

**Information and communication in rural areas**

Community listeners' clubs and Women's Leadership

The “Dimitra” project collaborates with several partner organizations that have established community listeners’ clubs sensitive to gender (in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Niger). An innovative initiative, these clubs are spaces for expression and consultation amongst women and men who, in collaboration with community radios and other local stakeholders, connect the rural population and create networks. By sharing knowledge, requesting information, and conducting civic actions, these clubs contribute to local development and food security. These clubs help build women’s self confidence, improve their status within the community, and are tools for sharing knowledge on agriculture. The use of solar crank radios, coupled with solar-rechargeable mobile phones, promotes networking among members of the community listeners’ clubs and literacy centres.

**Knowledge Fair**

The Knowledge Fair held in June 2010 in Niamey, Niger was crucial for drawing attention to the Programme better known for its projects, its participatory methodologies its partner activities, and also for initiating dynamic exchanges and networking around themes that are common to all partners. The 250 Knowledge Fair participants appreciated the level of exchange and the participatory methodology used for knowledge sharing, such as the World Café, «talk shows», and the mapping exercises.

The Knowledge Management and Gender Programme is composed of the following projects: “Capitalization”, “Dimitra”, “Hortivar”, and the “Rural Finance Learning Centre”.

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**Knowledge Management and Gender**

Capitalize and share knowledge on food security and empowerment of rural people

**Fundamental principles**

The creation of the FAO-Belgium Partnership Programme «Knowledge Management and Gender» is based on a systematic consideration of gender issues and the experiences and learning that have resulted from FAO projects and programmes. In the long term, this Programme will contribute to the food security of the rural poor, notably women. Through a participatory approach, it will improve the living conditions of rural populations, the integration of gender issues, and knowledge sharing.

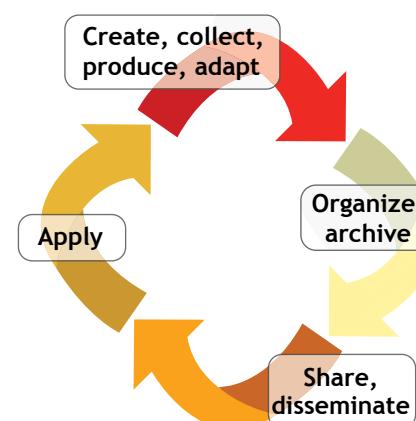


The Knowledge Management and Gender Programme has the following goals:

1. Disseminate knowledge.
2. Promote knowledge sharing.
3. Identify, promote, publicize and disseminate good practices in support of food security and the empowerment of rural populations.
4. Create synergies among the largest possible number of stakeholders in the development sector (i.e. representatives of networks, governments, civil society, producers organizations, other international, bilateral and multilateral organizations).

**Why knowledge management?**

A strategy is essential for capitalizing on experiences and to avoid losing what has been learned. The challenge of this Programme is to demonstrate that there is more to gain by sharing what we know. Sharing enables one to deliver the most appropriate information, leading to appropriate action, which in turn impacts the environment in an appropriate way.



A strategy for effective knowledge management is made up of several stages:

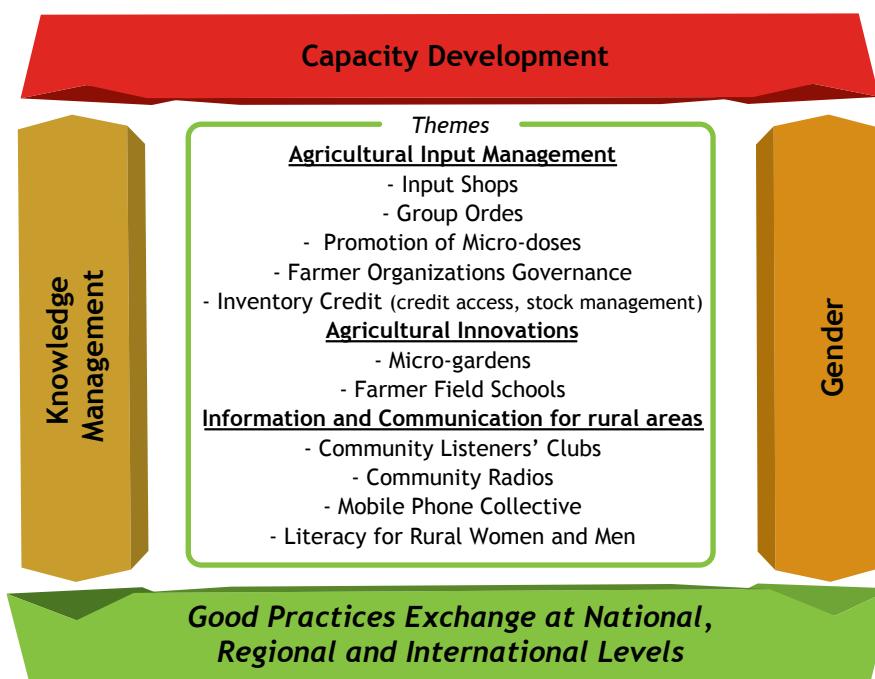
1. Acquiring the relevant knowledge in order to document the existing experiences, translate them into different languages and adapt them to the intended audience.
2. Enabling a system to manage all the content, to file and classify materials so they can be retrieved easily.
3. Sharing and disseminating knowledge through specific means of communication appropriate for each group of users.
4. Effectively applying the shared knowledge to ensure ownership by users and achieve the desired change.

## Why gender?

Gender equality is essential for achieving sustainable development, as are addressing the key issues of food insecurity and poverty. Gender equality is crucial to accomplish FAO's mandate on food security and nutrition, to improve living conditions, to increase agricultural productivity, and to ensure that rural populations - women, men, and young people - have equal access to resources, goods and services and decision-making in rural areas.

### The Programme rests on three pillars: Capacity Development, Knowledge Management and Gender

The Programme arose from the experiences and lessons learned from projects which in turn generated good practices. These lessons have been grouped by three main themes: agricultural input management, agricultural innovations, and information and communication in rural areas. Under each theme, we have developed good practices with Programme partners taking into account capitalization of experiences as well as gender. These good practices are exchanged at local, national, regional, and ultimately the international level.



Through knowledge management we develop capacities as we learn lessons from experiences. A practice that is repeated and applied in other contexts or by other partners enables to define what should become a good practice. This work is complemented by the development of methodologies, training manuals, information fact sheets and fact sheets on good practices.

Capacity development also addresses ways to communicate about gender, integrate gender in development interventions, and promote women's leadership. To this end, good practices are reviewed from the perspective of gender in order to identify if, in the implementation of the practice, gender aspects were taken into account. A gender sensitive analysis methodology is provided to support action-research for implementing practices so that they are able to take into account the needs of both women and men.

## The Programme in Action

### Agricultural Input Management

Learning how to make group orders for potato seeds

In Niger, potato seeds must be imported from Europe each year. With support from the «Capitalization» project, the FCMC-Niya, a federation of horticultural cooperatives, was able, for the first time, to order potato seeds in bulk quantities for all its members (group order). This operation was carried out simply by requesting a commercial letter of credit (a "Crédoc" in French), which is a guarantee of payment provided by the buyer's to the supplier's bank. The use of these financial tools by the federation demonstrates that together farmers are able to order directly from the international market.

### The promotion of gender sensitive practices for inventory credit

Warrantage, or inventory credit system, originally used by European farmers in the 19th century, is a farmers system in which rather than selling their harvest at once, can use it as collateral to obtain credit from a bank. The «Capitalization» project highlights the good practices that contribute to making inventory credit equally accessible, especially the most vulnerable women and men. Farmer organizations, decentralized financial institutions, advisory service providers, and others participate to produce fact sheets that summarize their experiences. In two cases in Burkina Faso and Niger where inventory credit is practiced, the project conducted an analysis of the factors which hinder access or prevent continuing access to inventory credit by the poorest women and men. The solutions for avoiding these inequities will be promoted and integrated into the training manuals.

### Agricultural innovations

Micro-gardens



Dimitra©

Demonstrations of micro-gardens are organized under the project «Hortivar». A micro-garden is a small garden for the cultivation of a wide range of food plants in a small space with little water. Thanks to this, each day a family has every day, for every meal, fresh vegetables with a high nutritional value to meet their daily intake requirements of vitamins, essential minerals, and proteins. Women and men can diversify their food supply while generating income by selling the surplus. The initial investment is very small and micro-gardens can be built using readily available local materials. Minimal work is required which does not overburden women. School children, including those of the «upgrading schools» in Niger, play while building their micro-gardens, and benefit by taking home their produce (mint, tomatoes, onions, etc.).