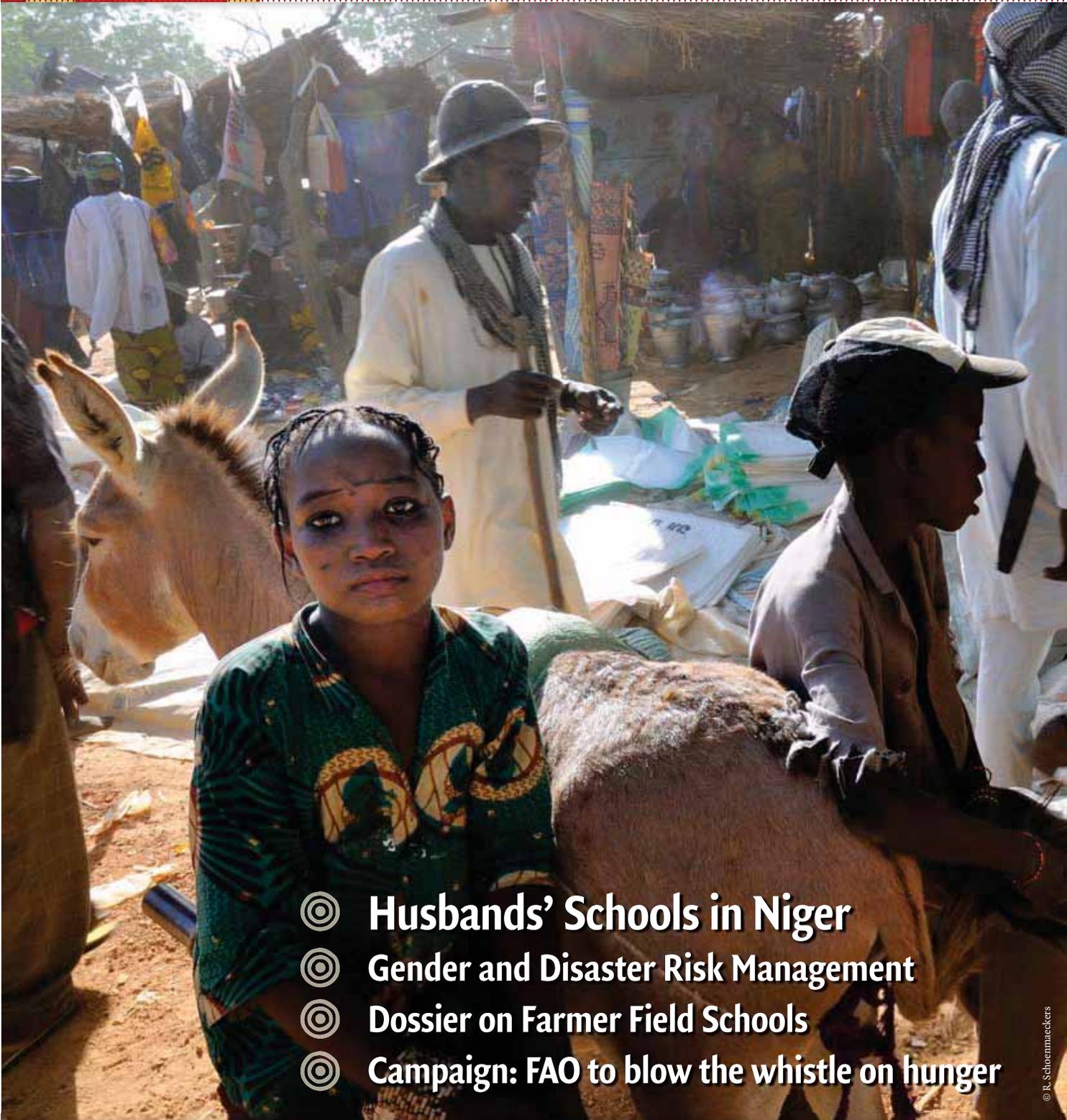




Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT



- ◎ **Husbands' Schools in Niger**
- ◎ **Gender and Disaster Risk Management**
- ◎ **Dossier on Farmer Field Schools**
- ◎ **Campaign: FAO to blow the whistle on hunger**

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our spring issue. We are very pleased to announce the birth of Yero, the son of our colleague Maartje and her partner Seydou. We wish little Yero, the youngest member of the expanding Dimitra network, a long and beautiful life in a world that is more just and free from poverty and hunger.

This Dimitra Newsletter gives examples of strategies and innovative projects that are important to share widely. In Niger, for example, where the maternal mortality rate is one of the highest in the world, UNFPA has developed an innovative strategy to involve men in promoting reproductive health and to encourage behaviour change at the community level. In these “Husbands’ Schools” (Ecoles des Maris), it is the men who persuade their wives and other men in their community to let women go to health centres to give birth in good conditions.

We present a participatory action research project on women and land in Senegal, initiated by “Groupe de Recherche Action sur le Foncier au Sénégal” (Action Research Group on Land in Senegal) (GRAFOSÉN). The implementation of the research is the result of collaboration between grassroots organizations, NGOs, universities and ministries. These include the NGO Enda Protection Naturelle (Pronat), Dimitra’s partner in the region.

The management of disaster risks is an area in which the gender approach is being increasingly integrated because it has become clear that disasters do not affect women and men in the same way. The article in this issue presents the lessons learned on this subject by FAO concerning food and agriculture.

Climate change is another area which is integrating gender more and more. Its effects are greater on women than on men. The article written by Dimitra’s focal point in Tanzania explains this in detail.

In Kenya, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS is greater in rural areas where more than 80% of the population live. Of those infected, more than 60% are women and girls. Rural women living with HIV are often exposed to a high risk of gender based sexual violence. The article of the Insti-



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tute of Policy Analysis and Research presents this issue.

The series “Women’s Portraits” is dedicated to Elise Muhimuzi, Permanent Secretary of CONAFED (Comité National Femme et Développement or National Committee for Women and Development) in the Democratic Republic of Congo. In particular, Elise describes how CONAFED was first set up and has grown.

The field schools in their various forms are the subject of a special dossier. The different methodologies used by FAO are reviewed, from traditional Farmer Field Schools to Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools for vulnerable youth which integrate the fight against sexual violence and HIV/AIDS as well as entrepreneurial training.

Other articles are devoted to the sustainable management of natural resources, particularly in Cameroon. Dimitra’s partner there highlights some successful experiences in this field.

Finally, after the usual section on resources, you will find information on the new FAO campaign to denounce hunger. It is about creating a global dynamic to challenge world leaders to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger through a world petition.

We hope you find this issue useful and enjoyable and, as always, your suggestions and comments are welcome.

Happy reading!

Marcela Villarreal
Director
Gender, equity and rural employment Division
FAO, Economic and Social Development Department



FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

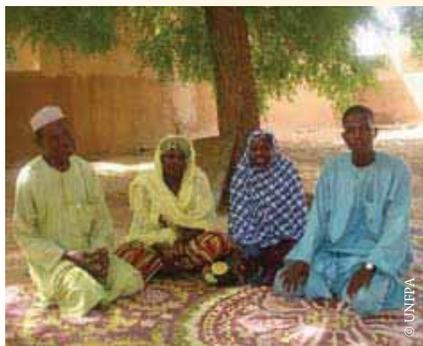
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The content of the articles does not necessarily reflect the views of FAO.

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Niger – Husbands' schools seek to get men actively involved in reproductive health

In Niger, UNFPA¹ has developed an innovative strategy for involving men in the promotion of reproductive health and fostering behavioural change at community level.

Despite all the efforts, every minute somewhere in the world a woman dies in childbirth. In Niger, where the maternal mortality ratio is 648 deaths per 100,000 live births, a woman dies every two hours. This is one of the highest ratios in the world, and it does not include the unacceptable number of women left disabled after childbirth. Working to ensure that women survive childbirth is a human rights imperative and an absolute priority for international development.

The International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals call for both a “75% reduction in maternal mortality” by 2015 and “universal access to reproductive health”.

To gain a better understanding of the issue and find appropriate solutions, UNFPA commissioned a study on the obstacles to the promotion of reproductive health in Zinder Region. Conducted in 2007 by the Laboratoire d'Études et de Recherche sur les Dynamiques Sociales et le Développement Local (LASDEL – Laboratory for Study and Research into Social Dynamics and Local Development), the study identified a number of barriers to the use of reproductive health services, the most important being the power and behaviour of the men who determine

whether or not women can have access to medical care.

The Husbands' Schools initiative

To address this situation, UNFPA Niger has developed a strategy known as “Ecole des Maris” (EdM – Husbands' Schools), which aims to involve men in health promotion and foster a change in behaviour at community level.

The strategy is being implemented in Zinder Region, via the Reproductive Health Programme co-financed by the European Union and UNFPA between 2004 and 2008, and from 2009 in partnership with the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation. Eleven pilot schools have been set up in two health districts in Zinder, located in particularly vulnerable areas with low reproductive health indicators.

A forum for men's involvement

The concept, approach and functioning of the EdMs were defined in greater detail at an initial workshop, based on a participatory approach, bringing together national NGOs, health workers, volunteer husbands, support organisations and other stakeholders. Criteria for selecting model husbands were established, of which the first five are essential:

1. Be married
2. Be a husband whose wife/wives use(s) reproductive health services
3. Be aged 25 or over
4. Be willing to participate
5. Be a husband who allows his wife to participate in group organisations
6. Be available for the School
7. Be of good moral character
8. Be someone who nurtures harmony within his household
9. Be a husband who supports his family.

The EdMs are based on voluntary membership and community involvement, the aim being to make men take responsibility for their own development. There is no leader: all members are equal and work in a non-hierarchical framework, with each member assuming his share of responsibilities on a rotational basis. The EdMs are a forum for discussion, decision-making and action.

The members meet around twice a month to analyse and discuss specific cases within the community in the field of reproductive health. This interaction is important since it gives the members insight into how they each perceive maternal health issues and problems. The group dynamic is also a tool for changing behaviour.

The husbands should look for appropriate solutions based on reliable knowledge available within the group or obtained from a specialist resource person. For example, on the basis of information provided by health personnel in the area, the husbands identify places where health indicators are critical, such as areas with low rates of prenatal consultation. Having identified the problem, the husbands can devise strategies and actions to get more pregnant and breastfeeding women attending Integrated Health Centres (Centres de Santé Intégrés, CSI), thereby improving the indicators. Awareness sessions held during re-



Members of the Bandé (Magaria) Husbands' School during a work session.

¹ United Nations Population Fund. UNFPA is the UN specialised agency working on population issues.



Work session on maternal health with the midwife and the Dungass (Magaria) members.

In addition, the EdMs have led to positive spin-off effects and new village initiatives. For example, the EdMs emphasise the close link between sanitation and the health status of populations and are implementing hygiene measures in villages.

The EdMs have also achieved results in terms of community actions. For example, latrines have been built in the CSIs to enhance women's comfort and privacy; a midwife's residence and an observation room for women in labour have also been built, and a prenatal consultation room completed.

The EdM experiment is taking place in an area bordering northern Nigeria, where entrenched religious attitudes are hostile to modern reproductive healthcare and gender equality. The commitment of married men from the region to the cause of reproductive health is a key result in terms of changing behaviour.

The challenge now is to secure the continuity and sustainability of capacity-building and to ensure that these changes in behaviour are passed on. The current members of the schools must be in a position to pass on to their children the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour that they have acquired.

Following this positive experiment in Zinder Region, the Representative of UNFPA Niger says "the initiative is having such an impact that it has caught the attention of other development partners." Consequently, UNFPA is planning to support more partners and to work with the government to extend the initiative to other regions, in order to get more men involved in the fight for better reproductive health among women.

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religious services are also one of the strategies they use.

In the areas covered by EdMs, husbands are taking an increasingly active role in the healthcare of their families and communities.

Model husbands

The Husbands' school primarily influences behaviour within individual couples. According to one wife, "we have seen many changes since the schools were set up. The men have become more aware. The women, too, have learnt that it doesn't matter whether it is a man or a woman that delivers their baby. It is the men who take their wives to the CSI."

Moreover, husbands and wives say that they are now talking to each other more: men understand the importance of the health of their wives and children. For the first time, husbands have even been attending the births of their children at the CSI. Member husbands are therefore acting as guides for their own families as well as for other families that would otherwise find it hard to get to a CSI.

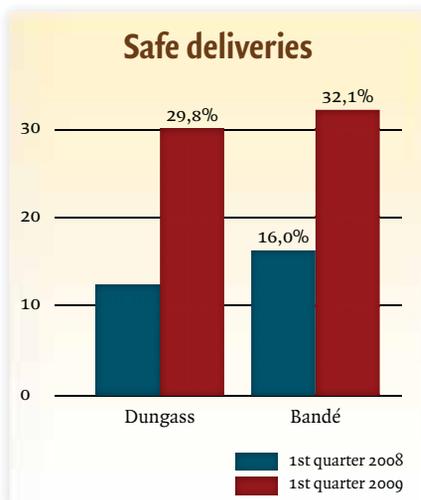
Impact on health indicators

There has also been a noticeable change in behaviour among villagers, authorities and health workers. The decisive factor is the new relationship that has been built up between the EdMs and health workers, which is having a qualitative impact on the indicators. The CSIs that achieve the best results, are those where health workers have good relations with local people generally and the EdMs in particular.

According to the head of the CSI in one village, "the husbands have contributed significantly to improving health indicators. We found that our behaviour was a barrier to attendance at the Centres. We decided to change our behaviour in terms of the reception we provide. Services are also better organised, with a timetable (for pre- and postnatal consultations and family planning) sent out to the women in all of the villages concerned."

Figures that speak for themselves

The reproductive health indicators are improving, with particularly significant rises in deliveries assisted by skilled personnel, prenatal and postnatal consultations and family planning. The graph below illustrates the positive impact on safe delivery rates at two sites with EdMs, where the figures have doubled.



Participatory action research on women and land in Senegal: improving women's access to reliable information

One of the outcomes of the Workshop on Women's Access to Land, organised by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and Dimitra in Mbour in 2008, is the establishment of an ambitious action research programme designed to improve and safeguard women's access to land in Senegal. It is being coordinated by the Groupe de Recherche Action sur le Foncier au Sénégal (GRAFOSEN - Senegal Land Action Research Group) and funded by the IDRC. The next stage is to share and validate the findings of the research with partner organisations and local populations, and to launch advocacy campaigns.



In Senegal, as elsewhere, land tenure is a delicate issue, intricately bound up with the social order and individual sensibilities. In rural households, women play a full role in food production, feeding the family and caring for and educating the children. In some cases, they have to shoulder these family responsibilities alone. However, despite their involvement in the economic fabric, women are hardest hit by the poverty associated with the difficulties in accessing and controlling resources such as land, which are linked particularly to patrilineal forms of social organisation.

Improving women's access to and control over land requires large-scale intervention and a commitment to placing people centre-stage, so that they can voice their wishes and fears and share their proposed solutions.

With this in mind, the project "Improving and safeguarding women's access to land in Senegal" has opted for a multidisciplinary action research approach, encompassing sociology, law, economics, agronomy and communication, among other fields. The researchers and users of the research findings engage in a joint 'learning by doing' process based on a detailed survey, data gathering and analysis, feedback and planning.

The action research is being implemented in three areas: Niayes, eastern Senegal and the Senegal River valley.

The research is a collaborative effort between grassroots organisations, NGOs, universities and ministries. Among those, the NGO Enda Protection Naturelle (Pronat), Dimitra partner in the region, which is responsible for coordination, the Groupe d'études et de recherches genre et sociétés (GESTES - Gender and Society Study and Research Group) at the University of Saint-Louis, the University of Dakar, NGOs such as the Réseau Africain pour le Développement Intégré (RADI - African Network for

Integrated Development), the Ministry of Agriculture and FAO.

Objectives and activities

The action research has three specific objectives:

- To present an exhaustive diagnostic on the issue of women's access to land by identifying the barriers to enforcement of the relevant legislation and regulations and their interactions with customary and religious laws.
- To bring about the conditions needed to disseminate and sustain the research findings on this topic by means of a partnership between the various stakeholders aimed at strengthening advocacy and legitimising the actions to be taken.
- To identify and put in place conditions that enable women to access reliable information on the issue of land tenure and express their points of view.

Numerous activities are being implemented to achieve these objectives. The long and crucial stage of compiling an 'inventory' of the situation by means of baseline surveys is now complete. This process enables the researchers to better understand the issue and identify the factors working for and against change.

The information meetings and methodological workshops organised in 2009 confirmed the importance of developing synergies and

involving multiple actors, with a variety of profiles, to make the initiative a success.

In 2010, GRAFOSEN will share the results of the survey with the groups concerned, with a view to validating and building on the findings. Communication activities will be launched, including partnerships with local media outlets aimed at improving women's access to information about (and involvement in) land issues in rural areas. Advocacy work will also be undertaken, primarily to mobilise decision-makers and other players in response to the action research findings.

A gender-based land access database will be developed and made available; effective advocacy tools will be produced and an awareness platform for land policy enforcement set up.

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GRAFOSEN Meeting in Koussanar.

Gender and Disaster Risk Management in Food and Agriculture: lessons learnt from FAO projects in Niger, Afghanistan and Indonesia

Natural disasters, conflicts and emergency situations in general, can have different impacts on women and men, young and old. Disasters tend to have the most severe consequences on vulnerable and agriculturally-dependent women and men, typically living in poverty, that are not often able to cope with the consequences of disasters. The systematic approach aimed at lessening the adverse impacts of hazards and the likelihood of disaster is called Disaster Risk Management (DRM). This approach has been conceived to address matters related to natural disasters but it can also be applied to agricultural threats and emergencies due to conflict or transboundary animal and plant pests and diseases.

FAO is actively involved in DRM interventions as food and agriculture can play a key role in increasing community resilience to likely threats. FAO aims at strengthening the livelihoods and increasing the resilience of households and communities in the pre-disaster phase, through measures to avoid (prevention) or limit (mitigation) the adverse effects of hazards and to provide timely and reliable hazard forecasts (preparedness). FAO focuses on saving lives and property in the response phase. FAO recovery and rehabilitation interventions, post-disaster or crisis, are based on the *building back better* principle. Building back better is to focus on ways to increase resilience to future hazards through longer-term interventions that facilitate the transition from relief to development.

Gender differentiated impact of disasters

Gender differences can make women more vulnerable than men to natural disasters in those contexts where they have less access to productive assets, especially land. For example, discrimination based on gender in terms of access to formally recognized property rights, as well as customary tenure systems, increases women's vulnerability to the impacts of climate related disasters like drought.

FAO completed a baseline assessment (November 2009) to review the gender implications of DRM interventions and to develop key recommendations to more effectively and

systematically include gender analysis and considerations in the design and implementation of FAO DRM projects. Good practice for gender-sensitive DRM projects were identified based on the following criteria: projects (1) focused on the application of gender-sensitive tools; (2) relied on one or more gender experts/consultants; (3) promoted gender analysis; and (4) provided training on gender and DRM.

Niger: increasing the land tenure rights of women

Recent projects in Niger, Afghanistan and Indonesia provide good practice examples. For FAO emergency and rehabilitation interventions in Niger, women account for 80 percent of the total beneficiaries of all projects, especially those involving off-season activities and the distribution of small ruminants. Women's access to land and water has been improved through leases of land to women's groups. The land tenure rights of these beneficiaries were secured for periods longer than five years by the Decentralised Land Commissions (*Commissions Foncières – COFOs*), which is significant in that women typically do not have property rights or land tenure security.

Afghanistan: strengthening women's technical skills

More than 25 years of war, recent prolonged droughts and environmental degradation in Afghanistan have heightened concerns

about growing food insecurity and poverty. From a gender perspective focused on reducing and managing disaster risk, FAO nutrition programmes are aimed at strengthening women's technical skills by working in partnership with organizations that assist women to organize themselves in self-help groups in order to better access credit, markets and develop small businesses.

Indonesia: improve knowledge and communication with farmers

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) has assumed epidemic proportions since late 2003 in Indonesia. FAO has recently started to promote the understanding of gender relations in livestock raising as a key factor in designing HPAI related interventions including training, communication materials and monitoring systems. FAO has made efforts to improve knowledge and communication with farmers and these initiatives need to be sustained by improving the training of key project staff in gender sensitive approaches, including pre-test techniques for communication and outreach.

Lessons learnt

The lessons learned and key recommendations from Niger, Indonesia and Afghanistan can be summarized in six key messages:

1. Promoting women's control over assets in the transition phase following an emergency is crucial: at this stage, support to women's entrepreneurship improves household food security standards.
2. Reduction and eventual removal of discrimination in women's access to land and property is fundamental to reducing women's as well as communities' vulnerability to natural disasters.
3. Gender analysis is the basis of effective targeting of beneficiaries as it strengthens planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, and makes programmes and projects more efficient and relevant.





Women's Group in Niger.

© FAO/Lucia Palombi

4. Strengthening women's technical skills in food processing can help them improve household food availability and income: nutrition is a good entry point to address gender issues as it is culturally acceptable even in countries where women are segregated and excluded from public life.
5. Supporting women's groups in DRM interventions is essential: low-income women who have lost everything can form groups and become active participants in the relief and recovery process.
6. Gender analysis around HPAI issues is important for ensuring that risk reduction strategies consider women's role in the poultry sector; successful outcomes of these measures will depend on long-term structural changes in gender dynamics.

More gender mainstreaming in DRM

FAO is actively seeking ways to more systematically address gender issues to improve FAO DRM interventions, and the examples discussed above are a small sample of the many types of interventions focused on food, agriculture, gender and emergency response, rehabilitation and development programming. FAO has launched a new FAO corporate strategy on improving emergency preparedness and making emergency response more effective. A more enhanced

focus on gender analysis and identifying the gender-differentiated needs and capacities of women and men will play an increasingly important role in improving how FAO implements and delivers results under its new corporate strategy. FAO agrees with the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) in that a gender-inclusive approach to DRM can achieve win-win results for families and communities.

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Distribution of chickens in Haiti.

Tanzania – Climate change, an additional burden to rural women

Africa faces many problems: poverty, disease, rapid population growth, food insecurity, limited water access and poor water management. In addition to these, the effects of climate change could drive the majority of the population into destitution, as assets are lost and resources are diverted to deal with emergencies rather than being used for development.

Climate changes as a result of human activities such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, have contributed to the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which contribute to a warming of the earth, a rising sea level and changes in rainfall amounts and distribution.

Food insecurity

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the most food-insecure regions in the world. Unless adequate measures are put in place, climate change could further aggravate this situation. Some areas may become too hot for certain crops or animals; it may rain too little or too much to allow farming; the breakout of climate sensitive diseases, such as Rift Valley Fever, could seriously affect livestock production, etc. With drier areas projected to get even drier, producing food using irrigation may not be possible due to water shortages. At the other extreme,

flooding could destroy the infrastructure used to store or transport food from production areas to markets. This may discourage farmers from producing more food, potentially contributing to even lower food production.

In short, dealing with the impacts of climate change – called climate change “adaptation” – requires measures that will minimise losses or take advantage of the opportunities presented.

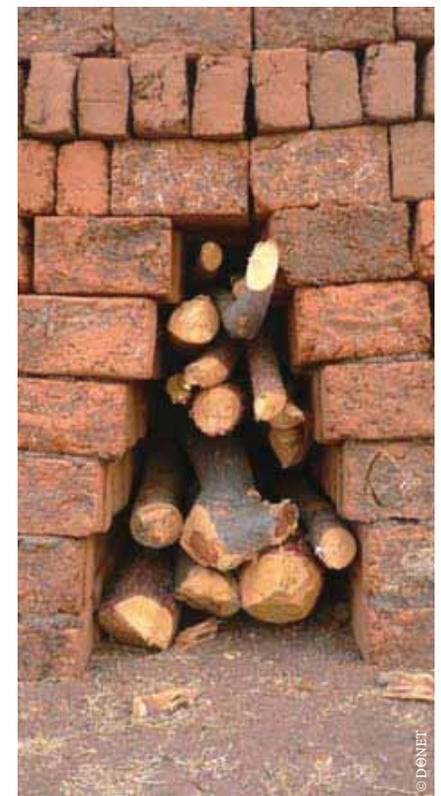
The case of Bahi District

In Tanzania, women play a critical role in the rural economies. In most parts of the country they participate in crop and livestock production, provide food, water and fuel for their families, and engage in off-farm activities to diversify the family income. In addition, they carry out vital functions in caring for children, elderly people and the sick.

A village survey conducted by Flora K. Munyasya, a student at the Institute of Rural Development Planning, in Bahi-sokoni village (Bahi District, Dodoma region) on household basic access needs clearly showed the daily access burden of women and girl children in this region. Women bear the largest share of rural domestic and production burden, contributing more than 70% of household’s time and effort.

With regards to travel and transportation, the survey showed that:

- 95% of all rural travel and transportation is done by foot and head-loading, only 5% by motorised transport;
- 80% of all trips are within the village;
- 80% of all journeys are for transporting water and firewood and travelling to the grinding mills; the remainder is for other activities such as going to markets, farms, school and health centres;



▲ Women pumping water from a bore hole

A mud brick furnace being prepared for burning using fuel wood. ▶



The alarming rate of deforestation in Bahi district.

- 85% of all transportation is done by women, 15% by men and children;
- An average household of 5 persons spends 7 hours every day on transport-related activities.

People in this region are farmers whose only sources of income are food crops and cattle breeding. However, prolonged drought due to climate changes has led the men abandon their previous occupations and to earn a living by making charcoal and clay bricks. Their felling of trees has left the women with long distances to walk in search of firewood, thus spending many extra hours a day on the road and reducing their productive hours. The deforestation has great impact on the environment, economy and women's health.

The practice of keeping excess livestock and the lack of destocking cause overgrazing, which results in the destruction of possible water catchment areas. This, together with long periods of dry weather, has caused a water shortage, which has again left women with long distances to cover to collect water for domestic use.

Facing the effects of climate change

Following the ever increasing effects of climate change in Bahi district, the community decided to take action. Facilitated by members of the Dodoma Environmental Network (DONET) in the district, the community has formed four "Ward Environmental Networks". A ward comprises from two to five villages.

The members of these networks have identified the environmental problems predominant in their wards. They have developed work plans which guide them in implementing the tasks aimed at resolving these environmental problems. Priority is given to the establishment and management of tree nurseries. The next step will be tree planting around homesteads and the establishment of forests in reserved areas of each village. To ensure effective coordination of the Ward Environmental Networks, the members have formed the Bahi District Environmental Network (BAENET).

With these efforts it is hoped that the harmful effects of climate change in Bahi District will be gradually minimized.

DONET is also interested in exchanging experiences with other organizations and communities on counteracting the effects of climate change.

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Fetching water from a natural spring. Such water is not safe. ▶

Kenya – Devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on rural women

Women are distinctly and devastatingly affected by HIV/AIDS. Trends indicate that HIV/AIDS is more prevalent in women than in men. Today, roughly 40 million people worldwide are living with HIV. In Kenya, the effect is greatest in rural areas, where over 80% of the population lives. Out of those infected with HIV, more than 60% are women and girls.

Women are more vulnerable to HIV infection in many ways; the reasons that account to the differences in the infection rate between men and women are:

- i. *Physical Differences / Easier to Transmit from Men to Women than Women to Men* – anatomical differences between men and women mean transmission from men to women is easier than the other way around. The mucosal lining of the vagina offers a large surface area to be exposed to infected seminal fluid and is more susceptible to small tears and irritation during intercourse than is the penis.
- ii. *Gender Inequities* – Prevailing gender inequities leads to higher-risk behaviours. For instance, in many cultures women are not free to refuse sex or to insist on safer sex

using condoms. Women have less access to employment and education in developing countries. The sex trade can be one of the few options for women trying to earn money and support themselves and their children. Sexual violence against women is also very high in some areas, thus exposing them to high-risk behaviours.

Gender inequity challenges facing rural women

Rural women living with HIV often face oppression in their relationships with male partners and within the wider community because of their gender, HIV status and economic (and social) marginalization. As a result, they are subjected to high levels of sexual and other gender-based violence. They are often unable

to protect themselves against HIV infection because they risk violence should they suggest safer sex.

Male partners are reluctant to test for HIV even when there are strong indications of infection. Many women face abuse from their partners when they access health services for HIV-related treatment and care. The assumption that men and women are aware of HIV and AIDS and know how to protect themselves does not apply to rural areas, particularly to young women. Myths, misconceptions, superstitions, stereotypes and stigmatization are widely prevalent. The less people know about the disease, the more negative they tend to be about HIV-affected families and the stronger the stigmatization.

In most Kenyan cultures, women do not inher-



Women's Group in Taveta.



it land and property, and until recently, banks did not lend to women because they lacked collateral. Economic dependence on men and lower levels of education condemn women to doomed marriages, and those who choose to remain single are often branded as having loose morals.

The HIV/AIDS scenario in Luo Nyanza and Taveta in Kenya

● Luo Nyanza: multiple sex partners encouraged for men

HIV/AIDS is more prevalent in Luo Nyanza mainly due to the socio-cultural behaviour of the Luo people. A report by Okeyo from Nyanza on 'The Impact of HIV/AIDS on the people of Nyanza'¹ blames socio-cultural behaviour which encourages sex with more than one partner in parts of Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa. Widow inheritance (levirate) is deep rooted here; men have multiple sex partners including their wives and casual sex partners and are reinforced by the high frequency of exchange of men by widows. This coupled with low condom use in rural areas has contributed to an explosive spread of HIV. The report further indicates that, HIV/AIDS is more prevalent among women (8.7%) than men (4.6%) and the epidemic rages since secrecy persists in the face of sickness and death.

● Taveta: fear of women to confront their husbands with HIV/AIDS

While studying traditional maternal health practices of the Taveta people of the Coast Province, some incidental findings were found through the health care providers at the district government hospital where the poor, mostly women, seek health care and

treatment. The health providers identified an emerging problem in Taveta relating to HIV/AIDS. They showed a corner where they kept anti-retroviral drugs (and also family planning pills) for HIV infected women who claimed to have been infected by their husbands. But they would not dare confront them for fear of being kicked out of the marriage, thereby being denied the only source of income – the family land, which is usually the property of the husband. These women thus chose to manage the infection while continuing to stay in the relationships, thereby exposing themselves to re-infection. Women have to go to the health facilities to take their daily doses.

Suggested Interventions

The interventions that should be taken must address the two forms of unique vulnerabilities: physical differences / easier to transmit from men to women than women to men, and gender inequalities. Specifically, there has to be action by governments and civil society as well as other stakeholders in the following areas:

- Invest in women's education to prevent HIV infection among girls and young women – women who are better educated take better care of their own health.
- Abolish practices harmful to women's health – gender discrimination, domestic rape, and genital mutilation.
- Remove legal impediments to the effective delivery of health services – increase women's access to care.
- Intensify public awareness – where men, women and community will be free to seek aid and thus face less discrimination.
- Increase male involvement and support – health and other agencies need to make

concerted efforts to make men aware of women's health problems and rights, and take responsibility for the effects of their behaviour.

- Address economic and social inequalities affecting women.
- Ensure transport costs and distances in rural areas do not impede access to health services.
- Promote accessibility to and availability of new prevention options for women, including microbicides, as well as to ART services in rural areas.
- Ensure access to adequate food, credit, and cash.
- Improve women's access to civil and criminal remedies in cases of violence against women.
- Assist women in disclosing their HIV status safely.
- Women-focused HIV research, funding and sponsoring studies around the world.
- Protect the property and inheritance rights of women and girls.
- Support improved community-based care, with a special focus on women and girls.

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¹ Okeyo, Tom Mboya (2001). 'The Impact of HIV/AIDS on the people of Nyanza', in Elderkin, Sarah (ed) (1998). *HIV/AIDS and Development in Nyanza Province: Report (Leadership Symposium Report)*.

Establishing a national women's network in the DRC: a challenge

ELISE MUHIMUZI, PERMANENT SECRETARY OF CONAFED, DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

Elise Muhimuzi has played a leading role in the National Committee for Women and Development (CONAFED) – one of Congo's main women's networks – since the 1990s. This is a great achievement in a vast country hit hard by dictatorship and war. Working with other women activists, she built up the CONAFED network over a number of years and has been its Permanent Secretary since 1997.

What part did you play in establishing CONAFED?

In early 1990, I worked for a small NGO called the Collectif de Diffusion d'Information et d'Appui aux Femmes (CODIAF – Collective for Information Dissemination and Support to Women) (...). We saw how difficult it was for farmers, both women and man, to make a living. In partnership with others, we tried to come up with ways to enable women to get some benefits from the fruits of their labour. At the time, the country was still under Mobutu's dictatorship. In 1991-1992, there were widespread lootings in Congo. That was when we started to campaign with other organisations.

The movement began in Kinshasa but we soon realised that women in other Provinces shared our concerns. Rural women were also oppressed by the existing system. So we came to the conclusion that we had to work together. (...) We launched a large-scale women's movement that culminated in 1997 in elections for CONAFED, aimed at promoting the rights and status of women. There were 12 of us – all women NGO members – who launched the process in Kinshasa. We chose

a permanent secretary and a chairwoman among these women. I was ideally placed to be the first leader of CONAFED. Some of these women went on to hold important posts, such as the Minister of Gender, Family Affairs and Children, Ms Marie-Ange Lukiana. I have remained at CONAFED ever since... and have just been re-elected.

Are you concerned that there has been no change of Permanent Secretary at CONAFED?

There may have been times when people thought I was clinging on to CONAFED. In fact, at the last elections I had made up my mind to leave, but the women wouldn't let me go – even though there were other strong candidates. When I started out, I didn't have all the skills: I learnt on the job. It must be said that a number of individuals have left the

“Congo's wealth must be allowed to benefit the people. I think this is possible – it's a matter of political will.”

movement, mainly to go into politics. In 2002-2003, many were involved in the Inter-Congolese Dialogue. CONAFED's strategy came to prominence, largely because we had made decentralised provincial education our primary focus – with some success. In 2002, 24 of the 29 women civil society members of the transitional Parliament established under the Inter-Congolese Dialogue came from CONAFED! (...) The newcomers to CONAFED have coped well, but naturally they do require training. I think that's another reason why they want me to stay – as a stabilising presence amid all the departures. That said, these departures are no bad thing in themselves; they are testimony to the quality of the movement, its members and training.

How has CONAFED become such an important player in this vast country?

From the outset, we had a very clear programme, namely to work on equal rights and equity. The movement aims to get women involved in decision-making bodies. We decided that education would be the best way to achieve this objective. Right from the start, the courses were run in a decentralised way, in the provinces, with the involvement of the customary and religious authorities. It is an unusual approach: in Congo, most human resources are located in Kinshasa owing to the centralisation of dictatorial power. The idea was to return power to the people.

How do you view CONAFED's capacity-building activities?

I believe that the capacity-building activities have had a big impact. Today, there are many competent women in positions of power who have passed through CONAFED. (...) This is of great benefit to us, because these women form a network, which means we have access to many high-ranking individuals.



Elise Muhimuzi during the Dimitra workshop held in Brussels in September 2008.

Has your work on women's emancipation caused any difficulties in your family life?

My husband has always encouraged me. In fact, he was around so much and so committed to the cause that many of my colleagues thought he was a human rights activist! Without his support, I don't know if I'd be what I am today. (...) In the early days, we didn't have any funding and it was his wages that paid for the office rent.

My family was a long way away in Bukavu [in eastern DRC – Ed.]. To start with, some people thought I was mad. They didn't understand how I could work for five years with no pay! [She laughs] (...) They would have preferred me to go into business, but I couldn't have done that.

I devoted a lot of energy to setting up CONAFED and everything went very well to begin with. But it created tensions, especially with other women, because of the backing that CONAFED received from donors. I have to admit that I wasn't too bothered by that. (...) I was pleasantly surprised when our first evaluation suggested we might become the main national women's organisation.

Have there been any difficulties in your dealings with the authorities?

Before the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, I had become a public figure. At that time, we were demanding that the rebels stop the rapes and other violence. In 2001, my elder sister paid the ultimate price: she and two of her children were murdered. It was an attempt to silence me. They targeted my family. I received a lot



of encouragement from our partners, because they didn't want me to leave Congo. Cordaid [a Dutch Catholic development aid organisation – Ed.] helped pay to save my little niece, who had been shot but not killed.

At the time, I was devastated by the loss of my sister. I lost my father when I was nine and she was the one who supported the family. She was everything to me. Then I figured that maybe her death could help restore peace to other women. She was dead, but so many other women had died in similar circumstances. Life had to go on.

How do you see the future for women in Congo?

We need to work at putting in place equality mechanisms. I think the fact that there have been elections has triggered a democratic process in spite of everything. Congo needs capacity to run the country. We have to be really determined to assume sovereignty over the country and have genuine rule of law. Congo's wealth must be allowed to benefit the Congolese people. I think this is possible – it's a matter of political will.

Do you have a message for our readers engaged in gender equality issues?

Opening up rural areas is very important. We need to keep up the work in that area. Today, completely isolated populations now have access to information that is of relevance to them. For us, the people of Congo, Dimitra is a very important programme, not only in terms of agricultural issues but in a much broader sense, in relation to the rights of women in forgotten rural areas. To work for others you have to believe in what you are doing: only when you believe do things get done.

“Only when you believe do things get done.”



CONAFED

The Comité National Femme et Développement (National Committee for Women and Development) is a network of women's organisations in the DRC aimed at promoting gender issues and women leadership. It comprises over 360 member associations grouped into Women and Development Networks (REFEDs) in each of the country's 11 provinces.

CONAFED arose from the need to create a framework for Congolese women to discuss issues that affect them and, most importantly, join forces in order to be stronger and make their voices heard. Rural women are well represented and play an active role in CONAFED.

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DRC – AGF, working for women empowerment in the peri-urban area of Kinshasa

Kindele is an outlying district of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). It has a high unemployment rate, but help is at hand thanks to Appui aux Groupements des Femmes et Familles (AGF - Support for Women's Groups and Families), an NGO that works to improve the livelihoods of its members and of families living in the neighbourhood. AGF is a member of CONAFED, the National Committee for Women and Development (see previous page).

AGF was founded in 1991 against a difficult economic and political backdrop. It started out as a group of local women who got together to breed chickens. Though a modest undertaking, it enabled the women to make a partial living and quickly expanded. At the time, it was difficult to access any major funding: the national financial system had imploded and development partners were more geared towards large associations. However, the organisation gradually diversified into a wider range of sectors, moving beyond chicken breeding into agriculture and other income-generating activities with the potential to enhance food security.

AGF's logo is the top of a palm tree. "The palm tree represents a tree that grows tall and strong," explains the organisation's coordinator Agnès Lukamba. And since its inception AGF has indeed grown from strength to strength. The association now has over 120 members –women who work in groups to improve their livelihoods. Most of its members live a rural lifestyle, with all the hardships that this entails. However, AGF also benefits another group not featured in its name: boys, who otherwise would not have any employment, help to sell the goods produced by the organisation's members. As well as being a development actor, Appui aux Groupements des Femmes et Familles has become a full-fledged business.

A range of activities

Today, AGF's members have the necessary experience and tools to organise themselves and contribute to social change initiatives in their area.

The association has over 2,500 broiler and laying hens. It sells its chickens and eggs all over Kinshasa and has developed a micro enterprise for chicken production and preservation.

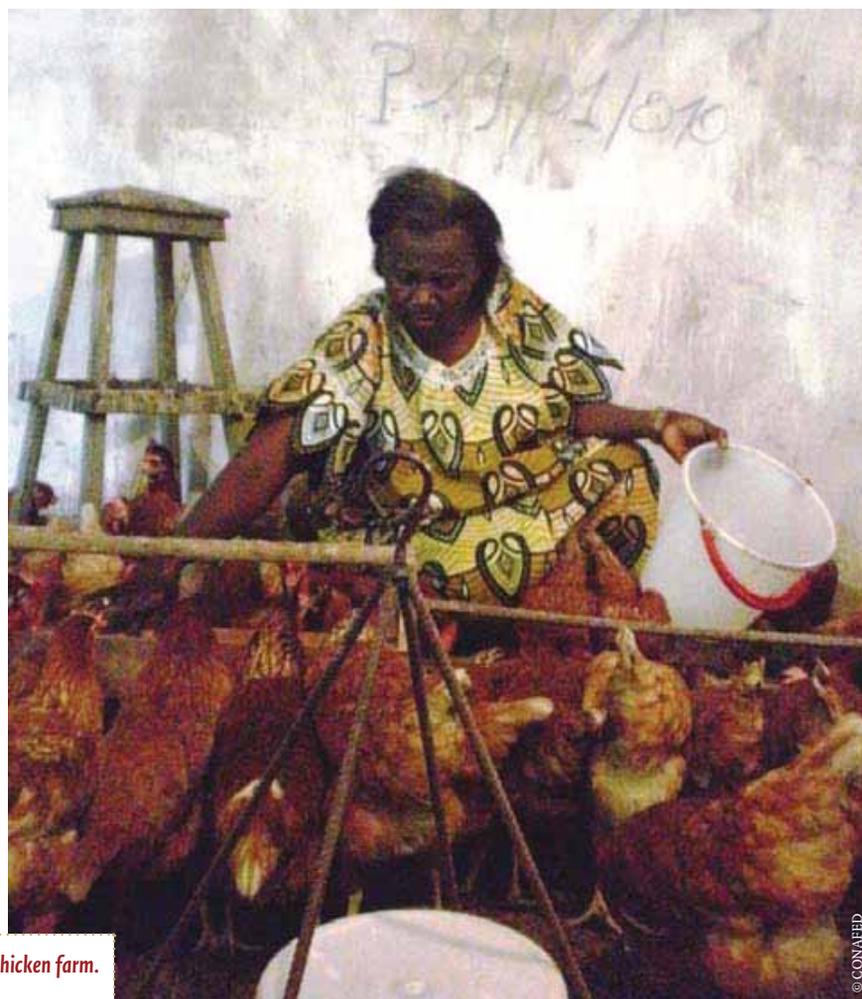
Its members also engage in agricultural activities: growing manioc, peanuts, spices and amaranth and selling large quantities of fresh (rather than frozen) produce.

Last but not least, AGF undertakes other income-generating activities such as the manufacture of detergents and the salting of fish. Some members have specialised in the production of boubous and tablecloths (rarities in the Kinshasa marketplace) based on their own designs. Others have branched out into pastry-making, producing small cakes and waffles.

Here too, youths who used to beg and steal are now helping to sell the products.

Capacity building

AGF's actions are also helping to build the capacity of its members and of neighbourhood residents. The association offers training in a variety of subjects, including literacy, agriculture, responsible citizenship and 'cutting and stitching', as and when it has the necessary resources. In this poverty-stricken neighbourhood, that is not often the case. Consequently, it has decided to focus more on vocational cal-



A woman from AGF in her chicken farm.

capacity building – an approach that has borne fruit.

Jacky Tsh. moved to Kinshasa with her husband and their six children 10 years ago because of the war. She gives an enthusiastic account of her experience: “Quite honestly, when I joined AGF in 2002 I was at the end of my tether and had given up all hope. I have to say that the association has given me everything – not just knowledge but love as well. My family and friends in Kinshasa are the AGF members. Now I’ve learnt to make detergents, which I sell, and I also breed chickens. My family’s situation has improved a lot. My husband has become a craftsman and together we earn a living for our family. We now have eight children, all of them at school and in good health. Thanks to their ability to produce goods, the women of Kindele are now respected.”

Another member, Fifi K., confirms this picture: “I am a young mother with three children. I left school at an early age. I’ve been a member of AGF for the past two years. I decided to turn to AGF because of the problems I faced as a young mother with no regular income. I learnt to breed chickens, salt fish and make detergents and also to sell these products. Through these activities, I’ve brought happiness to my family and to the community. I can meet my children’s basic needs. I’m very grateful to this initiative because I used to be unpopular as a girl – a problem child. Now I am taking responsibility for my children’s future. I’ve become a responsible person and a useful member of the community.”

Many challenges

However, despite this enthusiasm, the organisation continues to face many challenges, with logistical, administrative and communication resources generally limited. For example, the association’s headquarters, which houses offices and a chicken shed among other things, does not have any rooms large enough to gather all its members.

As far as the sale of chickens is concerned, there is stiff competition from imported frozen birds. AGF is applying to the relevant ministry to secure tax exemption on chicken feed, which would ease this pressure.

AGF’s members do not have enough access to land, despite almost a third of them being engaged in agricultural activities.

Access to water is not guaranteed, and women have to walk long distances to get enough water for their work. In addition, the electricity supply is limited and unreliable, which is another major obstacle to a number of the organisation’s activities.

Community ownership and an enthusiastic membership

However, these difficulties cannot overshadow the importance of the NGO’s role in supporting its members and the neighbourhood. Its coordinator Agnès Lukamba believes that it is AGF’s very community rootedness



Meeting of AGF members.

that explains its success: “Personally, it gives me great joy to see my children getting involved in this work, work with a community and a development focus. Within the community, I sense increasing openness to the idea of women as producers. Women are now viewed more positively in the neighbourhood. They have become capable not only of feeding their children but also of defending their rights. (...) Our greatest success has been this major step towards women’s empowerment, with every member now able to produce and sell.”

AGF’s strength lies in the energy and motivation of its members, as Jacky Tsh. and Fifi K. testify. “AGF is no longer just an association: it is a school of life, a centre for personal development. Women’s potential has been unlocked. This NGO is banishing poverty from our community. Myths are being dispelled. Take eggs, for example: they used to be just for well-off households, now they’re accessible to everyone. (...) AGF is a beacon of hope for Kindele. Women in this part of the capital now have the means to be self-sufficient.”

Appui aux Groupements des Femmes et Familles is an example of a successful local initiative aimed at improving the livelihoods of its members and the neighbourhood and empowering women.

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AGF products.

Farmer field schools, an evolving methodology

The farmer field school (FFS) is a group learning process whereby women and men farmers take part in activities where they learn by experience. This helps them to understand the ecology of their fields and improve their farming practices. The approach was developed in the late 1980s in Asia and has been a major success due to its participatory dimension which can incorporate different ecological realities and work within existing farm management methods. The article “West Africa – IPPM, a producer training programme based on the Farmer Field School method” provides an example of this methodology.

The JFFLS (Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools) are a further development of this methodology. The approach was first developed by both FAO and WFP (World Food Programme) in Mozambique in 2003 to cope with the high number of orphans left by the civil war and the ravages of HIV / AIDS.

In Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, orphans and vulnerable children from 12-18 years of age are trained by inter-disciplinary teams of extension workers, school teachers and social workers, on traditional and modern agriculture as well as in life skills following the agricultural cycle. Children work in groups and learn through experimentation, drama, singing and dancing, or other participatory cultural methodologies. The main objective of the JFFLS is to empower vulnerable children to improve their livelihoods and long-term food security and to be in command of their own future. The article “Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools: continued expansion and new modules” presents this approach and its application in Africa.

Finally, given the pertinence of working on ‘life skills’ with young people, FAO has recently established the FFLS (Farmer Field and Life School) for adults in high health-risk or emergency situations. The article “Tackling food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and gender based violence in East Africa with Farmer Field and Life Schools” deals with this new perspective.

West Africa – IPPM, a producer training programme based on the Farmer Field School method

Developed through cooperation between Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal and the Netherlands, the Integrated Production and Pest Management (IPPM) programme is a capacity-building programme for small producers, aimed at reducing dependence on pesticides and improving the management of cropping systems. It was launched in 2001. Since then, FAO has been providing technical support to the programme and using a participatory methodology to train producers.

The aim of IPPM is to help combat food insecurity and poverty in rural areas. This is a widespread problem in West Africa, caused primarily through a significant degradation of natural resources due to poor climatic conditions, which have weakened natural ecosystems, as well as to the irrational use of agrochemicals, production systems that are unsuited to farming conditions and realities and, above all, a lack of training and information among farmers. IPPM uses a participatory training methodology based on the Farmer Field Schools (FFS), first introduced to West Africa in 1995.

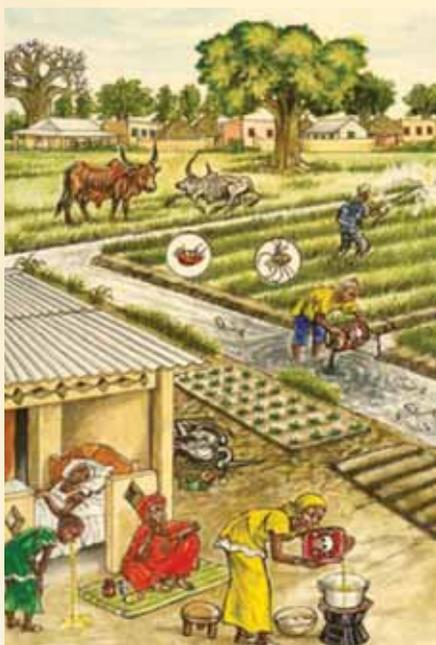
Field School principles

The Farmer Field School is an adult learning framework that facilitates the transfer of innovation in agriculture and many other areas. The name ‘Field School’ was chosen to reflect the educational character of the training, the fact that it takes place in the fields and that conditions in the fields determine the bulk of

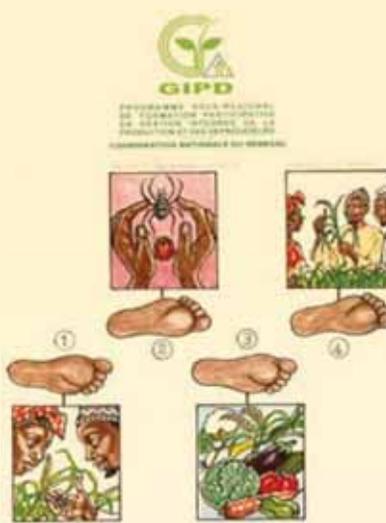
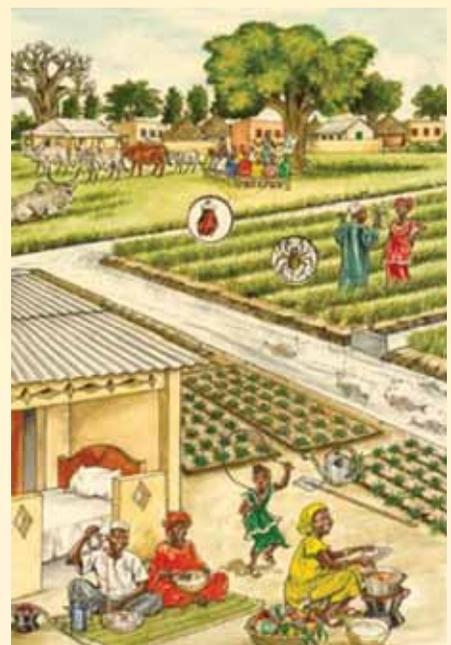


Application of IPPM principles for healthy and sustainable agriculture

BEFORE IPPM



AFTER IPPM



IPPM PRINCIPLES

Rural populations usually lack the education needed to use agrochemicals correctly. Consequently, they often apply the wrong doses, do not use personal protective equipment and fail to comply with the associated regulations. Empty packaging is reused or rinsed out at water supply points. All of these practices heighten

the health risks to humans and animals, pollute the environment with a resultant loss of biodiversity and create major disruption in households. The Field School scheme and IPPM use participatory principles as a basis for addressing this key issue in agricultural areas. The training process enables farmers to

increase their income, protect the environment and learn about crop management. Communication and exchanges of experience between local people have improved considerably.

the study programme. Actual problems encountered in the fields are observed and analysed, from planting through to harvesting of the crop. Farmer Field Schools operate on the following principles:

- **Grow a healthy crop:** use the right varieties of seeds and appropriate cropping practices to produce healthier plants.
- **Observe crops regularly:** ensure informed decision-making for appropriate interventions on problems relating to water, soil, fertilisation, pests and weeds.
- **Conserve natural enemies:** protecting their habitats is an active method of conserving natural enemies.
- **Make farmers experts in their own fields** so that they can manage their fields with the necessary knowledge and expertise. Expertise implies a basic understanding of the agro-ecological system and decision-making processes.

The teaching objectives of the FFS are to facilitate sound understanding by targeted farmers through exchanges with technicians. The group (farmers and technician) manages the crop, carries out observations and analyses

all of the results. Through these exchanges, the producer comes to understand the physiological behaviour of the plants, the life cycle of insects as well as their respective status and roles in a crop plantation. This participatory method encourages initiative on the part of the farmer, consolidates agro-ecological knowledge and allows the farmer to become less dependent on agrochemicals and thereby to help conserve the environment.

Women's involvement

This participatory approach mainstreams gender by involving women in the training of facilitators and producers. Women are particularly heavily involved with market-garden crops, making up 58% of the producers trained over a three-year period. However, they are less well represented in rice and cotton crop training. FFS help to empower women by giving them an opportunity to interact with the producers' group and to capitalise on their experiences with crop management throughout the crop cycle. Upon completion of the training, some women go on to help train other producers. Interaction in mixed groups is facilitated by group dynamic exer-

cises, which help bring the participants closer together and improve their communication skills. The head of a women's group that received the training said: "The programme has created a healthy dynamic in the village. For almost a decade, all our attempts to work in a group proved unsuccessful. Since we started working in the FFS, there has been a widespread sense of motivation and all the group's members have enjoyed working together. As head of the group, I appreciate the way that IPPM has made it easier for us to work together collectively and improved our internal dynamic." Women's role in agricultural development is now widely acknowledged, but the Field School training also helps to ensure that women's voices are heard during discussions on questions and issues raised.

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The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools: continued expansion and new modules

Since 2003, growing numbers of Junior Farmer Field Schools (JFFLS) are operating in seventeen, mainly African, countries. The goal of the JFFLS is to empower vulnerable youth, giving them livelihood options and long term food security while minimizing their vulnerability to risky coping strategies.

In a JFFLS, around 30 rural boys and girls meet a few times a week to acquire agricultural and life skills. They work together on a piece of land to learn about and experiment with new and traditional agricultural techniques and discuss issues that are crucial in their daily lives, such as prevention of diseases, decision making and the importance of working together. The sessions are organized and facilitated by adults from the community, often teachers and agricultural experts, who have been trained on the JFFLS approach. The selection of the participants as well as the design of the curriculum are done in consultation with the community. The participants attend the JFFLS for one agricultural cycle.

The JFFLS approach was initially developed by FAO and WFP as a response to the HIV orphan crisis and first started in Mozambique. It has been adapted to address emergency situations, rural youth employment and child labour prevention. FAO, as well as various governments, NGOs, and UN joint Programmes have since then integrated the approach into various programmes.

Implementation and the role of FAO

FAO frequently sets up pilots with partners to introduce and adapt the approach to an

area and specific target groups. FAO provides support to the running and monitoring of most JFFLSs, through organizing training of facilitators and developing training and monitoring materials and promoting exchange of knowledge through publications and workshops. A toolkit for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the JFFLS programme was developed in 2009, which provides a summary of M&E principles relevant to JFFLS and describes a minimum set of core tools for on-going monitoring and programme evaluation. A considerable part of the toolkit is dedicated to the evaluation of outcomes and impact of JFFLS programmes, which is important for tracking the progress as well as for advocacy.

Modalities for implementation, monitoring and funding vary. In Mozambique for example, the government has assigned some of their officers to coordinate the JFFLSs, which number more than 58. In Western Kenya, the Farmer Field School (FFS) network, coordinated from the Ministry of Agriculture, is overseeing the different JFFLS projects with the assistance of a JFFLS officer based at FAO. In Ghana, a group of NGOs, in collaboration with FAO, has decided to use the approach in their 'family strengthening programme', while at the

same time promoting youth employment and organic farming skills.

In some cases, communities are running the JFFLS without core funding. Western Kenya provides an interesting example in this respect, since the JFFLSs have been linked to a larger plot of land where caretakers farm and learn. Yields are used to provide for the lunches for the children and to cover the costs of the JFFLS learning sessions. In Mozambique, JFFLS graduates are now actively involved in running JFFLSs for their younger peers.

In Mozambique, eight young farmers' cooperatives have been formed by JFFLS graduates, who have been provided with follow-up entrepreneurship training, within the context of the One UN Youth Employment programme.

The JFFLS learning process

In the JFFLS learning process, which is adapted by the facilitators according to the climatic and socio-cultural circumstances, focus is on learning by doing. A constant link is made between the agricultural cycle and the life cycle. The JFFLS approach is based on an experiential learning process that encourages the group to observe, draw conclusions, and make informed decisions consistent with good agricultural and life practices. In the field, this means that participants study crop-related issues within the framework of their analysis of the problems they face in their own lives. In JFFLS, participants analyze livelihood and social problems and discuss the results with their peers, through drama, play and other methods. In situations where children have very limited access to information and facilities, helping children to play, think, discuss, and to capitalize on local resources to solve their problems is a suitable strategy for enhancing their empowerment and self-esteem.



Junior Farmers Field and Life Schools, Hebron, West Bank.

Gender Sensitivity

It has been observed that girls are more likely to drop out from JFFLS than boys, mainly because of their workload at home, therefore a gender focus is essential to reach the goal of empowerment for boys and girls. One of the main objectives of JFFLS is to promote the creation of gender-equal attitudes, by enabling the youth to exercise the same roles and responsibilities and to stimulate them to think critically about the gender relationships in their society.

Three new JFFLS training modules

JFFLS has proven to be a good way to discuss complex issues with vulnerable youth. Recently FAO has incorporated three new topics in the curriculum:

Preventing child labour in agriculture

The new module on child labour in agriculture, which will help to address the topic in JFFLS explicitly, has been developed by FAO in collaboration with ILO (International Labour Organization), facilitators and partner organizations in Mozambique, Kenya and Ghana.

Land and property rights

Access to and control and management of natural resources, especially land, is a key determinant of income, power, status and rural livelihoods. FAO took the initiative to develop a JFFLS training module with information and practical exercises including role plays to help children and their caretakers understand the basic concepts of land and property rights and the impacts that gender inequality in land and property rights can have on people's livelihoods and food security.

Entrepreneurship and business skills

Given the often limited opportunities for gainful employment in rural areas, JFFLS graduates are likely to sell surplus or set up their own agribusiness later on. The new module includes simple exercises and games to make children think strategically about how they can improve their future livelihoods in agriculture.

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JFFLS – Investing in the future of Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) in Northern Uganda

Various stakeholders in the Adjumani district were consulted on the participatory preparation of the project work plan and during the joint identification of the sub-counties to target. All facilitators received two weeks training organized by FAO.

MR. GEORGE OLIMA, DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (DRC)

JFFLS steering committees were set up with the children's guardians, the schools' headmasters, members of the schools' management committees, etc. This management structure ensured the appropriation of the project by the schools and local authorities, therefore guaranteeing local capacity-building and the sustainability of the approach.

Approximately 600 school children from among OVC aged 12 to 18 years were identified jointly by local stakeholders (JFFLS steering committees, local authorities, Danish Refugee Council). Orphans and traumatized children, as well as children coming from extremely poor or difficult households were selected, using school registers and community perception and knowledge.

Thanks to this initiative:

- Children built a sense of team and established solidarity ties.
- Children are very active in peer-teaching thus increasing the impact of the knowledge transfer outside the JFFLS groups.
- Peer-teaching, associated with distribution of vegetable seeds, allowed families to develop household vegetable gardens.

This consequently improved their dietary diversity and provided income generating possibilities through the resale of surplus production.

- Child nutrition has improved.

- Orphans are better integrated in their host families.
- School attendance rates have improved.
- The approach also prepared the ground for interventions on other local issues requiring urgent attention and action.



Tackling food insecurity, HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence in Eastern Africa with the FFLS

Rejected by her husband and community because she had been raped by a group of soldiers, Florence¹ was forced to live in the forest in South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for 4 years. The Farmer Field and Life School (FFLS) operated by a new project in the region targeting food insecure people affected by HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence (GBV) gave her the chance to re-integrate in the community. The fact that she was an active member of the FFLS group and that she owns a goat received from the project, made her status rise so that she was again accepted in the community.

Florence is one of the 75 000 targeted beneficiaries of the FAO Regional project “Eastern Africa regional response to food insecurity, HIV and GBV” supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida). This project has been running for one and a half years and targets rural men, women, boys and girls in five countries: rural communities in eastern DRC; peri-urban areas and peace villages in Burundi, returnees from Tanzania in Rwanda, people affected by post-election violence in Kenya and resettled populations in Northern Uganda.

According to the Farmer Field School Foundation² the project has provided an innovative and ground breaking step towards a more participatory and beneficiary-driven support system that addresses the specific needs of vulnerable populations affected by HIV and GBV.

Setting up FFLS targeting adults is an innovative aspect of the project³. FAO considers the J/FFLS (Junior/ Farmer Field and Life School) as an approach which provides an excellent entry point and platform for improved self confidence and dignity among vulnerable people.

Due to lack of experience and capacity in this new approach in the three French-speaking countries (DRC, Burundi and Rwanda) the implementation was challenging. However, across the participating countries the project has proven to be a success, rewarded by the important impact observed at the beneficiary, household and community levels.

The project has promoted experience-sharing between countries through capacity exchange. For instance, Kenyan FFLS experts trained and backstopped some of the other countries. Also, lessons learnt were exchanged in regional forums, such as regional inception and stocktaking workshops. Finally, as a result of advocacy for a response in terms of food security to HIV and GBV undertaken at regional level and supported at county level, national projects have been developed.

The impact assessment of the project will be undertaken in the next two months but elements of impact that have already been observed and can be shared include:

- The horticulture and small livestock activities that are carried out in the JFFLS and replicated at home have **improved the dietary diversity** of HIV and GBV affected beneficiaries as well as their incomes, through resale of surplus production. As a result, a reduction of malnutrition has been observed.
- Beneficiaries of HIV sensitization are **increasingly recurring to voluntary testing** and those found positive are assisted with counselling and antiretroviral treatment.
- **By generating the youth’s (and specifically girls) interest and by providing them with a source of income, the JFFLS have allowed dropouts to go back to school and are helping those previously at risk of dropping out to stay in school.**

ing those previously at risk of dropping out to stay in school.

- Not only has the group cohesion effect of the JFFLS approach allowed **stigma reduction, social re-integration and empowerment of individuals** affected by HIV and/or GBV and their families; but it has also proved to be a powerful tool for **peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction of social cohesion** between different ethnic groups as well as between returnees, refugees and host communities. The most vulnerable have **rebuilt their livelihoods** and regained a certain degree of autonomy.
- Capacity-building and promotion of peer training and assistance, combined with the great interest raised by the JFFLS activities among local populations, have created a spill-over effect: the impact observed stretches far outside the boundaries of the project sites, as beneficiaries trained within the JFFLS become trainers themselves. In that way, thanks to JFFLS, participants have become role models for other members of the community.
- Finally, local authorities, NGOs and associations have greatly benefited from technical capacity building to jointly address issues of food insecurity, malnutrition, gender inequities and violence and can guarantee the sustainability of the project activities.



Kitchen garden in Rwanda.

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1 Not her real name.

2 The FFS Foundation based in the Netherlands provides some technical backstopping on the FFS methodology to FAO.

3 For more information, refer to the introduction: “FFS, JFFLS, FFLS, an evolving methodology”.

Cameroon – Women contribute to sustainable management of natural resources

Dimitra partner organisation Alternatives Durables pour le Développement (ADD - Sustainable Alternatives for Development) was founded in Mbalmayo, Cameroon, in 1996. ADD is active in three core areas: sustainable management of natural resources, local governance and health, in the country's Centre, South and East regions.

The sustainable management of natural resources is central to ADD's activities, with a focus on social and community forestry, sustainable agriculture and water, and basic sanitation. In this area, ADD aims to get local communities more involved in the sustainable management of natural resources by building up their capacities so that they can actively contribute to poverty reduction.

ADD also implements programmes on local governance and decentralisation (Social mobilisation and participation, Civic education and Promotion of good corporate governance) as well as community health and HIV/AIDS (Information/Education/Communication to foster a change in behaviour and access to primary healthcare).

Well-defined intervention strategy

ADD's intervention strategy is structured around research and action based on a well-established approach. The research component comprises studies which precede and determine the action. Local people, public services, civil society and other local stakeholders are involved in these studies. A negotiation stage follows during which anything can happen: nothing is ruled out in advance and the contributions of each party are determined by consensus and subject to constant scrutiny (this being a condition for implementation). The final stage is the action itself, which takes the form of interventions combining organisational development and technical aspects. Priority is given to women and young people, since they are the most marginalised categories in relations between social groups. The stakeholders are supported to enable them to play their role as fully-fledged participants in the development mechanisms.

Two flagship activities have been central to ADD's work: the multiplication of plantain off-shoots using the PIF method and the processing of cocoa into butter.

Multiplication of plantain off-shoots using the PIF method (PIF = planting stock derived from stem fragments)

ADD provided training on the PIF method to women from the Common Initiative Group¹ (GIC) ENTENTE in the village of Bizock in the Center region. Following the training, the women specialised in the multiplication of plantain

off-shoots using planting stock derived from stem fragments. They built a germinator and produced around a thousand off-shoots, which they shared out between themselves and planted on their respective plots.

Monitoring of these plots showed that the off-shoots derived from PIF multiplication grew much faster than those taken directly from the old plots, known as 'tout venant'. A reduction in the incidence of disease was also recorded. "Although the PIF off-shoots looked fragile compared to the tout venant when planted out, we noticed after two months that the plots containing PIF off-shoots were free of disease, and the off-shoots that had been fragile to start with had become stronger and thicker than those in the tout venant plot," a GIC ENTENTE representative explains.

In November 2009, the same women built another germinator and planted seeds. When asked why they chose the PIF method, they reply that it is very practical and yields the number, quality and varieties of healthy off-shoots that they need, in the right timeframe. It also allows them to tailor their production to market demand.

Processing of cocoa into butter

The GIC APROFAM (Agriculteurs pour la Promotion de la Femme à Andock-Minlaba – Farmers for the Promotion of Women in Andock-Minlaba), which consists mainly of women and is also based in the Centre region, has specialised in the production of butter from cocoa. Farmers in this region have been selling cocoa in bean form for some years. ADD provided training on processing cocoa into butter. Since then, the village women have continued to use this method, which is significantly more profitable and more valued by local people. As one of the group's members explains: "Cocoa processed into butter is more expensive than cocoa sold in bean form, and it has a lot of valuable properties. It is used in the manufacture of many pharmaceutical and cosmetic products and is recommended as a food-stuff because it helps with various health problems experienced by women. All we need is for our husbands to realise this and allow us to process a sizeable portion of our produce. The money raised from selling the butter goes a long way towards meeting our household needs."

The women produced around 15 litres of cocoa butter in 2008. In 2009, having acquired a



Woman from ADD grafting an avocado plant.

multi-purpose mill with the financial support of the NGO Nouvelle Planète Switzerland via ADD, they increased their butter production by 40% and expect to go even further this year.

The training provided in the communities of Mbalmayo has fostered the acquisition of new knowledge, skills and attitudes among local population in general and women in particular. It has also enabled joint and group initiatives to be run, which has strengthened social ties between the communities and local development actors and their involvement in the development process.

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¹ A Groupe d'Initiative Commune (GIC – Common Initiative Group) is an association under Cameroon law which engages in community or other activities and usually comprises several dozen members.

UN panel says rural women need more resources and greater say in decisions

The lack of women's ownership of land, their difficulty in competing against imported agricultural products, and the exodus of rural workers in search of stable employment are major challenges to food security worldwide, participants in a UN panel discussion co-hosted by FAO said.

Women must be involved in decision making

Developing effective programmes to eliminate hunger and extreme poverty will require getting rural women in agriculture directly involved in decision-making processes that affect their lives, the panelists told an audience of international diplomats, NGOs and others this week.

FAO held the panel discussion at UN Headquarters along with the Huairou Commission and WOCAN, two women's advocacy organizations which recently conducted a series of face-to-face consultations for FAO with hundreds of rural women from 23 countries. The event was part of FAO's efforts to give rural women a greater say in the global dialogue on food security.

FAO's Director of Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, Marcela Villarreal, and Ambassador Augustine Mahiga, Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania to the UN, moderated the panel. The discussion featured grassroots leaders from Asia, Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean, the three regions covered in the consultations.

The panel discussion was held in connection with a meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which was presiding over a key review of the main international framework for gender equality and women's empowerment efforts, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Together women develop innovative coping strategies

The Beijing agenda covers 12 critical areas relating to women, including poverty, health, violence and inequalities between women and men in their access to a wide range of social and economic opportunities. Most areas directly or indirectly relate to FAO's work as the UN's lead agency dedicated to fighting hunger through agriculture and rural development.

The panelists, who had experienced or witnessed the effects of food insecurity in their communities, said women working together had developed innovative coping strategies, pooling resources to come up with communal kitchens, farming and livestock collectives, cereal banks, funding and credit groups, and other tools to improve community food security.

"The grassroots women are also supporting indigenous knowledge in storage and planting of crops, which has been forgotten, but which are cost-effective and help the grassroots women to have food in their households." said Violet Shivutse of grassroots organization GROOTS Kenya at a news conference following the panel discussion.

Shivutse participated on the panel along with Ruth Serech, a Mayan woman leader from Guatemala and Executive Director of the Coordinación de Desarrollo Integral de Mujeres Mayas (CODIMM), and Sri Sofjan of the Huairou Commission in Malaysia.

Governments need to listen to rural women

But the efforts of rural women could only go so far without greater strategic support, said the panelists. They echoed many of the concerns raised in the FAO-commissioned report, saying that governments and their partners needed to listen carefully to the gaps identified by rural women and their coping strategies, using that information to provide more effective, strategic support to food insecure and agriculture-dependent communities.

Several issues emerged as common threads throughout the panel discussion:

- insufficient access to, and ownership, of land by women, even when national laws recognize their rights;
- lack of access to other productive resources, such as seeds and fertilizer, due to lack of markets in remote areas or lack of funds;
- the need for new agricultural technologies and training;
- recognition of the impact of climate change on women producers and support in their efforts to cope with, and minimize, its effects;
- increasing migration from rural areas to urban centers, especially by men and young adults, in search of stable employment, and resulting negative impacts, such as declines in rural productivity;
- the need to include rural women in policy and programme discussions that affect them.

At the news conference, FAO's Villarreal said the discussion showed that women, if listened to carefully, could provide much of the answer to the question of how to improve the fight against hunger and poverty.

"The joint effort between FAO, WOCAN and the Huairou Commission has shown data coming straight from the field that illustrates the situation at the grassroots level. Also the groups have developed very specific and concrete recommendations that will no doubt help countries to address issues of hunger and poverty at the national level," Villarreal said.

Given the successes wrought at the community level by organized women's groups, the panel members and the audience stressed the necessity to provide women with more resources to enable them to construct stable and strong groups or associations.

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Resources

RADIO

Case Studies Agriculture on-air

Every month, an audio CD of interviews and a booklet of accompanying transcripts arrive in the post for broadcasters at 80 radio stations in Africa. Recorded by Africans for Africans, AGFAX monthly radio service, now in its 15th year, provides the latest information on agricultural and rural development to agricultural broadcasters and, through them, to millions of listeners across Africa.

www.research4development.info
www.agfax.net

FUNDRAISING

African Women's Development Fund (AWDF) Small Grants Programme (SGP)

Supporting small, community/rural-based grassroots women's groups in Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria. The SGP also supports emerging or emergency issues. The AWDF funds work in six thematic areas: Women's Human Rights; Political Participation; Peace Building; Health, Reproductive Rights; HIV/AIDS; Economic Empowerment. Deadline: Rolling deadline

www.cominit.com/en/node/267128/38
www.awdf.org

PUBLICATIONS

Because I am a girl: Girls in the global economy 2009

This is the third in a series of annual reports published by Plan examining the rights of girls throughout their childhood, adolescence and as young women. Focusing on girls in the global economy, the report warns that failing to send girls to school is costing the world's poorest countries billions of pounds each year. No education means girls are confined to dangerous, unskilled work – neglecting their earning potential.

Plan, 2009 (306p)
EN + FR summary
<http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources>

Bridging the gap: FAO's programme for gender equality in agriculture and rural development

Women's empowerment and gender equality are fundamental to FAO's vision of a world free of hunger and malnutrition. This guide describes the gender dimensions of each of FAO's new strategic objectives, and FAO action to achieve gender equity in agriculture and rural development.

FAO, 2009 (36p) – EN+FR
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/j1243e/j1243e00.pdf>

Gender equity in agriculture and rural development agricultural growth and rural development

Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. This is a quick guide to gender mainstreaming in FAO's new strategic framework.

FAO, 2009 (16p) – EN+FR
<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/j1240e/j1240e00.pdf>



Lightening the Load. Labour saving technologies for rural women

Women are central to overcoming rural poverty. They play a critical role in poverty reduction and food security because they are responsible for both production and reproduction. Rural women in developing countries have longer working days than men because of their triple roles as farmers, caretakers of their families and cash earners through income-generating activities and micro-finance.

IFAD, January 2010 (76p)
www.ifad.org/gender/pub/load.pdf

Resource guide on gender and climate change

This resource guide aims to inform practitioners and policy makers of the linkages between gender equality and climate change and their importance in relation to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It makes the case for why it is necessary to include women's voices, needs and expertise in climate change policy and programming, and demonstrates how women's contributions can strengthen the effectiveness of climate change measures. As the world moves towards a new global agreement on climate change, it is critical that women contribute to the effort and that their perspectives are equally represented in the debate.

UNDP, 2009 (151p)
www.un.org/womenwatch

State of world population 2009 – Facing a changing world: women, population and climate Etat de la population mondiale 2009 – Face à un monde qui change: les femmes, la population et le climat

How do population dynamics affect greenhouse gases and climate change? Will urbanization and an ageing population help or hinder efforts to adapt to a warming world? What's the best way to protect humanity from extreme weather and rising seas? And could better access to reproductive health care and improved relations between men and women make a critical difference in addressing the challenge of climate change? The answers to these questions are found in The State of World Population 2009.

UNFPA, 2009 (EN+FR)
www.unfpa.org



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 organisations' websites, it usually suffices to do a google search.

◎ **The Power to Empower: Innovation to Transform Women's Lives**

In this new, groundbreaking study, ICRW examines how cutting-edge innovations can transform women's lives. The report analyzes how a variety of innovations that used technology, changed social norms and strengthened economic vitality have helped women. Researchers identified seven core approaches – or levers – needed for any innovation to create meaningful change for women. They include:

- Creating strategic partnerships among governments, the private sector and civil society.
- Including women in the design and implementation of innovative ideas.
- Having committed support from governments as well as efforts at the grassroots level.

ICTW, 2009 (20p)

www.icrw.org/innovation/index.html

◎ **Participation – Sharing our resources Resource CD on Participatory Approaches, Methods and Tools**

This CD presents a collection of 635 FAO full-text publications on “Participation in development” and a data base featuring 360 participatory approaches, methods and tools developed by FAO and other organizations. It is an updated version of a former CD-ROM on ‘Participatory Approaches’, issued by the FAO Participation Website Team of the Gender, Equity and Rural Development Division (ESW), and provides powerful search options which will help you find and access specific information. It is intended for use by field practitioners, development experts and researchers, but also organizations, communities and groups ranging from civil society to public and private sector. The CD-ROM includes three language versions (English, French and Spanish) and is available for free.

FAO, 2010

Request to IWG-PA-Webbox@fao.org specifying who will use it and for which purpose.

WEBSITES

◎ **New FAO Gender web site**

The website contributes to a series of world initiatives focused on food security, highlighting the crucial role of gender equity in the struggle against hunger and poverty.

FAO – English+French
www.fao.org/gender

◎ **New FAO website on land tenure**

FAO recently put online a new website on land tenure. This website includes new publications, studies, policy notes, manuals, magazines, compendiums and CDROMs.

FAO – English+French
www.fao.org/nr/tenure/lt-home

◎ **UN Secretary General's database on VAW**

In March 2009, the Secretary General has launched a comprehensive, searchable database that provides information on legal, policy and institutional measures undertaken by UN Member States to address violence against women. The database includes information organized by country as well as a section on best practices, with a focus on laws, services and prevention.

webappso1.un.org/uawdatabase/home.action

◎ **GenderStats – World Bank**

GenderStats is a one stop source of information on gender.

web.worldbank.org/genderstats



FAO to ‘blow the whistle’ on hunger

The world is a teeming, changing, often dangerous place. Natural disasters, accidents and war generate a never-ending stream of crisis. Public attention shifts from one to the next.

Hunger, a quiet crisis, is rarely in the news.

Yet current calculations show that close to a billion people worldwide are going hungry on a daily basis. At the rate things are going, the first of the Millennium Development Goals – the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty – will be missed by a long shot.

When we think about it, most of us feel frustration, indignation, even anger. If it were in our power to change things, we would act.

FAO – the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations – is working with partners to mount a carefully orchestrated global

petition drive, challenging world leaders to put a rapid end to hunger.

Known as “The 1billionhungry project”, the campaign is an aggressive and surprising one, according to FAO communication officer Sharon Lee Cowan. “It offers a constructive outlet for those feelings of anger and indignation. It channels frustration and anger towards an ambitious but achievable objective.”

“We believe that people everywhere are ready to involve themselves in an international movement to eliminate hunger,” Cowan said. “Ready to add their names to a worldwide petition demanding that hunger be moved to the top of the international agenda. Demanding that national leaders make it their priority.”

To deliver a petition that is significant – during an official ceremony in October 2010 –

FAO aims to attract a minimum of one million signatures to the petition, but expects that the final tally will far exceed that goal.

Targeting primarily young people, “The 1billionhungry project” makes heavy use of online social networks. Street posters and megabanners will boost visibility in several key cities around the world. Creative development of the project was provided pro bono by McCann Erickson Italy.

Watch for the project's symbol: a big yellow whistle.

✳ **For more information and to sign on to the petition, visit:** www.1billionhungry.org