization of rainwater.' It was in the process of promoting rainwater harvesting that the association found that it could not go very far in this venture without incorporating women.

Building women's skills in the community

Against all odds, albeit with plenty of support from organizations such as the Regional Land Management Unit (RELMA), KRA has over the years successfully conducted demonstration training courses and projects in tank construction and drip irrigation among several women's groups in East Africa. Rainwater harvesting projects undertaken by the association are preceded by training on the construction and management of the project to be undertaken. This enables the women and the other trainees to make a contribution of skilled labour to the project, which is a sure way of instilling a sense of ownership of the project among the community members. This approach also leaves skills in the community once the project is complete. These skills are valuable during future ventures of a similar nature including even those in which the association will not be involved.

Lighting a fire

The most important impact of imparting skills to a community is that it 'lights a fire'. The members of the women's group are continuously looking for opportunities to use their newly acquired skills. This translates into more water projects both at individual and community level and also shows the women and girls that they too can successfully undertake construction, a plus for gender equity in Kenya.

In the year 2001, KRA conducted training courses in tank construction in Embakasi near Nairobi, where 16 women were trained and in Matuto in Nyeri, where 12 women were trained. In Matuto, the women were also trained on the assembly and use of low-head drip irrigation systems for production of horticultural crops. Low-head drip irrigation systems are becoming more and more popular in Kenya since they can be assembled using locally available components for as little as US \$15. The attraction of this system of irrigation is the fact that it conserves water, requiring only two buckets of water a day to irrigate 100 plants. Several KRA members were contracted by other development agencies to disseminate the technology in Western Kenya, particularly in Kusa in Kisumu.

More training for women was carried out on the management of earth dams in Sweetwaters and Weruini in Laikipia. These courses were conducted hand-in-hand with dam rehabilitation projects in the area. Several courses were conducted by KRA in 2002. Such training courses were held in Mukogodo, in Laikipia and in Garissa, where the association is undertaking dam rehabilitation.

A knock-on effect

The initial impact of the demonstration training courses offered by KRA has generated interest among women in rainwater harvesting. Each time a demonstration-training course is conducted in one village, women from the neighbouring villages who have seen what their colleagues have achieved come to KRA offices seeking the same training. In fact, the association is now having a problem coping with the number of women's groups who would like to be trained, mainly due to financial constraints. In the course of time, it is hoped that this interest will translate into a wider acceptance of RWH technology in Kenya and the application of rainwater harvesting and utilisation technologies. This will in turn lead to improved health and agricultural production as a result of improved water supply for domestic and agricultural use. ♪

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Education on 'The Fast Track' in Niger ...

In April 2000 more than 1,100 participants from 164 countries gathered in Dakar, Senegal for the World Education Forum. This event brought together everyone from teachers to prime ministers, academics to policy makers, representatives of NGOs and international organisations. The meeting resulted in the adoption of the 'Dakar Framework for Action, Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments'¹⁾, which commits governments to achieving quality basic education for all by 2015 or earlier, with particular emphasis on girls' education.

'Education for All' in Niger – an impossible dream?

With the first deadlines for the implementation of the 'Dakar Framework for Action, Education For All, Meeting our Collective Commitments' already upon us, Niger is still waiting for the funding promises made in the declaration to be honoured. The Dakar Framework for Action affirms that, "no countries seriously committed to education for all will be thwarted in their achievement of this goal by a lack of resources".

However, three years down the line, we can see that the Dakar meeting was no different to other large international meetings swept along on a wave of optimism. Does this constant swinging between euphoria and disillusion signal that we have reached a dead end? Is this promise credible? Are there really resources available for 'Education for All' (EFA)? All of these questions show our anxiety at seeing our countries unable to meet the EFA goals and targets by 2015. On three occasions, Africans have committed themselves to meeting the basic educational needs of their communities, firstly in April 2000 in Dakar, then in September 2000 in New York in abiding by the Millennium Goals and finally in October 2001 by adopting the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD). Must we merely evolve from commitment to commitment? Are we really the masters of our commitments?

How to get back on track?

In November 2002, UNESCO published the Global Monitoring Report of EFA with the title: "Education for All, is the World on Track?" This report draws our attention more than ever to the fact that the six Dakar objectives are far from achieved, before concluding that the world is on the wrong track. Under these circumstances the expectations of the Millennium Goals become unrealistic and unattainable.

In my country, Niger, we have been holding our breath since November 2002 when the donor's conference proclaimed us elected to the 'Fast Track' initiative.

We believed it really would be 'fast' but then our optimism began flying out the window. In what way will the initiative be "fast"?

To reach the objectives within the timeframe, Niger has set itself EFA development indicators with the following projections:

- Raise the completion rate of six years of primary education from 23.7% in 2001 to 38% in 2005 and to 100% in 2015;
- Raise the percentage of girls in schooling from 29.6% in 2001 to 57% in 2005 and to 100% en 2015;
- Raise the literacy rate from 19.9% in 2001 to 38% in 2005 and to 84% in 2015.

Questions and doubts

A quick glance through these ratios, bearing in mind the time remaining clearly raises doubts and questions as to how to meet these objectives by 2015, particularly given that nothing indicates that 2003 will see the actual start-up of 'Fast Track'.

These doubts are backed up by a number of questions which merit special attention on behalf of the State of Niger, the people of Niger and the technical and financial partners of my country. These questions are the following:

How many contracted teachers are there today (as opposed to civil servant teachers)?

How many will there be at the end of the ten-year programme for education development?

How many civil servant teachers will lay down their chalk after having 'been sentenced to 30 years of service', as they would say, or as we would say, 'for having given 30 years of highly valuable service'?

For as long as education is a shared responsibility amongst different actors, efforts must be united to address this issue together, taking account of these legitimate questions.

The states elected to this 'Fast Track' initiative are making enormous efforts to comply with the conditions of governance even at the risk of undermining the very fabric of Dakar 2000. If this initiative should be carried out in Niger, this would translate into:

- The recruitment of 11,059 primary school teachers, 10,146 of whom on a contractual basis and 913 civil servants.

Consequences:

- The new type of teachers – poorly paid – will make up 65.62% of the active workforce from 2006 and are already beginning to demand their inclusion in the public sector with full teacher status. These teachers will be strong enough to hold the whole Niger education system to ransom.
- Between now and 2006 more than 10,000 civil servant teachers will leave the education



From right to left: the President of the Republic of Niger, Ali Abdoulaye (ROSEN/ONG-VIE), the Minister of Basic Education of Niger

system for early retirement. With premature departures of teachers, whose experience underpins the fundamental quality of teaching and training, how can we hope to achieve quality education?

- The maintenance of the new contracted teachers' salary at 35.000 FCFA per month.

Consequences:

- The lack of motivation will reach a threshold which will undoubtedly damage the professionalism of teaching;
- It is almost certain that a large number of these teachers will not hesitate to seize the first opportunity to leave the teaching system, thus leading to initial and continued training starting all over again.

A more flexible approach for the future

In light of these facts, we have good reason to ask ourselves:

- Will we manage to attain quality education for Niger?
- How will the State manage to contain the social movement?

It is high time the governance of the accelerated initiative take into account the social dimension of each of the countries elected in the financial framework of 'Fast Track' and foresee sufficient flexibility for its management. No study, no survey will express better than us the reality of the situation that we are experiencing and that we are expressing.

1,300,000 children from Niger are waiting for real actions in order to have access to their basic right to education. 🙏

Ali Abdoulaye, President of ROSEN
– Réseau du Secteur Educatif du Niger
(Education Sector Network of Niger)

✦ Ali Abdoulaye is also the Coordinator of ONG-VIE Kande Ni Bayra, Dimitra partner for the Sahel region

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¹ For more information on the Dakar Framework for Action see: http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/ed_for_all/dakfram_eng.shtml

Investing in ICT skills for Jordan's future

by Abeer Hweide

Due to Jordan's scarce natural resources, in contrast to its neighbours, it is considered a very poor country. This situation has forced decision-makers in Jordan to invest in human capital in order to bridge the gap between the lack of natural resources and development planning needs. Consequently Jordan launched a strategy that concentrates on investing in the capacities of its people at every level, the fundamental aspect of which is the education system. Schools and universities are

established countrywide, and now the country is recognised as a human resources hub for the region with Jordanian professionals active everywhere and in every field.

When information technology (IT) emerged as an important element in improving quality of life, and for staying at the cutting edge of development, Jordan modified its plans. It began by initiating a National Strategy to establish a network of Jordanian Information Technology Community Centres (JITC-Cs) covering the

entire country, especially rural areas, in order to guard against IT illiteracy and help to make the smooth transition to globalisation in the decades ahead.

To achieve these goals, Jordan started making serious efforts to help the country become the regional leader in information and communication technology (ICT). Now Jordan is in the process of establishing solid links between its educational system and the ICT industry. ¶

TWO SUCCESS STORIES

Investing in Jordan's youth

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Jordan has supported approximately 1.5 million students. It has used this experience as a sensor for identifying future educational needs, and realises the importance of IT in addition to its traditional curriculum. The MoE has initiated the concept "Knowledge workers" which is part of the national strategy to empower and equip the students with information and communication technology skills. This concept translates into practical steps, as the MoE made computer science a compulsory subject from seventh grade up to high school. Thereafter, universities continue the task. This compels the government to improve the infrastructure for the entire kingdom. Schools must be equipped to provide the IT curriculum, and about 2300 out of

3500 schools have a computer laboratory and are linked to an Internet line. This strategy will pave the way for students, the future leaders, to gain professional scientific and technological skills and give Jordanian youth equal opportunities to play a major part in the economic growth of Jordan and its development as a regional ICT hub as well as to become qualified and able to face the challenges of globalisation.

ICTs help rural women to advertise their products

The second success story concerns a project run by rural women in Iraq Al-Amir area, (located about 30 km to the west of the capital Amman), who are using IT to advertise their products – a collection of pottery handicrafts, reflecting the rich Nabatean

history of the area. This use of information technology is considered very innovative for small and micro enterprises in Jordan, and will improve and emphasize the rural women's performance, as well as the quality of the products. This will also be reflected in the business revenue, and will encourage others such as business owners, credit funds and training institutes, to include IT as an effective tool to help achieve their overall objectives.

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Women take the initiative

Entrepreneurial activities of rural women in the agricultural sector in Tunisia

by Mabrouka Gsmi

Impact analysis of Income Generating Activities – a participative approach

In October 2002, CREDIF (the focal point for the DIMITRA project for Algeria, Libya and Tunisia) organised a seminar to present the results of a research action (R-A) into the entrepreneurial activities of rural women in the agricultural sector in Tunisia.

This R-A, based on a participative approach, was led by the Observatory for the Condition of Women with the support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Its realisation benefited from the active and ongoing support of various Tunisian governmental and non-governmental organisations to promote rural women's status.

The analysis of data collected during this research enabled the partner organisations to better understand the impact of their actions on women (income, family relations and the

agricultural system, external relations with beneficiaries, rural women's access to information, self-perception, sustainability of income-generating activities, etc.)

The results

As regards access to information and participation in associations, the majority of women (69.3%) say they participate more than before in meetings. At the same time when asked if they feel better informed on what is going on in their area, their replies are more diverse: 52.4% said 'yes', and 47.7% 'no'. From this we can see that participating in the meeting does not necessarily guarantee rural women better access to general information. Nevertheless, a great majority of beneficiaries who have joined consider that their associative activity is beneficial and that it enables them to have better purchase and sales prices.

Looking ahead

In spite of the difficulties encountered, rural women are enthusiastic about creating or developing income generating activities and express a strong interest in preserving their projects, notably for young girls. Motivated by new interests, the beneficiaries, supported by development organisations have proved to be an essential part of the rural development process.

The results of this research have been published and are available from CREDIF.

CREDIF

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Women working in Fairtrade Certified Organisations

Anneke Theunissen, Information Officer, FLO International



Fairtrade Labelling Organisations (FLO) International exists to improve the position of the poor and marginalised producers and workers in the developing world, by setting the Fairtrade standards and by creating a framework that enables trade to take place at conditions respecting their interests.

Fair Trade organisations (backed by consumers) are actively engaged in supporting producers, awareness raising and in campaigning for changes in the rules and practices of conventional international trade. Also at local level, Fair Trade enables empowerment and dialogue of the different farmers, members and workers, male and female, so that they really feel like active participants in the decision-making process with regards to development of their own organisation. In the case of tea organisations, this is often organised through the setting up of a Joint Body, a committee composed of workers, farmers, management and union representatives, to discuss the social issues of the organisation and decide upon the use of the Fairtrade premium money.

Advancing through empowerment and dialogue ... in Uganda

Juliet Ntiwirenabo is Chair of the Premium Committee of the Igara Growers Tea Factory in Uganda. The Igara Growers Tea Factory is a company of which 100% of the shares are held by the farmers bringing the tea leaves to the company. The company is certified Fairtrade since 1998.

Juliet has four children, all of whom help out on her tea farm of 2 hectares, in order to be able to pay the school fees. She reports on the functioning of the Premium Committee.

"Since 1998, we have a joint body Premium Committee, which is democratically elected and respects a gender balance. Currently, we have 3 women and 10 men in the Committee, representing workers, small holders and management of the organisation.

As a Committee we first ask all farmers and workers for their needs, and then we prioritise. So in the past few years our first priority was education. With the Fairtrade Premium income we bought exercise books, pencils and pens for four children in each family. Then we looked at the women who suffer a lot in giving birth. Some women need to be carried down the mountains on a stretcher for 60 kilometres before they can be brought to a hospital. So we decided to build a maternity centre. Last year, over 1000 women delivered in that centre. We brought in some premium money and the rest we negotiated with the government. We



also had drinking water projects and installed e-mail connections.

If I can pass on a message to consumers in Europe and North America, I would like to say: "Buy more Fairtrade Certified tea. Our lives have been changed with Fairtrade. The women are treated better; they no longer die in childbirth on a stretcher. The Committee and even the farmers are more informed and involved in our own business."

... in Sri Lanka

Ms. Sivapackiam from Stockholm Tea Estate in Sri Lanka is member of the Estate Joint Body. She experienced similar developments in her Fairtrade certified organisation:

"I am 38 years old and I have four children, not all are educated, some of them are looking for work now. I was born on this estate and we are already three generations working here. I am elected as the representative of our block. I am the estate's women's leader and so by being on the Joint Body, I can communicate ideas to workers. Since coming onto the Joint Body, I can speak out; I can have joint discussions with many people. Before especially women we were very afraid to talk to the manager. We wouldn't even walk on the path with the manager.

The fact that Fairtrade demands a democratic decision taking process around the use of the Premium money obligated this Estate to establish a Joint Body, with representatives from workers. It really works well now. The Joint Body has used the premium to help get electricity for all worker's houses, for volleyball and cricket matches, and now we will provide loans to workers." J

FAIRTRADE A WINNING WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The King Baudouin International Development Prize 2002, worth 150,000 euros, was presented at the Royal Palace in Brussels on May 27, 2003, to Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO) and its members.

The jury, chaired by Dr. Peter Piot, executive director of UNAIDS, explained their decision to reward Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International (FLO): "for their pioneering role in giving disadvantaged producers and workers in the developing world the opportunity to participate directly and at fair trade conditions in international trade through a system of certification, producer support, business facilitation and consumer education."

FLO aims to improve the situation of disadvantaged producers and workers in developing countries by setting Fairtrade standards through a system of product certification, and by creating the framework for favourable trading conditions.

Fairtrade certification of products gives consumers a genuine choice in their day-to-day shopping habits. Currently, various ranges of food products (sugar, bananas, coffee, tea, cocoa, fruit juices, honey, rice...) are sold under a fair trade label, but non-food items are increasingly being offered as well (e.g. footballs). The most widely distributed labels are Max Havelaar, TransFair and Fairtrade.

For more information consult:
<http://www.fairtrade.net>

Resources: conferences, training, books, internet sites

◆ Dimitra Events

Dimitra Southern Africa

Advancing rural women's empowerment: ICTs in the service of good governance, democratic practice and development for rural women in Africa

This workshop will be organised by Dimitra partner Women'sNet in South Africa, and is scheduled to take place in February 2004 in Johannesburg, RSA. Women'sNet aims to empower South African women to use information and communications technologies (ICTs) towards advancing women's equality. The focus is on locally generated information. This workshop will be an opportunity to discuss about ways in which ICTs can help secure more rights and a greater role in decision-making processes for rural women, for example by linking projects, people, tools and resources; creating a platform for women's voices and issues and facilitating the dissemination of information in formats accessible to women who are not directly linked to Internet.

Dimitra Maghreb

Regional Workshop on Rural Women's Access to Information – 2-4 April, 2004, Tunisia

In April 2004, CREDIF, the Dimitra partner for the Maghreb region, will be organising a workshop in Tunis on rural women's access to information and to new information and communication technologies.

This event will gather together approximately 50 participants from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania and Senegal to exchange experiences and best practices and to assess and consider the current state of information and communication systems used by rural women: their effectiveness, their limits, etc. Many representatives of grassroots and rural women's organisations will attend, together with key decision-makers from within Ministries and local government, extension workers, trainers and local and national media.

The workshop should provide the occasion to draw together some concrete proposals for improving existing systems and encourage more networking between development actors working for rural women in the information and communication field, at local, regional and international levels.

The topic and the location of the workshop are especially pertinent in light of the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society to be held in Tunis from 16-18 November 2005 and also in view of the Tunisian National Plan for Rural Women 2002-2006, which envisages establishing an information and communication strategy to benefit rural women.

During the workshop, the term 'information' will be treated in its broadest sense to focus on how it relates to the realities of rural women's daily lives: information on health issues, on natural resource management, on education and training, etc.

◆ Other Events

HELINA (Health Informatics in Africa) 2003

ICTs in the Fight against HIV/ AIDS in Africa, 12-15 October, Johannesburg, South Africa.

The goal of this meeting is to introduce all participants to the broad range of issues of mutual concern facing those who develop and manage HIV/AIDS interventions, and the potential for ICTs to further these aims.

<http://www.helina2003.org/>

World Rural Women's Day – 15 October 2003

The Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) invites the rural women of the world to mark the 8th year of World Rural Women's Day with local activities and events and to lobby their government to proclaim 15 October as National Rural Women's Day.

In an Open Letter to the rural women of the world, entitled: 'Claim your right to Information and Communication Technologies ICTs', the WWSF Executive Director, writes: "Dear Sisters, the right to information and knowledge as well as the right to communicate are recognized as fundamental human rights and should therefore be added to the list of fundamental Human Rights. We hope this letter will encourage you to claim your rights, as there can be no global information society unless everyone, everywhere, including you, is granted an opportunity and the capacity to access information sources and communication networks. World Rural Women's Day was created to empower you in your daily lives and struggles for the well-being of your families. You are the real, albeit unsung, heroines of the world."

<http://www.woman.ch>

World Food Day 16 October 2003

This year World Food Day takes the theme "International Alliance Against Hunger". The website is now accessible through the FAO home page:

http://www.fao.org/wfd/index_en.asp

The site is available in the Organization's five official languages and Italian. Also available for download is an Information Note on the theme and an 'Issues' leaflet.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), Geneva, Switzerland, 10-12 December 2003.

The Summit hosted by the United Nations will bring together all of the world's nations to try to develop a global framework to deal with the challenges of the information society, and to take advantage of its opportunities. After the event of December 2003, the process will continue at regional and national levels. The second Summit, to be held in Tunis in November 2005, will review the process and progress made and will identify a possible further plan of action. (See full article page 7)

<http://www.itu.int/wsis/>

<http://www.geneva2003.org/bamako2002/>

"International Conference on Women in the Digital Era: Opportunities and Challenges (WIT2003)" 10-13 December 2003

Annamalai University Chidambaram, Tamilnadu, India

Will the new ICT revolution that is ushering in the digital era change the role of women in society? Does the technology of the Digital Era have in it the critical characteristics needed to provide women, equal or better opportunities to participate in the mainstream activities and provide solutions to many of the current social, cultural and technological bottlenecks being faced by women of our society?

This international conference – Women in IT (WIT-2003) is being organised in an attempt to find answers to these and other questions. World-leading technologists, sociologists, policy makers, social activists, academics, demographers, and historians are expected to come together and deliberate over issues that are critical to all of us.

<http://www.auwit.org>

◆ Training

UNESCO/APC Multimedia Training Kit

Today it is widely accepted that combining new information and communication technologies with more traditional information and communication tools and methods, particularly radio and television, offers a great deal of creative scope.

However, it is often not clear how to make a smooth transition from one media form to another.

The UNESCO/APC Multimedia Training Kit (MMTK) provides trainers in telecentres, community media organisations, and the development sector with a structured set of materials to help make the link between new and traditional media or train in a new skill area. The materials are divided into three broad categories: "Materials on technical skills" (e.g. "Searching the Internet"); "Materials on content development skills" (covering topics such as "producing content for radio") and "Materials on specific themes" (such as "cooperative problem solving"). New topics will be added in the months to come.

Flexibility of a building block approach

Materials follow a standard format and so can be used as interchangeable building blocks from which trainers can design appropriate training modules for their different needs. For example, a trainer running a workshop on information skills for a women's organisation could choose components from the "Searching the Internet" unit and the "Violence against Women" module and combine them into a single workshop kit. Individuals can also use many of the materials to teach themselves.

Each unit includes notes for trainers on running the workshop, a handout for workshop participants, exercises, a list of additional resources, a glossary of terms, a copyright statement and workshop and materials evaluation forms. Many units contain additional resources such as presentations, detailed manuals for trainers, and case studies of how the tools in question are being used in different contexts.

◆ For more information, see:

<http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/mmtk/>

◆ Publications

FAO Gender and Development Plan of Action – Gender, Key to Sustainability and Food Security (Also available in French)

FAO's Gender and Development Plan of Action 2002-2007 embodies the continuation of the Organization's longstanding commitment to the equality of opportunities and rights for women and men.

Gender and Development Service

Sustainable Development Department, FAO
Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
00100 Rome, Italy
Fax: +39 06 570 52004
<http://www.fao.org/sd>
(Also available in French and Spanish)



Rural women's access to land and property in selected countries (also available in French)

This study undertaken jointly by FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Land Coalition, analyses information on the status of rural women as provided in selected reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) during 1997-2003.

The document is available at:
http://www.fao.org/sd/2003/PE07033a_en.htm

IP Brochure on HIV/AIDS and agriculture: impacts and strategies for action

FAO's Integrated Support to Sustainable Development and Food Security Programme (IP) has published a brochure on preliminary findings on the impact of HIV/AIDS on agricultural production in rural areas in Namibia, Uganda and Zambia. The findings clearly illustrate that the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic is slowly eroding food security, damaging rural livelihoods and exacerbating poverty.

The brochure is available for download at:
<http://www.fao.org/sd/ip>

Regards de femmes africaines sur la pauvreté (African women's views on poverty) (available in French only)

UNIFEM has gathered testimonies of rural women in three West African countries – Benin, Burkina Faso and Senegal – on their perception of the different aspects of poverty, and women's poverty in particular, across the years and in light of their own evolution.



The testimonies that appear in the book follow the replies given to the following questions: What is poverty? What are the causes of poverty? What are its indicators? How can you come out of it?

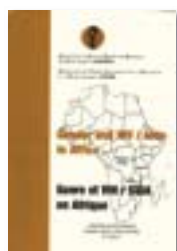
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Gender and HIV/AIDS in Africa (also available in French)

Association of African Women for Research and Development (AAWORD)

This publication results from investigations carried out in several African countries (Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal) and unveils gender inequalities in AIDS prevention, contamination and access to curative care through stereotype analysis. It examines ways of reducing the disparity between men and women through the integration of the gender dimension at all levels in the conception and execution of development policies, projects and programmes, in general, and programmes for the fight against AIDS in particular.



AAWORD

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Do Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) Address Gender? A Gender Audit of 2002 PRSPs

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers were introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a precondition for borrowing by the poorest countries and those in transition. These have now effectively become national plans with budgets. To achieve their poverty reduction targets, PRSPs must address the gender dimensions of poverty, including promoting women's rights and identifying and funding gender responsive interventions. This in-depth audit of the 13 PRSPs produced during 2002 demonstrates that 3 PRSPs address gender issues commendably, 8 apply an outdated 'Women in Development' approach and the remaining 2 almost neglect gender issues. Most PRSPs state that women are included in their participatory consultations but few PRSP data are sex-disaggregated.

The publication is available in English and French at:
<http://www.genderaction.org>

The One to Watch Radio, New ICTs and Interactivity

FAO-SDRE

"Sometimes looked down upon as the 'poor relation' of television, and certainly considered old-fashioned compared to the Internet, radio today has become the one to watch... Still the most portable communication medium, the most widespread and the most economical, radio is now proving itself versatile enough to go hand-in-hand with the Web." Carleen Gardner, Assistant Director-General for Information, FAO
 A new FAO publication entitled 'The One to Watch Radio, New ICTs and Interactivity' considers the continuing important role of radio today.

The publication can be consulted online at:
<http://comunica.org/1-2-watch/>

To order a print copy, contact:

Research, Extension and Training Division
 Sustainable Development Department (SDRE)
 FAO
 Viale delle Terme di Caracalla
 00100 Rome, Italy
 Fax: +39 06 705 3801
rural-radio@fao.org

Progress of the World's Women vol 2: Gender and the Millennium Development Goals.

UNIFEM

The data and statistics collected and analyzed in this report present a picture of women's empowerment in the new century, and highlight what remains to be done to achieve true gender equality. The framework for the report uses indicators created for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of 8 goals established at a UN conference in 2000. By looking at achievements in girls' and women's secondary school enrolment, literacy, non-agricultural wage employment and seats in national parliaments, this report is able to show which countries are on the road towards empowering their female citizens and what factors influence achievement. Among key findings are that Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest levels of achievement, primarily because of a devastating combination of national poverty, conflict and the effects of HIV/AIDS. The report also notes that the rise

in women's share of parliamentary seats in national governments is primarily due to special measures – such as quotas – being introduced and is not tied to a nation's relative wealth or poverty.

68 pages. ISBN: 0-912919770-9. WE 628. US\$16.95
 The publication can also be downloaded from the Unifem website:

<http://www.unifem.undp.org/resources/progressv2/>

AFRICA BOOK CENTRE

'TALKING GENDER: Conversations with Kenyan Women Writers'

A collection of six provocative interviews with the Kenyan writers Wanjiku Kabira, Marjorie Oludhe Macgoye, Leah Muya, Pat Ngunukie, Margaret Ogola

And Grace Ogot. Dealing with expressions of women's fiction, domestic violence, polygamy and female genital mutilation, these discussions reveal new perspectives in African women's dis/empowerment.

24160 Kuria, Mike (Ed.) Index, notes, 177pp, KENYA.
 PJ KENYA, June 2003, 9966803068 2003 PB GBP16.95

'TEARS OF HOPE:'

A collection of eight short stories by rural Ugandan women which reflects their lives and thoughts. Also included are colour photographs of the authors and brief biographies.

24254 Wangusa, Ayeta Anne (Ed.), UGANDA. FEMRITE PUBLICATIONS LIMITED, June 2003, 9970700022, 171pp,

See the Africa Book Centre site for further details:
bookinfo@africabookcentre.com;
<http://www.africabookcentre.com>

••• Websites and Databases

Siyanda website revamped

Siyanda (<http://www.siyanda.org/>) is an on-line database of gender and development materials. It is also an interactive space where gender practitioners can share ideas, experiences and resources. The site has recently been re-designed and offers various new and improved services.

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

Pambazuka News database

The Pambazuka News database is now available on line. Pambazuka News is a weekly electronic newsletter covering news, commentary, and analysis, and a range of other resources on human rights and development in Africa. More than 15,000 news items, editorials, letters, reviews, etc that have appeared in Pambazuka News during the last two years are now available in an easily accessible website.

<http://www.pambazuka.org/>

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<http://www.womensnet.org.za>

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 below.



This poignant poem reflects the difficult situation faced by women throughout many parts of Africa as regards land rights. It was published in the Uganda Land Alliance/Action Aid Uganda study (2000), entitled: 'Included yet Excluded a Study of Women's Land Rights in the Districts of Pallisa and Kapchorwa'

Where Do I Belong?

Where do I belong?
Neither here nor there
When I ask here
I am told I will be married there
When I ask there
I am told I was not born there
Where do I belong?
Neither here nor there
But where do I labour
Both here and there
As daughter here
And a wife there
Both here and there
When I die
Where do I belong?
Neither here nor there
Here I am not a son
There I am only a woman
A visitor
In both place in relation to land
I belong here nor there

BY JACQUELINE ASIIMWE [DEC. 1999]

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FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS