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Dimitra Newsletter

GENDER, RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT



© Rural women's empowerment
and collective action

Editorial

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Dear Readers,

Just one year ago, world leaders committed to working towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) designed to change the course of the 21st century and address challenges such as poverty, inequality, climate change, education, etc. All these objectives are inextricably linked, and the success of one often depends on that of the others. To achieve a world free of poverty, it is crucial to tackle its many causes, leaving no-one behind. Gender equality and women's empowerment are considered critical for all the SDGs, and are both recognized as an objective in itself (Objective 5) and as a means for achieving all the objectives.

In concrete terms, that means ensuring that all FAO initiatives in rural areas place people and social capital at the centre of socio-economic development, with a special focus on women. That is precisely what the Dimitra Project aims to do, fostering and supporting the process of long-term social transformation, guided by rural communities themselves. For these processes, 'empowerment' means strengthening organizational capacities, participation and access to information.

Empowerment and collective action therefore go hand in hand. That is the common theme of issue 29 of the Dimitra Newsletter. The very first article goes straight to the heart of the matter, describing the community mobilization triggered by the Dimitra Clubs in Gasseda (Niger), which has helped to solve an administrative problem that is key to the future of village children. Still in Niger, women's access to land is the subject of an article that places the spotlight on Seybou Djamma. This woman farmer has managed to obtain formal certificate of land belonging to her husband, as a result of her negotiation skills.

At times, it is the little things that make a difference. That is the message that emerges from three life stories from Benin, Burundi and DRC, where individual events and path-

ways have brought about changes in practices that have benefited the whole community.

Strengthening the resilience of rural communities is the aim of the 'Caisses de résilience', an integrated FAO approach that is described in this issue. The approach offers support to women's associations and farmers' groups, so that they can better respond to shocks and crises, strengthening their capacities in three areas: social, technical and financial.

Our Portraits Series introduces Ms Niakate Goundo Kamissoko, Chair of the National Federation of Rural Women's Associations of Mali. 'From agriculture to politics', Niakate has devoted her life to fighting for women's access to land in Mali, and for an improvement in the livelihoods of rural communities in her country.

The joint United Nations Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) programme is presented in articles that address the subject of horticulture (Nepal) and nutrition (Niger). A third article shows how results of the RWEE-Niger programme were capitalized during the European Development Days, held in Brussels. The event offered an opportunity to present Dimitra Clubs as an entry point for the programme, creating synergies and strengthening coordination at community level. Drawing lessons from experiences is important, and this is highlighted in another article that describes a learning module for capitalization.

To conclude, the Dimitra Clubs in Brief section outlines various club activities carried out in recent months and presents a number of stories of Dimitra Club achievements in Niger and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

I hope you enjoy reading this newsletter!

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THE BELGIAN
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Niger | Social mobilization offers a future to children in Gasseda

In the village of Gasseda, Dimitra Clubs have been discussing the importance of education for young girls and boys as drivers of development in their community. They observed that for any village children to be allowed to attend school, a major hurdle had to be overcome: the children must be registered at the civil status office, a three-day walk away. The clubs successfully rose to the challenge.

In Niger, school enrolment is subject to presentation of the child's birth certificate, which the parents can only obtain from the competent authorities. This poses a considerable national problem since only a minority of children living in rural areas are actually recorded in population registers. This is mainly due to the long distances that separate many rural communities from civil status offices.

In the case of Gasseda, for example, it means going to the capital of the municipality Dantiandou, 13 km away, and to the departmental capital of Kollo - seat of the administrative authorities for validation of birth certificates - which is 95 km away.

Creativity, social mobilization and women's leadership

After discussing the issue of registering births, the clubs decided to settle the matter and sent a delegation to the mayor of Dantiandou to explain the problem. The delegation was made up of the village chief and Hamsa Maïkido, one of the Dimitra Clubs' women's leaders. Having checked that Hamsa was literate and able to undergo training in keeping records of births, marriages and deaths, the municipal civil registry service decided to delegate power for filling out the records to the village of Gasseda, under the responsibility and supervision of Hamsa!

This is how Hamsa Maïkido became the contact point for the entire village for a range of administrative issues. Each month, she sends the various certificates (births, marriages and deaths) to the town hall of Dantiandou, which then sends them to Kollo, where the administrative authority countersigns them and returns them to Hamsa, so



that she can give them to each of their owners. There is no charge for the beneficiaries and, even better, Hamsa receives a nominal sum of 4 500 FCFA (7 euros) per month for her responsibilities.

The presence of Dimitra Clubs in Gasseda has unleashed a community dynamic that has enabled women and men in the village to work together so as to ensure an education and a future for their daughters and sons: "Being able to issue birth certificates on the spot means opening a door that was previously firmly closed. Only a few months ago, you had to travel for 3 days at huge expense. Schooling was jeopardized as a result," said Hamsa, during a Dimitra Club meeting held in Niamey last May.

This achievement by the clubs, together with Hamsa's personal involvement, illustrates the maturity of the Gasseda clubs and its communities. The process that the clubs

went through has led to greater awareness of the challenges faced, but also to an individual and collective undertaking of responsibilities and the emergence of women's leadership.

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Life stories, individual commitment for the benefit of communities

Three countries, three journeys, one common denominator. Experiences which illustrate how simple events can unleash learning dynamics that will change lives in communities, in Benin, DR Congo and Burundi. These experiences also show the importance of using participatory approaches for socio-economic development in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Benin, Martin Tohou creates the “nourishing family backyard” from micro-gardens

Intrigued by micro-garden systems when he participated in a Knowledge Share Fair, held in Niamey, Niger in 2010, Martin Tohou – Executive Director of NGO GRAAB (Groupe de recherche et d'appui à l'autopromotion durable à la base) – was inspired by this technique to promote what he calls the ‘nourishing family backyard’ (cour familiale nourissante). Today, several organizations working toward food security in Benin are drawing on his expertise for technical support.

It all began at the Knowledge Share Fair in Niamey. Once back home, Martin Tohou watched his children sweeping and weeding the courtyard next to their house. He decided to use this space to make better provision for the food needs of his children and the family as a whole, transforming the yard into an area for producing fruit and vegetables.

With the help of his family, Martin Tohou built growing cages from briquettes, inside

which he placed a layer of chicken manure, covering it with straw or shavings of wood. In these new cultivation areas, the family plants all kind of vegetables and fruit trees.

Today, what Mr Tohou calls the ‘nourishing family backyard’ enables the entire Tohou family to have a rich and varied diet. In addition, the wood shavings used in the cages prevent the growth of weeds and maintain soil humidity for several days, making it possible to use very little water for irrigation. “Sales from the surplus of fruit and vegetables earn me more than 5 000 CFA per week, without the help of my husband,” adds Mrs. Tohou. Through his NGO GRAAB, Mr Tohou has launched the ‘Thousand and one nourishing backyards for food security in households with weak purchasing power’ project. The idea is to ensure other families benefit from this experience, in so doing promoting food security and ways of combating childhood malnutrition in the country’s poor households.



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Rural women promote peace in Burundi: the experience of Goreth Nyabenda

Burundi is currently undergoing a political unrest, which is destabilizing the country. Agricultural production has declined significantly, with hunger making itself felt as a result. Since 2014, the Programme entitled “Promotion du rôle de la femme dans la consolidation de la paix”, (Promoting women’s roles in peacebuilding), funded by UN-Women, has been raising the awareness of rural women on conflict prevention by combating malnutrition. The results are tangible, as shown by the example of Ms Goreth Nyabenda.

For several years, Goreth was in a very precarious situation, in constant conflict with her husband and living in extreme poverty. Today, relations with her spouse are harmonious and her family is more prosperous. This has been made possible by her participation in the UN-Women’s programme. Jointly implemented with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and civil society women’s associations, this programme seeks to change the perception of the role of rural women in combating poverty, by

strengthening their capacities so that they can become real drivers of development.

When Goreth joined the programme, her family was living in poverty and her six children suffered from malnutrition. The women’s association she is a member of simply received a goat from the programme. That proved a turning point. Use of manure from the animal led to a significant increase in household vegetable production. And the revenue from sales of produce at local mar-

kets enabled Goreth to set up a poultry rearing activity. In just a few months, her family became a role model for the whole community. She has now bought two cows and two plots of land. This new economic prosperity has enabled the family to regain its serenity.

In addition, Goreth has been selected by the UN-Women's programme as a peace media-

tor in the municipality of Busiga, in the province of Ngozi. Today, peace mediators form a network throughout the provinces of Burundi. They join forces with the Association de Promotion des Actions en Faveur de la Femme et de l'Enfant - APAFE (Association for the Promotion of Actions for Women and Children), working together to fight malnutrition.

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Mali ya Mungu, a young Congolese man discovers the Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools

In South Kivu, few young people want to work in agriculture, which is widely held to be unprofitable and only fit for the poor. Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) can help to change this view, offering new prospects for youth. Participating in a JFFLS enabled Mali ya Mungu, a 17-year-old orphan, to discover the effects of agriculture on health and nutrition. The courage he showed has proved a driving force in the campaign on nutrition in the Dimitra Club of Ikoma.

After the death of his parents, Mali ya Mungu and his two brothers went to live with their grandmother in the village of Ishaliro, South Kivu. The arrival of these three orphans exacerbated this old lady's already precarious financial situation. As time went on, the situation worsened. So Mali ya Mungu left school and took to begging.

Several months ago, he saw a group of young people walking towards a field carrying pots of raw food, as well as plates and fuelwood.

Thinking that the group was going to organize a feast, he decided to follow them to share in the meal. Imagine his surprise when they reached their destination.

Mali ya Mungu had never seen a Junior Farmer Field and Life School and the group facilitator explained to him what a JFFLS was, and that on this particular day, there would be a session on growing amaranth and discovering its nutritional benefits. He watched the entire session with great interest, especially the part about the nutritional value of this vegetable, and was invited to table with the others when the meal was prepared.

Although he had only gone there with the intention of eating, he left with a strong desire to learn. This young boy understood that his poor state of health was the result of an unbalanced diet, based exclusively on cassava fufu, with no vegetables at all. Above all, he realized that all he needed to ensure he never suffered from hunger again lay within easy reach.

Accepted into the group together with his two brothers, Mali ya Mungu gradually developed skills in nutrition. The three brothers decided to set up a kitchen garden at their home. Today, they spend most of their time producing soya, amaranth, beans and onions. In addition, sales of these products bring in a little money, which enables the youngest brother to go to school. In this region, where nutrition is often the preserve of women, Mali ya Mungu stands out as an example. Not only has he improved his diet and that of his family, but he has also become a facilitator for a Dimitra Club, making his contribution in the area of health and nutrition.

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Ghana | Street food Ladies, entrepreneurs for nutrition and food safety

Street food in Africa is women's affair. According to a FAO study in Ghana, women account for more than 90% of street food vendors in the country. This central role is rooted in sociocultural norms, since low-income women and single mothers must balance their traditional duties of housekeepers with income-generating jobs to pay for family needs. Despite public perceptions, street food sold in Accra, the capital of Ghana, is found to be acceptable, nutritious and safe, making it a big chunk of the urban food systems for better livelihoods, as well as an economic opportunity for women.

The selling of street food has proliferated in the last 35 years throughout the continent, mainly due to urbanization and its ensuing effects. On the one hand, the increased commuting distances and the fast urban living have accentuated the demand for easily accessible ready-to-eat and cheap food among the growing low-and-middle-income urban dwellers. On the other hand, a growing number of people looking for a job face labor market that does not expand as quickly, to the detriment of marginalized social groups (i.e. women and ethnic minorities) that are penalized by the lack of education and professional skills. For these people, self-employment, often on an informal basis, becomes the only way to earn a living. In particular, selling street food represents one of the easiest and viable jobs, as it requires little start-up capital and no formal education.

Women have a virtual monopoly over street food trade in Africa

Women account for the majority of street food vendors in the region, with the excep-

tion of a few countries where cultural rules restrict women's economic activities. Street food vending enables them to start and operate their business enterprises with small amounts of capital, traditional cooking skills, home kitchen and cooking equipment, and with the help of unpaid family members, in particular young daughters and sisters.

FAO recently carried out an extensive field survey in Accra, Ghana. The study highlighted that women account on average for over 90% of all the street food vendors at country level. Most of them are between 25 and 45 years old and, compared to the past, their level of education is rising. Almost all of them rely on personal or family money to fund their enterprises, as borrowing capital from banks and microfinance companies is rarely taken into consideration. Street food vendors work an average of 10 hours a day, not including the time spent to buy and cook the ingredients, six days a week. Most of those interviewed during the survey have been working as street food vendors for an average of 8 years, sug-

Esther is 32 years old and a mother of two. She has spent the last four years preparing ready-to-eat fruits from a stall on a street corner. The hardest part of her job, she says, is to get up at 2 in the morning every day to start selling at 5. She wears plastic bags on her hands as gloves. She washes a sharp knife with water gushing from a polyethylene bag (known in Ghana as "pure water"). She takes a pineapple and, holding the clump of leaves, she peels it and cuts it into small pieces that fall into a thin polystyrene container. Mango, banana, watermelon and apple cut in small cubes follow, all washed with the water left. She carefully closes the container over-filled with fruits, securing it with a rubber band in which she slips a small plastic fork and a paper napkin, ready to hand it over to a customer with a thank you and a smile.

Comfort is 27 years old. She wakes up at 5 in the morning, goes to the market to buy the ingredients and opens her kiosk at 8. Until sunset, she sells tomato stew, rice, palava sauce, fried chicken and fish, jollof rice, banku, shito and her true passion: pastries. Unable to find a job, she attended cooking classes and designed her eye-catching brand and logo. Like any true entrepreneur, she knows that the image of a business is as important as the taste of her food and she wishes her customers a sweet French "Bon appétit!"



Comfort in her 'Food and Pastries' kiosk



gesting that the sector is not only a temporary source of income, but can be also a long-standing employment option.

Nutritious and safe street food

The study also highlighted that food street vendors tend to operate in poverty pocket areas of the city and near schools, making street food central in children nutrition. Despite street food vendors are out of food controls by public authorities, and despite public perceptions, the overall hygienic and safety conditions under which street foods are prepared in Accra are found to be acceptable. The rising levels of education of street food vendors, combined with the trainings carried out by authorities in collaboration with FAO in the last years, have improved vendors' knowledge on hygiene and safety standards, food handling, and storage. Public awareness campaigns also had an impact on vendors' practices, as they are now more and more under the constant scrutiny of informed customers. Although public authorities have done little so far to enhance the infrastructure on which vendors can rely (such as clean water sup-

ply), these women try to efficiently put the acquired knowledge into practice relying on the little means they have.

In Accra, as in many other urban areas of Africa, street food vendors represent a big chunk of the urban food systems. FAO works to increase their knowledge and improve their practices, with the support of local authorities in providing better infrastructure. It aims at turning it into an opportunity to improve nutrition and food safety, contribute to healthy diets and better health for city-dwellers, while providing income-generation opportunities for women.

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For further details on the FAO survey:
<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5804e.pdf>

Hamida is 32 years old and lives in Accra. A veil embroidered with blue and golden flowers covers her hair. Her menu includes local dishes: banku, jollof rice, tuo zafi, wakey, beef stew with eggs, shito, fried chicken and fish. She prepares everything at home and brings the food on the spot in shiny pans and coolers. She dishes out warm food with a large metal spoon, serving it in a small plate with recyclable cutlery. Customers sit at plastic tables under a large curtain. When she is not serving, she sits and talks to customers while nursing her 2 years old baby. At 2 pm, her sister takes the lead. Hamida wraps the baby in a shawl tied on her back and leaves, followed by her two older children.

Niger | Land certificates guarantee access to farmland for women

In the Dosso region, agriculture is the main economic activity for local communities and the biggest source of household revenue. However, land access for women remains a major obstacle to rural development. According to a study by the Luxembourg Development Cooperation Agency, very few women own land, despite the existence of customary laws which recognize their right to inherit property. The situation is very challenging, but solutions can be found, as shown by the case of Seybou Djamma.

When her husband left to join the rural exodus more than fifteen years ago, Seybou Djamma found herself as head of household, alone in looking after the house, their children and the land.

Seybou lives in the village of Kolgou Zerma, not far from Kiota, in the department of Boboye. Throughout the region, it is customary for women to work a small plot of land loaned to them by their husband, brother or another village landowner, so as to engage in horticulture during the off-season. Afterwards, at the start of the winter period, the plot is returned to the owner, who benefits from the organic fertilizer applied by the woman tenant by way of compensation.

This highly precarious situation became untenable for Seybou Djamma, after more than a decade during which time she had had to assure the livelihoods and well-being of the entire family. Listening to a broadcast on the local radio, she learned that a Regional Support Fund – made available by the Regional Council of Dosso from funds given by the Luxembourg Development Cooperation – would allow her to access credit subsidized by the Banque Agricole du Niger (Agricultural Bank of Niger), based in Dosso.

A life-changing decision

In order to have a right to this loan, Seybou had to negotiate the donation of a 1.5 ha plot of family land with her husband, so that she could practice horticulture, in so doing helping to support the household. A few days later, Seybou Djamma and her husband reached an agreement by telephone in the presence of three witnesses: the neighborhood chief, the village chief and the local mayor.



Seybou Djamma with her land use certificate

Following this agreement, Seybou obtained a certificate giving proof of customary occupancy of the land in question from the village chief, marking an important milestone in her life: this certificate has enabled her to access the Regional Support Fund.

Collaboration from the whole family

The loan, of which Seybou will only pay back 55%-45% being a subsidy from the Regional Support Fund – has enabled her to close off her garden with wire netting, to protect it from animals, as well as sinking two wells and buying a motor pump and good quality seeds. In all her work to develop and cultivate her plot of land, she has been able to count on help from her children and daughters-in-law. Together, they are planning to increase the production of onions, peppers, aubergines and moringa, so as to

earn up to 30 euros per week. This makes a valuable contribution, for which Seybou is deeply grateful: "With the money that I'll earn from the sale of my horticultural products, I plan first of all to meet the needs of my family, prepare for the weddings of my daughters and ensure that my children have a good education, seeing that my husband never returned after leaving in the exodus. This certificate, which is recognized by everyone, gives me a complete guarantee".

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Uganda | Engaging women in family farming to eradicate hunger

Despite the potential of the agricultural sector, many regions of Uganda still suffer from hunger. As everywhere, the serious problem of hunger is linked to climate change, unequal resource allocation, illiteracy, attitude towards farming and poor policy implementation. One of the root causes is also the uneven access of women and men to resources and markets. The Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) shares its views on the key role women have to play.

53% of country's export revenue. For this reason, agriculture is a major source of income for the vast majority of the households and a determinant for food and nutrition security, employment, income generation and export trade. The sector has the potential to sustain, encourage and promote the economic development and eradicate hunger.

Nevertheless, many regions in the country are not able to produce enough food to tackle acute malnutrition. Nearly half of the country's families record low food consumption. This situation is due to poor agricultural production, low rains and increasingly destructive weather events, as a consequence of climate change. This resulted in a decline in food stocks for households and in an increase in food prices, which further reduces their ability to purchase food.

Yet, despite these difficulties, reducing the gender gap in agriculture in terms of access to resources and markets would break this vicious cycle.

Enhancing women's participation

In the Northern and Eastern regions of Uganda - that predominantly rely on livestock rearing- women make up the vast majority of food producers. However, while land is accessible to all, only men benefit from land and cattle ownership. Unwritten customary laws prevent women from inheriting land or livestock because they leave their father's clan when they get married. As a result, rights over productive resources and access to markets are mainly concentrated in the hands of male headed households, while female headed households are likely to earn a lot less from farming activities and are much more exposed to risk factors that eventually lead to hunger.

Over the years, many development organizations, including WOUGNET, have raised



serious concerns about the state of food security in Northern and Eastern Uganda. In particular, WOUGNET recognizes the importance of closing the gender gap in agriculture and continues to emphasize the need to encourage women to participate in family farming. The organization is primarily engaged in supporting female led households in agriculture at district level, through its educational programmes. An example is the project, initiated by WOUGNET in 2005 and still ongoing, on "Enhancing access to agricultural information using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)" in Apac District. The project aims to develop and improve information and communication systems to enable easy access to agricultural information, especially for rural women. Uganda and other countries at risk can reverse the effects that may lead to hunger by encouraging rural women in affected areas to participate in skills development projects run by government and non-government actors.

Also, there is a need to engage in dialogue with law and policy makers on the urgency to have gender specific policies and laws that give women equal ownership rights over land and livestock. Policy implementation frameworks should include mechanisms that identify, educate, support and follow up on affected populations, particularly women and children.

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Caisses de résilience: empowerment of rural people starts with women

“Caisses de résilience” is an integrated approach designed to strengthen the resilience of women’s associations and farmers’ groups to shocks and crises by developing their capacities in three areas: social, technical and financial. FAO implements this approach in Uganda, Guatemala, Honduras, Central African Republic, Chad, Liberia, Malawi, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Despite the challenging agro-ecological and social environments in which they live, subsistence farmers and pastoralists have developed their own mechanisms and strategies to reduce risks and increase resilience – from organizing themselves into associations to setting up solidarity funds or rotating savings and credit associations.

The “Caisses de résilience” approach supports these communities to fully exploit their potential, building on diverse options. In particular, the approach seeks to empower women’s associations and groups and increase recognition of women’s economic and social roles. This approach consists of three dimensions: technical, financial and social.

● Technical dimension

It focuses on helping communities boost agricultural production over the long term, manage natural resources sustainably, improve the conservation, processing and marketing livestock and agricultural products, reduce disaster risks, adapt to climate change and improve agro-ecosystem management.

● Financial dimension

It promotes community savings and credit initiatives, such as village savings and loan associations and savings and credit cooperatives, based on the principles of rotating savings and credit associations whereby members provide the capital (such as “tontines”). Beneficiaries improve their understanding and take ownership of the credit rules and regulations before engaging with formal financial institutions. Often these savings and loan initiatives are the only option in rural areas where access to financial services is limited. Loans or grants such as for small processing materials can help members generate additional income.

Participants save regularly, invest in their businesses, increase production and diversify income sources.

● Social dimension

Strengthening communities’ social cohesion is critical for ownership and sustainability, as is raising awareness among group members on solidarity within and among communities. It is particularly essential for communities trying to rebuild their lives after traumatic experiences such as displacements, food crisis or conflicts. Members facing similar challenges can discuss opportunities, share useful experiences, and, depending on the local context, address topics such as nutrition education, hygiene, reproductive health, literacy, violence, etc. The use of the Dimitra Clubs approach is currently tested to structure FAO intervention under this pillar (See box).

To ensure the long-term sustainability of the Caisses de résilience, some groups have decided to set up a system of conditional assistance, requesting that members actually apply good practices, technical or social, to access savings and loan systems.

Experience shows that after the end of a project, groups continue to come together and advocate for complementary services, including education, nutrition, leadership and market access – all of which further strengthen community resilience.

Examples in Uganda and Central African Republic

In Uganda, the Karamoja region is faced with a multitude of risks due to various factors including prolonged dry spells, flash floods, transboundary animal diseases, crop pests and diseases, soil erosion, etc. The communities have low incomes, low literacy levels and the region has the lowest

“Caisses de résilience” helps food-insecure smallholder farming and pastoralist communities accumulate and diversify income sources, assets and knowledge. It promotes sustainable agricultural practices (technical dimension) and economic and financial opportunities, such as access to credit (financial dimension), while strengthening social cohesion and solidarity within and among communities (social dimension). Combining all three aspects enables households to improve their living conditions, food security and nutrition and better prepare to buffer the impact of future shocks.

economic indicators compared to the rest of the country.

To empower communities to take action, FAO Uganda used a livelihoods approach to strengthen the livelihood capital through the Agro-Pastoral Field Schools (APFS). It enabled communities to seize local economic opportunities and reduce risks and vulnerability to shocks. The integrated approach of Caisses de résilience put vulnerable communities at the centre of risk management by strengthening their capacities in the technical, financial and social dimensions while at the same time involving the communities in actions that improve their ecosystems.

Central African Republic has been facing since 2013 a political crisis that led to massive insecurity, displacements and outbreaks of violence in the country. As 75 percent of the population relies on agriculture, the

crisis has exacerbated food and nutrition insecurity and farmers' vulnerability, dismantling their livelihoods and disrupting the value chains. As of December 2015, a quarter of the population was still displaced, both in neighbouring countries and internally, increasing pressure on host communities and their already limited resources. FAO implemented a programme of *Caisses de résilience* to enable families improve their agricultural techniques, financial capacities and governance structures at community level, with a view to reinforce community and livelihoods resilience.

Throughout 2014-2016, almost 2,500 farmers groups, representing 45,000 households, have received support from the *Caisses de résilience* in 10 of the 16 prefectures of the country. FAO has worked in partnership with five governmental agencies and 28 national and international NGOs. A first interim evaluation, conducted after six months of implementation, showed positive impact on beneficiaries including: enhanced knowledge of agricultural techniques, increased yields, improved saving capacity, self-confidence, as well as better facilitation skills inside the farmer groups and synergies among farmer groups, stronger involvement of women in household decision-making and enhanced skills in public speaking. The evaluation illustrated that the rehabilitation of community infrastructures (such as wells, village pharmacy, etc.) was highly appreciated and contributed to rebuild social cohesion inside communities.

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The farmers' group "Amakpam" in Yamboro, CAR, benefits from this approach

Caisses de résilience and Dimitra Clubs

Observing the complementarity between these two approaches, FAO has begun implementing activities that link Dimitra Clubs and *Caisses de résilience* (CdR) in DR Congo, and is planning to do the same in the Central African Republic. As well as being useful for strengthening community-based initiatives and social mobilization, the clubs also offer an interesting option for supporting activities under the social pillar of the CdR. The presence of the clubs enables more men and women to be reached and for these to receive greater benefits from interventions set in place by FAO and its development partners. Use of the clubs as an entry point

at community level facilitates local coordination of various initiatives and ensures that the voices of rural communities, especially women and young people, are at the heart of decision-making and any actions undertaken.

As a result of their network organization, and particularly through community radio stations, the clubs are also able to forge a link between groups supported by the *Caisses de résilience*, and projects operated by other development partners, as well as United Nations agencies, civil society and government services.

From agriculture to politics

NIAKATE GOUNDO KAMISSOKO, CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF RURAL WOMEN'S ASSOCIATIONS OF MALI

Niakate Goundo Kamissoko's career reflects the history of the struggle of men and women of her country to gain access to land. Deeply engaged in land issues since the 1970s, she is now Chair of the National Federation of Rural Women's Associations of Mali (FENAFER), a member of the Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture of Mali (APCAM) and Chair of the Rural Development Commission. She has always been committed to working with rural women, for whom she sees a future rich in opportunities.



of us women, and following a great many discussions, we eventually received three hectares to farm. Unfortunately, this land was not in the conditions to be exploited. I therefore set to work, as I had heard that in Kayes there was a FAO project for rural women. So we left to ask for technical support from FAO to develop an implementation programme, which we then submitted to the French Development Cooperation to obtain funding. With support from FAO and the French Development Cooperation, we were able to exploit these three hectares.

In 2004, the National Farmers' Day in Mali was an important event, but unfortunately it didn't pay sufficient attention to rural women. We were appalled by this omission. Women make an essential contribution to the country's agriculture. It is they who ensure the food security of households and the well-being of their children. We were able to meet the President of the Republic, explain our frustration to him and request that he set in place more appropriate measures. He was quick to give a response: "I can help you," he said, "but first, you must group yourselves together."

During a series of meeting between women from the cooperative and state services, it was therefore decided to set up women's associations throughout the country, with a national office in Bamako. That is how the National Federation of Rural Women's Associations of Mali began. Since I had followed the whole process from the beginning, I was nominated administrative secretary of the national office, before becoming its chair.

**What has been your career path?
How did you become such an important
representative for rural women in Mali?**

It all began in France, where my husband was living as an expatriate. Together with other African emigrants, he set up an association to enable their economic reintegration in agricultural activities back home, by requesting land from the leaders of the countries concerned.

Moussa Traoré, who at the time was the President of the Republic of Mali, was the

first to give a favourable response to this request. The association then became a cooperative, the Multifunctional Agricultural Cooperative of Somankidi Coura (CAMS), to which the government allocated land for farming.

And that is how we women also found ourselves alongside our husbands in CAMS, working in the fields. That lasted until 1985, then we became organized so that we could ask the cooperative for land that was specifically for women. At the time, there were nine

"Women are always invited to the meetings but they seldom participate in decision-making processes"

What are the objectives of FENAFER? What activities have been implemented by the federation?

The federation's general objective is to offer rural women a network for exchanges, as well as practical help for their activities in the agricultural sector, including fisheries and livestock keeping. The federation plays a major role in advocacy with institutions and government, but also in advancing dialogue with the private sector. I have now also been elected to the Permanent Assembly of the Chambers of Agriculture of Mali (APCAM) and as Chair of the Rural Development Commission, and I believe these institutional positions are crucial for defending the interests of rural women in this country.

How is the federation organized at national level?

It works on a pyramid system. Each village has four delegates at municipal level. And since each municipality has four villages, there are 16 women in each municipal office. In turn, each municipal office nominates four delegates at city council level, and then each city council nominates five delegates for the regional office. Lastly, at the national office in Bamako, there are seven delegates for each regional office.

What do you think needs to be done to promote the representation of rural women in decision-making bodies?

First of all, there needs to be a distinction between women's participation and the representation of their interests. They are always invited to meetings and conferences, but they have little voice in the decision-making process. It is a cultural issue. In some rural regions of Mali, there are still social norms which prevent women from being considered equal to men. So we need to keep on fighting to give women a voice and an education, so that they can be better represented and so as to bring out their crucial role in socio-economic development.

Can you tell us about your political engagement?

I was a delegate for the city council in the municipality of Kayes from 2004 to 2009. I fought hard for the construction of new schools, to ensure proper teaching for all children. Before that, there were some areas in the municipality where the nearest school was 15 kilometres away, which meant the children had to walk long distances to get there and back. We managed to change that.



“The battle for rural women's empowerment is not just about the women. It is a battle of all for all!”

I also fought to ensure access to drinking water in many of the region's villages.

Did your family support you, especially when your role became more important?

Yes! Even when I was elected and I fought to defend the interests of rural women, my husband and my family always supported me. And that gave me the courage to move forward.

What are the main challenges currently facing rural women in Mali?

The first difficulty that they encounter is certainly education. Most women working in rural areas are illiterate, and that poses a real obstacle to their empowerment. This constraint is closely linked to access to information, land, productive resources, markets and credit. That's why we need to start with education, so that women can acquire the capacities needed for ensuring the livelihoods and food security of their households.

How do you see the future for rural women in your country?

I am optimistic! In rural areas, there are women everywhere. They cultivate the land, they harvest and process agricultural prod-

ucts and they sell them at the markets. They already have a huge range of skills. But they need to be given the means to move forward and play their role to the full in the development of Mali.

What advice would you give to women and men who are readers of the Dimitra Newsletter?

It is important to fight for the social and economic empowerment of rural women. And this is not just a battle for women. It's a battle that needs to be waged by all, for all! When women are given the chance to play their role to the full, the whole community benefits. All women and all men should join hands to achieve this goal.

Nepal | The RWEE Programme supports women's groups

In the small village of Tallo Baraha, in the mid-hills of Sindhuli District, rural women have seen their nutrition and livelihoods improved. This was possible through the UN Joint Programme on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (RWEE), implemented in 7 countries, including Nepal. The RWEE targeted the existing rural women's associations in the region to put in place a comprehensive capacity development programme for rural women's economic empowerment with outstanding results. The story of Sumitra and her group is a prime example.

Like most of the farmers in the area, up until January 2016 Sumitra was cultivating traditional cereal crops like rice, wheat and maize in her small plot of land. But today, she is able to grow a great variety of vegetables, which has increased her income and food security.

Sumitra Thapa is 47 years old and lives in the village of Tallo Baraha, part of Bhimesh-wore Village Development Committee. She is an active member of the Pachankanya Women's Group on commercial vegetable production, one of the rural associations targeted by the RWEE programme in the country.

Thanks to the specific training sessions on economic empowerment, conducted in the last 6 months by FAO technicians working under the RWEE, Sumitra has acquired competencies on vegetable farming adaptation and market skills, just like the other members of the women's group she belongs to.

Increased income for children's education

Within a period of 4 months, she was able to grow as many as 60 kg of tomatoes, 50 kg of brinjal (eggplants), 800 kg of cucumbers, 800 kg of bottle gourds and 50 kg of green chilies. She also managed to sell these vegetables in the local market, earning 80,000 Nepalese Rupees (US\$ 800), which is about 200 US\$ more than the previous year.

This additional income enabled her to support the schooling of her daughter who is pursuing her bachelors' degree in management in a local college. She also wishes her three sons –to continue their studies abroad.

Before the arrival of the RWEE programme in the region, "the lack of a collection center at local level was an obstacle to the sale of vegetables in time with good prices in big markets such as Kathmandu", Sumitra says. Today, she is also aware of the need to use bio-pesticides and minimize the post-harvest losses.

Women's empowerment for community development

"After the launching of RWEE project, all the villagers have been sensitized on improving food security and nutrition of rural women and their families", she added. The joint programme focused on building leadership skills of rural women, so as to increase their representation in local and national public policy making forum. In the Sindhuli District, training on vegetable farming adaptation and market skills proved to be key to the socioeconomic empowerment of rural women, with obvious effects on food security and development of the whole community.

RWEE started training sessions of women groups in the region in January 2016, in coordination with District Agriculture Development Office (DADO) and District Livestock Service Office (DLSO). In total, 57 women groups were formed. Women farmers have started selling the commercial vegetables in May 2016 bringing back home substantial profit. Altogether, 1292 households – with 111 households in commercial farming and 1181 households in kitchen garden – have directly benefited from the programme.

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Dimitra Clubs at European Development Days 2016

This year, the European Development Days (EDD) were convened in Brussels on 15-16 June 2016 under the theme “17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Action and Implementation”. The event offered a unique occasion to present the United Nations Joint Programme in Niger on Accelerating Rural Women’s Economic Empowerment (RWEE) and to discuss why the Dimitra Clubs were chosen as an entry point for setting in place the activities in the country. These are initiatives that make a direct contribution to SDGs 1, 2 and 5.

The workshop titled “Gender and agricultural entrepreneurship. Unlocking women’s full potential through agricultural empowerment” was conducted under the leadership of FAO, WFP and UN-Women, together with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) and NGO Oxfam. The debate was facilitated by Jean-Pierre Halkin, Head of Unit for Rural Development, Food Security & Nutrition at the European Commission (DEVCO), with the participation of Kawinzi Muiu, Director of the WFP Gender Office in Rome, Halimatou Moussa Idi, National Coordinator in Niger for the joint United Nations Rural Women Economic Empowerment (UNJP RWEE), Caroline Chelele, a farmer from Tanzania and winner of the Oxfam initiative Oxfam Female Food Heroes, and Dorianne Rowan-Campbell, Chair of the Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement and owner of Rowan’s Royale Organic Farm.

RWEE in Niger

The debate focused on the crucial role of rural women in the economic and social development of their communities. More precisely, discussions revolved around key questions, especially the choice of Dimitra Clubs as the entry point for the RWEE programme in Niger. This offered the opportunity for Halimatou Moussa Idi, National Coordinator for the programme, to highlight the critical role played by the Dimitra Clubs in implementing RWEE activities in Niger, which have benefited more than 25 000 people, two-thirds of them women.

Clubs as a mechanism for synergy creation

The Dimitra Club approach is considered by the four United Nations agencies involved in RWEE (FAO, WFP, IFAD and UN-Women) as one of the most effective mechanisms for creating synergies between all stakeholders, enabling the communities concerned to become involved in the design, implementation and coordination of activities in the field in a fully inclusive manner. The clubs’ participatory communication approach, based on sharing knowledge and experiences, as well as empowerment, enables everyone – women and men – to be informed, participate in the decision-making process and take joint action for their own development. This process of collective awareness-raising and dialogue improves community governance and also fosters behaviour change in all sectors, including relationships between women and men.

The European Development Days

Organized for the first time in 2006 by the European Commission, in recent years the European Development Days have become a flagship event for development cooperation. Bringing together all the sector’s actors on an annual basis, these days offer an international discussion forum, where participants can share ideas and experiences, and inspire new partnerships and innovative solutions to the planet’s most pressing challenges.

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National Coordinator RWEE in Niger

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Niger | Local solutions against malnutrition

As part of the joint Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) programme, FAO has launched an initiative for nutritional education in the Dosso region. Various sessions organized between 2015 and 2016 by NGO Kundji Fondo were planned using a participatory approach, with support from the Dimitra Clubs. Some interesting behaviour changes have been observed.



A participatory cooking demonstration

The joint Rural Women Economic Empowerment programme – launched in November 2012 by FAO, UN-Women, IFAD and WFP – seeks to improve the livelihoods and strengthen the rights of rural women in the context of sustainable development. In Niger, Dimitra Clubs have been chosen as the entry point at community level for coordinated implementation of activities by the four agencies. Access to information and the level of participation achieved by the clubs are leading to a strengthening of local governance in terms of transparency and inclusion. The clubs serve as a unique mechanism to ensure local coordination of interventions and the development of synergies between stakeholders.

Improving nutrition in a participatory manner

One of the components through which FAO offers a contribution to RWEE is by improving nutrition through education. When local NGO Kundji Fondo (Women United Against Malnutrition) was selected to organize sessions on nutritional education, it was natural that Dimitra Club members should be chosen as beneficiaries.

In November 2015, Kundji Fondo trained ten trainers from the NGO that is a partner to Dimitra (AEDL) and 20 Dimitra Club leaders. The training focused on basic concepts of nutrition, malnutrition and their consequences, and on essential good practices, such as hand washing and breastfeeding. Participatory methods were central to these five-day training sessions.

Subsequently, leaders of the formed clubs organized discussions on the same themes within their respective clubs in the five villages covered by the programme: Falwel, Mallam Koira, Daytagui Yamba, Kokoukou and Tégoyzékoira. Local nutritional experts from the NGO Kundji Fondo took part in

discussions to ensure the quality of information shared. Over five months, the Dimitra Clubs explored issues linked to nutrition: critical nutritional concepts, especially those regarding children aged from 0 to 2 years and pregnant women; breastfeeding; diversification in diets; essential good household practices and budgeting for food.

Local solutions

During these discussions, club members identified nutritional ingredients that were locally available and became aware of the challenges they face due to poor availability of these food products throughout the year. As a result, they began thinking of solutions that would enable them to have a healthy, varied and balanced diet at all times.

On the basis of a seasonal calendar of local foods and known methods of conservation, members identified two solutions: conserving cowpeas or voandzou in sealed plastic bags (triple bagging), or in empty vegetable oil drums. Processing methods for certain food products were also explored, using the knowledge of club members, especially women, in ways of processing cowpeas and voandzou (making cowpeas into béroura, gabda, motolbali, dungouri dambou, bouki kaina tobaye, dungouri massa and kékéna and processing voandzou into loubatou).

Participatory cooking demonstrations were held at all the clubs, where members prepared three balanced and varied recipes, combining the three food groups (proteins, carbohydrates and fats): millet paste with a sauce of dried baobab leaves, served with groundnut paste seasoned with gabou (powdered dried onion); millet couscous served with cowpeas and squash and seasoned with gabou; millet couscous served with green cassava, cowpea, squash, cabbage leaves etc. and seasoned with oil.

Three other recipes for children of 6 months and older were identified by participants: pap enriched with millet, groundnuts or cowpeas, squash or moringa powder; purée of cowpeas served with squash and oil, and purée of husked cowpeas served with squash and oil.

Almost all Dimitra Club members spoke during the discussions

In May 2016, the Dimitra project carried out a survey to evaluate the quality of participation in this nutritional education initiative. A total of 125 Dimitra Club members from the 5 villages were interviewed.

The results revealed a high level of appreciation of the themes handled and the way in which they were discussed. In addition, almost all the members spoke during the training sessions on nutrition, showing a strong level of participation and interest in the subject.

These results confirm that the clubs offer effective spaces for dialogue and action, enabling all members of the community to make themselves heard, express themselves freely and take part in the development process.

Behaviour changes in clubs and households

The majority of women and girls interviewed said they had acquired new knowledge on the issue of nutrition, particularly that of children aged from 0 to 2 years and pregnant women. For men and boys, the gains were more in terms of information acquired about certain household practices (hand washing, sleeping under a mosquito net). The clubs also undertook awareness-raising initiatives through cooking demonstrations. For example, in the village of Daytagui Yamba, Hallassay women's club members prepared pap enriched with millet for children aged 6 months and older in front of the entire village. They also raised community awareness of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and of supplementary feeding for children from six months onwards, to ensure healthy growth.

According to the survey results, members have changed their household dietary practices, adding new ingredients to produce varied dishes that contain the three food groups (proteins, carbohydrates and fats), together with vitamins.

Information beyond the village

Lastly, one interesting result to emerge from the survey concerns the sharing of new knowledge. All club members who took part in the sessions said they had passed on the information to at least one person who was not present at the discussions. According to some of those questioned, the information on nutritional education travelled beyond the villages involved, reaching some of the neighbouring ones. This networking through interpersonal communication and community radios is crucial in order to reach as many people as possible and produce a multiplier effect for interventions, especially in isolated areas.

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Ibrahim Seybou and Mariama Ousseini during the survey. Facilitator of the Dimitra Club in Falwel, Mariama passed away last August, too early. The Dimitra team honors her enthusiastic work in supporting the clubs and rural communities.

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For a better use of practices

Since 2009, the Knowledge Management and Gender programme, run under the FAO-Belgium partnership, has made efforts to strengthen the capacities of FAO and its partners in capitalizing on good practices. Following successful experiences in Niger and Burkina Faso, the programme team has capitalized on... capitalization, developing a learning module that offers a practical methodology for capitalization, and its systematic integration into development initiatives. This methodology was tested for the first time in Dakar, in May 2016.

The capitalization of experiences is a systematic, iterative and participatory process, through which an experience is analyzed and documented. It generates knowledge, which is then shared and developed, in order to bring about change.

The team for the Knowledge Management and Gender programme, run under the FAO-Belgium partnership, has developed a learning module, which offers a methodology for the capitalization of good practices in development. The module sets out all the phases and stages of capitalization, from preparation to implementation, ending with adoption (see diagram of capitalization cycle).

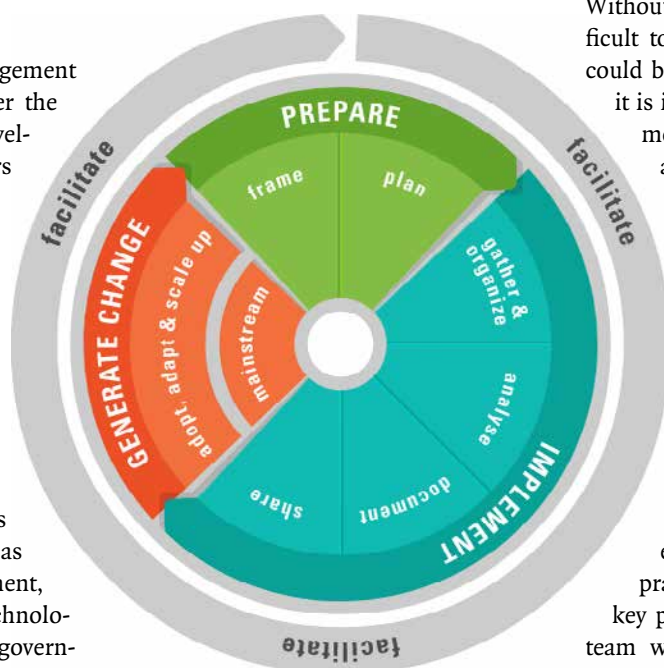
The methodology was tested during a workshop, organized in Dakar on May 10 and 11 2016, which brought together FAO partners working on various issues, such as resilience, nutrition, youth employment, information and communication technologies and voluntary guidelines on governance of land tenure.

Participants – both men and women – each made a contribution, mainly by playing devil's advocate or defending capitalization. Subsequently, the training team clarified

a series of concepts linked to good practices, enabling the workshop to embark on the phase of collecting knowledge and information.

Without systematic capitalization, it is difficult to identify promising practices that could become good practices. That is why it is important to equip oneself with the means to capitalize from the start of a project, using the resources available. This is what emerges from the learning module.

The participants declared that they had learned a great deal about the capitalization process and that they welcomed the method for putting it in place. Everyone said they were ready and well prepared to pursue the work linked to their theme. However, the documentation of good practices must be programmed and key persons identified. The programme team will therefore continue to support participants throughout the stages of documenting and disseminating experiences, so as to promote mutual learning.



A promising practice has demonstrated a high degree of success, in a unique setting. There is a possibility for replication of the practice in this same setting. In addition, quantitative data is available to demonstrate its positive impact over a period of time. A promising practice has the potential to become a good practice. However, it does not yet have enough research or replication to support wider adoption or scaling up. As such, a promising practice incorporates a process of continuous learning and improvement.

A good practice is not just a practice that is good, but a practice that has been proven to work well and produce good results, and is therefore recommended as a model. It is a successful experience, which has been tested and validated, in the broad sense, which has been repeated and deserves to be shared so that a greater number of people can adopt it.

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<http://www.fao.org/elearning/#/elc/en/home>
http://www.imarkgroup.org/index_en.html

DR Congo | Bolstering collaboration between the Dimitra Clubs and community radio stations

Conducted in May 2016 in Walungu (Sud-Kivu), FAO's "Radios and Dimitra Clubs" training session sought to improve the capacity of community radio stations to produce programmes that are participatory and gender sensitive, and to strengthen the links between clubs and radio stations. Based on the core principles of the Dimitra approach, this type of training is now systematically organized as part of projects that include the Dimitra Clubs.



The primary media channel in sub-Saharan Africa, especially in rural areas, radio plays a key role in the networking of Dimitra Clubs, enabling them to share experiences and ideas, but also to reach surrounding rural communities. Given their participatory and gender sensitive approach, Dimitra Clubs are natural partners for local radio stations, enabling them to better accomplish their mission of local development, based on community needs and perspectives.

The "Radios and Dimitra Clubs" training initiative for Sud-Kivu was organized by NGO Samwaki and facilitated by FAO, bringing together club members, government service representatives and the following radio stations: Radio Bubusa, Radio Mitumba, Radio Umoja FM, Radio Mulangane, Radio Le Messenger du Peuple, Radio Luhwinja, Radio Bobandana, Radio Apide, Vision Shala and Radio Mutanga. Participants had varied profiles. Some were very familiar with the Dimitra Clubs approach (club members and radio stations had been working together for a number of years). Others were hearing about it for the first time.

The training sessions have a dual objective: to strengthen the capacities of radio staff and other participants in producing participatory and gender sensitive broadcasts, and

to encourage the forging of partnerships between local radio stations and Dimitra Clubs.

Based on a flexible approach that focuses on using practical exercises, the methodology for this training initiative was developed to respond to the needs of radio stations and Dimitra Clubs over a short period of time. This type of training is now systematically organized as part of projects that include the Dimitra Clubs, but on each occasion it is adapted according to the context.

Gender and participation

The first training session offered an opportunity to clarify the clubs' core principles, which should also guide the production of radio broadcasts. Two principles that are crucial for any collaboration with radio stations were explored in greater depth: gender and community participation. Participants then carried out a 'gender-based' review of the media, so as to develop a basic understanding of the concept of gender. The issue of participation was central to exercises on participatory broadcast types/formats that can be used in rural areas, in order to promote maximum community involvement.

The second session was given over to preparing and recording a live club radio broadcast, with instructions to pay special attention to the two principles highlighted the previous day. Listening to these programmes allow trainers to deal with technical issues and discuss content.

The third session explored relations between the clubs and radio stations, enabling the FAO team to reiterate the need for clubs to engage with the stations that they have themselves chosen. The special message to the radio stations was that the clubs are products of the community, not of an FAO project – a factor that offers opportunities to the radios.

Before the final evaluation, a session was held on reinvesting in training, so as to ensure the sharing of knowledge, as well as effective implementation of collaboration with radio stations.

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Dimitra Clubs in Brief



NIGER

International Day of Rural Women

On 15 October, as part of the International Day of Rural Women, FAO organized a cooking contest for 5 villages that are beneficiaries of the joint United Nations Rural Women Economic Empowerment (RWEE) programme. The Minister for the Promotion of Women and Protection of Children, together with the Minister of Livestock, the acting Minister of Agriculture, the Governor of the region of Dosso, the Prefect and the entire community took part in the celebrations.

Survey

In May 2016, a field survey was conducted to evaluate the participatory approach used in the nutrition component of FAO within the RWEE programme in 5 villages of the municipality of Falwel. For more information, see page 16.

Training for 200 young leaders

Training sessions for young leaders of Dimitra Clubs were carried out by NGO AEDL and NGO APEBA – local partners of FAO-Dimitra – in 18 municipalities of 4 regions (Dosso, Tillabéry, Tahoua and Zinder). At the end of the sessions, the young leaders developed a plan of action for their respective clubs. In addition, regular meetings were planned between all the young leaders, at village and municipal level, to exchange strategies, identify best practices and develop a common vision.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

A new project called “Rural Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Programme” (RWEAP), was launched recently on the outskirts of Kinshasa. Implemented by FAO, with support from the national agricultural advisory service (SNV), this project aims to reduce rural poverty and improve food security, while advancing women’s empowerment. The Dimitra Clubs are the entry point for activities and the main tool

for strengthening the capacities of communities, especially in the areas of horticulture and aquaculture.

Seven clubs have already been set up, following initial training held in September. Other activities will be carried out to strengthen resilience, in particular through the village savings and credit association (AVEC) approach.

Bandundu

Several missions have taken place as part of the programme “Femmes et hommes, progressons ensemble” (Women and men, let’s move forward together), co-funded by the European Union and UNICEF and implemented by FAO, GIZ and CARITAS CONGO, which seeks to reduce gender-based violence (GBV). These missions helped to document a number of results achieved by Dimitra Clubs, which were launched barely one year ago. First and foremost is the fact that there are already 70 of them, compared with the 20 or so originally planned. More than 50 clubs have been set up spontaneously. As part of the same programme, around 20 more clubs have recently been launched in Kinshasa.

Tshopo

This province has 105 Dimitra Clubs, which were set up as part of the project “Clubs d’écoute, lutte contre la pauvreté, genre et sécurité alimentaire” (Listeners’ Clubs to tackle poverty, gender and food security issues). The support activities have ended, but the momentum continues. Facilitators who are external to the clubs, and were trained during the project, have set up a technical support office for the clubs, where these can obtain assistance and training for other local facilitators.

Katanga

A revitalization workshop for the Dimitra Clubs in Kopolowe, Kasumbalesa and Katanga took place in Likasi in August 2016. Taking part in the event were club representatives, the Chief of the Katanga area, the advisor to the Provincial

Minister of Agriculture, the advisor to the Commission of Gender, Family and Children and the department head of Gender, Family and Children.

Each club presented the achievements accomplished and the challenges encountered.

Feedback sessions were held in September in the presence of a mission of FAO and various authorities, stimulating fresh enthusiasm among clubs in programming activities and attracting new members. Two new Dimitra Clubs were launched.

South Kivu

As part of the project “Réduire la pauvreté rurale par l’information, la communication participative et la mobilisation sociale pour les femmes, les hommes et les jeunes en milieu rural au South-Kivu” (Reducing rural poverty through information, participatory communication and social mobilization for women, men and youth in rural areas of South Kivu), 13 existing Dimitra Clubs were revitalized and 105 new clubs – separate from the existing ones – were set up in the areas of Kabare, Walungu and Kalehe.

SENEGAL

Launch of the Dimitra Clubs

The “Climate Resilience” project was officially launched at the end of October in the presence of the Secretary-General for the Ministry of Agriculture and rural equipment, Dr Dogo Seck and the FAO Representative, Patrick David. On this occasion, Mr David declared: “Dimitra Clubs have shown their efficiency (...). They improve people’s empowerment, networking and they strengthen women and youth’s leadership.”

A Dimitra Clubs Regional Launch Workshop was organized in Tambacounda from 31st October to 2nd November. Its aim was to inform and raise awareness of the Climate Resilience project’s stakeholders on the Dimitra Clubs approach and its key features, such as gender, participation and communication.

Dimitra Clubs in action

Information and communication technologies support collective action in Niger

In Mallam Koïra, in the region of Dosso, villagers have discovered insects in their millet fields. After discussing the problem in their Dimitra Clubs, members sent photos of the pests to the municipal official in charge of agriculture. To do this, they used a mobile phone and WhatsApp, which enables users to make telephone calls and send messages and files via the Internet. Valuable time was saved, with the official making a rapid response by sending a team to apply the treatment needed for this type of pest. Thanks to the mobile phone and applications such as WhatsApp, the village farmers saved their harvest.

In the village of Falwel, Dimitra Clubs for young people have launched a network to share experiences between clubs from different villages, using WhatsApp. The idea is to take advantage of the opportunities offered by this type of app (transferring photos, text, videos and voice messages) to exchange information on their respective ideas and achievements. The networking, which is being organized in parallel with radio broadcasts to share experiences, is proving a powerful incentive and a source of great pride to these young rural people.

Also in Niger, the Clubs help to prevent early marriages

The village assembly of clubs in Wakazoua Darai, in the region of Tahoua, examined the theme of early marriages in the community. Club members voiced their arguments and suggestions. At the end of the assembly, the village committee, chaired by the village chief, decided to introduce binding measures for any families allowing their daughters to marry before the age of 17, with a fine of 100 000 CFA in the event of contravention.

Health at the heart of collective decision-making

Today, there are more than 70 Dimitra Clubs operating in the provinces of Kwango and Kwilu, set up as part of the programme “Femmes et hommes, progressons ensemble” (Women and men, let’s move forward together), with the aim of reducing gender-based violence.

A number of these clubs have found interesting solutions for diseases spread by dirty hands. The first initiative was set in place by Dimitra Club members from the village of Carrefour (Kikwit). They linked the incidence of diseases spread by dirty hands with the lack of toilets. To address the problem, they decided to build toilets for families without one, for the modest average sum of 5 000 Congolese francs (about US\$5).

Twenty five families accepted the offer and the toilets were built. This earned 125 000 CF (about \$125) for the clubs, which they used to buy seeds for their collective field. The harvest was good, and with the proceeds of sales, they bought sand and cement to make improvements to a natural source of drinking water in their village, which was in a very poor condition.

In a second village, Idiofa, issues of hygiene were also addressed by clubs, which decided to build 315 hand-wash basins in front of the latrines. A total of 315 households have benefited from this ingenious system of hand-wash basins, which are fed by a 3-litre tank with a hole in the bottom, made from Chinese bamboo. Each of the 115 club members contributed 1 000 CF (\$1) to purchase the materials needed to build the basins. A local assessment revealed a 4% decline in diseases spread by dirty hands after two months.

In the village of Ikialala, problems caused by the distant location of the health centre (15 km, requiring a 3-4 hour journey on foot), especially for prenatal visits, was the topic of club discussions, which decided to take matters in hand. They constructed a small building with three separate rooms to use as a health centre. This received authorization from the health services, which agreed to assign a nurse to it. The appointed person receives a government allowance, while mainly living off earnings from the centre and payments from patients, according to their possibilities. Using proceeds from sales of produce grown in the collective field, the clubs have purchased essential medicines, on the advice of the local doctor.

Results of Dimitra Clubs in the spotlight in Niger, Senegal and CAR

Meetings/testimonials entitled “Spotlight on Dimitra Clubs” were held recently in three countries, in order to present the Dimitra Clubs’ approach. Two videos were screened on the results and impact of clubs in Niger and DRC (see below), serving as a starting point for discussions among participants.

The first “Spotlight” took place in Niger, in May 2016, in the presence of more than 60 participants, including club leaders – women and men – local authority officials, traditional chiefs and representatives from the Government and development agencies.

The FAO Representative for Niger highlighted the important role played by clubs in rural development: “The Dimitra Clubs are suited to rural areas because they deal

with a variety of themes, such as food security, agricultural production, climate change, health, education and women’s economic empowerment”, he observed.

In Senegal, the “Spotlight on Dimitra Clubs” took place in Dakar, in June 2016. The Dimitra Club approach was presented to staff from FAO and other partners (ministries and United Nations). The discussions revealed strong interest on the part of a number of participants, particularly the representative from WHO, colleagues from UN Women and WFP, and the ministries in attendance. In Senegal, 400 clubs will be set up in the coming years in the scope of the ‘Climate Resilience’ project.

In August, it was the turn of the Central African Republic. The Spotlight on Dimitra

Clubs in Bangui brought together representatives from FAO, the European Union (Békou Trust Fund and Recovery and Peace Consolidation in the Central African Republic), UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, Food Security Cluster and Inter Cluster coordination OCHA, services of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock and FAO partner NGOs. As in the other countries, two videos about the clubs served as a basis for discussions. The exchanges focused on implementation of the Dimitra Clubs in CAR, and especially on the relevance of the approach in the areas of social cohesion and gender.

To watch the videos:

<http://www.fao.org/dimitra/dimitra-clubs/en>

FAO Publications

Addressing Women's Work Burden: Key issues, promising solutions and way forward

This factsheet discusses women's triple work burden in the household, as producers and at community level. It introduces labour saving technologies, practices and services as potential solutions and describes constraints women may face.

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5586e.pdf>

Strengthening Coherence between Agriculture and Social Protection to Combat Poverty and Hunger in Africa: Framework for Analysis and Action

This document presents a Framework for Analysis and Action with the purpose of exploring benefits to be derived from greater coherence between agriculture and social protection. From concrete country experiences, the Framework identifies the options available for achieving this, through policy and programming.

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5386e.pdf>

Adopting a Territorial Approach to Food Security and Nutrition Policy

Around 800 million people in the world remain food insecure. Three-quarters of them lack adequate infrastructure and basic services and are more vulnerable to adverse climatic conditions. Continued population growth brings added pressure to these challenges and, through migration and urbanisation, food insecurity may also become an increasingly urban problem.

FAO, OECD, UNCDF, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bl336e.pdf>

Restoring Africa's landscapes – the way forward: Report of the Great Green Wall Conference

The first International conference of the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and Sahel Initiative was attended by a wide range of participants in land restoration practice. Discussions focused on what needs to be done at the level of resource mobilization, communication, project development and collaboration amongst different stakeholders.

FAO, 2016

http://forestry.fao.msgfocus.com/files/amf_fao/project_59/inFO_news_41/FINAL_REPORT_DAKAR_GGWSSI_CONFERENCE.pdf

Core Set of Gender Indicators in Agriculture

Developed in response to data needs identified by member countries, this set of 18 indicators provides guidance on the collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive data in agriculture and rural areas.

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-bb172e.pdf>



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Promoting the Leadership of Women in Producers' Organizations.

Lessons from the experiences of FAO and IFAD

This paper explores aspects of promoting rural women's leadership in producers' organizations (POs). Women's leadership, especially in POs, is essential for increasing the production of smallholder agriculture, as women make massive contributions to the sector.

FAO, 2015

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5696e.pdf>

Qualitative research on women's economic empowerment and social protection: a research guide

This guide will be used for conducting qualitative research through FAO's Social Protection and Rural Women's Economic Empowerment research programme. It describes the sequencing, timing and methodology of the research process, including training, fieldwork preparation and roadmap, key hypotheses, guiding questions and research tools.

FAO, 2015

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i4420e.pdf>

Gender Mainstreaming as a Key Strategy for Building Resilient Livelihoods

This brief presents gender mainstreaming as a key strategy for increasing the resilience of both men and women's livelihoods in the face of crises. It explores the gender dimensions of natural and human-induced disasters and demonstrates how FAO contributes to empowering women as agents of resilience building.

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-i5631e.pdf>

A Gender-responsive Approach to Climate-Smart Agriculture: Evidence and guidance for practitioners

Global Alliance for Climate-Smart Agriculture (GACSA) Practice Briefs provide operational information on climate-smart agricultural practices. Taking a gender-responsive approach to Climate-Smart Agriculture (CSA) means that the particular needs and priorities of men and women are recognized and adequately addressed in the design and application of CSA.

FAO, 2016

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-be879e.pdf>



Resources

© **The Mobile Phone: A Solution to rural agricultural communication a case study of Rakai district, Uganda**

Communication and information are fundamental building blocks of social and economic development. In recent years, the explosion of new information and communication technologies on to the agricultural development scene offers an opportunity to extend the reach of current information systems. ICTs can amplify the efforts of extension and advisory service providers in disseminating various kinds of information to large, dispersed audiences.

CTA, 2016

http://publications.cta.int/media/publications/downloads/1892__PDF.pdf

© **Spotlight on Sustainable Development 2016. Report of the Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

The Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, together with other civil society organizations and networks, has produced the first annual Spotlight Report assessing the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the structural obstacles in its realization. The report puts a spotlight on the fulfillment of the 17 goals, with a particular focus on inequalities, responsibility of the rich and powerful, means of implementation and systemic issues.

Reflection Group on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2016

https://neu.globalpolicy.org/sites/default/files/contentpix/spotlight/pdfs/Agenda2030_engl_160708_WEB.pdf

© **Leaving no one behind: a critical path for the first 1,000 days of the Sustainable Development Goals**

Leaving no one behind is the moral issue of our age, and is at the heart of an ambitious blueprint for action: the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Now the focus is on implementation and this report outlines the actions that governments can take in the first 1,000 days of the SDGs to respond to what poor people want and to deliver for the most marginalised people and groups.

The report concludes that early action is critical for the achievement of the SDGs.

Overseas Development Institute, 2016

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10692.pdf>

© **The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity – Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda**

Women form a large proportion of the agricultural labour force in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, gender-based inequalities in access to and control of productive and financial resources inhibit agricultural productivity and reduce food security. This report, measuring the economic costs of the gender gap in agriculture in three African countries – Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda – provides further evidence that reducing the gender gap plays a significant role in poverty reduction and improved nutrition.

UN Women, UNDP, UNEP, World Bank, 2015

http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/costing%20gender%20gap_launch.pdf?v=1&d=20151015142608

© **Reducing rural women's domestic workload through labour-saving technologies and practices toolkit**

Labour-saving technologies and practices promote inclusive development by reducing the domestic workload of rural women. The free time gained can be used to perform productive tasks and participate in decision-making processes and development opportunities. This new toolkit focuses on methods that can help rural women reduce their workload and enable rural transformation.

IFAD, 2016

https://www.ifad.org/topic/gender/overview/tags/knowledge_notes

© **Women's economic empowerment. Navigating enablers and constraints**

This report details how gender equality, poverty eradication and human development require increased investment in women's economic empowerment. It brings together new and existing evidence to propose a set of core building blocks for the complex process of women's economic empowerment. This report identifies 10 key factors that can enable or constrain women's economic empowerment, and make recommendations for policy and practice for each.

Overseas Development Institute, 2016

<https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10683.pdf>

☉ **Conflict-Related Sexual Violence – Report of the UN Secretary-General 2016**

The eighth annual Report of the Secretary-General on Conflict-related Sexual Violence focuses on the critical new dimension of sexual violence as a ‘tactic of terrorism’. The report spans 19 country situations and includes 13 conflict settings, four post-conflict countries, and two additional situations of concern. It highlights patterns of violations, as well as challenges faced and actions taken by States to protect women, girls, men and boys from such violence.

UN Secretary-General, 2016

<http://www.stoprapenow.org/uploads/advocacyresources/1464291095.pdf>

☉ **Innovate for agriculture: Young ICT entrepreneurs overcoming challenges and transforming agriculture**

The report introduces 30 young innovators from Barbados, Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, Jamaica, Senegal and Tanzania. It presents a multidimensional picture of the emerging field of ICT entrepreneurship in agriculture in developing countries and describes challenges but also successes already achieved.

CTA, 2016

http://publications.cta.int/media/publications/downloads/1924_PDF_ILGFWF6.pdf

☉ **Cedaw general recommendation on the rights of rural women**

FIAN International recently published an analysis of General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women, which was issued by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This recommendation is the first international instrument that specifically addresses the rights of rural women and furthermore, it is the first that explicitly recognizes the human right to adequate food and nutrition of rural women within the framework of food sovereignty.

FIAN International, 2016,

http://www.fian.org/fileadmin/media/publications_2016/CEDAW_GR_Rural_Women_Analysis_FINAL.pdf

☉ **Islamic inheritance laws and their impact on rural women in Muslim societies: synthesis of studies from Asia and West Africa and emerging recommendations**

Land rights are particularly important for women's empowerment and gender equality, but they continue to be systematically denied their rights to inheritance, especially in rural areas. The newest issue of ILC's Framing the Debate series on Islamic inheritance laws and their impact on rural women in Muslim societies finds an interconnected mix of legal, educational, economic, social and political reasons for discriminatory inheritance practices.

International Land Coalition, 2016

http://www.landcoalition.org/sites/default/files/documents/resources/web_framing_the_debate_islamic_inheritance_.pdf



© Michael Pervanah

☉ **IFAD's Rural Development Report 2016: Fostering inclusive rural transformation**

This report comes at a time of major change in the world. Structural shifts in the global economy, increased urbanization, climate change and protracted conflicts have altered the development landscape. While poverty has decreased, inequality has increased. This IFAD's flagship publication brings together leading thinkers to analyze lessons learnt and to look at rural development in a new way.

IFAD, 2016

https://www.ifad.org/documents/30600024/30604583/RDR_WEB.pdf/c734doc4-fbb1-4507-9b4b-6c432c6f38c3

☉ **Women and gender in Drylands: gender inequity in agriculture**

Women and girls in drylands make significant contributions to rural economies. Yet, in many dryland countries across the world rural women continue to face discrimination and have limited access to agricultural assets, land, credit, education, information, technologies and other services. These in turn limit women's participation in critical decision-making processes, and prevent them from fully enjoying their rights and better opportunities.

Global Forum on Agricultural Research – GFAR, 2016

<https://drylandsystems.exposure.co/women-and-gender-in-drylands>

☉ **Leave no one behind. A call to action for gender equality and women's economic empowerment**

This first report represents a major milestone for the work of the High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment. Building on the objectives and directions that were agreed on during the inception meeting in March and the subsequent Panel meeting in Costa Rica, this report has drawn on the substantial and robust evidence about key issues, identified the fundamental drivers and principles, and delivered a call to action.

UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, 2016

<http://www.womenseconomicempowerment.org/assets/reports/UNWomen%20Full%20Report.pdf>

Note: Most of the publications mentioned here are available on-line for free (unless otherwise specified). Most web links are too long to provide in their entirety. If the publications are hard to find on the organisation's websites, it usually suffices to do a google search.