



**NATIONAL MEETING ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF RURAL WOMEN'S NETWORKS**

23 – 24 FEBRUARY 2007

WORKSHOP REPORT

RANCH ON THE LAKE, LWEZA- KIGO, UGANDA



Contact:

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

P.O. Box 4411, Kampala, Uganda

Tel: 256-41-4532035

Fax: 256-41-4530474

Email: info@wougnet.org

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

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ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
ARV	Anti Retro Viral Therapy
AU	African Union
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CTA	Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immune Virus
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
KIC	Kubere Information Centre
MOU	Memorandum Of Understanding

NAWOU	National Association of Women Organizations of Uganda
NEPAD	New Partnership for African Development
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NVIWODA	Ntulume Village Women's Development Association
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission
RWN	Rural Women's Networks
SMS	Short Message Service
TOR	Terms of Reference
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing
WOUGNET	Women of Uganda Network

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) organized the Uganda National meeting on Information and Communication Strategies for Sustainability of Rural Women's Networks from 23 - 24 February 2007 at Ranch on The Lake, Lweza- Kigo, Uganda with financial support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA).

The national meeting was organized as a follow up activity to the online discussion (e-discussion) on Rural Women's Networks that took place from January to June 2006. One of the recommendations from this e-discussion was that in subsequent e-discussions, more rural women networks – including those without internet access – should meet through face to face opportunities. In support of this recommendation, national meetings have been held in Uganda and Senegal with financial support from CTA.

The Uganda national meeting provided an opportunity for the rural women's networks to share their views and challenges met in networking and dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS. The following report gives the workshop proceedings during the two day workshop. During the first day of the meeting, participants were introduced to the background of the workshop, its structure, a summary of the online discussion report and a presentation of strengthening information sharing and networking among rural women's networks. The second day of the meeting began with presentations on the impact of HIV/AIDS in Uganda with a focus on food security and rural communities livelihoods. The second day also included a presentation on reinforcing networking among the rural women's networks and recommendations on how best the organizations represented at the meeting can network on a continuous basis.

1.0 Introduction

From 23 – 24 February 2007, a Uganda National Meeting for Rural Women’s Networks was organised by Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) with financial support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP EU (CTA). The workshop was hosted at the Ranch on the Lake, Lweza – Kigo. This meeting drew participants from RWNs and organizations working with rural women in 13 districts across Uganda, including Apac, Arua, Busia, Gulu, Kampala, Kasese, Kayunga, Lira, Luwero, Mpigi, Mukono, Nebbi, and Pader.

1.1 Background to the Uganda National Meeting

The workshop theme was “Information and Communication Strategies for Sustainability of Rural Women’s Networks” and was a follow up activity to a six-month online discussion forum on the sustainability of CTA/Dimitra networks and impact of HIV/AIDS on rural women networks. The e-discussion was held from January to June 2006 under the theme “Strengthening Rural Women Networks with regards to Information and Communication, and to combat HIV/AIDS in rural areas”. The workshop followed one of the recommendations from the e-discussion which was in subsequent discussions, more rural women networks including those without Internet access should meet through face-to-face opportunities and discuss their views on the theme with the outcomes of such meetings shared with other networks, through online discussion forums, in order to enrich and include diverse experiences.

1.2 Objectives of the Uganda National Meeting

The Uganda National Meeting had four objectives:

- To strengthen rural women networks and build capacity in information sharing and networking.
- To exchange experiences and knowledge on the impact of HIV/AIDS in rural areas.
- To analyze the effects of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural community life.

- To define common activities that can reinforce the various organizations and networks.

1.3 Expected output of the Uganda National Meeting

There were two primary outputs expected of the Uganda National Meeting. It was expected that the output of this meeting would comprise of strategies that would strengthen rural women networks. Secondly, it was expected that the national meeting report and recommendations would be shared with the participants of the six-month e-discussion in order to solicit further contributions on the strengthening of rural women networks.

1.4 Expectations of the Participants

The expectations of the participants were found to lay within three categories, namely, knowledge sharing and networking, capacity development and creation of partnerships.

Knowledge Sharing and Networking

- Share information regarding HIV/AIDS and women
- Share and learn more about the FAO/Dimitra project.
- Learn more about WOUGNET and educate the rural women on the roles of WOUGNET.
- How to network more effectively with WOUGNET and all the other organizations represented at the workshop

Capacity Development

- To gain more knowledge and skills from WOUGNET as this will help rural women to develop economically and socially.
- To learn from participants' experiences on how to improve the networks with whom CEFORD works
- How to use the ICTS to empower the rural women

Create Partnerships

- Develop strong relationship that will help in networking and collaboration

1.5 Opening Remarks

The meeting was opened by Dr. Dorothy Okello, WOUGNET Coordinator. In her opening remarks, she welcomed all the participants present, she thanked them for making time to be part of the meeting and hoped that at the meeting, the voices of the rural women that were not able to be heard during the e-discussion would be heard as their input would be posted to the e-discussion.

Dr. Okello informed participants that the Uganda national meeting was a build up from 2005 when WOUGNET was invited to a joint work meeting held from 13th to 17th June 2005 in Brussels, Belgium by Dimitra-FAO and CTA, with the goal to strengthen and energize networks working for rural women in the South. This was followed by a six-month online discussion with the theme “Strengthening Rural Women Networks with regards to Information and Communication, and to combat HIV/AIDS in rural areas”. Given that the voices of the rural women’s networks were not heard due to lack of internet access, there was need for a meeting in which their views would be gathered and input shared with the participants of the online discussion in order to solicit further contributions on the strengthening of rural women’s networks. Subsequently, national meetings were to be held in Senegal and Uganda.

Dr. Okello concluded by wishing participants fruitful deliberations and with those few words declared the meeting open.

2.0 Overview of the structure for the national meeting

Ms. Janet Cox Achora, the WOUGNET Rural Access Program Officer, gave an introduction of the structure and objectives of the workshop. In her presentation Ms.

Achora explained to the participants the format in which the workshop would be conducted. She informed the participants that it would mainly be participatory with the use of working groups to discuss each of the objectives of the workshop. She communicated that the workshop was a follow up activity to the six-month online discussion. She added that the expected output from the meeting would comprise of strategies that would enable rural women networks to grow stronger.

3.0 Introduction of Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

A presentation on WOUGNET was made by Ms. Goretti Zavuga Amuriat – WOUGNET ICT Program Manager. Ms. Amuriat focused her presentation on the activities currently being undertaken by WOUGNET. She informed the participants that WOUGNET activities are carried out under four program areas, namely, Information Sharing and Networking, Technical Support, Gender and ICT Advocacy and, fourthly, Rural Access.

Ms. Amuriat proceeded to explain the aims of the four WOUGNET program areas. The aim of Information sharing and Networking is to facilitate access to relevant information by WOUGNET members in both the rural and the urban areas and includes production of a print newsletter and hosting face to face workshops on topical issues and online discussions. Technical support aims at providing technical support to WOUGNET members in applying ICTs in their activities and includes activities like website design for WOUGNET members and answering IT/ICT questions that members may have. Gender and ICT Advocacy aims at building capacity of network members to effectively influence the formulation and implementation of gender sensitive policies and includes activities like analysis of policy documents to identify gender issues and building capacity of policy makers, ICT Experts and journalists in gender analytical skills, to appreciate gender and be able to integrate it in policies and programs. Rural access aims at improving rural women's access to ICTs, strengthening organisation members and building capacity in ICTs application, increasing women's access in ICTs activities including the setup of Rural Information Centres such as Kubere Information Centre (KIC) with the aim of providing rural women's farmers with

much needed agricultural information and training in the use of ICTs like phones, computers, radios and audio tapes.

She concluded by saying that WOUGNET would continue to strengthen the use of ICTs by women and women organizations in order to effectively address local problems for sustainable development.

4.0 Summary of the CTA/Dimitra online discussion and recommendations

Participants were briefed on the discussions and recommendations from the six-month CTA/Dimitra online discussion by Ms. Janet Achora, WOUGNET Rural Access Program Officer. In her presentation, Ms. Achora provided the background to the online discussion, the thematic areas of the discussion and highlighted a few conclusions and recommendations that resulted from the online discussion. The six months' discussion was organized and financed by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP EU (CTA) as a follow-up to the CTA/FAO-Dimitra workshop in July 2005. The discussion was coordinated and hosted by WOUGNET in both English and French at this address: <http://www.dgroups.org/groups/cta/rwn/>, and was conducted in collaboration with ENDA Pronat, Senegal, and the Pacific Islands Energy Gender Network from 1st January to 30th June 2006.

The theme of the six-month online discussion was “Strengthening Rural Women’s Networks with regards to Information and Communication & to combat HIV/AIDS in Rural Areas.” The electronic discussion was comprised of two parts. Part one focused on Sustainability of the CTA/Dimitra networks and part two focused on the Impact of HIV/AIDS. Each part was categorized into three main themes, each theme covering a month’s discussion namely January - Experience from networks, February - Funding mechanisms, March - Information and communication strategies, April - Identification of shared problems as a result of the impact of HIV/AIDS, May - experience from networks in dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS and June - Information and communication strategies that can be used by rural women’s networks.

The discussion noted that HIV/AIDS was still affecting the majority of households in Africa hence impacting negatively on food security and income levels for most families. Culture and poverty still play a big part in escalating the spread and effects of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Effective information and communication strategies such as use of multiple channels, combining technology and social networks, exploiting the fairly wide availability of communication technology tools like radios in rural areas are vital to the efforts to reduce the spread and containing the effects of HIV/AIDS in rural areas.

The recommendations following the online discussion included: in subsequent discussions, rural women networks in other countries can adopt Senegal's approach to collect views of their members with no Internet access through a face-to-face meeting and later share them on the list. It was also recognized that there was need to sensitize development partners and funding institutions to include funding of rural women network projects among their funding priorities. As an action point from the six-month's online forum, individual rural women networks could merge into regional groups to form recognizable entities better placed to apply and stand chances of winning funding. This funding could later be shared out.

5.0 Overview of the EC Discussion Paper on Advancing African Agriculture

The presentation on the European Commission (EC) Discussion Paper was by Dr. Dorothy Okello, WOUGNET Coordinator. The paper was entitled "Advancing African Agriculture: Proposal for continental and regional level cooperation on agricultural development in Africa". The aim of the paper was to find ways to create awareness about this proposal and potential impact on rural women's networks and to gather contributions and input about the proposal for submission to CTA. She added that she hoped the paper would shade more light on how best rural women's networks could benefit from agricultural programs at national, regional, continental and international level.

The proposal highlighted six main challenges that were facing the agricultural sector and these were;

- 1) Developing an integrated vision for growth of agricultural activities can be enhanced by interventions in other sectors such as industry, infrastructure, water and trade.
- 2) Strengthening agricultural sector governance through agreement of national strategies for agriculture and its sub-sectors by all stakeholders.
- 3) Improving rural productivity through land security or ownership.
- 4) Accessing remunerative markets through provision of market information and quality storage of produce.
- 5) Managing the natural resource base in a sustainable manner to avoid land degradation and over grazing.
- 6) Reducing vulnerabilities that lead to food insecurity in particular natural disasters and limited access to resources and markets.

The EU policy position emphasises that agriculture and rural development are crucial for poverty reduction and agricultural growth. With Agriculture as one of the seven priority areas identified by the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), African Union (AU) and NEPAD launched the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) that commits member states including Uganda to allocate at least 10% of national budget to agricultural sector by 2008/09. Expected results from the AU-EU cooperation included improved information systems, knowledge bases together with cross-country cooperation and lessons learning.

Following the presentation, participants were divided into four working groups. Below are the outcomes of the group work in relation to the discussion questions.

5.1 Key general challenges for rural women's networks

Groups were asked to identify three key general challenges for rural women's networks. The challenges identified can be summarized in five areas namely: information and communication, infrastructure, financial, lack of knowledge and cultural and societal norms. The table below presents the challenges identified.

Key area	Challenges
Information and communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of forum to share information. • High costs of accessing information like the internet. • Lack of technical skills on the use of ICT. • Lack of knowledge on ICT resources available. • No access to information and lack of communication facilities.
Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor infrastructure that makes the accessibility difficult. • Poor communication system.
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income levels.
Lack of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High rate of ignorance on development issues. • High level of illiteracy. • Inadequate support for financial, technical community involvement and management capacities.
Cultural and societal norms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural norms and behavior.



© WOUGNET 2007 – *Photo of participants in a group discussion*

5.2 Opportunities to address key general challenges

The opportunities to address the challenges faced by rural women's networks can be summarized into four categories namely; Information Sharing and Networking, Advocacy and Lobbying, Establishment and access to communication infrastructure and Capacity Building.

Information Sharing and Networking

- Linking and networking with already established groups like WOUGNET.
- Making formal networks and focal points to share information and knowledge.

Advocacy and Lobbying

- Lobby and advocate for ICT support services- financial and technical.
- Organizations which lack skills should demand for their services.

Establishment and access to communication infrastructure

- The government should accelerate development and infrastructure.
- Establish central information centers.
- Avail rural ICT resources in appropriate technology.
- Put in place communication technologies e.g. radios, phones, computer sets and strengthening the local communication media through music dance and drama.

Capacity Building

- Capacity building for users of ICTs.
- Continuous sensitization and involvement of communities and network members.
- Educate rural women on development issues that they can take advantage of.
- Initiate income generating activities to enhance self sustainability and training in proposal writing to seek funding for rural women activities.

5.3 Common information and communication strategies in use by rural women's networks

The common information and communication strategies identified have been categorised into the traditional and the modern ICTs. The traditional ICTs identified were gatherings and face to face discussion, letter writing, radio information like announcements on news, family issues, political programs, church programs, agricultural programs, health issues, brochures and posters. The modern ICTs identified were email, internet and mobile phones.

5.4 National and international networks to which rural women's networks are affiliated

In order to display the current level of networking, participants were asked to list the national and international networks to which their organizations are affiliated. Following below is a list of networks/organizations/institutions that the rural women's networks are affiliated to. It was observed that networking is being done at district, national and international levels. It was also observed that there were no affiliations to Africa-wide networks.

District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● District women network ● District NGO Link Forum
National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Isis Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) ● Ntulume Village Women's Development Association (NVIWODA) ● Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) ● Uganda Women's Network (UWONET) ● National NGO Board ● National NGO Link Forum ● National Association of Women's Organizations in Uganda (NAWOU) ● Forum for African Women Educationalists - Uganda (FAWEU) ● National Association of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (NACWOLA)
International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Association for Progressive Communications (APC)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dimitra • Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
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5.5 Plenary discussion on advancing African agriculture

Following the group presentations, Dr. Okello noted that none of the groups had listed being linked to an agricultural organization or network despite most of the participants at the workshop being engaged in agricultural activities. Participants were encouraged to network and partner with agricultural organizations as these would also help in achievement of organizational goals and objectives. Some of the agricultural organizations listed for the information of the participants were;

- Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA)
- World Food Program (WFP)
- Association of Uganda Professional Women in Agriculture and the Environment (AUPWAE)
- CARITAS
- Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns (VEDCO)
- Agency for promoting Sustainable Development Initiatives (ASDI)
- National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS)
- National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU)
- National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO)
- Uganda National Farmers Federation (UNFFE)
- WANDA – Mukono
- District Farmers Associations

For purposes of avoiding loss of their respective identities as they join various networks, participants wanted to know what should be done to ensure sustainability of rural women networks. In response to this, it was noted that it is always important to be clear about the purpose of the network, and establish a relationship with the network members so that they

feel a sense of ownership. In addition, women's organizations should join those networks that will enhance their activities as well as still enable the organizations to retain their unique identities.

There was also interest from participants to learn more about CTA who was facilitating discussion of the EC paper in addition to sponsoring the Uganda National Meeting. Participants were informed that CTA is the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation ACP EU, and is a development partner based in the Netherlands that supports agricultural, rural and ICT-based programs in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific Islands.

Finally, participants were interested to know more about whether Uganda was on track to meet the CAADP recommendations on budget allocation to the agricultural sector. A participant informed the plenary that Uganda currently allocates four percent of the budget. It was agreed that a lot needed to be done if the 10% allocation is to be reached by the year 2008/2009 in line with the CAADP to which Uganda is committed.

6.0 Presentations: Strengthening rural women's networks and the impact of HIV/AIDS

Four presentations were made based on each of the objectives of the workshop with each presentation aimed at giving the participants a broader understanding of the topic of discussion.

6.1. Strengthening rural women networks and building capacity in information sharing and networking

The presentation was made by Ms. Cissy Edith Nyarwa, NVIWODA Program Coordinator. In her presentation, Ms. Nyarwa focused on what networking was, the importance of effective communication when networking, the key challenges to networking and the ways of improving networking. She emphasized the importance of having super ordinate goals, sharing or clear communication of one's vision with the network members and always

creating a sense of ownership. It is only when people have a sense of ownership in what an organization is doing that networking would succeed. Simplicity of language, local content and a non – defeatist attitude were key to the success of networking.

Following her presentation, three working groups were generated, each tasked with discussing one of the following three questions:

- Mention three strategic ways that can improve networking among the grassroots networks.
- To what extent have networks been of benefit to their members?
- How could international, national, regional and local networks bridge the networking gap?

The group discussions are presented below.

6.1.1 Three strategic ways that can improve networking among the grassroots networks

- Having regular meetings with the members at the grassroots.
- Always keep the original objective of the network in mind even when integrating new opportunities for networking
- Identification of common activities that can strengthen the networking among individuals at grass root level.

6.1.2 Extent to which networks have benefited their members

Groups were asked to discuss the extent to which networks have benefited their members. The benefits identified can be summarized in 3 areas namely: capacity building and empowerment of network members, information sharing and networking and cost minimization. The table below presents the challenges identified.

Key Area	Benefits
<i>Capacity Building and empowerment of network members</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity building through training and sensitization during network meetings • There is also institutional development – capacity building of individual members. • It is a source of empowerment
<i>Information sharing and networking</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a strong peer support when one networks because of the relationships built in the networks. • Increased information sharing among members of the networks. • There is exposure of the individual members of the networks • Creates linkages with other stakeholders who are in the same area of operation as the network member. • Identification of gaps in the community can be easily identified since all the organizations are sharing information. • Organizations can easily get best ways of dissemination of information and also look at the challenges with less difficulty as there is also input from network members.
<i>Cost Minimization</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational costs are minimized as common activities can be done together with network members not as individual organizations.

6.1.3 Ways in which International, National, Regional and Local networks can bridge the networking gap

Areas identified for bridging the networking gap were exchange visits and information collection and dissemination.

Exchange Visits

- Visit national, local, regional and international organizational with common activities to create awareness of the existence of other organizations.

Information Collection and Dissemination

- Publicity campaigns through newsletters, radio talk shows, publications, banners, charity walks and t. shirts to create awareness of common network activities
- Workshops and conference to share common experiences and lessons learnt from networking.



© WOUGNET 2007 – *Group discussion by participants*

6.2 Impact of HIV/AIDS in the Rural Areas - Situation and Response

The presentation on the impact of HIV/AIDS in the rural areas was made by Mr. Spencer Birungi who is Project Coordinator of the Stop Aids Now! Project. The focus of the presentation by Mr. Birungi included the need to have a response to mitigate the effects of the HIV/AIDS impact on the rural communities. In his presentation, he emphasized that HIV/AIDS was not only a health issue but a developmental one given that over 80% of the Ugandan population was in the rural areas. AIDS accounted for 91,000 deaths in 2005/2006 with the prevalence rate currently at 6.4%. Due to the HIV/AIDS impact on the rural areas, there has been increased workload on the rural women, women were less likely to own any property due to strong cultural norms as well as an increased incidence of child headed households.

Mr. Birungi placed emphasis on providing the rural communities with the right information about HIV/AIDS in order to deal with its impact, provision of income generating activities, advocating against stigma and discrimination of the families infected and affected by the AIDS scourge and advocacy against gender inequalities like property and sexual rights. He concluded by saying that despite challenges like inadequate health facilities, strong cultural and societal norms, together as communities, civil society and developmental partners, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic can be dealt with.

6.2.1 Post exposure treatment for victims of rape/defilement for HIV prevention

In response to a query from a participant, Mr. Birungi noted he was not aware if the post exposure treatment was readily available to the public. He added that this treatment is usually given within 72 hours following the forced sexual act with someone who is HIV positive to greatly reduce the susceptibility of the victim to HIV/AIDS.

6.2.2 Ways for parents to deal with youth in addressing HIV/AIDS

Participants were interested in ways in which parents could deal with the youth of today who behave in ways that are contrary to the norms of their societies and to the advice of their parents.

Mr. Birungi began by emphasizing that today there is a generation gap between the youth and the parents. Many parents fail to understand the youth and the challenges they face in growing up (the youth want to be readily accepted by society and be a part of the latest trends and fads). Parents need to know the best way of dealing with the youth is by continuously talking to them, being friendly and trying to understand them. This however should be done bearing in mind the socio- economic environment meaning that some behaviors regardless of whether the youth wants to fit in society should be discouraged as encouraging such behavior will risk exposure to HIV/AIDS.

Participants also voiced their concerns on how to get all members within a community to be responsible for looking after those that are sick. The challenge with community and family care support is that women are expected to look after their husbands when sick but when a woman is sick she will be expected to look after the home and the husband usually brings in another woman to take care of the home as she is not able to. Gender inequality is still a major challenge in Uganda. It was proposed that one way of dealing with this is by having support groups for the men to help them understand women and HIV/AIDS.

In addition, to address the challenge associated with property rights and inheritance, the rural women should be sensitized about the Ugandan laws to know what they are entitled to as legally married women in eventuality of the husband's death

6.3 Effects of HIV/AIDS on Food Security and Rural Community Life

Ms. Daphne Kakonge, the WOUGNET Assistant Technical and Operations Officer, made the presentation on the effects of HIV/AIDS on Food Security and Rural Community Life. In her presentation, Ms. Kakonge focused on the effects of HIV/AIDS on food security

and rural livelihoods with emphasis on the impact of women and the agricultural sector. Emphasis was placed on the fact that HIV/AIDS hits hardest in the most productive group of 15 – 49 years of age and that agriculture was the dominant sector in Uganda's economy, supplying 80 percent of employment, 43 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and 90 percent of foreign exchange earnings. The sector was dominated by food production, and most produce was consumed at the household level. HIV/AIDS was increasingly being recognised as a cause of hunger and continued food insecurity, particularly in the African context.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on the agricultural sector included loss of labor as HIV/AIDS affected the most active and productive segment of the rural society, thereby threatening agricultural productivity and food security, loss of agricultural knowledge as the intergenerational transfer of knowledge was being disrupted because parents died before passing on their knowledge to their children, food insecurity as nutrition levels decreased making people even more vulnerable to HIV infection and the diseases that follow and economic losses as there was a shift from labor-intensive (high - value) crops to subsistence crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes with less labor requirements that reduced incomes and negatively affected the overall economy of the country (decreases in exports).

The impact of HIV/AIDS on nutritional status was looked at from the biological perspective which was the association between nutritional status and risk of infection, as well as the relationship of nutritional status and the evolution of the disease e.g. opportunistic infections and loss of appetite and the socio- economic perspective which considered the consequences of the disease for the food and nutrition situation of affected households and communities through lack of food. Women were not only more susceptible to HIV infection but also vulnerable to impacts biologically, socio-culturally and economically. Some women engaged in transactional sex to earn money or other commodities in times of economic insecurity while others whose husbands had died of AIDS had resorted to commercial sex as a means of survival, because they had no legal rights of inheritance to their husbands' property and often a widow was blamed for transmitting the disease and accused of promiscuity and immorality with some being harassed and forced to leave their village.

Strategies that can be used to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural community life included use of labor-saving technology like ox- ploughs and activities like intercropping to greatly reduce on the energy spent tilling the land. At house hold level diversifying crop production, income-generating activities and building up insurance mechanisms including savings, assets while at community level support and mitigation included social support groups, self-help groups, savings clubs, microfinance activities as well as treatment and care including patient care. Local agricultural technologies should be documented in order to preserve local knowledge.

She concluded by saying that effective mitigation of the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural livelihoods entails understanding the problems of AIDS that are specific to rural areas and working in collaboration with the local community, civil society organizations and government.

Following her presentation, three working groups were generated, each tasked with discussing the following three questions:

- HIV & food security – How can the community continually have access to high quality foods?
- HIV & effects on the rural community life – The effects are well known and documented, but what should communities do to address the impact of HIV/AIDS on community livelihoods?
- HIV & land issues – What should the communities do given that most of the land remains underutilized following high death rates in the community?

6.3.1 Ways in which communities can continually ensure Food Security

Following below is the ways in which communities can ensure food security as a result of the group discussions. The areas identified are categorized in three areas namely; improving of nutritional status, information sharing and networking and advocacy and lobbying.

Improving of nutritional status

- Using indigenous crops and plants in improving nutrition and fighting HIV/AIDS.

- Adoption of traditional food storage methods to reduce the loss of food. Food can be stored as a paste e.g. simsim and groundnut paste, in powder form e.g. millet and cassava flour and fish can be smoked.
- Encourage the adoption of kitchen gardens as a way to supplement the food needed by families.
- The district health personnel should be involved in the promotion of food security and nutrition at household level.
- Introduce community project on small animals like piglets and goats to supply proteins.

Information Sharing and Networking

- Introduce exchange visit programs to enable communities see the reality of food security and nutrition or apply ICTs to improve on agricultural produce.
- Networking with agricultural institutions in and outside Uganda to learn the best agricultural practices.

Advocacy and Lobbying

- The NGOs/CBOs should utilize women councilors to promote food security and nutrition.
- Solicit for local governments and CSOs support to vulnerable groups.

6.3.2 Addressing the impact of HIV/AIDS on community livelihoods

The responses identified following the group discussions can be summarized into three categories and these are community support groups, sensitization and behavior change and empowerment of the communities.

Community Support Groups

- Organize community to share roles in home based care, palliative care, counseling and guidance.
- Encourage support from the extended families to the affected homes.

- Strengthen community service providers in different sectors in provision of support to affected households.

Sensitization and Behavior Change

- Intensive community awareness programs e.g. VCT, PMTCT, gender and Gender Based Violence.
- Modifying cultural norms through sensitization on rights.
- Sensitize and create awareness on the impact of HIV/AIDS
- Create awareness of availability and accessibility of ARVs.
- Disclosure and mentoring children.

Empowerment of the communities

- Women should be empowered economically through income generating activities and social empowerment like through capacity building.
- Training to preserve local knowledge to be done at the community and family level irrespective of gender, sex and age.
- Strongly lobby the communities to work together to fight stigmatization especially people living with HIV/AIDS.
- Restore good traditional values for example “every child is my child.”

6.3.3 Land utilization following death of community members

The participants were divided into groups and asked to identify ways of effective land utilization given the high death rates of community members. The output of the discussion is summarized into three categories and these are income generating activities, sensitization and capacity building and community involvement in land use.

Income Generating Activities

- Joint income generating activities to sustain the home after death of spouse.
- Support the families to use land such as collateral materials for accessing loans.

Sensitization and Capacity Building

- Create awareness of effective land use.
- People should learn the importance of making a will, Inheritance rights and succession

Community Involvement in Land Use

- Building strong solidarity amongst the community e.g. digging groups.
- Involving the extended families in the utilization of the land.
- Community is sensitized on their roles to protect vulnerable families for example child headed families to avoid snatching of their land.



© WOUGNET 2007 – Presentation of group discussions

6.4 Reinforcing Organizations & Networks: Common Activities

Ms. Janet Cox Achora, the WOUGNET Rural Access Program Officer, made the presentation on common activities to reinforce networks and organizations. Networking was defined as making links from people we know to people they know, in an organized way, for a specific purpose, while remaining committed to doing our part, expecting nothing in return.

In order to succeed at networking there was need to establish goals, analyzing the kind of help needed in achieving your goals as well as developing people skills. Common activities to enhance networking included sharing news on organizational activities through tools like Newsletters, mailing lists, telephone, organizing workshops, trainings and meetings to build capacity of network members, joining successful existing networks e.g. NAWOU, joint fundraising drives in soliciting for funds from donors and partnering with like minded organizations. She placed emphasis on keeping the network going through constant communication even though contacts have already been established.

Following her presentation, Ms. Achora asked the participants to come up with recommendations on the way forward after the meeting in relation to networking among rural women.

6.4.1 Recommendations on how to strengthen rural women networks

Two main categories on how to make rural women networks stronger were identified as recommendations. These were partnerships and collaborations and information sharing and networking.

Partnerships and collaborations

- Participants at the workshop can begin partnering with other organizations represented at the workshop with similar interests.

- Formation of regional networks with a focal point person to coordinate activities under the different regional networks and with WOUGNET. The focal point will also help keep the network going so that it does not die and involve different groups of individuals in activities that are of interest to them.

Information Sharing and Networking

- Use of regional community radio program to talk about what WOUGNET does in collaboration with the rural network members. During such programs, network members can highlight the benefits of networking. It was noted that support could be asked of CTA which already has an extensive radio programme with other partners.
- Feasible field visits to different network members.
- Within our organization, we can use something to say that they belong to WOUGNET network.
- Information sharing on activities done by different organizations to WOUGNET on a quarterly basis or as convenient to the organization. In addition, relevant information could be shared with the other networks from ACP regions through the online discussion forum supported by CTA.
- Sending of SMS and email to inform people about important events going on at WOUGNET. SMS will mainly be for the people with no readily available internet access. Short articles on how this works could be shared with a wider audience, through online and print fora.
- Use memorabilia as a means of networking with other members for example banners, caps, t-shirts with the different organization logos. It is cost effective as one banner or t-shirt can have the logos of the network members.
- Deliberate commitment by members to share information not only on WOUGNET but other networks members.
- WOUGNET can produce souvenirs that members can identify with for example cups, posters and stickers in addition to the calendars.

Following the recommendation that regional networks be formed among the participants, the different participants were divided based on which part of the country they come from. Groups then had some time to plan out activities that they can do together.

Central region	Florence Sekabanja, Sarah Namulondo Florence Baka, Farida Naigaga, Cissy Nyarwa Florence Nakabugo, Annet Nakate, Olivia Nakalema
Northern region	Florence Omara, Claudia Apio, Margaret Onono, Helen Koli, Acan Korina, Apio Mercy, Godfrey Odwong, Anne Acham, Claudia Apio, Jennifer Aciku, Nancy Grace Ayo
East-West region	Robert Mitse, James Ojambo

6.4.2 Initial activities for regional networks formed at the Uganda National Meeting

The three regional networks created at the national meeting presented a set of initial activities to be undertaken following the national meeting. The discussions are highlighted below.

Northern regional network – Initial Activities

- Membership association will be by registration
 - Have members sign an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for all the members through meeting
 - Have a designed card for every member who signs the MOU.
- Have a meeting for a development plan. Policies of working, Terms of Reference (TOR) to support each other
- Operationalize the plan. Set foot on the ground, workshop, visiting, training, writing newsletter, radio talk shows. The focal point for the network will be in Gulu at the

Grassroot Women Association for Development located at Plot 18 Senior quarters, Onono Road.

Central regional network – Initial Activities

- Have a meeting at NVIWODA offices in Kampala on the 25 May 2007, to familiarize with the group members and their activities.
- The meeting to be held on the 25 May 2007 will involve the setting of the networking goals, objectives and identifying network activities.
- Immediate activity will be visiting the WOUGNET website to learn more about the different network members from the profile page of network members

East - West regional network – Initial Activities

- Information sharing and networking on activities being undertaken by the different organizations.
- Exchange visits to physically see what the organizations are doing.
- Sharing information on resource mobilization and if possible have joint resource mobilization.

7.0 Closing Remarks

In her closing remarks, Dr. Dorothy Okello thanked the participants for honoring the invitation to be a part of the workshop, and for their active participation. She placed emphasis on the need for continued networking among network members as it is important to the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. She added that the report would be forwarded to the online discussion forum to let the Ugandan voices heard. She further appreciated the administrative support that had been provided by WOUGNET staff and acknowledged CTA who provided the funding that made the workshop possible. With these few words, Dr. Okello declared the workshop closed.

Annex 1: Program for the Uganda National Meeting

PROGRAM

The National Meeting on networking and collaboration among rural Women networks.

Ranch on the lake Country Club Lweza Kigo

23rd – 24th February 2007

Thursday 22nd, February 2007

4:00pm-6:00pm Registration of participants at Ranch on the lake Country Club, Lweza –Kigo

PART I: OPENING CEREMONY AND GENERAL INTRODUCTIONS

Friday 23rd February 2007

8:30-9:00am Registration and sitting of participants in the conference hall

9:00-9:15am Opening remarks and Rules of the game.

9:15-9:30am Presentations/ Introductions of participants

9:30-9:45am Introduction of the structure and objectives of workshop /Purpose of the workshop

9:45-10: 30am General presentation of WOUGNET and expected outcomes of the meeting.

10:30-11:00am *Tea break*

PART II: PRESENTATIONS & DISCUSSIONS

11:00am -12:00	Summary of e-discussion and recommendations
12:00-1:00pm	European Commission Discussion paper on African farmers.
<i>1:00-2:00pm</i>	<i>Lunch break</i>
2:00-2:45pm	Rural women networks & build capacity building in information sharing and networking
2:00-3:00pm	Question and discussion
<i>3:00-03:15pm</i>	<i>Coffee/tea breaks</i>
03:15 -4:30pm	Working groups and presentations
4:30-5:30pm	plenary session
5:30- 6:00pm	18 min video on 'Gardens of Hope: Urban Micro farming and HIV/AIDS'
6:00pm	End day
7:00-8:00pm	Dinner
Saturday 24th February 2007	
8:30-9:00am	Registration
9:00-09:30am	Recap of day one by participant
9:30:10:15am	Impact of HIV/AIDS in rural areas

10:15-10:30am	Questions and Discussion
<i>10:30-11:00am</i>	<i>Tea Break</i>
11:00-11:45	working groups
11:45- 1:00pm	Analysis of the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural community life
<i>1:00-2:00pm</i>	<i>lunch break</i>
2:00-2:45pm	Common activities that could reinforce organizations and Networks
2:45-4:15pm	Working groups
<i>4:15-4:30pm</i>	<i>Coffee/Tea break</i>
4:30-5:15pm	Plenary session
5:15-5:30pm	Workshop evaluation and the way forward.
5:30-5:45pm	Closing remarks
5:45- 6:00pm	Conclusion and Recommendations
7:00- 8:00pm	Dinner

Annex 2: Participants List

NAME	ORGANIZATION	EMAIL ADDRESS	TELEPHONE CONTACT
KAYUNGA			
Farida Naigaga	Kayunga District Farmers Association - K DFA	karugeof@yahoo.com	0774 498975
Florence Nakabugo	Kayunga District Farmers Association -K DFA	karugeof@yahoo.com	0772 531190
Nakalema Olivia	Kayunga District Farmers Association - K DFA	karugeof@yahoo.com	0782 424503
Nakate Annet	Kayunga District Farmers Association -K DFA	karugeof@yahoo.com	0772 830846
APAC			
Odwong Godfrey	Youth Against AIDS Challenges (YAAC) – Apac	yaac93@yahoo.com	0772 961443
Nancy Grace Ayo	National Association of Women Living with AIDS (NACWOLA)		0782 493441
Helen Koli	Save the Children in Uganda	kicinfo@wougnet.org	0782 491184

Mercy Apio	Kubere Information Centre (KIC)	kicinfo@wougnet.org	0782 972470
Florence Omara	National Association of Women Organizations in Uganda - NAWOU Apac branch	nawouapacbranch@yahoo.com	0772 308647
LIRA			
Apio Claudia	Youth Alive - Lira	claudapio@yahoo.com	071/782 338991
MUKONO			
Sarah Namulondo	Mukono Women AIDS Task Force (MWATF)	Mwatf@yahoo.com	0772 903649
Florence Sekabanja	Mukono Women Enterprise Networks & Associations (MWENNA)	fswanda@gmail.com	0772 482162
LUWERO			
Madinah Zalwango	Luweero Women's Development Association (LUWODA)	nassozimargaret@yahoo.com , zalwangomadina2@yahoo.com	0782 387077, 0772 462038
BUSIA			
James Ojambo	Hope Case Foundation	hopecasefoundation1997@yahoo.co.uk	0712 814345

	(HCF)		
NEBBI			
Acan korina	West Nile Private Sector Development Promotion Centre (WENIPS)	wespnileps@yahoo.com 225 Nebbi/ 80 Pakwach	0782 510725
ARUA			
Jennifer Aciku	Community Empowerment For Rural Development (CEFROD)	Jenny_aciku@yahoo.co.uk	0772 463095
KASESE			
Robert Mitse	Rwenzori Concern Women Association (RWECOWA)	Rwecowa2001@yahoo.com	0782 368040
GULU			
Margaret Onono	Grassroots' Women Association For Development (GWAD)	gwad1998@yahoo.co.uk	0772 616551
PADER			
Anne Acham	Women in Rural Development Network (WORUDET)	achamanne2@yahoo.com	0772 318022

MPIGI			
Florence Baka	Business Systems, Buwama	florencebsb@yahoo.com	0772 601676
KAMPALA			
Cissy Edith Nyarwa	Ntulume Village Women's Development Association (NVIWODA)	nyarwacissy@lycos.com	0772 452 965
Janet Cox Achora	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	info@wougnet.org	0414 532035
Goretti Amuriat	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	info@wougnet.org	0414 532035
Daphne Kakonge	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	info@wougnet.org	0414 532035
Dorothy Okello	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	info@wougnet.org	0414 532035
Freda Apio	Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)	info@wougnet.org	0414 532035
Spencer Birungi	Stop AIDS Now! (SAN !)	spencer@acord.or.ug	0772 693138

Annex 3: About CTA and WOUGNET

The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA – www.cta.int) is an international institution set up in 1983 under the EU-ACP Lomé, and operates since 2000 under the Cotonou Agreement. The mission of CTA is to assist actors operating at local, national and regional levels in producing, acquiring, exchanging, utilising and disseminating information related to agricultural and rural development, and natural resource management in the 79 Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) member countries.

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET – www.wougnet.org) is a non governmental organization established in 2000 by several women organizations in Uganda to develop the use of Information and Communication Technologies(ICTs) among women as tools to share information and address challenges collectively. WOUGNET's vision is a network organization that supports, enhances and improves the lives of rural and urban women through the innovative use and application of ICTs and the mission is to promote and support women and women organizations in Uganda to effectively use ICTs for sustainable development.