



Dimitra Newsletter

Newsletter N° 10 – Brussels, October 2004

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Women take action

Dear friends,

Our latest edition of the Dimitra newsletter focuses on rural women, information and empowerment. Two workshops, organised by our local partners, Amsed in Morocco and Women'sNET in South Africa, take the spotlight. The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for rural women was on the programmes of both events. In Rabat, Morocco, women members of cooperatives gathered together with government and NGO representatives to discuss and debate how new ICTs could be better exploited to encourage women's full and active participation at professional, political, and social levels in the country. While at the Johannesburg workshop, participants considered how ICTs can contribute to rural women's empowerment and good governance in Southern Africa.

Rural women's access to information and to institutions to secure their land rights in Burkina Faso, was the subject of a case



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study commissioned by FAO. In-depth interviews took place with women and men to investigate how land law is implemented in areas where it is at odds with local culture and traditions. A summary of the results of this detailed study is included in this edition.

is threatening subsistence agriculture in the country with long-term decline, a trend that has ominous implications for the country's food supply, as is the case for all the countries affected.

Gender at the centre of discussions

Gender issues are an ever-growing topic of discussion and have recently made headlines at several important meetings, in Africa and beyond. For the first time, gender issues were debated at the African Union Summit which took place from 6-8 July 2004 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

In spite of a greater recognition of their value and needs, many women remain in a vulnerable position, particularly as regards HIV/AIDS. A report entitled *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis* was released during the International AIDS conference 2004 from July 11-16 in Bangkok, Thailand. Its findings show that gender inequality lies at the heart of the debate and underlines that efforts to combat the epidemic can only arrive at a successful outcome through the promotion of gender-sensitive approaches.

FAO is deeply concerned about the impact of HIV/AIDS on food production, as the disease is killing people working the land, hence reducing the agricultural workforce. A recent study in Mozambique shows that HIV/AIDS

A network on the move

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Dimitra will begin its third phase in January 2005, and the network will extend to cover the Great Lakes region. Information on the extension of project activities and profiles of new partner organisations will be included in the next edition.

Over the coming months several major events will focus on issues which affect rural women and we invite you to take a look through the listings in the 'Resources' section.

As the Dimitra network continues to grow, we encourage you to follow the activities of its members through our newsletters, and of course to check our website for updated information (<http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>). Inserted in this newsletter you will find an evaluation questionnaire on the impact of Dimitra. We thank you in advance for taking time to complete it and return it to us.

We hope you have an enjoyable read and please feel free to contact us with your comments, suggestions and articles for the upcoming editions.

MARCELA VILLARREAL, Chief,
Gender and Development Service, FAO

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Seminar “New Information and Communication Technologies and women’s promotion”

RABAT, MOROCCO 10-11 JUNE 2004

At one o’clock on Thursday 10 June 2004, a steady stream of women made their way along the path leading to the impressive white façade of Rabat’s national school for town planning and development. This was the setting for Dimitra’s official launch in Morocco during a seminar entitled “New Information and Communication Technologies (NICTs) and Women’s Promotion”.



In groups of two or three the women chatted as they made their way to the meeting room upstairs. Walking past the chairs at the front of the room they headed directly to those along the back wall and sat in silence. Khadija stood out. Dressed in the striking and traditional blue and white ceremonial robes of her region, she sat quietly observing the opening presentations of the seminar.

Within the space of two hours, however, the floor was open for discussions. One by one the women began raising their hands to claim the microphone and explain why they had come to the meeting and the relevance of the topic to their everyday lives. Khadija also ensured she had her turn. With a steady voice and wide smile she announced that she has never spoken out at such a meeting in her life before. But just listening to the speakers talk about issues that directly affect her, and seeing the other rural women who had made the long journey to Rabat dare to speak out, had motivated her to tell her story, and emphasise her own desire to increase her knowledge and skills.

The silence was broken, and the real work of talking and sharing began.

This seminar was organised by the Dimitra partner organisation in Morocco AMSED – Association Marocaine de Solidarité et Développement’ (The Moroccan Association for Solidarity and Development).

Over 30 rural women from cooperatives based throughout Morocco descended on Rabat for the event, bringing with them a multitude of craftwork and local produce to display at the stands, ranging from intricately woven carpets

and cushions from villages at the foot of the high Atlas peaks, to brightly coloured beads, and amber bottles of the highly sought after ‘Argan’ oil.

In total around 70 people participated over the two days and, in addition to the members of cooperatives and associations, were representatives from NGOs, international organisations and Ministries. Also present was Fatou Sow from Dimitra partner Enda Pronat in Senegal, who shared the experiences of the Rural Women’s Network of Senegal with participants at the seminar.

Time to talk

The programme for the event was varied and allowed ample time for debate and discussions. On the first day FAO, Unifem, and representatives from several Ministries opened the proceedings by speaking of their ongoing work in the country, focusing particularly on the need to increase rural women’s standing and their access to information. This was followed by a presentation of the Dimitra project – its objectives and activities as well as guidelines on how to use the database and website.

The remainder of the first afternoon was given over to discussions on some of the questions raised and this incited the participation of everyone present in lively debate.

A room in the seminar venue had been set aside for the cooperatives to display their wares and at the end of the first day the participants made a tour of the colourful stalls, profiting from the opportunity to have detailed explanations on the craftwork from the women and men of the cooperatives.

The seminar’s second day began with presentations of several ongoing projects and initiatives in the country, which target women and use new information and communication technologies.

Group discussions

On the afternoon of 11 June the participants broke off into smaller groups to discuss the seminar’s four main themes: NICTs in education for improving the promotion of women;

NICTs for women’s participation in professional life; NICTs for socio-political promotion of women; and NICTs for economic promotion of women.

NICTs in education for improving women’s promotion

Women play a vital role in the family’s education, however as this group pointed out, this is rarely reflected in the general perception of society. Often rural women do not receive the necessary support to carry out their tasks properly, facing challenges such as lack of political will, inadequate infrastructures, and insufficient time and tools.

NICTs can facilitate exchanges of knowledge and experiences and play a key role in developing networking activities. They also make it easier to access pertinent and up-to-date information without the need to pass via an intermediary. The group also underlined the important potential of NICTs for promoting distance education.

The main recommendations on this theme focused on the need to sensitise civil society and to promote a sustainable approach to development with appropriate infrastructures in place.

NICTs for women’s participation in professional life

Rural women have many skills, especially in craftwork, even if they are often illiterate. New technologies can contribute to capitalising on their abilities and their participation in active life. Those already working in cooperatives are aware of the potential benefits of NICTs for their work but they have not been trained to exploit them concretely. Several associations mentioned the fact that they own a computer but that no-one uses it.

Barriers highlighted by this group include a lack of awareness-raising activities and initiatives to demonstrate the utility of ICTs to women, together with the problem of high connection costs.

NICTs are clearly valued as tools for networking, mobilisation and training of women. They also help women to be informed on their rights, as well as on new techniques that can assist them in their work.

To help better exploit the potential of NICTs for women’s participation in professional life, the group recommended the implementation of a national policy for generalisation of ICTs, training of trainers and the production of tools specifically adapted to the reality of rural women’s daily lives.

NICTs for women's socio-political promotion

Socio-politics particularly concerns the position of women in society, their rights and the value placed on their role. This group considered the importance for women to be aware and informed of their rights, and conscious of their role as actors for change and progress. NICTs can play a major part in this by increasing visibility, assisting communication and advocacy and highlighting women's abilities. Some of the obstacles identified to women's socio-political promotion in Morocco include prejudices, traditional mentalities, and illiteracy along with a lack of necessary material and financial means.

The group concluded that promotion of women's rights should be carried out at three levels: within the family, the community and at macro level (national, regional, international, etc.). Culture and tradition in every region influence women, and changes need to come about gradually, so as not to alienate people.

Progress could be made by investing more in mentality-changing projects, creating meeting places with easy access, both in geographic and cultural terms, further encouraging women to participate in events and workshops and by supporting mixed associations so as to help sensitise men.

NICTs for women's economic promotion

Throughout the seminar the women openly expressed their desire to improve their work by better marketing of their products and craftwork. They are well aware that they are stronger when they join forces with other women in similar situations. Unfortunately their activities are often constrained by exploitative practices, by inadequate training and tools, as well as the unavailability of women to participate in cooperatives and insufficient means of transport.

Women know that new information and communication technologies can play an important role in the success of their businesses – improving the quality and marketing of products; helping to organise tasks and leading to more efficient management of their work. This groupwork session highlighted literacy as a priority issue for the economic promotion of women in Morocco. They also underlined the need for more training on the utility and use of NICTs, initiatives to change mentalities and demonstrate the real advantages of new technologies, closer cooperation between cooperatives and associations and changes in terms of political will.



Examples of cooperatives which participated

Targanine is a group of women's cooperatives involved in the production of argan oil. Their activities are dependent on the fruit of the argan tree, a species native to Morocco, which only grows in the arid zone along the Atlantic coast. The oil is used for two different product lines, one for food (from roasted kernels), and the other for cosmetics (from raw kernels). The Amal Cooperative is part of the Targanine group:

- ▶ **Amal Cooperative**
Arganier Village,
Essaouira Province,
Morocco
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Amal in Arabic means hope and that is exactly what it has meant for its women members: widowed or divorced for the most part.

When proposals were made to set up the Amal cooperative, initial reactions were mixed. The idea made the village men smile and it puzzled the local administrators, who had no confidence at all in a project entirely run by women. The attitude of the men gradually began to change as they considered the fact that the cooperative would bring extra income into families and beneficial consequences from tourism. Finally with the backing of foreign and local donors and associations, work got underway in 1999. Today the women employed in the cooperative control their own destiny, and have accepted responsibility for running the cooperative, after being trained in extraction techniques, processing, management, organization, and marketing. They feel they are respected and their salary allows them to send their children to school, improve their living conditions, eat better and look after themselves.

The government promotes literacy courses for the cooperative and a public child-care facility next door to Amal ensures that workers' children are taken care of during work time. ♪

Signature of a gender agreement between FAO and the Moroccan Ministry for Agriculture and Rural Development, Rabat, 9 June 2004

Just one day prior to the opening of the Dimitra/Amsed seminar, an historic agreement was signed by the FAO Representative in Morocco and the Moroccan Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development.

This 17-month action plan entitled: "La formulation d'un cadre et d'un plan d'action pour l'intégration de la dimension genre et le renforcement des capacités nationales". ("Drawing up of a framework and action plan for integration of the gender aspect and strengthening of national capacities"), sets out to integrate gender into rural policies and to further develop initiatives and legislation in favour of rural women. It should also contribute to strengthening national expertise for integrating gender into policies and programmes in the field and within institutions. At a broader level, and in terms of impact at grassroots level, it will support existing gender networks in carrying out their work and help strengthen civil society, as well as evaluating the priorities and know-how of rural populations for rural development.

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Dimitra/Women'sNet Workshop: a meeting point for rural women and ICTs

Advancing Rural Women's Empowerment: ICTs⁽¹⁾ in the Service of Good Governance, Democratic Practice and Development for Rural Women in Africa

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 23-25 FEBRUARY 2004

Women'sNet, the Dimitra partner in Southern Africa, organised this international workshop in February 2004 with the support of the Dimitra project.

The workshop provided a space to talk and share experiences of how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can be used by organisations in different African contexts.

Participants considered the use and utility of ICTs in several areas of life: their role in facilitating rural and disadvantaged women's participation in public debates on issues that affect them; how ICTs can address everyday challenges facing many rural women, such as food security, conflict situations, drought, land, health, economic wellbeing, etc.; and how rural women can use ICTs to overcome obstacles to accessing information.

These topics generated a great deal of interest, attracting women and men from organisations and associations throughout Southern Africa, and beyond, as well as from various FAO services and AMARC (the World Association of Community Radio Announcers and Broadcasters). Two representatives from Dimitra partner organisations Enda Pronat in Senegal and ONE in Madagascar also made the trip to Johannesburg, to share their experiences of ICT challenges and initiatives for rural women in their own countries.

ICTs: useful for rural women?

Several speakers at the workshop talked about initiatives already underway to improve information flow in rural areas, and showcased some solutions to problems of connectivity and access.

Sophie Treinen, Information Management Specialist of the WAICENT data management branch (GILF) at FAO presented the FAO initiative for bridging the digital divide in rural areas⁽²⁾. It aims to strengthen human and institutional capacities to harness information and agricultural knowledge more effectively. FAO has developed appropriate methods and tools for information management and exchange. In particular this concerns e-learning through an 'information management resource kit' (IMARK)⁽³⁾ which is available on CD-ROM. Many successful activities are



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already up and running. Among the examples mentioned were farmers in Senegal who are using mobile phones to get information from a local entrepreneur about prices in several local agricultural markets; radio stations in a number of African countries which are broadcasting programmes on how to treat sick livestock, using information from scientific institutions and the experience of farmers; and private sector extension services in rural India that are providing networked information on all aspects of agricultural production for village-based agronomists. However, Sophie Treinen also pointed out that women are hit hardest by the rural digital divide. She stressed that unless researchers and policy-makers give due attention to gender and unless women have a voice in developing available opportunities, the new technologies could serve merely to exacerbate existing inequalities.

Radio: a fundamental role

Community radio plays an essential role in rural areas and AMARC's Eric Foady provided workshop participants with an overview of its use as a tool to advance women's rights. Working within AMARC, Women in community radio Network (WIN) promotes the empowerment of women working in community radio globally. Regional in focus and action-oriented, WIN Africa aims to ensure full and equal integration of women's rights and empowerment of women in all community radio spheres.

A recent pilot project consists of listening clubs which have been set up in ten countries in Southern Africa. The members of these clubs document their own stories and take these for recording at the participating AMARC com-

1 ICTs = Information and Communication Technologies

2 <http://www.fao.org/gil/rdd>

3 <http://www.fao.org/emark>

community radio stations. The project encourages women to get involved in social, cultural and economic activities in their communities and countries. This in turn will promote women's empowerment in terms of access to information and knowledge.

Dorothy Okello of Wougnet, Uganda spoke of Future Generation Wireless Networks, describing the important impact of data services on people's lifestyles. She emphasized the benefits that should be derived from the new mobile technologies to improve the livelihoods of rural populations, especially women.

Developing strategies for the future

During the workshop the participants had the opportunity to split off into smaller discussion groups to consider issues in detail and develop focus areas for future action. Sustainability of initiatives was a key talking point and the workshop recommendations

emphasise the need to develop local content and use local technology and languages, so as to create a sense of ownership over information.

New information and communication technologies give communities the means to record, collect and broadcast their challenges, solutions and ideas and are recognised as effective tools to address issues facing women. Mobile ICTs are increasingly being developed to reach out to rural women and communities and they can overcome problems of infrastructure in isolated areas.

Participants also agreed on the importance of networking effectively, so as to share training material, strategies and lesson and help increase efforts in advocacy and lobbying.

In conclusion, democracy, human rights and sustainable development depend on the full participation of the whole population, both women and men. Information and knowledge can empower local populations and ICTs hold

the potential to open up access to meaningful and accurate information, and therefore promote people's participation. ¶

The results and recommendations of the workshop as well as presentations and papers in English and French are available to download from the Dimitra and Women'sNet websites.

For more information on the results of the workshop, please see:

<http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>

http://womensnet.org.za/dimitra_conference/

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Parallel discussions on-line

So as to broaden the dialogue and discussion to subscribers from around the globe, Women'sNet organised an e-consultation from 11-24 February, publicising the workshop via national, regional and global email mailing lists. Many people from Africa and beyond, who could not attend the workshop in person, used the e-forum to join in the discussions and express their views.

Synopsis of some contributions during the e-consultation:

There was overwhelming support for the use of ICTs as development tools amongst the participants.

"It is my conviction that ICTs will be the dividing line between development and non-development".

Nnenna Nwakanma

"I believe that ICTS are a vital tool for development and need to be available and accessible to all, particularly those in remote areas who are rarely covered in everyday life. Radio in particular is the most preferred and accessible media in Zambia, although the combination of the various ICTS leads to a more enhanced and informed society".

Sharon Mwalongo, member of a women's media organisation in Zambia

However, access still remains a problem as Irene Ossere of the Congo pointed out:

"ICTS are a very great problem in Congo because women do not have access to the information. The cause: no media in rural areas".

What are the strategies and opportunities for linking rural women with radio?

Sylvie Siyam shared some criteria developed by PROTEGE QV (a Cameroon-based NGO).

- the relevance of radio programme content;
- the accessibility of messages: language used should be the one practiced by the majority, time of broadcasting corresponds to the time of listening, i.e. after farming hours;
- the affordability of the material;
- community participation: the broadcasters should belong to the community, so that the subjects are addressed by someone who has the same problems;
- Educated mothers are less hampered by social and cultural inhibitions and become able to contribute more effectively to the society, to the quality of their children's education, and to the management of the household.

Some responses to questions put to participants:

In your view, do particular communication technologies (television, radio, Internet, etc) lend themselves better to activities facilitating rural women's participation?

"Rural women need information for their development, but finding the right means to deliver the message is a very important issue. For example in rural Tanzania, radio and newsletters are more effective means, followed by discussions at activity centres and social gatherings".

Maryam Katongo, Tanzania

What are the opportunities and challenges facing rural information centres?

"I am of the opinion that there is a need to set up rural information centres specifically to provide information to women.

It will be necessary to provide material in the local language in addition to material in English. Interpersonal communication in the local language with the center staff would make illiterate women feel relaxed enough to seek information or advice".

Miriam Menkiti



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Initiatives presented during the workshop

“We need to think of ways to bring Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) applications to the developing world, so as to make use of unlicensed radio spectrum to deliver cheap and fast Internet access.”

Kofi Annan, 5 November 2002.

The Sunbook: a solution to lack of electricity in rural areas

PEET DE PLOY

- What use is a PC for the average person without a desk or even electricity?
- Learning to use a PC is hard enough, but when it breaks, who would fix it?
- What use is Internet without a phoneline to connect to it and even if they could, would they have to wade through a million sites to find the information they need?

It is these challenges that inspired a South African company, Reverse Entropy Systems to design the ‘sunBook’. The sunBook is a compact, multimedia panel PC which can be operated without a keyboard or mouse, using buttons around the screen similar to a banking teller machine. Its operation is as simple as using a cellphone, it can run on solar power and has no moving parts so that it could withstand movement and dust.

The sunBook network takes the community telecenter beyond walls. A base station pro-

vides the hub of a wireless (radio) network that can serve sunBooks for 20km around it, with a library of web-style content specially selected for the community it serves. Where available, the base station can also relay educational TV programmes from a single satellite dish to the all the sunBooks within its reach.

The sunBooks use electronic cards to identify users. Without this card, the sunBook won’t work. With it, the base station can track and report individual usage, making the system completely auditable.

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Wireless Internet – a cost-effective solution to connectivity

MULWELI REBELLO, UNINET COMMUNICATIONS

Wireless Internet provides a solution to developing nations to have connections at low cost, with easy implementation and with low power supplies, as it functions with solar energy. Disadvantages include the limited radius that can be covered – i.e. up to 50 km, and the fact that wireless systems will never function as well as fibre. It is therefore seen as a complement to traditional wired systems, rather than a replacement.

UniNet communications covers 70% of the Western Cape area of South Africa and provides 24 hour internet connectivity. The company implements broadband wireless networks for franchisees. These include: product and technical training; equipment provision; managed bandwidth; and remote technical and administrative support for clients.

UniNet is currently carrying out research into sustainable telecentre models in South Africa.

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Digital Divas

THEMBILE PHUTE | Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN), Zimbabwe

Shurugwi is a dusty chrome, platinum and gold mining town in Zimbabwe's Midlands province, around 500 kilometres outside of the capital city Harare. About 72 000 people, more than half of whom are women, call this area home. Small scale farming generates some revenue for the region but gold mining is the main economic force here. There are 13 councillors in the town council, nine male and four female, who are responsible for making decisions in the interest of community development. They know all too well that their gold does not always glitter.

Shurugwi's gold panning legacy has resulted in massive environmental destruction. The deciduous vegetation and indigenous trees of the area are seriously diminished. The pace and direction of the town's growth has also been influenced by activities related to gold panning.

Eleven girls aged 15 and over gather at the rural district council offices, happy for the school vacation and looking forward to an excursion to the capital city.

Their voices slowly lower to a hushed chatter as they approach Harare. The Women's Internet Café is set at the corner of Seventh Street and Five Avenue.

Hooking up to close the gender gap

In 1999, through support from the U.S.-based 'Women Connect', a special project of the Pacific Institute for Women's Health, the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN) secured funding to establish an internet café to provide e-mail and internet skills to those women who would otherwise not be able to get 'hooked up'. ZWRCN's project became the first initiative dedicated to locally training women to learn how to use the internet and email to communicate, search for the information they needed and enjoy the benefits of being part of a global on-line community.

"This is an exciting initiative", says ZWRCN Information officer Thembile Phute. "We really have a chance to close the glaring gender gap in the new digital technologies. It is my hope that we will be able to continue to grow and reach out to young women across the length and breadth of Zimbabwe".

Information: a basic human right

For the women and girls of the African continent, access to information and communications technologies, along with access to safe and secure water, reproductive health care facilities, education and employment are important human rights; rights to equal opportunities to participate fully and equitably in matters of

national, regional and global development. The digital advances and developments of the 21st century present an opportunity for African women in general, and Zimbabwean women in particular, to be players in the future design of these technological tools.

ZWRCN trains groups of young women on e-mail and Internet use, providing knowledge and developing basic skills on how to use computers.

Potential to empower

Over the years it has become clear that Information and Communication Technologies or ICTs are not just a luxury toy for the rich but have the potential to positively transform the quality of life of poor and marginalized communities.

Merjury Mhaka says "I hope that I will be able to access computers after the workshop because I feel that women have been greatly deprived, especially in the rural communities where we have no access to that sort of technology. From this training, I have been enlightened. The only jobs I knew of were nursing, teaching and being a storekeeper. From what I learnt, I know that I can choose from a variety of careers."

All over Africa, women are unlocking the potential of ICTs as an empowerment and human development tool. Craftswomen in Senegal are using the Internet and email to promote and sell their ethnic crafts to a market that, without information technologies, they may have never been able to reach (<http://www.taftaf.com>). Nigeria's Society for Women and AIDS in Africa provides health education to women via e-mail (swaan@cyberspace.net.ng), and a project called NairoBits in the slums of the



© ZWRCN

Kenyan capital is providing web-design skills to youths (<http://www.nairobibits.org>).

The IT Gender Challenge

The greatest challenge to ZWRCN is how to maintain the momentum so that the girls keep using the technology well after this exposure. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action Chapter J, recognizes access to information as one of the basic human rights of women and girls that empowers them through the struggle for equity and equality.

Africa's own particular set of challenges such as high levels of illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure, inefficient telephone lines, unreliable electricity sources, and poor road networks, among other things, make the journey towards majority internet connectivity difficult. However, a commitment at the national level to democratising ICTs would provide the inspiration to bring women on-line. ♪

Based on a ZWRCN Press Release

Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network is a non-governmental organisation working in the gender and development field.

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CTA: 20 years of sharing knowledge for the benefit of rural populations

Since its foundation, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), based in the Netherlands, has played a leading role in improving communication techniques and sharing information amongst rural populations in ACP countries.

Easier information access

Rural women in ACP countries have much fewer opportunities to access new information and communication technologies than their male counterparts. They are the greatest victims of the digital divide. Issues of language, illiteracy, lack of time and cultural constraints, all conspire to restrict their access to information and to public multifunctional centres, which are often dominated by men.

In an effort to remedy this situation, the Observatory on Gender and Agriculture in the Information Society, which was created by CTA in 2002, recommended the establishment of a grants fund (GenARDIS) to support small initiatives incorporating the gender aspect in their ICT activities.

GenARDIS: overcoming existing inequalities

The aim of GenARDIS is to support innovative activities that contribute to the understanding and application of ICTs in gender, agriculture and rural development in Africa, the Caribbean or the Pacific.

Following its launch announcement in March 2003 GenARDIS received over 360 requests in less than two months, clearly indicating the need for support in the field of gender and agriculture in the Information Society. Eventually nine projects were selected to receive grants, and these winners came together at a seminar held in August 2004 to present their results. At this same meeting the second GenARDIS campaign for 2004 was launched. ♪

For more information on GenARDIS contact:

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Nine project winners in 2003:

- Chad:** Community radio for rural women's development in Chad, *Grâce Agouna, Audy Magazine*.
- Jamaica:** ICT tools and services in support of development of organic agriculture in the Caribbean: a regional training workshop for women entrepreneurs, *Dorienne Rowan-Campbell, Networked Intelligence for Development*.
- Kenya:** Health and Agriculture Community Radio Network, *James Onyango, Kenya AIDS Intervention Prevention Project Group (KAIPPG)*.
- Benin:** Capacity building of women civil servants working for rural women's economic autonomy for food security and poverty alleviation, *Alice Djinadou Igue Kouboura, Institut National des Recherches Agricoles du Bénin (INRAB)*.
- Uganda:** Women's access to and the use of basic ICTs in accessing information on new agricultural technologies *Akello Zerupa, Makerere University*.
- Malawi:** FarmWise, *Bessie Nyirenda, Computer Land Limited*.
- Ghana:** Participatory Community Planning (PCP); *Joana Francis Adda, Participatory Community Development (PACODEV)*.
- South Africa:** Diffusion of ICTs in communication of agricultural information for rural development among women in Kwa-Zulu Natal, *Joseph Kiplang'at, University of Zululand – Department of Library and Information Science*.
- Tanzania:** Mainstreaming Gender into Information, Communication and Technology in Sub-Saharan Africa: A Case Study of Northern Tanzania, *Pantaleon Shoki, Community Development and Relief Agency (CODRA)*.

Gender tops the programme at the African Union Summit 2004

The African Union Summit, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 6-8 July 2004, brought together 48 Heads of State to discuss issues related to conflict, development, and for the first time, to debate gender issues. As a result African leaders agreed on an action plan, which sets out a strategy to improve women's rights on the continent.

Some of Africa's most powerful men spoke out against gender discrimination at the African Union (AU) summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2004, and pledged themselves and their governments to strive for gender equality. Newly elected AU chairman, Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, cut straight to the point when he spoke of the negative attitudes towards women and chauvinism that still dominate in many African countries. Earlier, Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal, proposed that the AU ensure gender equality at the national, regional and continental levels and in all levels of government. Paul Kagamé, the Rwandan President spoke of the victimization of women in his country during the genocide, when rape was used as "a method of destruction". He described Rwandan women today as indispensable for reconstruction and reconciliation.

Historical changes

Co-chair of the session and president of the Pan-African Parliament, Gertrude Mongella, said the deliberations at the Summit would make history. Speaking of recent gender equality achievements in Africa, she mentioned the fact that Rwanda had the highest number of women parliamentarians – 48% – in the world and also highlighted that South Africa had the highest number of women ministers, at 30%. The AU administration itself also achieved the 50/50 gender balance with five women and five men Commissioners. Mongella said this showed an important change in mentalities, particularly amongst leaders of the continent.

A framework for change

The Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa, formally adopted by the AU Summit in July 2003, holds the key to a brighter future for Africa's women. This comprehensive legal document covers a broad range of human rights issues and offers women an essential tool to exercise their rights in terms of gender equality in education, marriage, divorce, inheritance, property rights and protection from

female circumcision, amongst other issues. However, the Protocol has still not entered into force. Despite commitments by African leaders to place women at the heart of development and poverty reduction, only three countries, the Comoros, Libya and Rwanda have ratified the Protocol. Twenty-seven member states, among them the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe have signed, but are yet to ratify the document. This bears witness to the amount of work still to be done.

At its close the African Union pronounced a 'Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa' and agreed to push for ratification of the Protocol by the end of 2004. ♪

'Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa'

AU SUMMIT, ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, JULY 2004

The African Heads of State agreed to:

- (1) Accelerate the implementation of gender specific economic, social, and legal measures aimed at combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic and effectively implement both Abuja and Maputo Declarations on Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and other related infectious diseases. More specifically we will ensure that treatment and social services are available to women at the local level making it more responsive to the needs of families that are providing care; enact legislation to end discrimination against women living with HIV/AIDS and for the protection and care of HIV persons, particularly women; increase budgetary allocations in these sectors so as to alleviate women's burden of care;
- (2) Ensure the full and effective participation and representation of women in peace process including the prevention, resolution, management of conflicts and post-conflict reconstruction in Africa as stipulated in UN Resolution 1325 (2000) and to also appoint women as Special Envoys and Special Representatives of the African Union;
- (3) Launch, within the next one year, a campaign for systematic prohibition of the recruitment of child soldiers and abuse of girl children as wives and sex slaves

in violation of their rights as enshrined in the African Charter on Rights of the Child;

- (4) Initiate, launch and engage within two years sustained public campaigns against gender based violence as well as the problem of trafficking in women and girls; Reinforce legal mechanisms that will protect women at the national level and end impunity of crimes committed against women in a manner that will change and positively alter the attitude and behaviour of the African society;
- (5) Expand and promote the gender parity principle that we have adopted regarding the Commission of the African Union to all the other organs of the African Union, including its NEPAD programme, to the Regional Economic Communities, and to the national and local levels in collaboration with political parties and the National parliaments in our countries;
- (6) Ensure the active promotion and protection of all human rights for women and girls including the right to development by raising awareness or by legislation where necessary;
- (7) Actively promote the implementation of legislation to guarantee women's land, property and inheritance rights including their rights to housing;



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(8) Take specific measures to ensure the education of girls and literacy of women, especially in the rural areas, to achieve the goal of “Education for All” (EFA);

(9) Undertake to sign and ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa by the end of 2004 and to support the launching of public campaigns aimed at ensuring its entry into force by 2005 and usher in an era of domesticating and implementing the Protocol as well as other national, regional and international instruments on gender equality by all States Parties;

(10) Establish AIDS Watch Africa as a unit within the Office of the Chairperson of the Commission who should render annual report on HIV/AIDS situation in the continent during annual Summits; and promote the local production of anti-retroviral drugs in our countries;

(11) Accept to establish an African Trust Fund for Women for the purpose of building the capacity of

African women and further request the African Union Commission to work out the modalities for the operationalisation of the Fund with special focus on women in both urban and rural areas;

(12) Commit ourselves to report annually on progress made in terms of gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in this Declaration, both at the national and regional levels, and regularly provide each other with updates on progress made during our Ordinary Sessions;

(13) We request the chairperson of the African Union Commission to submit, for our consideration, an annual report, during our ordinary sessions, on measures taken to implement the principle of gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and all issues raised in this Declaration both at the national and regional levels.

SMS: combining advocacy and technology for women’s rights

In an innovative move that combines new technology with the fight for women’s rights, mobile phone users can send SMS (short message service) messages to sign an online petition urging African governments to ratify the AU Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa. A coalition of human rights groups, spearheaded by women’s rights organisations Equality Now and FEMNET, together with Oxfam, CREDO for Freedom of Expression and Associated Rights and Fahamu has developed a campaign to promote the ratification and popularisation of the Protocol, which includes a petition addressed to African leaders.

“To our knowledge, this is the first time that SMS technologies will have been used on a mass scale on the African continent in support of human rights,” said Firoze Manji, Director of Fahamu. “The facility enables those with poor or non-existent internet access to sign the online petition and takes advantage of the fact that there are about eight times more mobile phone users compared to e-mail users in Africa.”

Those wishing to SMS their support for the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa can do so by sending an SMS to: +27 832 932934, with the word ‘petition’ and their name in their message. Senders will be charged the cost set by their network for sending an international SMS. ¶

The online petition can be signed at:
<http://www.pambazuka.org/petition>

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“Africa cannot develop unless its women exercise real power”, says Secretary-General in message to Addis Ababa Summit.

INTERVENTION OF KOFI ANNAN | Secretary General of the United Nations
AFRICAN UNION SUMMIT | ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 6 JULY 2004

“In the past year alone, Africa’s women have made great strides forward. I congratulate the African Union (AU) on electing five women out of a total of ten Commissioners. This reflects growing recognition that gender balance is crucial to all areas of the AU’s work. I also commend African States for adopting the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa to the African Charter on Human Rights, as well as including gender considerations in the Protocol that establishes the Peace and Security Council. And of course, I warmly congratulate Gertrude Mongella – a long-standing friend of the United Nations – on her election as the first President of the Pan-African Parliament.

Increasingly, Africans understand that their continent cannot develop unless its women exercise real power – in the home, in the local community, in the nation, and in the Union itself. Indeed, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development has set women’s advancement, along with the eradication of poverty, as its two key long-term objectives. But let us be clear: inextricably linked with both of those is the need to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS. The epidemic is proving a devastating obstacle to development, while taking an increasing and terrifying toll on Africa’s women. But women also have an indispensable part to play in all aspects of the struggle against it.

No less important is recognition of the role of women in the work for peace and security. Time and again, women have played a con-

structive and essential part in peace processes. They are gradually finding a place at the negotiating table, in the implementation of peace agreements, in post-conflict rehabilitation, reconstruction and disarmament. It is high time they were included in those processes in a more formalized way, at all levels and at all stages.

I deplore the fact that sexual and gender-based violence continues to be used as a weapon of war in African conflicts. In parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, and in the Darfur region of Sudan, gender-based violence has reached almost epidemic proportions. Every effort must be made to halt this odious practice, and bring the perpetrators to justice.

I urge African States to do everything they can to translate into reality the objectives of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security – and to do so without delay, since implementation of this landmark document will be reviewed by the Council in October this year.

I hope that this gathering will bring fresh impetus and resolve to Africa’s efforts for the advancement of women, and help you build further on your achievements so far. The United Nations will continue to do all it can to support you in that mission.”

For more information see the website of the African Union:
<http://www.africa-union.org> ¶

Discrepancy between law and customs: women's access to land in Burkina Faso

On the request of the land tenure service of FAO, Maître Françoise Ki-Zerbo carried out a study entitled 'Women's access to information and to institutions to secure their land rights. Case study in Burkina Faso'.



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Françoise Ki-Zerbo examines the theme of 'women, land and information' in Burkina Faso from several angles: the legal basis of the modern land tenure system; women's access to land according to traditional norms; women's participation in social communication; and local civil society initiatives to improve women's access to natural resources, to land and to legal information.

Land laws: culture, tradition and information

In Burkina Faso women's access to land is a precarious issue and they have a limited ability to receive, obtain, understand or use legal information on the procedures and institutions which can secure their legal land rights.

This study examines rural implementation of land laws which run against the grain of local culture and traditions and the resulting discrepancies between legislation and reality. From this perspective, it looks at the legal information system and the problems women face in accessing information and administrative bodies to formalise transactions in which they are involved. Dialogue, awareness raising, and monitoring are underlined as essential factors for change, which will secure women's rights and enable equal access to land for both women and men.

The distribution, evaluation and removal of land is the responsibility of village land management commissions and legal information should reach the grassroots level through these

structures. Specific actions are foreseen on the legal and socio-economic protection of women as part of reforms and general action necessary for decentralised development. The decentralised rural development plan also envisages the implementation of a Concertation Framework on Land Security for Women in Rural Areas as a support body to the National Committee for Land Security in Rural Areas.

However, at present women's access to land is still conditioned by tradition and as such they remain today in an unequal, dependent and vulnerable position.

In rural areas :

- land is managed by the elders of the community;
- women's access is subordinate to that of men, since they can only access land with male approval and they themselves do not own land;
- paradoxically women find it easier to access loaned land than men, since their needs are limited and they are easier to evict than men.

As part of steps to improve the income and working conditions of women, the Minister for Women's Promotion in Burkina Faso plans to draw up standard contracts for land access, heighten sensitivity amongst traditional chiefs and disseminate the results of studies on women's access to land. There are also plans to popularise legal texts on basic rights, together

with the Ministries for Justice and Human Rights, and to raise awareness amongst the population on the inequalities suffered by women, in collaboration with the Ministries for Information and Culture.

Obstacles

- the legal texts are only known to a handful of individuals;
- it is mostly the urban dwellers (mainly men) who are aware of the law;
- almost all rural producers, men and women, are unaware of the texts;
- the large majority of the population does not seek information and does not try to exploit the legal provisions.

Exercising rights claimed by women, in particular the right to speak out or to take action is an ongoing challenge in light of African customary thinking. As one woman with lengthy experience in associative circles points out:

'Traditionally, according to custom, it is out of the question to resort to force to insist upon one's rights. Women still bear this customary rule in mind. Today the force is the law...'

The combined efforts of women have nevertheless had an impact and in undeveloped areas, women's groups – whether formal or informal – have been successful in being granted land collectively. Nevertheless, in order to secure women's rights to their personal fields, the collective method should not be seen as the only solution.

A need for concrete measures

The women intend to consolidate their achievements in terms of access to information, to training, to literacy and to land. They delegate representatives to village authorities, have learnt to write so as to be able to communicate with structures able to inform them, and listen to community radios, which deal with issues of interest to them. The National Advocacy Forum for women's full rights to citizenship took place on 3 April 2003. The women present demanded that concrete steps be taken to facilitate women's access to land and proposed long-term lease contracts for the



benefit of women, and the revision of the terms and conditions of developed zones to allow equal access of men and women to land.

Networks: enabling access to legal information

Today there is greater tendency for women to come together in a network. Conscious of their lack of legal information, the women of Burkina Faso have joined forces to call for their rights and civil society organisations help them with their social communication activities.

The quantitative and qualitative growth of the women's associative and cooperative movements has led to a greater visibility of the socio-economic role of each woman and of women in general; in addition the women have improved their negotiating ability and are better able to defend their own interests.

The legal information of the citizens of Burkina Faso is assured by NGOs specialised in legal education or social communication. However, legal information activities are more concerned with family law than land law.

An oral tradition

Land transactions in women's favour are generally carried out verbally. When the women are supported by an association or an NGO they are more aware of the benefits of a written transaction, however their priority remains the possibility to access and work the land. In official law written proof carries more weight than oral proof. Nevertheless in rural areas a document does not necessarily secure the rights of the land users. On the contrary, the desire for written proof is generally seen as a sign of lack of confidence. This mistrust of the written may be put down to the fact that most of the population is unaware of the content of many administrative texts, with information systems and authentication of

agreements tending to be based on oral traditions.

A question of representation

Women's involvement in land committees is limited. Those who are members have been chosen by virtue of their age and experience and also because of their ability to make their voices heard. The village commissions for land management are important bodies and it is imperative that women are better represented and their interests taken into account.

General recommendations

One general recommendation of the study is the need to identify the sections of legal texts that contradict the constitutional right of the Burkinabe people to land access, regardless of their sex. Also highlighted is the importance of social communication and dialogue between the population (men, women and youth) and traditional chiefs, mayors, local representatives, among others, who hold power and can change the situation. There is a clear need to integrate a gender approach in all development projects and programmes.

Legal information in itself is not enough. An administrative structure needs to be set up to monitor the application of legal texts and secure the rights of citizens, both men and women.

Specific recommendations

- improve the level of information and training within the population;
- summarise and simplify the number and complexity of legal texts, and adapt the communication of them to the various target groups;
- develop functional literacy which includes specific training in land tenure matters;
- translate reference documents into local and national languages and distribute them

using appropriate media – such as cassette tapes – at a price which most people can afford;

- carry out civic education in schools and universities to help promote positive thinking and reduce conflicts with traditional culture;
- train local extension workers, as well as administrative agents, in information, education and communication techniques;
- provide greater support to community radio networks and strengthen the skills of presenters in the “gender and development” approach;
- strengthen NGO and associative networks working in the area of legal education by providing training of trainers – both in communication methods and Burkina land law;
- train paralegals specialised in land law to support local groups and bring appropriate legal assistance to those who need it;
- undertake comparative research actions at sub-regional level, to help identify legal information needs and strengthen women's negotiation skills;
- share experiences and good practices of securing land rights, so as to capitalise on experiences of applying the law as it currently stands.

The way forwards

Rural women are speaking out and using the many different media available to them, including newspapers, radio, forums and workshops. In daily life they are negotiating verbal contracts and obtaining concessions which allow them to access land in the best conditions possible for the moment.

For real change to come about, however, concrete measures must be taken to ensure optimal security of land rights for women. Equally, the whole population, and women in particular, must have access to legal information and land law should be adapted to the actual needs and realities of the rural men and women of Burkina Faso. ♪

The complete version of the study (in French version only for the moment) is available for download from the Dimitra website: <http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>

Based on: “*Les Femmes Rurales et l'accès à l'information et aux institutions pour la sécurisation des droits fonciers. Etude de cas au Burkina Faso.*” (Women's access to information and to institutions to secure their land rights. Case study in Burkina Faso.)

Maître Françoise Ki-Zerbo, January 2004

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New report on women's inheritance rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

The Swiss-based Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction (COHRE) has recently published a report entitled: *Bringing Equality Home: Promoting and Protecting the Inheritance Rights of Women: A Survey of Law and Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa*.

This innovative publication, produced by the Centre's ‘women and housing rights programme’, examines and compares the inheritance rights of women in ten sub-Saharan

countries: Botswana, Ghana, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe by analysing legal systems (both civil and customary) relating to inheritance within a human rights framework. The result is an exposé of the inequitable inheritance rights to which women fall victim. International and national protections of inheritance rights are shown to be inadequate and/or not properly implemented and as a result women are still widely denied their rights to equal inheritance.

The report makes recommendations to positively tackle this complex issue.

“*Bringing Equality Home: Promoting and Protecting the Inheritance Rights of Women: A Survey of Law and Practice in Sub-Saharan Africa*”.

Birte Scholz and Mayra Gomez
ISBN:92-95004-28-0

This publication can be downloaded free at the COHRE website: <http://www.cohre.org>

Paper copies are available from:

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WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR, 12 JUNE 2004

“Mulezi”: the girl-child servants in DRC

ADELINE NSIMIRE | Samwaki

The “mulezi” or girl-child servants in the Democratic Republic of Congo provide indispensable assistance to Congolese women who are increasingly occupied by their economic activities. How can we reconcile the conflict of interest between the right of young girls to education and the necessary assistance they provide to families?

When we talk about child workers, most often it is in reference to those working in craftwork, agricultural or industrial factories and firms, or those who spill over into the informal sector of working life. However, also active among these child workers are girl-children who are often not accounted for in this social category. These are the thousands of young girls used as domestic labour in numerous households, both in towns and villages – girls called ‘mulezi’, a mashi word which means ‘maid’ or the young girl who takes care of the children.

Customary origins

In our villages, numerous households still believe that the first-born girl does not have the right to attend school. What is the reasoning behind this?

The birth of a daughter brings relief to her mother, who is pleased to have obtained a valuable assistant. From a very early age this daughter replaces the ‘mulezi’ – if the family were to have one. It is up to her to take care of her younger brothers and sisters, as well as to deal with other household tasks. When she reaches adolescence she takes up the hoe, and goes with her mother to the field. Her role as maid is then taken over by another child, with the choice being linked of course to sex, but also to age.

The mother, a willing accomplice?

The maids rarely work for their own families; generally they work for an elder sister, an aunt, or a distant family member. Arrangements are often made between women. Once agreed upon, a proposition is made to the father. He cannot refuse to give his blessing so as, among other reasons, to maintain good family ties with the requesting family. The slightest refusal could lead to severe breakdowns in links between the two families involved, and risk damaging the solidarity of the clan.

While initially a social practice, this need for girl labour has increased in parallel with the degradation in the country’s economic fabric, which has led to widespread misery. Women living in towns and other major agglomerations in the country were well aware that a cri-

sis situation was in the making. They did not wait a single minute longer to protect their endangered families and invented a new lifestyle which meant they were no longer dependent on their husband’s salary. Consequently we can see them all around us, as carriers of goods and sellers of all kinds of merchandise, walking avenues and streets without ever giving up hope. While they are busy with this, their husbands still go to their workplace, defensively proclaiming that they need to keep “their registration numbers”, in the hope that one day the State will pay their salaries. And so the days, years and decades pass by.

The family’s survival depends on the women’s resourcefulness and mobility. However this is only possible when they have someone who can take care of the household tasks in their place – and especially the care of the infants. It may well be the case that all the children of school-age are educated, except in cases of extreme poverty. It is in this sort of case that a paid maid is called for. Her salary varies between 5 and 10 \$US in Bukavu.

“Maid” for hard work

So what are the actual tasks of the maid? They are many and varied depending on whether she is living in a village or in a town. In the village for example, in addition to the day-long task of caring for the children, the mulezi helps her mistress with almost all the domestic work: gathering wood, fetching water, doing the washing and collecting green grasses (used for carpets in the houses). On the contrary in towns, the maids are often used for income-generating activities: selling doughnuts, flour, charcoal, ice or beer. All of this in addition to their heavy load of domestic chores. Occasionally they go to the market to get heavy foodstuffs (flour, beans...), even if their rights to take a taxi are limited.

What sort of future without schooling?

There are almost as many maids as there are households, both in villages and in towns. The mulezi phenomenon bears witness to the solidarity which characterises individuals and families. It enables many families to survive, thanks to the resourcefulness of the mother,



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while the father maintains his registration number and does nothing to support his family. What status can we accord to these young girls who act as an extra link between the mother and the family? Do they not toil from morning until evening – and perhaps late into the night? Are they not workers as well?

Presently they are leaving their villages in large numbers and heading for urban centres where they think life will be better. We as parents, as well as associations working to fight for women’s rights and particularly rural women’s rights, can help open the eyes of the community to the impact of the mulezi phenomenon. Does the sheer number of them, calculated on the basis on the number of active households in an area, not constitute a clear obstacle to every child’s right to education and schooling, regardless of their sex? 🍷

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Sanabel/Campaigning for Rural Women Project: enhancing the role of Palestinian women in the state-building process

FRIEDA DAHDAH KHAYAT | Sanabel Main Project Coordinator

The project **Sanabel/Campaigning with Rural Women** is implemented by the **Palestinian Women's Affairs Technical Committee (WATC)** in rural areas in four regions of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Through training and public awareness programmes it aims to empower Palestinian women and enhance their role in the state-building process. Targeting villages in Hebron, Gaza and Jenin the project selects two women from each village and trains them in empowerment skills so that they can lobby for their human rights and reach out to the other women of their village.

Women: actors of change

WATC works to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and promote respect of human rights. The Sanabel project is based on the notion of "active citizenship" enabling women to become actors for change in their local communities, while at the same time enhancing their skills and raising their awareness of their rights.

It began with a seven-month pilot project, sponsored by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung in 1997, when WATC conducted a campaign for women's organizations in 20 villages in the southern region (Hebron) of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In 1999, the project had reached a total of 32 villages (15 in the West Bank and 17 in Gaza Strip) and following external evaluation, was eventually expanded to reach seven new villages in the Jenin area (Al Yamoun, Al Rama, Fahma, Jaba', Jalkamous, Tennek, and Silet Al Thaher), with funds provided by the National Endowment for Democracy.

Networking for community awareness

As the Palestinian people are now in a transitional phase of reform and building the state, women are preparing for the coming elections, either as candidates or as voters. To date, Sanabel has trained women on gender and human rights issues, and gained experience in networking for community awareness on women's rights. WATC believes that it is now time to advocate for women's rights at political and legal levels. This is particularly relevant at a time when the country is currently debating the constitution, family law, criminal law, child law, and social insurance law. Women who are well informed on gender analysis will realise the impact of these laws on the whole family, and will be well placed to lobby for gender sensitive laws. These women can help change attitudes and perceptions of women's roles in the most conservative societies, as they themselves come from these communities and can

be positive role models for other women, and for men to respect as partners.

Women take the lead

Since 1997, around 5,000 women from targeted villages have received training through the Sanabel project in gender analysis, communication, advocacy, self-assertiveness and awareness, human and women rights, and participatory rapid appraisal. They have also attended many seminars and workshops on first aid, food preservation, house economy, garden planting, and health.

These women are now aware of their rights and better able to assess their needs and priorities. They are also more willing to work together as a team and many of them have become members of associations, committees or councils in their villages. The training has strengthened their self-confidence, assertiveness, self-esteem, and has provided them with the opportunity to expand their choices on how to lead a better life in regard to their education, health, legal or economic status.

Changes at every level

Women targeted by Sanabel training also noted significant changes within the family. Some women mentioned that their attitudes towards their children have changed. They no longer feared for their daughters and therefore started reconsidering early marriages and focusing on educating their daughters.

As a result of their training, the women are willing to work together, regardless of their political affiliation – a situation that was uncommon before. Once equipped with their new skills, women began to actively participate in their communities. This led them to be held in greater respect within their society, particularly by men. Local communities were keen to cooperate in Sanabel activities, especially in providing information during the appraisal, which is a clear indication of the



heightened public awareness on women's needs and rights.

Several women proclaimed a new-held belief in their power to bring about change and ability to stand up for their rights. They remarked that their relations with neighbours, other women and relatives has changed for the better due to the communication and negotiation skills they have acquired.

Local action

Women's participation in public activities has also increased as a result of the project. They have joined in demonstrations, sit-ins, festivals, and other political activities, making their points of view heard. Other women have become members in councils and taken up decision-making posts or joined institutions and organisations, becoming active in fieldwork. Many initiatives are taking place at local level in the Jenin and Gaza areas, and Sanabel continues to make important impacts in areas that are often remote and marginalised. ♪

For more information, contact:

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¹ WATC is a coalition of women affiliated with six main political parties, as well as representatives of six women's study centres and human rights organisations, in addition to independent professional women.

Ugandan women in rainwater harvesting

GLORIA KARUNGI | Uganda Rainwater Harvesting Association

“There was a time when women’s role in society was relegated to the kitchen. However, as time goes by, with more and more women being educated, women have shown that they too can do many of the things traditionally thought of as ‘men’s jobs’.”

A shared vision

Rainwater Harvesting (RWH) is one of the fields in which women have pulled their weight and shown everyone that “if the men can do it, so can we!” It’s through such efforts and determination that groups like Katuntu Tweekambe and Bakyala Kwekulakulanya Women Groups have been formed in Rakai district of Uganda. The groups have one common problem and share a vision of clean and safe water. Rakai district is located in the South Western region of Uganda where the main activity is subsistence agriculture. It is one of the areas worst hit by the HIV/AIDS pandemic and has a very high orphan percentage per household. The district receives about 800mm of rainfall annually and most households are child/widow headed.

No looking back

With the growing need to promote rainwater at household level, the Swedish Development Agency in Nairobi sponsored six Kenyan women experienced in tank construction to train the women in Rakai district. The groups were taught how to make jar and ferro-cement tanks that cost Ushs 160,000 (US\$106) and Ushs. 240,000 (US\$159) respectively. With the help of the District water officer, these groups were introduced to various donors and NGOs to obtain support materials like cement and wire mesh and since then there has been no looking back. The groups have not only strengthened women’s position by addressing gender issues, but have also transformed the women into equal partners with men in the field, bringing about many knock-on effects. The population in the area is benefiting from improved health due to access to safe and clean water and improved sanitation.

The women have also become economically independent because they earn money and can meet some of the basic household needs. Their husbands appreciate their financial contribution towards the home.

Building confidence

Mr. Kadaladini Musoke, secretary for Bakyala Kwekulakulanya group said that his family has changed a lot as a result of being involved in rainwater harvesting activities.

“Since the start of rainwater activities, I have seen a great change in my family. I am proud that my wife introduced me to such a beneficial project. Our children no longer fall sick of diarrhoea as before and so the money that was previously used for treatment is used for other things at home. My wife is also able to meet some of the family financial needs because she earns money”, he added.

The groups have also taken the women’s empowerment process further than the economic level, as it has transformed the women from shy into confident individuals, as is the case of Mrs. Mary Nabukenya, Chairperson Bakyala Kwekulakulanya women’s group.

“Before, I was not able to speak in public or even go to the sub county or district offices to speak to any officer. But today I can speak without fear”, she said.

Long-term benefits

Political empowerment is another benefit for the women, due to their involvement in decision-making for the development of their communities. Some are local council representatives and take part in decision-making through participation at community meetings where they air their views because they are confident and can speak in public.

Women have also become individually empowered and are more confident, taking the initiative to solve their problems and improving their health and economic status.

The groups in Rakai are excellent examples of the ability of communities to address their own needs if interventions are accurately targeted. This has a much more sustainable impact on the lives of the population and on the long-term development of the community as a whole. ♪

For more information, contact:

☉ Uganda Rainwater Harvesting Association

PO Box 34209
Kampala, Uganda
Tel.: +256 41 34 02 01
urwa@infocom.co.ug



Photo 1



Photo 2

Photo 1 – The burden of fetching water normally falls on the women. URWA has tried to ease the burden through empowering women to solve their water problems, through training in tank construction.

Photo 2 – Rakai Women constructing a brick rainwater tank. The women were trained by URWA and have also trained other women groups in Mbarara, Mpigi and Rukungiri districts.

The Uganda Rainwater Harvesting Association (URWA) is a national-level network to promote rainwater harvesting (RWH) to alleviate water and food insecurity. Its members are from various non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, research institutions, private companies, government departments, funding agencies and individuals of Uganda. Similar associations also exist in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania – together constituting the Greater Horn of Africa Rainwater Partnership.



Conflict and Poverty: the women's side of the story

ISIS-WICCE, UGANDA

Since 1997, Isis-Women's International Cross Cultural Exchange (Isis-WICCE) has documented the experiences of women in situations of armed conflict in ten countries in Africa. A recent initiative focused on recording and telling the little-known stories of women in situations of armed conflict in Uganda and other African nations and was awarded the 2003 "Gender and ICT" prize¹.

Conflicts are one of the major causes of poverty in Africa and of the continued marginalisation of women. Isis-WICCE decided to take action when a survey highlighted just how little was known about women's experiences of armed conflict in Uganda, let alone in Africa as a whole. The time was long overdue to tell the women's side of the story and to raise awareness amongst the population about the impacts of conflict on cultural, social, economic and political development, and particularly on women's well being.

Using various methods, including audio and video recording, photography, and face-to-face interaction through meetings and workshops, Isis WICCE set about collecting testimonies from women in the affected communities.

Speaking out: a healing process

The project targeted areas that have experienced, or are continuing to experience, armed conflict in Uganda, including the districts of Luwero, Gulu, Kitgum, Kasese, Soroti, Katakwi and Kumi. Most of the respondents (77%) were involved in small-scale farming and living in abject poverty with no source of income. Professional and technical experts in research, medicine and media played a key role in gathering information in a sensitive manner.

The women war survivors spoke out about their experiences and were able to make their own recommendations. Bit by bit a rich tapestry of women's experiences in situations of armed conflict began to take shape.

By talking about their experiences and sharing their pain the women discovered that those who care can help to improve their situation. This has to some extent helped heal their wounds.

Post-conflict: raising awareness of women's needs

The team at Isis knew that this collection of information on women's experiences could have a strong impact at the institutional level by providing stakeholders with tools to improve current laws and policies and to support lobbying for specific programmes that would address the emergency needs of women war survivors e.g. reproductive health. Most importantly it is a step towards encouraging

discussion on the issues of peace-building and co-existence.

Key results

All of the documentation was collected with the full participation of women war survivors and local leaders. During the course of the interviews 2012 clients were treated for various ailments and 110 surgical cases were handled. The majority of the survivors had ailments that had never been attended to 10-15 years after the armed conflict.

Forty-five women leaders have undertaken training over a five-year period in the areas of conflict analysis, peace building and leadership. They have also been trained in the use of drama as an information dissemination tool in local communities.

Twenty-seven women and eleven men acquired skills in documenting women's realities from a human rights perspective. The interviews underlined the need for immediate action to deal with high levels of trauma, particularly amongst women war survivors. Based on this evidence the Ugandan Ministry of Health incorporated mental health as a key focus area in its five-year strategic plan.

Sensitisation and Lobbying

A total of six research reports, two video documentaries, photographs, and pictorial

posters were produced. These make up a comprehensive information package for use by development workers and policy makers in lobbying for peace building.

In addition around 1000 video documentaries were distributed to partners internationally, and have been used in training workshops and for sensitisation. For women who do not normally have the time or opportunity to access information, video can be a very effective tool, since the tape is normally short (either 15 to 40 minutes) and the women can participate in the discussion that follows.

Isis-WICCE used the research findings to influence the Ministry of Gender and Community Development in Uganda to incorporate the issue of peace as a cross-cutting issue in the National Action Plan. The priority areas of the action plan are: poverty, income generation and empowerment; reproductive health and rights; legal framework and decision making; and the girl child and education. ¶

The research reports can be downloaded from the Isis-WICCE website: <http://www.isis.or.ug>

¹ The Gender and ICT prize was established by the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) Women's Networking Support Project at the World Summit on the Information Society.

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Women, Peace & Security

Displaced populations: some facts

- Up to 80% of displaced people worldwide are women and children.
- Internally displaced women face additional risks as there is no international body responsible for their well-being. When states or other actors are unwilling to allow humanitarian access, internally displaced women remain completely out of reach of aid and support.
- Displacement often occurs when women are least prepared for it. Women must flee their homes along with their children, or during pregnancy, sometimes giving birth along the way. Many women have the task of finding food and shelter upon arrival.
- Displaced women are not able to benefit fully from aid when they are under constant threat of assault, rape and other human rights violations.
- Refugees are particularly at risk of HIV infection as wars and conflicts often force them to flee to areas where the virus is prevalent. They are also more exposed to factors that facilitate transmission, including poverty, the disruption of health services and social structure and increases in sexual violence.

Women, Peace and Security: an alternative report

October 2004 marks the fourth anniversary of the adoption of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.

To mark the occasion, the United Nations Secretary-General will publish a report on the progress and challenges in the implementation of the resolution since 2000. The Secretary-General's report will focus on governmental and UN efforts to implement the resolution, and will not formally seek the input of civil society. The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGOWG)* believes however, that civil society input is crucial to fully assess governmental and UN work towards the implementation of Resolution 1325. Furthermore, as civil society organizations, networks and groups were important actors in the creation and adoption of the resolution, they are also important in its implementation.

The NGOWG will therefore publish a civil society alternative report, to be entitled "Four Years On: Advancing Women, Peace and Security".

*The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security, came together in June 2000 with a focused campaign on the development of a UN Security Council resolution on women, peace and security. With the unanimous adoption of Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security on 31 October 2000, the NGO Working Group shifted its focus to the support and monitoring of the implementation of Resolution 1325.

Women's Networks join forces for change in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Twelve networks of women's associations have agreed to set up a joint platform named 'Congolese Women for peace in the Great Lakes Region'. This 'superstructure' has been established in view of the *International Conference on Peace, Security, Democracy, and Development in the Great Lakes Region* and reflects the wish of the Congolese women to look beyond their internal differences and develop a common programme which will allow them to speak with a single voice. Among activities planned are workshops at provincial, national, sub-regional and international level.

The new platform will have a 12-member steering committee. Conafed, Dimitra partner for the Democratic Republic of Congo, will be responsible for coordinating its technical secretariat.

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Links

NGO Working Group on Gender:

<http://www.peacewomen.org/un/ngo/wg.html>

Human Rights Watch – women's rights:

<http://www.hrw.org/women/refugees.html>

Unifem – Women, war and peace:

<http://www.womenwarpeace.org/issues/displacement/displacement.htm>

1 000 women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005

The Swiss initiative '1 000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005' will help bring women's efforts to counter injustice, oppression, and violence into the international spotlight, and underline the vital role played by women in promoting peace in their communities and the world.

By nominating 1 000 women for the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize, 'invisible' peace workers throughout the world will be honoured and given international recognition. Their lives and work will be documented through video and film, audio tape, printed biographies and other media.

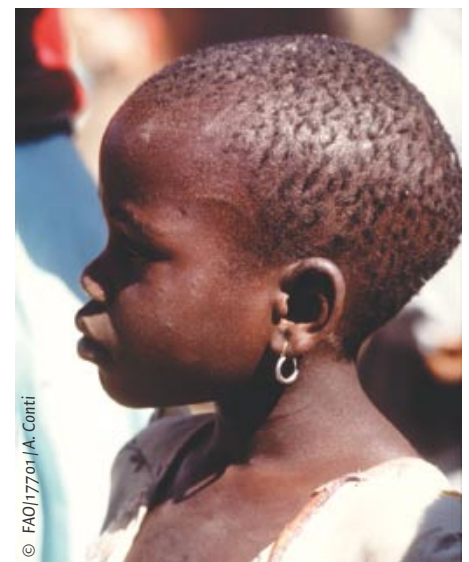
Nominations for the 1 000 women were submitted by end of June 2004 and the final list will be drawn up by November and submitted to the Nobel committee. However Nobel rules stipulate that a maximum of three people can be awarded the Prize. Therefore, should the 1 000 peace women win, three of the women's names would be drawn at random and they

would collect the prize on behalf of the other individuals. The Prize money would be used for peace projects.

While there is no guarantee that the "1000 women" will win the Nobel Peace Prize, the initiative will nonetheless draw attention to women's work in the cause of peace.

"1 000 is a symbol. It is a symbol of saying: peace is not a dramatic activity but rather is accomplished bit by bit. Peace is not an individual act. You cannot make peace alone."

Kamla Bhasin, India



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For more information, contact:

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HIV/AIDS: the gender factor

Without serious efforts to address gender inequality, action against HIV/AIDS is destined to fail. This is the stern warning contained in a report published by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund. The report was released during the International AIDS conference 2004 held from July 11-16, in Bangkok, Thailand.

The report entitled *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis* makes for sombre reading. Its statistics reveal that 48% of all adults living with HIV are women, up from 35% in 1985. Today, 37.8 million people are infected worldwide: 17 million of them are female.

The situation is even more alarming in sub-Saharan Africa, where women make up 57% of those living with HIV. Young African women aged 15-24 are three times more likely to be infected than their male counterparts.

“Promoting concrete actions that address the reality of women’s lives and help decrease their vulnerability to HIV is the only way forward,” said Dr Kathleen Cravero, Deputy Executive Director of UNAIDS. “We must reduce violence against women, ensure greater access to HIV prevention and treatment services and protect their property rights.”

Confronting the Crisis focuses on key areas identified by the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS – an international pressure group – as critical to an effective AIDS response. The Coalition is a broad-based initiative launched in 2004 to stimulate concrete action to improve the daily lives of women and girls infected and affected by HIV and AIDS. These critical areas include HIV prevention, treatment, care-giving, education, gender-based violence and women’s rights.

“Gender inequality has turned a devastating disease, AIDS, into an economic and social crisis,” Noleen Heyzer, Executive Director of UNIFEM

The epidemic’s impact on women and girls is especially marked. Most women in the hardest-hit countries face heavy economic, legal, cultural and social disadvantages, which increase their vulnerability to the epidemic’s impact. Women may hesitate to seek HIV testing or fail to return for their results because they are afraid that disclosing their HIV-positive status may result in physical violence, expulsion from their home, or social ostracism.

Young girls may drop out of school to tend to ailing parents, look after household duties or care for younger siblings. When their partners or fathers die of AIDS, women may be left with-

out land, housing or other assets. The denial of these basic human rights increases women’s and girls’ vulnerability to sexual exploitation, abuse and HIV.

AIDS and conflict

Conflicts can also create conditions that increase the risk of contracting infections such as HIV, and may also lead to their spread. This can happen either during the conflict itself, or after it is over, during the often fragile post-conflict period.

It is essential that countries recovering from armed conflict integrate an AIDS response into their recovery programmes, particularly HIV-prevention activities. Likewise, HIV-related activities should be integrated into refugee assistance and other humanitarian programmes. In a variety of recent conflicts-including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Rwanda, combatants have used rape as a weapon of war. A study in Rwanda⁽¹⁾ revealed 17% of women who had been raped tested HIV-positive, compared with 11% of women who had not been raped.

Not as easy as ABC

A large majority of HIV/AIDS awareness programmes have focused on the ABC – Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms – strategy. However, for many women and girls, this approach is of limited value and hypocritical. They lack social and economic power, and live in fear of male violence. They cannot negotiate abstinence from sex, nor can they insist their partners remain faithful or use condoms.

“The ABC approach is not a sufficient means of prevention for women and adolescent girls,” says UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Obaid. “Abstinence is meaningless to women who are coerced into sex. Faithfulness offers little protection to wives whose husbands have several partners or were infected before marriage. And condoms require the cooperation of men. The social and economic empowerment of women is key.”

Developing solutions

Many women are denied the knowledge and tools to protect themselves from HIV. It is vital to implement comprehensive strategies, including gender-specific and culturally specific services. Key components include: access to education (particularly secondary education); strengthening legal protection for women’s property and inheritance rights; eradicating violence against women and girls; and ensuring equitable access to HIV care and prevention services. Diagnosing and treating sexually transmitted infections need to be integrated into family planning/reproductive health clinics and women should be able to gain access to these services without fear of social censure. Other examples of solutions involve promoting female-controlled prevention tools, such as female condoms⁽²⁾ or microbicides.



Also strongly recommended are approaches that involve peer groups, working together with men and women to overturn gender norms that create HIV vulnerability.

Calls for leadership

Empowering women and girls to protect themselves against the virus is a pressing priority, said UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his address to the Bangkok conference. He went on to say that “what is needed is real, positive change that will give more power and confidence to women and girls. Change that will transform relations between women and men at all levels of society.”

Mr. Annan also underlined the need to scale up infrastructure to support both treatment and prevention, together with stronger leadership at every level.

One positive example of national progress is Ethiopia's recent launch of the Women's Coalition Against HIV/AIDS. At a ceremony attended by some of Ethiopia's leading female figures, Prime Minister Meles Zenawi spoke out about the need to change Ethiopians' gender attitudes and practices to stop the epidemic.

HIV/AIDS and FAO

FAO is developing a multi-dimensional agriculture sector response to HIV/AIDS.

HIV/AIDS has a severe impact on food security, affecting all of its dimensions – availability, stability, access, utilisation. The epidemic is taking back years of slowly earned progress in rural development, while it is causing significant increases in rural poverty and destitution in the most affected countries.

A major new study commissioned by FAO in Mozambique, published in August 2004, documents the loss of many varieties of grains, tubers, legumes and vegetables due to HIV/AIDS, flood and drought. The study shows that 45% of respondents from HIV/AIDS-affected households said they had reduced the

area under cultivation and 60% said they had reduced the number of crops grown. Author Anne Waterhouse commented that the results showed that the disease affects the passing down of farming know-how about traditional crops from generation to generation. ♪

For further information, see:

FAO HIV/AIDS website:

<http://www.fao.org/hiv aids/>

Women and HIV/AIDS: confronting the crisis, UNIFEM, UNAIDS, UNFPA

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

2004 UNAIDS report of the global AIDS epidemic:

<http://www.unaids.org/bangkok2004/report.html>

“Family and community structures crumble in the wake of HIV/AIDS. Already facing poverty, the needs of many households become more acute and assets – like land, property and tools – become critical resources,” says Marcela Villarreal, AIDS focal point at FAO.

1 UNAIDS/UNHCR, 2003

2 The female condom is unique in that it is the only form of contraception which women themselves can control that protects them from HIV/AIDS and other STIs. This makes it valuable in communities where there is resistance among men to wearing the male condom. Female condoms are also gaining ground among commercial sex-workers, partly because they can be fitted in advance.

UPCOMING DIMITRA EVENTS

Regional workshop on rural women's access to information

16-18 November 2004, Tunisia

From 16-18 November 2004, Dimitra partner CREDIF will organise a workshop in Tunis on rural women's access to information.

This event will gather together approximately 50 participants from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Mauritania and Senegal. Many representatives of grassroots and rural women's organisations will attend, together with key decision-makers from within Ministries and local government, extension workers, trainers and local and national media.

For updated information check the Dimitra website:

<http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra>

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OTHER EVENTS

Seventh African Regional Conference on Women

UNECA/The African Center for Gender and Development, Addis Ababa, 6-14 October 2004

The Seventh African Regional Conference on Women will focus on the decade review of the implementation of Beijing Platform for Action in Africa (Beijing +10). Within the framework of the global evaluation of progress, Africa will join the rest of the world in assessing the performance of Beijing +10 and identifying the way forward.

For more information see:

<http://www.uneca.org/beijingplus10/>

Seventh_African_Regional_Conference.htm

Women and ICT: Challenges and Opportunities on the Road to Tunis 2005

Arusha International Conference Centre, Arusha, Tanzania, 20-22 October 2004.

The overall objective of the conference is to draw a roadmap for the caucus that will enable effective women's participation at WSIS-Tunis 2005. The specific objectives are:

- Report back of the activities and agreements made at the Geneva-WSIS 2003
- To draw up a detailed work-plan through a participatory approach covering all major challenges identified by women at the Geneva phase
- To study the draft Geneva 2003 Draft Plan of Action and identify entry points for the caucus's further intervention.
- Develop continuity strategies, including funding, for the Women ICT activities in the region

For more information about the programme, see:

<http://aitecafrica.com/events/2004/WomenICT/womens-ict.htm>

Tenth anniversary of the Commission “Women and Development”, Belgium

10 December 2004, Brussels, Belgium

The Commission “Women and Development”, an advisory body established officially in October 1994 by the Belgian Secretary of State for development cooperation, will celebrate its 10th anniversary in Brussels on 10 December 2004.

The Commission aims to improve the condition of women in the Third World and elsewhere by promoting their economic, social and political situation.

This will be an opportunity to take stock, review achievements to date and discuss with friends and collaborators on future initiatives and next steps.

For more information see:

<http://www.dgdc.be/en/topics/gender/>

Beijing +10

New York, 28 February-11 March 2005

The 49th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women will be held in New York from 28 February - 11 March 2005 to assess the implementation of recommendations of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995 and 2000), and identify the way forward.

So as to adopt a holistic approach, the implementation review is expected to include other relevant global and regional frameworks. Therefore, the evaluation process will also examine the gains linked to the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals, the World Social Summit on Sustainable Development, the International Conference on Population and Development and NEPAD.

The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) will launch a new website in preparation for Beijing +10. This will focus on listing information on events in Africa leading up to the main event. You can access it at: <http://www.uneca.org/beijingplus10/>

For updated information on Beijing +10 see:

<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/>

The World March of Women

The World March of Women is an international feminist action network connecting grassroots groups working to eliminate poverty and violence against women. Its values centre on the globalization of solidarity, diversity, women's leadership, and the strength of alliances among women's and other social movements.

Although the March already has 5500 participating groups in 163 countries, it is intensifying its efforts to mobilise grassroots women's groups in preparation for major international actions in 2005.

For more information:

<http://www.marchmondiale.org/en/>

The World March of Women

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PUBLICATIONS

Manual: "Plaidoyer pour l'égalité de genre dans les politiques de TIC" (Advocacy for gender equality in ICT policies)

Available in French version only

'Gender and ICT network' – ENDA-OSIRIS-ART

The project "Plaidoyer pour l'égalité de genre dans les politiques de TIC" (Advocacy for gender equality in ICT policies) will help raise awareness amongst women's organisations, communities and decision-makers on the need to take the gender aspect into account when drawing up ICT policies.

This manual demonstrates how to carry out information and awareness-raising activities amongst policy-makers, leaders of women's organisations, the media and the general public. The preface is written by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and it has been produced with the support of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA, Dakar).

The Gender and ICT network is a common initiative of ENDA – Environment and Development, the association OSIRIS – Observatoire sur les Systèmes d'Information, les Réseaux et les Inforoutes au Sénégal (Observatory on Information Systems and Networks in Senegal) and ART – Agence de Régulation des Télécommunications (Telecommunications Regulation Agency).

To download or order the manual see:

<http://www.famafrique.org/regentic/accueil.html>

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

UNIFEM launches report on status of Jordanian Women

The report – 'The Status of Jordanian Women: Demography, Economic Participation, Political Participation and Violence' – was prepared in collaboration with the national Department of Statistics and the Jordanian National Commission for Women, and includes in-depth analysis of gender gaps and disparities in the four areas mentioned in the title.

The report is currently available only in Arabic.

For further information, please contact:

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AMARC magazine – 'Habari ya Africa' for the community radio sector

'Habari' is a bi-annual magazine published by AMARC Africa that examines key issues affecting the community radio sector on the continent and in the worldwide community radio family. It focuses mainly on policy issues and tracks developments within the community radio sector, linking these to communication democratisation processes at large. The first edition of 2004 was printed in May.

For copies please contact Shingai

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Information and Communication Technologies for Development in Africa

In 1997, Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) launched its Acacia initiative in an effort to empower sub-Saharan African communities with the ability to apply new information and communication technologies to their own social and economic development. Now, five years later, the Acacia initiative presents this unique and groundbreaking three-volume collection of original research on this important and timely issue.

Volume 1: Opportunities and Challenges for Community Development

Edited by Ramata Molo Thioune

CODESRIA/CRDI – 2003, 220 p. – ISBN 1-55250-001-2

Volume 2: The Experience with Community Telecentres

Edited by Florence Etta and Shiela Parvyn-Wamahi

CODESRIA/CRDI – 2004, 220 p. – ISBN 1-55250-006-3,

Volume 3: Networking Institutions of Learning

Edited by Tina James

CODESRIA/CRDI – 2004, 220 p. – ISBN 1-55250-008-X

The three volumes are also available individually.

Free download:

http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-32997-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

IDRC

BP 8500 – Ottawa (Ontario) – Canada

K1G 3H9

info@idrc.ca

INTERNET

INSTRAW – new site launched

The United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) officially launched its new website.

<http://www.un-instraw.org>

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With the financial support of the Federal Public Service Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation (DGDC) Belgium and of the King Baudouin Foundation.

The content of the articles does not necessarily reflect the view of FAO

Design: Atelier voor grafische & aanverwante toepassingen, Ghent
Printed by Parys Printing, Evergem-Ghent

Editor:
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Belgium



FOOD AND
AGRICULTURE
ORGANIZATION
OF THE UNITED NATIONS



Is it a fault?

The world has so much variety
And that is the source of its beauty.

If men and women coexist
And live in harmony
Nature will be in perfect balance
What has been glaring for centuries
Is its absence.

To be born a woman
Is it a fault?
Who knows the patience I lost?
My sisters and brothers
Who feels the sacrifices
I paid in every walk of life?

Is it a fault to be a woman?
Was I born by choice?
Please, listen to my voice
To the cry of misery
To the tears of a century.

To me the world is unfair.
I am in despair.
My cries amounted to nothing
But hot air.

Let me stop and rethink
To sort out this thing
I am born a woman
But still I am human.

Being a woman is not a fault
Let me get up and act.

Being a woman is mighty fine
Get up sisters!
Do not be slaves to tradition
Get up, act, and break the chain
Act, let your genius shine!!

MULU SOLOMAN (MFS) | ADDIS ABABA, 2003

Recited by the author in honour of women denied their inheritance rights, during the closing ceremony of the COHRE Workshop 'Inheritance Rights are Human Rights' Johannesburg, South Africa, 23 January 2004.