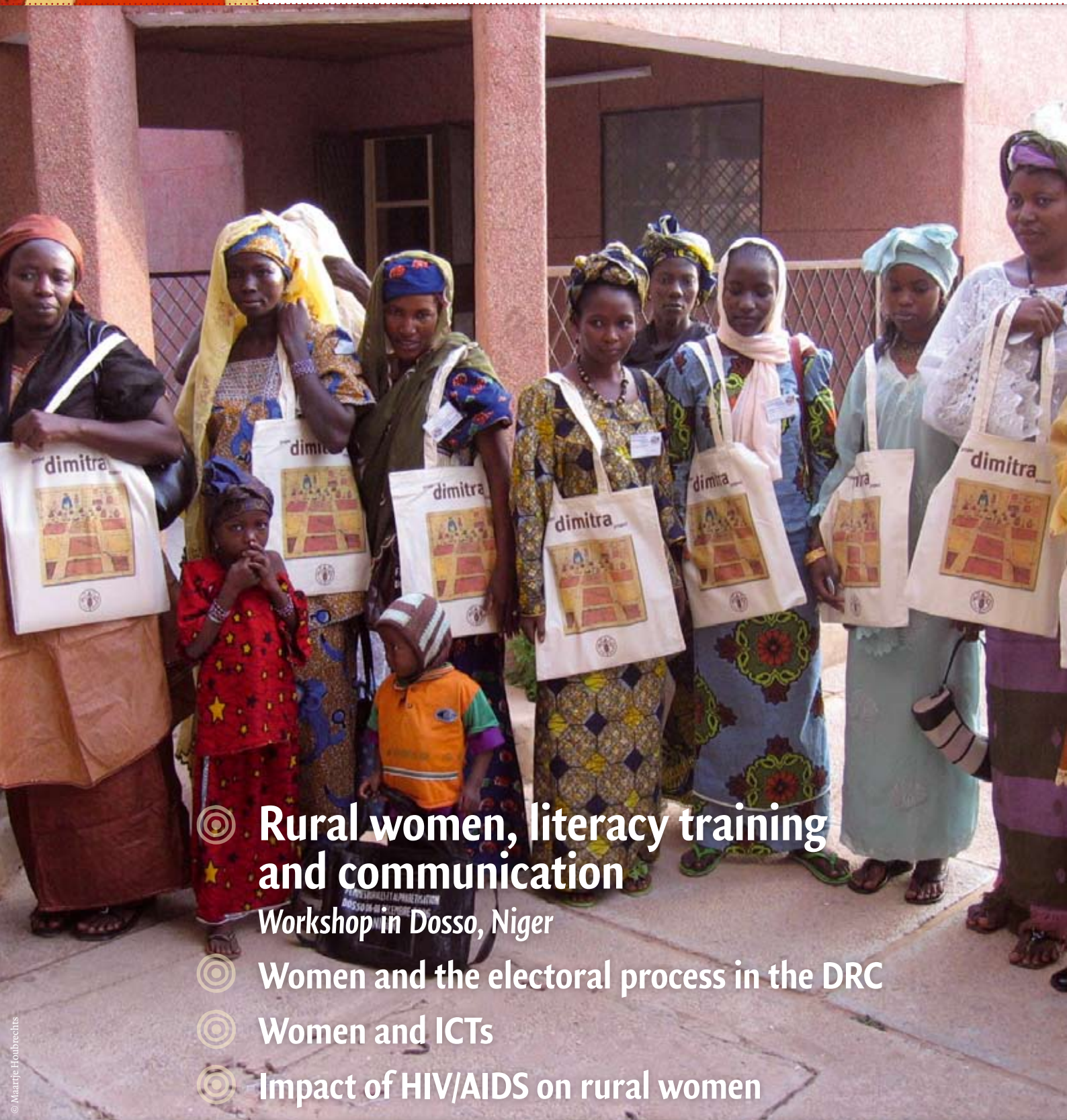




# Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT



## © Rural women, literacy training and communication

*Workshop in Dosso, Niger*

- © Women and the electoral process in the DRC
- © Women and ICTs
- © Impact of HIV/AIDS on rural women

# Editorial

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Dear Friends,

We would like to start by wishing you and your families all the very best for a happy, healthy and peaceful 2007. We hope that all of us may live in a better and more just world without violence.

We are delighted to be able to begin this year by welcoming back Maartje Houbrechts who has returned to the Dimitra team after a number of years working elsewhere. Judith Gracey has gone back to the United Kingdom and we thank her for her excellent work and wish her the very best for the future.

In this latest edition of the Dimitra Newsletter, as in previous editions, we highlight the importance of access by rural populations, and particularly women, to information and communication. The ability to access information and to share it through dissemination and networking is crucial in order to combat inequality, malnutrition and poverty throughout the world.

In Niger, Dimitra and its partner ONG-VIE, supported by a number of international organisations, held a workshop in Dosso in December 2006 on literacy training for rural women, girls' schooling and communication. The workshop allowed rural women from all over Niger to come together for the first time to discuss with community radio presenters and representatives from the education sector the obstacles to education which they face. The follow-up to this workshop led to the establishment of three pilot projects which will bring together women's groups, literacy centres and community radio stations.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a workshop on strengthening communication skills among rural communicators (rural radio stations and women's organisations) took place in Bukavu in February 2006. The topics discussed had been chosen by grassroots rural women and included participation by women in the electoral process, combating HIV/AIDS, combating violence against women and impunity and gender. The recommendations from this workshop led to support from the King

Baudouin Foundation for listeners' clubs in Sud-Kivu and Katanga and the organisation of another workshop in Lubumbashi in May 2007.

In October 2006, Dimitra took part in the first World Congress on Communication for Development to which we were able to invite Ms Tine N'Doye, President of the National Rural Women's Network of Senegal. During the Congress Tine presented her concrete experience of rural women and explained how new communication and information technologies and the support of a participative network has improved their conditions and those of the members of the network. Several articles illustrate the positive and interactive role which can be played by these technologies in the lives of rural women and the importance of communication for development.

Other articles discuss the involvement of women in the electoral process in the DRC and issues linked to food security, for example the experience of farmer field schools in Bukavu and the LinkS project. The impact of HIV/AIDS on rural women and the different methods currently being developed to combat the pandemic are also discussed. Finally, we pay homage to Muhammad Yunus, winner of the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize for his promotion of microcredit, of which the vast majority of beneficiaries are women.

You will notice that we have made changes to our website and also to the format of the Dimitra Newsletter. We would be grateful if you would complete and return the attached questionnaire so that your comments may be used to make further improvements.

We hope you will like the range of articles and find the newsletter an enjoyable read.

Marcela Villarreal, Director  
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FOOD AND  
AGRICULTURE  
ORGANIZATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS

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

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*The access of rural women to literacy training will undoubtedly have a positive effect on the improvement of women's status, the living conditions of children in general and of girls in particular.*

According to the UNDP's Human Development Report 2006, Niger is the poorest country in the world. An important indicator of this is provided by literacy levels: in 2004 only 28.7% of adults (aged 15 and over) were literate. Of these, only 35.1% were women. Illiteracy thus affects women more than men, even though the number of women learning to read and write has been on the rise since 2000 – in 2003 there were seven women for every three men attending the literacy centres.

### The obstacles to schooling for girls

A number of studies have shown that socio-cultural practices often present obstacles to the enrolment of girls in schools and to their remaining at school. In Niger, illiteracy among parents explains the lack of importance attributed to a school education. Other factors may be a restrictive interpretation of religious precepts and a perception of school as a threat to the moral integrity of young girls and thereby of their families. It is believed that girls who go to school are escaping from family, social and community control and go on to question certain values and conduct to which the socio-cultural stereotypes confine them.

At the economic level, increased poverty means that girls must work (undertaking domestic tasks and small-scale business) and there is no perception of the benefits for these girls which may be derived from schooling and literacy.

The overwhelming majority of girls who are excluded from schooling are the daughters of rural women. Yet access to literacy for rural women would undoubtedly have a positive impact on the improvement of their own status and of conditions for children in general and girls in particular.

## Literacy training for rural women: a lever for girls' schooling

The impact of rural women's literacy training on girls' schooling was the subject of a workshop held on 6-8 December 2006 in Dosso (Niger). It was organised by ONG-VIE Kande Ni Bayra, the partner of the Dimitra Project for the Sahel region, and was co-financed by Dimitra, FAO, the Belgian Cooperation, the Belgian Technical Cooperation, the Swiss Cooperation, the Canadian Cooperation and UNFPA.

### The women themselves identify obstacles and strategies

The Dosso workshop sought to give rural women a voice to enable them, in the main national languages (Hausa and Djerma), to identify the obstacles to literacy training and/or to informal education and to find appropriate ways of creating the necessary conditions for their own literacy training.

Around 70 representatives of rural women's organisations, NGOs and organisations active in informal education, community radio stations, the education authority and development partners in Niger took part in the workshop. Representatives from organisations in the Dimitra network from Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso were also invited, which meant the issues could be considered from a regional perspective.

### Interest from officials and a visual presentation of the subject

The workshop was officially opened under the patronage of the First Lady of Niger, Ms Hadjia Laraba Tandja, who is very interested in the issues and who is committed to supporting any action which promotes women's wellbeing. A number of dignitaries from the administrative and traditional authorities were also present at the opening. Among them were the Governor of the Dosso region, the Minister for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection, the Minister of Basic Education and Literacy and the Chief of the Province, Zarmakoye Seydou Maïdana. The FAO representative in Niger also took part in the opening ceremony.

After the opening speeches, a documentary on literacy training and its impacts, made by ONG-VIE, was shown. The initial sequences



*The participation of representatives of organisations of the Dimitra network in Mali, Senegal and Burkina Faso allowed for discussions with a regional perspective.*



present a picture of daily life for rural women, constantly occupied by all manner of tasks. However, the film shows that this situation is not a given which cannot be changed. Sa'a, a rural woman from the Maradi region, who was also present at the workshop, illustrated this by enrolling at a literacy training centre. She now sees her future quite differently and encourages women in her region to experience the benefits of education. The documentary aims to persuade rural women to use literacy and information as resources to combat poverty.

**Debates and discussions: proposed solutions**

Following a presentation of the Dimitra Project by the project coordinator and one on adult education systems based on communication and the role which can be played by rural community radio stations given by an FAO expert, the participants presented the experiences of their countries in relation to literacy training for rural women. This facilitated a better understanding of the significant contribution made to the schooling of girls by women's access to literacy training. It also highlighted the conditions necessary to promote accessibility.

The presentations were followed by question and answer sessions and debates, and four themed discussion groups were held. Each group dealt with a different issue and had the remit to identify the obstacles inherent in each of the issues and to propose possible solutions to improve current practice:

1. Identification of the main obstacles to literacy training for women and of the conditions for access to and success for rural women in informal education.
2. Content of teaching/learning, focus and strategies to shape high-quality literacy training.
3. The influence of literacy training for rural women on schooling for girls.
4. The role of community radio stations and new information and communication technologies for the promotion of rural women.

**Strategies to be implemented**

Following these discussions, a number of recommendations were formulated, the most significant of which are listed here:

- Awareness must be raised among men in the same way as among women
- A real policy of literacy training for women



© Maartje Houbrechts

Since she took part in a literacy training course, Sa'a, a rural woman from the Maradi region, sees her future differently, and encourages women to educate themselves.

must be established, with an appropriate budget; training for young girls who dropped out of school must be ensured by the establishment of specific infrastructure.

- Literacy training activities must include measures to reduce women's domestic burden; literacy training modules must be held at times which suit women and must be more specifically aimed at women.
- Literacy training activities must be better planned at the regional level so that there is improved synergy and sharing of experience.
- In terms of communication, more use should be made of rural radio stations and new information and communication technologies. Also awareness should be raised among women and men of the aim and role of the radio and of new information and communication technologies.
- Community radio stations must be provided with equipment and logistical, financial and human resources, radio stations must be set up where they do not exist and 'radio listening clubs' should be set up in literacy centres.
- Programmes aimed specifically at women should be produced.
- In the case of any activity it is important to involve religious and community leaders and opinion shapers, men and women.

**New synergies**

The workshop provided rural women of Niger with a unique space and for the first time enabled meetings and discussions to take place between these women, people involved in liter-

acy training and representatives of community radio stations. Together the participants identified and analysed the principal obstacles to literacy for women and proposed possible solutions. They also discussed how to give a new impetus to literacy training for women through communication specifically aimed at the training and information needs of rural women.

The plans announced following this workshop include setting up three pilot projects in Gaya, Loga and Tera, where synergies will be encouraged around centres that will bring together community radio stations, literacy training centres and rural women's groups. ONG-VIE and Dimitra, with the continuing cooperation of the funders who contributed to the organisation of the workshop, will develop and test these pilot projects. Also, a booklet on the results of the workshop will be developed and largely distributed.

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The final report of the workshop will soon be available on the Dimitra website.

# Bolstering communication skills in South Kivu

In February 2006, some 60 representatives of rural women's organisations got together with a group of journalists from the community radio stations of the province of South Kivu in the DRC as part of a workshop on bolstering communication skills. They set the agenda for the discussion themselves, focusing on a series of specific themes for an exchange of experiences.

For a long time now, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has been the site of armed conflict. And the Congolese people are paying the price. The isolation of the majority of the rural areas of South Kivu, attributable both to the insecurity that currently reigns in this region as well as the absence of transport infrastructures, is a major obstacle to communication and the spread of information.

## The major role played by communication

Both community radio stations and rural women's networks play a crucial role in disseminating information which enables local people, in particular women in rural areas, to get involved in local development processes. However, journalists working for community radio tend to visit their listeners in their local setting infrequently and are consequently badly placed to pass on the needs of the local people, including women. In addition, rural women's associations are not often given the opportunity to express their opinions and generally do not receive training on how to use information and communication technologies. They are given very limited access to information in general and gender-specific information in particular. Journalists and rural women's associations only meet very rarely. Furthermore, gender is not a topic covered widely by the media and denigrating female stereotypes are still widespread. It is necessary to ensure journalists working for community radio broadcasters are better equipped for interactive radio programmes. In parallel, rural women should be given training on how to use information and communication tools so as to enable them to take part.

## A platform for discussion

A workshop focussing on these various issues was held in Bukavu, South Kivu, from 23 to 28 February 2006. It was hosted by the Dimitra project and its partners in the DRC SAMWAKI and CONAFED (National Committee for Women and Development – *Comité National Femme et Développement*), with the support of GTZ-Santé, the King Baudouin Foundation, the Panos Paris Institute, Radio Maendeleo, UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNDP and MONUC. The objective of the workshop was to bolster the communication skills of the participants and raise their awareness of the gender approach for both community radio and rural women's organisations. This was the first time that representatives of these two groups, both stakeholders within civil society, had got together to discuss the following highly relevant topics:



© Flame Najros

The workshop aimed to bolster the communication skills of both community radios and rural women's organisations and to raise their gender awareness.

- integration of gender issues into the production and scheduling of radio programmes;
- combating sexual violence against women and impunity;
- participation of women in elections;
- gender and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR);
- the fight against HIV and AIDS.

## An interactive approach

The workshop opted for an interactive working method and a series of debates and practical exercises followed on from the various presentations. The participants grasped this opportunity to put across their points of view with a great deal of energy and enthusiasm. The participants were also invited to assess the quality of the workshop at the end and agreed that the topics were relevant, the venue was ideal and the training sessions had provided them with new skills that would be useful in their day-to-day work.

## Recommendations

- The following are some of the recommendations drafted jointly at the end of the workshop:
- creating or reinforcing radio clubs and encouraging women in rural areas to get involved
  - helping women in rural areas to develop their own information and communication tools
  - creating a platform through which women in rural areas can express their opinions via community radio and the other media
  - encouraging women to create radio programmes for other women

- boosting synergy and exchange between community radio and women's organisations
- offering special training for journalists and women in rural areas

## Rural radio, listeners' clubs and HIV/AIDS

The Bukavu workshop was such a success that the organisers have decided to repeat the event in Lubumbashi (Katanga) in May 2007. Moreover, a project has been set up entitled "Strengthening community radio and listeners' clubs to help combat HIV/AIDS in South Kivu and Katanga". This project is being supported by Dimitra and the King Baudouin Foundation. Its aim is to encourage rural people to take greater ownership of the fight against HIV/AIDS through support from two key players: journalists from community radio stations and women's organisations.

✳ For further information on the workshop, surf to the Dimitra website: [www.fao.org/sd/dimitra](http://www.fao.org/sd/dimitra)

✳ For further information on the project "Strengthening community radio and listeners' clubs" contact  
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# Helping women take part in the elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Report from an information and awareness session involving women from rural areas and local community leaders from Walungu (Bukavu) on the elections in the DRC, held on 19-20 June 2006 in Mugogu by SAMWAKI with the support of the Gender Section of MONUC in Bukavu.

## Why raise the awareness of women voters?

A few months prior to the first free and democratic elections in the DRC since independence, great concerns remained as to whether the majority of the population would indeed turnout and vote responsibly. Very little and essentially ineffectual information had been provided on the elections, in particular in rural areas where there is a distinct lack of communication tools. Women in rural areas suffer most from this situation, despite the fact that they make up a majority within the Congolese electorate.

## How should it be done?

It is for these reasons that SAMWAKI decided to host an information and awareness session on the elections. The goals of the workshop were:

- to help prepare the rural people of Walungu, in particular women, for active participation in the elections;
- to inform and raise the awareness of these people as to the election process;
- to distribute a series of legal texts related to the elections;
- to encourage women from rural areas to take part in the elections both as voters and candidates.

26 representatives from rural women's organisations took part in the workshop alongside five representatives of political, administrative and military authorities and four representatives of the local catholic and protestant churches.

The working method for the session centred on active participation. Five presentations were given, followed by discussion and group work. The participants were also given substantial documentation on the elections.

## The five topics considered

### 1. Rural women, development and local governance

The first presentation set the role of rural women into the context of development and drew parallels between the roles played by rural women and women in local government. No development process can succeed without the active participation of women. This participation is guaranteed essentially through the involvement of rural women in local governance.

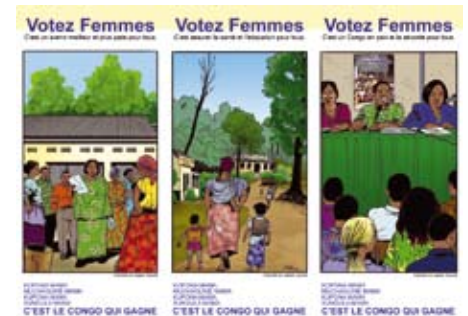
It was also stressed that elections provide rural women with the ideal opportunity to elect good leaders at all levels of governance and to obtain seats themselves within the different state management bodies, from the village to the local community, district and region.

### 2. The concept of free, democratic and transparent elections

Initially, some basic concepts such as democracy, referenda and elections were defined. Next, an image box was used to encourage debate on the Mobutu dictatorship, the organisation of free, transparent and democratic elections, the war era and more. The discussion was very lively.

### 3. Involvement of women from rural areas in elections

Questions such as why and how women should take part in elections and the role of



As part of the election education campaign being run in the DRC, Belgian NGO *Le Monde selon les Femmes* (The World According to Women) designed two information leaflets which focus above all on the determination of the Congolese women to place their great efficiency and work dynamism at the service of all.

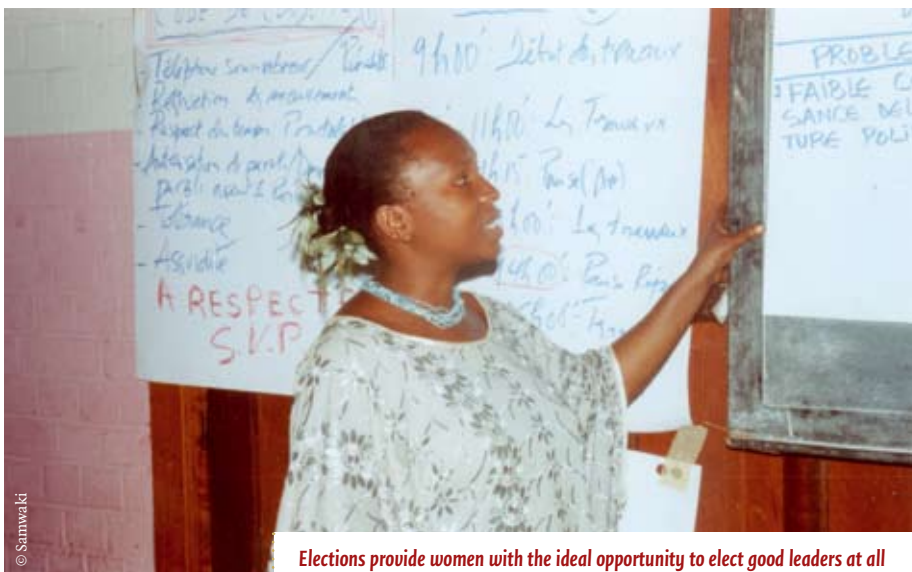
The first is a brochure entitled "Both women and men should vote for women" and sets out slogans in the 4 national languages of the country which explain the benefits for all of electing women to political posts.

[www.mondefemmes.org/pdf/docpdf/deplifemrdc.pdf](http://www.mondefemmes.org/pdf/docpdf/deplifemrdc.pdf)

The second is a pamphlet entitled "Memento for candidates" which provides some useful advice on how to run an election campaign. It lists the contact details of organisations which candidates can contact to obtain advice and documents.

[www.mondefemmes.org/pdf/docpdf/depliantFEMMES\\_memcand.pdf](http://www.mondefemmes.org/pdf/docpdf/depliantFEMMES_memcand.pdf)

This project was run jointly by the members of the CAFCO in the DRC (Cadre Permanent de Concertation des Femmes Congolaises – Permanent Framework for Dialogue for Congolese Women), and by *Le Monde selon les Femmes* and members of various Congolese organisations in Belgium.



*Elections provide women with the ideal opportunity to elect good leaders at all levels of governance and to obtain seats themselves within the different state management bodies.*

rural women in implementing the rule of law were brought to the fore.

The message was conveyed, using examples from the dictatorship, the period of conflict and the transition government, that poor governance has ruined the country, that it is now time for reconstruction and that for this the citizens must get on board. It was explained to the participants that a candidate must win a vote in order to enter a position of power and that the women of the DRC, who are in a numerical majority, can also harness the opportunity presented by the elections to influence the future of their country.

#### 4. Electoral law

Electoral law was explained with a particular focus on 5 key issues: who votes, for whom, where, why and how. Teaching materials, including a drawing of the layout of a polling station and a template ballot paper, were used to take the participants through the different stages of the elections, what to do and what not to do to make sure their votes count.

#### 5. Gender and elections

For this last topic, the male participants were asked to list the strengths and weaknesses of women and vice versa. The responses given highlighted the all-encompassing nature of the issue of gender and the benefits that can be drawn by the community from grasping the fact that gender problems can be resolved. Such change contributes to development and enables women from rural areas to become involved in managing state affairs through free, transparent and democratic elections.

#### Working groups, recommendations and undertakings

Two working groups were created to talk about the obstacles preventing women from the rural area of Walungu from participating actively in the elections both as voters and can-



Everyone participated actively in the workshop.

didates. Possible solutions were put forward. Numerous hurdles were identified, including: fear, lack of resources and information, multiple candidates, marital constraints, etc.

The participants then drafted a series of recommendations:

- consider organising a meeting between women from Walungu who have political ambitions and other groups of women from neighbouring rural areas so as to agree on joint strategies for representing women from rural areas within local, provincial and national government;
- pass on lessons learned within families and interest groups using various methods of communication;
- vote responsibly to help save the region, province and country as a whole;
- intensify gender teaching.

Lastly, the participants agreed to: support female candidates (support to be given by the men); elect a number of women to decision-making posts at different levels of governance; promote a culture of peace and understanding within the community to ensure the elections take place in a positive climate.

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Participants – women and men – agreed to support female candidates and thus elect a number of women to decision-making posts at different levels of governance.



## Bukavu: Election awareness-raising by women for women

Awareness-raising activities organised by women for women are multiplying in Bukavu. Thanks to help from the CEI<sup>1</sup> and MONUC<sup>2</sup>, various women's associations in Bukavu are helping their fellow female citizens understand how best to exercise their right to vote.

According to the proverb, a picture speaks a thousand words. It is for this reason that Amapaves (Association de Mamans Pacifiques Vendeuses de Souliers usagés – Peaceful Women's Association of Second-hand Shoe Sellers) opted for the medium of theatre to explain to women the elections and the voting process.

Rather than a traditional play set in a sit-down theatre, Amapaves decided to show an interactive piece at the market where women work and shop. The women who work at the market are often far too busy with their day-to-day activities to be able to attend election information sessions held elsewhere.

The play uses simple language and is acted out by women themselves. It was thought up by Amapaves, with the support of MONUC. The play explains to women how to choose their preferred candidate without falling victim to manipulation, as well as how to promote parity between women and men.

The play was shown on 6 April at the Kadutu market in Bukavu. It was a resounding success and was followed by a discussion with a representative of the CEI who went back over some basic facts brought to light during the play, notably gender equality and the need for everyone to remain alert to attempts to corrupt the election campaign.

Activities such as this are multiplying in Bukavu. For example, on the day after the play was shown in Kadutu, a further election education session was held in the neighbourhood of Essence. It was organised by Amav (Association des Mamans Veuves et Orphelins – Association of Widows and Orphans), also with the support of the CEI and MONUC. The aim of the session was to use images to explain to women how to go about voting.

The women who took part were keen to get answers to many different questions. Will a photograph and the name of the party be printed next to the candidate's name on the ballot papers handed out to citizens? Will there be a separate ballot box for each candidate? Will it be necessary to return any gifts given by candidates you don't vote for? This type of activity contributes to lessening any doubts the women may have and prepares them better for fulfilling their civic duty to vote.

\* Source: Elia Varela Serra / MONUC, 6 May 06  
[www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsId=10935](http://www.monuc.org/News.aspx?newsId=10935)

1 Commission électorale indépendante – Independent Electoral Commission  
2 Mission des Nations Unies en République Démocratique du Congo – United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

# Women and politics: the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo

**A female politician? The image has become familiar in governments across the world. Even in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) it has become an integral part of the fight against all forms of discrimination against women and of increasing determination to achieve equality between men and women.**

Congolese women gained the right to vote and to stand for election on 24 June 1967. This was seven years after independence, coinciding with the promulgation of the Constitution of the Second Republic, presided over by Joseph-Désiré Mobutu. Numerous women were elected and appointed to ministerial posts as well as to other public, civil and military positions.

## Participation of women in public institutions

Thirty-five years later, following the Inter-Congolese Dialogue organised in South Africa in 2002, a 'Global and Inclusive Agreement', aimed at reconciling the former warring parties, political actors and civil society, enshrined the principle of "fair representation of women in public institutions" at all levels. Although it did not set a fixed quota for women's representation, it led to the following appointments being made to public institutions: five women became ministers and deputy ministers out of a total of 62 and there were 57 other deputies out of a total of 500 and two female senators out of 120. Many other women became state representatives in public and mixed economy enterprises, in national institutions and also in the diplomatic service.

Despite this success, Congolese women have not rested on their laurels, especially since the threshold of 30% representation for women, as recommended by the United Nations, has by no means been reached. However, although modest, this experience has had an impact: a feeling of respect for human life and the public good, rigour in administration and a reinforcement of intellectual and managerial capacity. It was this impact that enabled Congolese women to demand and obtain the inclusion in the current Constitution of the principle of equality between men and women in public bodies. The mechanisms for implementing this equality must be established by legislation.

## Electoral law

Meanwhile, there have been encouraging developments in national legislation, in particular in the Electoral Law. This Law stipulates that when lists of candidates are drawn up account is taken of people with disabilities and equality between men and women. However, this same law notes that the failure to achieve equality does not make the electoral lists inadmissible.

## Challenges facing women in the electoral process

An examination of the list of 9,700 candidates for national deputy at the last elections reveals that there were 1,374 women. Of these, only 42 were elected, representing 8.4% of the 500 members of the first National Assembly of the Third Republic. Thus the goal of equality remains largely unattained. Numerous workshops had been organised with the support of international bodies in the country's major towns and cities, with the aim of preparing women candidates. According to a recent survey carried out by UNIFEM, 2,197 women underwent training in the DRC in the run-up to the legislative elections, but 82% of women interviewed said they had voted for men.

This raises two issues: 1) the weight of Congolese custom and tradition, which does not in general accept a woman becoming a 'boss' and 'reigning' over men; and 2) women, whether or not they are candidates, do not automatically show solidarity with other women.

In addition, the majority of female candidates were victims of their material and financial poverty. Furthermore, they accuse the international partners of having overestimated the importance of training and underestimating the need to provide them with the necessary resources to mount an effective electoral challenge. Those most affected were the independent candidates and those belonging to political parties without a solid financial base. It is also important to note the problem of the gulf between the urban candidates and their electorates in the suburbs and rural areas.

When it undertook an interim evaluation of the electoral process, one Congolese NGO identified two other limiting factors:

- the legitimisation of traditional prejudices by the women themselves
- the communication deficit

Experience showed that the women who were successful at the ballot box often had financial resources and benefited from a popular base.



© Eliane Najros

**Women are disadvantaged by Congolese customs and traditions and by their lack of access to resources, information and communication.**

These were also women who demonstrated a determination not to be held captive by tradition.

At the same time, women have not abandoned other elections. They were active in large numbers in the provincial elections, even though the final results were not particularly positive for them here either. They are now waiting, resiliently, for the municipal and local elections. In what might be termed a strategic readjustment, it emerges that Congolese women really want to influence public life through their daily work within political parties, not-for-profit organisations and NGOs, as well as in the business world.

At the end of the first quarter of 2007 it will be possible to produce a clearer snapshot of the place of Congolese women in the different institutions. The strengths and weaknesses of participation in the current electoral process will be identified. This should allow the ground to be better prepared for the difficult journey still to come.

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# On-line discussion for rural women

## Strengthening rural women's networks with regard to information and communication and to combat HIV/AIDS in rural areas

From January to June 2006, the Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) hosted an online discussion on the above theme. Participants highlighted the contribution made by women's networks in information, skills and resource sharing in rural areas. They also noted that effective information and communication strategies combining technology and social networks and using widely available ICT tools such as rural radio networks have a crucial role to play in containing HIV/AIDS.

The on-line discussion was one of the results of a workshop organised from 13-17 June 2005 in Brussels for partner organisations of the Dimitra Project and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA), with the goal to strengthen and energize networks working for rural women in the South. The e-discussion was supported by Dimitra and CTA and was conducted by WOUGNET in collaboration with ENDA-Pronat (Senegal) and the Pacific Islands Energy Gender Network.

Among the **objectives** for the electronic discussion were:

- to maintain and strengthen links created between organisations participating in the 2005 workshop and to create links with other networks;
- to share information on how organisations can build on achievements and ensure the development and sustainability of their networks;
- to explore ways of cooperating to attract funds and develop strategies to strengthen one another;
- to share experiences on the opportunities and constraints faced while working to fight HIV/AIDS in rural areas.

The discussion was hosted in English and French, and was divided in **two main themes**: (1) Sustainability of the Dimitra and CTA networks; and (2) Impact of HIV/AIDS. Sub-themes were: experiences from networks; funding mechanisms; identification of shared problems; and information and communication strategies. Each discussion was guided by, but not restricted to, a number of questions.

### The crucial role of communication and information

The discussion raised important issues regarding the sustainability of rural women's networks and the impact of HIV/AIDS. A significant conclusion was that information and communication can lead to the empowerment of women, enabling them to take control of their lives and participate as equals with men in promoting food security, combating HIV/AIDS

and driving rural development in general. By bringing people together to explore synergies and encouraging exchange of experiences, networks have become a powerful force for social change.

Also significant was that radio is still a powerful medium for rural communication and information sharing, especially by using participatory communication approaches.

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

### Funding issues

It also transpired that rural women networks need guidance on how they can access the available funds from relevant supporting agencies, and that a guidebook on fundraising strategies and funding sources adapted to such networks would be extremely useful. In this context, there is also need to sensitize development partners and funding institutions to include the funding of projects of rural women's networks in their priorities. An action point of the online discussion was that individual rural women's networks could merge into regional groups to form entities which would stand better chances of being successful in obtaining funding when applying jointly.

### Improving the e-discussion tool

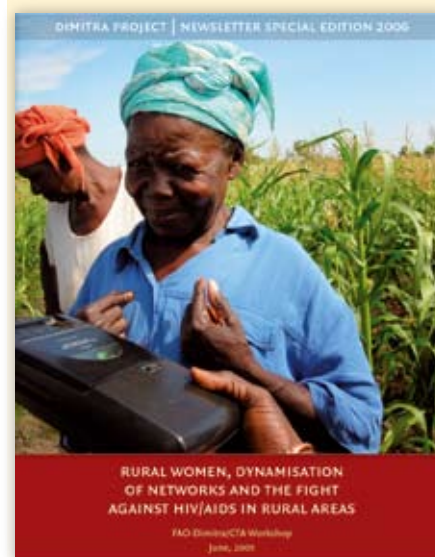
Overall, the contribution from participants to the e-discussion was fairly low. A problem identified by some was the lack of Internet/e-mail access by some members of the rural women's networks. In Senegal, an alternative

method was used to involve participants from rural areas. Face-to-face meetings were organised in which their views were gathered, which were then shared on the discussion list. It was suggested by participants that this method should be encouraged in future e-discussions, and that regular face-to-face meetings are also needed as a way to bond and plan future actions together.

The feasibility of organising such meetings as well as the possibility of a follow up to the e-discussion are being examined by Dimitra and CTA.

✳ The report of the on-line discussion is available in English and French from:  
[www.wougnet.org/Projects/wougnetprojects.html#RWN](http://www.wougnet.org/Projects/wougnetprojects.html#RWN)

## Report of the FAO-Dimitra/CTA Workshop



The Dimitra Project has now published the report of the FAO-Dimitra/CTA Workshop, held from 13-17 June 2005 in Brussels. You can **order the report** (135p) from the Dimitra team or consult it on-line: [www.fao.org/Dimitra/html/en/newsletters.html](http://www.fao.org/Dimitra/html/en/newsletters.html)

# Uganda: rural women exchange on agricultural practices and ICTs

Rural women from two different regions in Uganda benefited from an agricultural exchange visit facilitated by WOUNGNET, Women of Uganda Network, and co-financed by Dimitra. They learned about each others' methods of agricultural production and marketing, and about improved access to information through ICTs (information and communication technologies).

Agriculture is the economic backbone in many parts of Uganda. The Apac and Kayunga districts are no exceptions. Nine out of ten of Kayunga's local labour force works on the land growing pineapples, cassava, plantains, etc, as well as husbanding animals. Apac's main crops are cotton, tobacco, maize, beans, sesame, cassava, potatoes, sunflower and groundnuts. Some 80% of its residents are engaged in subsistence farming – the large majority of this work is done by women.

Given this reality, Uganda's rural women need access to all the tools that can empower them and help them provide for their families. A most important tool is knowledge. Equipped with the right information, women can adopt more efficient farming techniques, find more effective ways to market their produce, and learn more about their legal and social rights.

## ICT initiatives

In Kayunga, initiatives to empower local women through the introduction of new ICTs started in 1989. They include the introduction of mobile phones as accessible and affordable village phones – because they do not require the massive infrastructure investments necessary for landlines – and the use of the WorldSpace satellite radio service for weather forecasting and the repackaging of agricultural products.

In Apac, the Kubere Information Centre is working to put in place similar programmes. It is a telecentre as well as the coordinating office for the project "Enhancing access to agricultural information using ICTs to rural women farmers in Apac District". This project is an arm of WOUNGNET, an NGO seeking to "promote and support the use of ICTs by women and women's organisations in Uganda". It has introduced such ICTs as mobile phones and radios, and has used community radio to improve local women's access to agricultural information.

## Cross-fertilisation

It was decided that Kayunga, with its longer experience in the field, would be a suitable destination for an exchange visit for the women of

Apac, to learn and exchange about each others' ways of working and to see how to make the most of the new tools. Five rural women farmers from five different sub-counties, one project staff member and three WOUNGNET staff went on the visit, hosted by the Kayunga District Farmers Association (KDFA).

## Radio services and mobile phones

At the KDFA office, the group watched a demo of the WorldSpace radio service. This radio service allows farmers to get regular weather forecasts from the meteorological department and to obtain daily market information.

Farmers were also able to acquire village phones on loan at a concessionary rate through the KDFA. With these phones, farmers can easily obtain the daily market prices and can get better access to markets for their produce as they can contact buyers directly. The phones can also represent a means of income, as the farmers can charge for their use by other members of the community.

## And more exchanges...

At the 'Patience Pays Food Handling' project the group were shown the solar drying process of fruits and vegetables, from the acquisition of the fresh fruits, the culling and the drying, through to the marketing of the end products. They also visited the Kayunga Community Development Association's Eye Care Centre, which grows plants used as herbal medicines to treat common ailments and which offers training to local girls and boys.

The Ani Eyali Amanyi ('Who Knew') women's group focuses its activities around handicrafts, a piggery project and a fish pond. Nutrition is a very important component of the groups' activities – for example, the first priority is to rear fish for home consumption, to supplement the diet of the group members; only what remains is sold. The women's group's contribution to their community has been widely recognised in the area.

Finally, the Kangulumira Vanilla and Horticul-



Although participants to the exchange visit were seasoned farmers, they all agreed that what they had been exposed to opened their eyes to new possibilities and realities.

ture Group grows acres of pineapple, exporting some and making wine out of the rest. The delegation was shown how coffee husks are used as fertilisers and for mulching.

## Taking stock

This was the first such exchange visit for Ugandan rural women, and they all came away feeling they had benefited a lot. They said that, although they were seasoned farmers, what they had been exposed to opened their eyes to new possibilities and realities.

It was suggested that there was need to emulate some of the projects in Kayunga elsewhere. For example, most women were enthusiastic about the fruit drying, given the fact that during the mango season, a lot of mangoes go to waste. The challenges of securing start-up capital and of access to new markets were issues of common concern to all the women involved.

They also acknowledged that women farmers need to organise themselves better to tap into available resources and markets. The Kayunga women farmers expressed their willingness to help their counterparts to market their dry fruits once they got their operation going.

Participants to the exchange visit committed to sharing their experiences with others in their communities, and a radio programme targeted at women in Apac was scheduled to further share the experiences and challenges of the visit.

“The experience was an unforgettable one,” one of the participants noted, “Simple ideas made into tangible projects and using locally available resources!”

✳ **For more information, contact:**

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Equipped with the right information, women can adopt more efficient farming techniques, find more effective ways to market their produce, and learn more about their rights in all areas.

## TechTip: Addressing the power constraints

**Rural NGO:** We are constrained by the unreliable power supply. This has hampered the campaign for ICTs. The phones need charging, the generators are expensive to run the computers. The rural people are caught up in a dilemma. Are there solutions or a way out?

**WOUNET Tech Support:** Access to and affordability of power is a major constraint in rolling out ICT for development, especially in rural areas. It is very unlikely that the national power grid will be extended to rural areas when even the urban areas have insufficient supply, but then again, even if the power got there, would the people be able to afford it? Generators are seen as an alternative, but then again, they have limitations for rural deployment. They don't last long, when run constantly, which would be the case in rural areas without access to the national grid, fuel costs in rural areas are high than in Kampala, so the low-income people in the villages are paying more to run the same generator than the middle to high-income earners in the city and finally, there is limited support in rural areas when the generator breaks down. Therefore, the best alternative for power in rural areas is the use of renewable power sources, i.e. gifts of nature such as the sun, wind or biogas

from plant and animal waste which is a readily available resource in farming communities. The problem here is that the initial equipment costs are high, for example the solar panels, wind mills, inverters and batteries, but the day-to-day running costs are almost zero. Therefore, if a community can mobilise the funds for the equipment, either internally (local fundraising or community self help) or external (e.g. a donor), these alternative power sources would be our recommendation to support ICT for development in rural areas.

✳ **Source:**

TechTip compiled by the WOUNET Technical Support Team, WOUNET Newsletter, September 2006  
[lists.kabissa.org/lists/archives/public/woungnet-update/mmsg00052.html](http://lists.kabissa.org/lists/archives/public/woungnet-update/mmsg00052.html)



## Community radio for development

### id21 e-mail discussion

23 January - 17 February 2006

Poor and disadvantaged people are turning to community radio as a way of getting involved in decision-making processes and voicing their concerns. Despite the growing 'digital divide', radio provides access to information and knowledge for millions of people who would otherwise be excluded.

The Community Radio for Development e-mail discussion was an opportunity for community media practitioners and activists from around the world to share their experiences and views on the role of community radio in development processes.

Over 450 people subscribed to the discussion and 118 people with experience in over 40 countries contributed their views. Discussions focused on the issues covered in id21 insights #58: 'Voices for change: tuning in to community radio' ([www.id21.org/insights/insights58](http://www.id21.org/insights/insights58)). Each week focused on a different topic led by a different moderator. The final report provides suggestions on how to make this popular information tool even more effective.

✳ **More details:**

[www.id21.org/communityradio/finalreport/index.html](http://www.id21.org/communityradio/finalreport/index.html)

## GenARDIS: Gender, Agriculture and Rural Development in the Information Society

### A small grants fund to address gender issues in information and communication technologies in ACP agricultural and rural development

The GenARDIS Small Grants Fund was initiated in 2002 to support work on gender-related issues in information and communication technologies (ICTs) for Africa, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) agricultural and rural development. Two rounds of grants have been offered since the fund came into being. The response to both rounds has been overwhelming.

The programme was developed in recognition of the constraints and challenges encountered by rural women in ACP countries with respect to ICTs. The challenges include cultural factors that hinder women's access to ICTs, limited time availability to participate in training and use of ICTs, minimal access to technology such as radios, mobile telephones or computers, and inadequate availability of information in local languages that is relevant to local contexts.

The GenARDIS fund has financed some twenty projects, each grant consisting of 5000 euro. All projects focused on the original use of ICTs by or for rural women to improve their welfare and that of their families and communities. The beneficiaries of the projects supported were mainly women farmers, but also included students of women and gender studies as well as smallholders.



Several projects deal with the use of cellular telephones. A project in Lesotho, for example, focuses on the use of cellular telephones to facilitate communication between women farmers whose communications are hindered by the topography of the land which does not support fixed line installation.

“This prize will be of great help to us in building our capacity to promote the rights of women farmers through the demystification of new information and communication technologies (NICTs), and through gender advocacy. This prize will have a real impact on our support activities for women farmers in the sectors of agriculture, breeding, handicrafts, and in helping them to learn about their rights via their literacy efforts. Such capacity building will increase our usefulness to other women, and to our entire community.”

*Campaign to support and build awareness of rural women of Uvira about the promotion of ICTs for gender advocacy, DRC*



Among the 2005 GenARDIS grant winners were:

- Burkina Faso: Project to strengthen the ICT skills of 30 peasant women
- DRC: Campaign to support and educate Uvira's rural women in NICT use for gender advocacy.
- Ghana: Promoting the cultivation of healthy vegetables by farmers: a gender approach to using information and communication technologies
- Lesotho: Widening the Wellhead: Creating and using a dedicated cellular phone network to add information, value and dignity to the work of women in Lesotho's agricultural sector.

In Ghana, farmers expanded their information sources and used telephones, radios and agricultural information centres that provide easy access to market information. They subsequently formed a listening group to discuss pre-recorded radio broadcasts on agriculture. The listening groups have thus developed the ability to discuss and analyse agriculture-related issues.

The women of Arche d'Alliance in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) were able make use of loans intended for peasant women to start small businesses. The beneficiaries learnt to read and write in Swahili and to use computers. In terms of policy recommendations, Arche d'Alliance recommended that after the elections “the government should draft an ICT policy for rural development through the involvement of peasant women, who are mainly farmers” and that “the ICT approach should be integrated into the various socio-economic development programmes.”

The GenARDIS partners were CTA (Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU), Hivos, IDRC (International Development Research Centre), and IICD (International Institute for Communication and

Development). The project was administrated by APC, the Association for Progressive Communications and WOUNET, Women of Uganda Network. With regard to future prospects for the GenARDIS fund, it had been decided by the organisers that the evaluation report should indicate how to refine and continue GenARDIS' vision.

#### \* Sources:

- [www.apcwomen.org/genardis/](http://www.apcwomen.org/genardis/)
- GenARDIS: supporting the use of ICTs by women farmers for social change: [www.genderit.org/en/index.shtml?apc=a--e94815-1&x=94815](http://www.genderit.org/en/index.shtml?apc=a--e94815-1&x=94815)



# Microbicides: Women's weapon in the war against HIV/AIDS

Progress in the development of microbicides is being keenly monitored by different actors in the war against HIV/AIDS. An international conference held in South Africa in April 2006 discussed developments in research on microbicides including the different trials that are underway in several countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, South Africa and Zambia.<sup>1</sup>

Microbicide drugs would potentially present a viable option to women to protect themselves from contracting HIV. One of the reasons why women are more vulnerable to infection is that they are often unable to negotiate for condom use in sexual relations. The availability of microbicides would go a long way in addressing this vulnerability since they can be applied before sexual contact even without the knowledge of the partner.

## Same old challenges

Pharmaceutical companies are not investing enough resources into coming up with effective microbicides as fast as possible, because they do not regard research and development in this area as being potentially profitable. However, advocates argue that in the long run the pharmaceutical companies stand to make huge profits from the sale of microbicides. Moreover, they argue, such companies have a corporate social responsibility to take an active part in the fight against AIDS.

For now, the development of microbicides is being driven by small bio-tech companies, non-profit research bodies and academic scientists who depend on government grants and although funding for these efforts has tripled in the last five years, it is still inadequate. This is one of the reasons that the development of microbicides is slow, with the first one expected to be available not sooner than five or seven years from now.

As with antiretroviral (ARV) drugs, the easy accessibility of microbicides to women will be key. In countries like Kenya, it is only recently that the cost of ARVs has been brought down so that middle income patients can access them. They are still out of the reach of poor people, and particularly women, and although there has been an increase in programmes that deliver the drugs free of charge to such disadvantaged people, they are still disproportionately affected by the HIV/AIDS scourge.

The word "microbicides" refers to a range of different products that share one common characteristic: the ability to prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) when applied topically. A microbicide could be produced in many forms, including gels, creams, suppositories, films, or as a sponge or ring that releases the active ingredient over time.

Although microbicides are not being developed as a substitute for condoms there have been concerns that condom use will drop when they become available. However, studies have shown that there 'are likely to be many situations in which the benefits of microbicide use outweigh the negative impact of condom migration.'<sup>2</sup>

## Advocacy Needs

The development and distribution of safe and effective microbicides will depend on collaboration between policy makers and the public and private sectors. According to the Global Campaign for Microbicides, "Advocacy must extend beyond ensuring that a microbicide is produced. It must include research, policy work, and political activism to ensure that the microbicides developed are widely available and correctly and consistently used by



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*Microbicides could be a very powerful weapon for each woman in the war against HIV and AIDS, and could have a significant impact on a large scale.*

individuals at risk of HIV and STDs, especially women. This requires focusing advocacy on issues of pricing, accessibility, stigma, gender bias and women's empowerment, in addition to efforts to accelerate product development and approval."

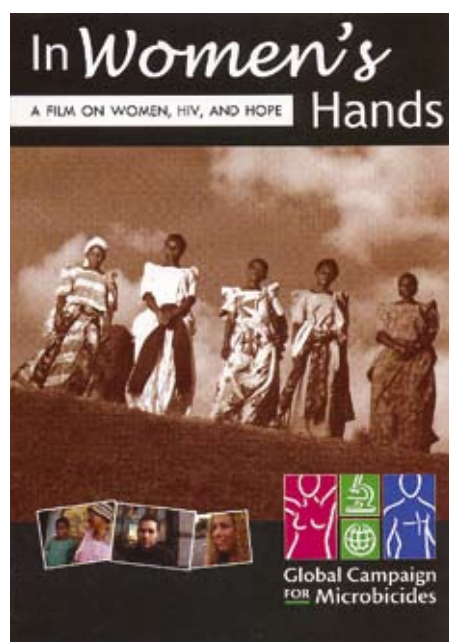
## A powerful weapon

Microbicides may be the most powerful weapon that individual women will possess in the war against HIV and AIDS, and could have a significant impact on a large scale. In order to make sure they actually deliver on the promise, it is crucial that civil society takes an active role in creating awareness, advocating for access of microbicides, pressing for acceleration of efforts in making the drugs available and ensuring that the interests of clinical trial participants and end users are protected.

### \* Source:

"Microbicides: Women's weapon in the war against HIV/AIDS", by Kathambi Kinoti, Resource Net (AWID, Association for Women's Rights in Development), 5 May 2006, [www.awid.org/go.php?stid=1601](http://www.awid.org/go.php?stid=1601)

\* For more information, you can contact the Global Campaign for Microbicides at [www.global-campaign.org](http://www.global-campaign.org).



Filmed in several locations across the world, this documentary is an important tool for organising and creating awareness around the increasing rates of HIV/STD among women and the importance of advocacy for microbicides. The personal stories portrayed in the film speak to the need for microbicides and the importance of leadership on this issue and provide an inspiration for action.

### \* More information:

[www.global-campaign.org/film.htm](http://www.global-campaign.org/film.htm)

<sup>1</sup> "Microbicides 2006", Cape Town, South Africa 24 -26 April 2006. For more information, see: [www.microbicides2006.org/](http://www.microbicides2006.org/)

<sup>2</sup> Fossa A.M. et al. 'Shifts in condom use following microbicide introduction: should we be concerned?' Department of Public Health and Policy, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, 2003.

## South African HIV/AIDS television serial drama leads to decrease in stigma and improved prevention behaviours among youth

A powerful television serial drama about young adults living in a rural South African town impacted by HIV/AIDS has led to improved attitudes about HIV/AIDS, stigma, living openly and positively with HIV, and faithfulness among its viewers.

Tsha Tsha is a gritty Nguni language drama (with English subtitles) set in the Eastern Cape that focuses on the lives of several young people exploring love, sex, and relationships in a world affected by the realities of the AIDS pandemic.

Ballroom dancing provides a thread of continuity in the series as the young people's lives unfold and also brings the characters together. At the same time, it illustrates creative relationships between people that are not beset by the complexities of life outside of the codes of dance. The ballroom dancing club serves as a metaphoric background for exploring relationships and intimacy.

### TV and radio outreach

Tsha Tsha reaches an average of 1.8 million viewers each week, for an estimated cost of \$.55 per person reached. It is now in its fourth season, and 26 episodes have been produced to air on Friday nights during prime time. To broaden its reach even more, Tsha Tsha's weekly themes are modified into radio dramas called "Body, Mind, and Soul," which reach 6 million listeners through 60 community radio stations. The stations offer listeners the opportunity to discuss the themes on the air afterwards.

### Soul City

Soul City is a dynamic and innovative multi-media health promotion and social change project. Through drama and entertainment Soul City reaches more than 16 million South Africans. It has also been broadcast in many parts of Africa as well as Latin America, the Caribbean and South East Asia. Soul City examines many health and development issues, imparting information and impacting on social norms, attitudes and practice. Its impact is aimed at the level of the individual, the community and the socio-political environment.

Through its multi-media and advocacy strategies it aims to create an enabling environment empowering audiences to make healthy choices, both as individuals and as communities.

\* More information: [www.soulcity.org.za](http://www.soulcity.org.za)

### Impact results

Evaluation research data showed that viewers saw the series as realistic, captivating, entertaining and educational. They considered the rural setting novel, and it appealed to rural and urban residents alike. Knowledge and general awareness about HIV/AIDS increased, and various self-reported shifts in HIV attitudes, beliefs, practices and behaviours occurred. Viewers reported an increased sense of responsibility for the well-being of others that enhanced tolerance and empathy for people living with HIV/AIDS. The characters demonstrate what it is like to live openly with HIV and the problems and challenges involved in sharing one's status with others. By showing strong, positive images of young people confronting their HIV-positive status, Tsha Tsha realistically portrays a broad range of personal and community issues.

Viewers also indicated that Tsha Tsha provided positive role models for women, as well as positive examples of male-female interaction. They perceived it as creating awareness around parent-child communication issues.

### Conclusion

Tsha Tsha is more than a television drama. It provides thought-provoking educational concepts in a realistic and entertaining context. Instead of providing simple answers, Tsha Tsha engages viewers in an ongoing dialogue



about making healthy decisions in a world where AIDS is a day-to-day reality. In addition to being broadcast nationally, the series airs in South African schools, correctional institutions, churches, and communities to stimulate conversations about the complexities of living with HIV and AIDS.

### Source

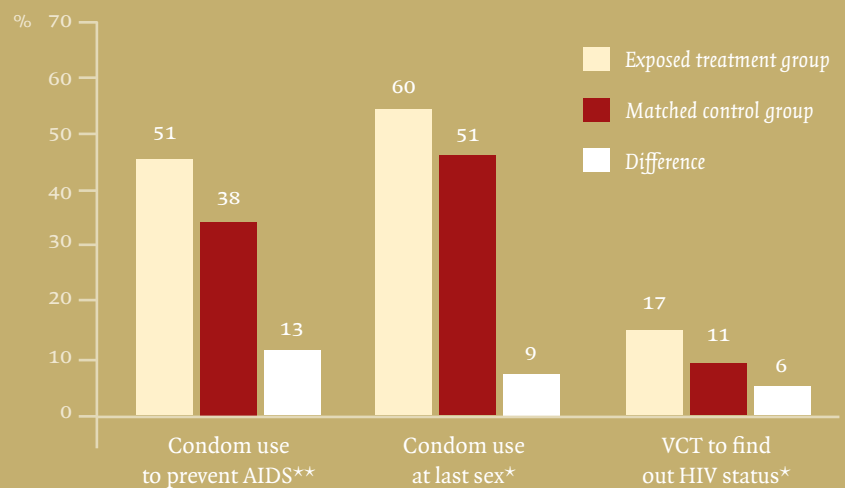
This article is a summary of: *Communication Impact!*, Number 20, June 2006.

Communication Impact summarizes key research and programmatic findings from the Health Communication Partnership (HCP) and other bilateral agreements.

### Download the issue:

[www.jhuccp.org/pubs/ci/20/20.pdf](http://www.jhuccp.org/pubs/ci/20/20.pdf)

### Behavioral responses to condom use and VCT after 26 episodes



## The vulnerability of women's property rights and livelihoods exacerbated in the context of HIV and AIDS

Report of a workshop on women's property rights and livelihoods in the context of HIV/AIDS in Zambia, co-organised by the Justice for Widows and Orphans Project, the Zambia Law Development Commission and FAO.

Widows and orphans in Zambia are extremely vulnerable to property grabbing, dispossession and destitution. This situation is exacerbated in the context of HIV and AIDS. The victims often lack the power to seek legal and social redress to their situation. It is against this background that the workshop on women's property rights and livelihoods in the context of HIV and AIDS was convened in Lusaka, Zambia in January 2006.

### Exchange of solutions and experiences

The workshop was a blend of different people and experiences from Zambia and Southern and East Africa. The participation of magistrates and lawyers, members of the police, delegates from NGOs, community-based organisations (CBOs), activists and academics along with widows and orphans provided an effective mix of people seeking to find practical solutions that are workable and thus make

rights a reality. The workshop provided every opportunity for this, including as it did moving experiences and powerful testimonies from widows, orphans, and from a Ugandan woman living positively with HIV and AIDS. It was evident that there are excellent Zambian initiatives, but that these lack coordination and linkages, resulting in duplication and inconsistent efforts on the ground.

### Concrete recommendations

A press briefing summarized the proceedings of the workshop as well as key recommendations with specific targets and timelines. For example, concrete steps were taken to seek redress for Mrs Chilala, a Zambian widow, aged 79, who has had 17 graves dug next to her home by her brother-in-law because she refused to marry him and give up her property on the death of her husband in 1990. Specific recommendations regarding the

amendment of the Zambian Intestate Act, which has a number of gaps in terms of protecting the rights of widows and orphans, will be pursued by the Zambia Law Development Commission (ZLDC). Practical solutions have also been sought in terms of linking property rights to livelihoods programmes. A range of "best practices", spearheaded by CBOs and NGOs in Zambia and in the region, will be documented and widely distributed.

\* Download the report "Women's property rights and livelihoods in the context of HIV and AIDS" (52 pages):  
[www.fao.org/hiv/aids/publications/gender\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/hiv/aids/publications/gender_en.htm)

## Zimbabwe: Hairdressers join the fight against HIV/AIDS

Last year more than half of all female condoms were distributed through a network of 500 hair salons and 1000 hairdressers.

Hairdressers in low-income areas have been trained to talk with their clients about how to effectively use female condoms thereby cutting the risk that women face. The hair salon program, part of a five-year AIDS prevention programme funded by DFID and USAID, has hugely influenced the increase in knowledge and demand for the CARE female condom in Zimbabwe, significantly contributing to the 240% increase in use between 2001 and 2006.

Maria Tavambirwa is a young hairdresser playing an active role in preventing HIV transmission. She does this by promoting the use of the female condom among young women in her salon in Chitungwiza, a town just outside Harare. Maria is very enthusiastic about the role she is playing in helping women at risk to take the initiative in protecting themselves from HIV infection.

"My clients are mostly young girls from a nearby college who are forced to engage in unprotected sex with older men because of economic pressures," she says. "They visit the salon on a regular basis and I take this opportunity to talk to them on the benefits of using the female condom while they are having their hair done."

In October 2006, DFID awarded a further £20 million for an HIV prevention program that aims to reduce new infections by increasing testing and encouraging safer sexual behaviour. The funding will allow Population Services International (PSI) Zimbabwe to:

- launch a national campaign spearheaded by a HIV-positive pastor that will help break down the stigma around AIDS;
- provide better testing and counselling services so that 800,000 people can learn their HIV status;
- target villages around the country with a music and games-based local education campaign;
- distribute over 250 million condoms, including female condoms distributed through a network of 700 hair salons.

With one in five adults infected, Zimbabwe currently has one of the highest HIV rates in the world. 80% of those infected are unaware of their status, but progress is being made in the battle against the disease with national infection rates falling in the last five years.

\* Source: [www.psi.org/news/1006b.html](http://www.psi.org/news/1006b.html)



Maria Tavambirwa promotes the use of PSI's CARE female condom with clients in her salon outside Harare.

## Sudan: Dealing with gender-based violence through music

Sudanese singers and actors can play an important role in teaching internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the western Sudanese region of Darfur about the harmful consequences of gender-based violence (GBV).

Renowned Sudanese singers Abdel Karim el Kabli, Samira Dunia and Abdel Gadir Salim entertained thousands of people in Otash IDP camp near Nyala (South Darfur), during a concert which took place as part of the 16 Days of Activism for Violence Against Women 2005. This annual campaign links 25 November, International Day Against Violence Against Women and 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

*“Please do not cry but tell all mothers in the neighbourhood that my passing away was due to the ugly, primitive and dangerous circumcision. Tell all the women the real causes of fistula; also that my death was due to my early marriage and child pregnancy and I could not tolerate the pains of delivery.”*

– Excerpt of a song by El-Kabli

Kabli’s lyrics speak for thousands of women and girls in Sudan who are victims of GBV, which is often perpetrated in the name of custom or tradition.

Between songs, members of the Tarab comedy group, known from Sudanese television, took to the stage and performed comedy skits about GBV. The scenes addressed issues which are

difficult to discuss in Sudan in a way that makes people laugh but also think.

In one of the skits, a man sat at home all day while his wife worked long hours selling tea to pay the bills. When she was late returning home from work one night, her husband beat her for her tardiness. The performers made the man appear silly for treating the woman this way and asked ‘Why are you beating this woman when you will not get up and work yourself? The woman does this work for you.’

The performances are part of a GBV prevention and treatment initiative in Darfur supported by UNFPA. They were organised not only to educate Sudanese about these issues, but also to give the IDPs a chance to enjoy themselves. Bringing some of Sudan’s most renowned artists and musicians to the camp was also a message that the displaced in Darfur are not forgotten in their own society and the recognition that music and art is a very important part of life

“At first it appeared to be a surprise to some



of the people to have a concert in the middle of this camp based on GBV. But in the end the women listened carefully, and even more importantly the men listened carefully,” a UNFPA representative said.

### \* Source:

IrinNews.org, 19 December 2005  
[www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=50751&SelectRegion=East\\_Africa&SelectCountry=SU](http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=50751&SelectRegion=East_Africa&SelectCountry=SU)

## UN Secretary-General and UNFPA call on world leaders to end violence against women

Welcoming a new in-depth report on violence against women released on 9 October 2006 by the UN Secretary-General, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said that violence against women is a serious human rights violation and an affront to women’s freedom at large.

The Secretary-General’s report covers various forms of violence against women, including control over women’s sexuality and reproductive capacity, prenatal sex selection and female genital mutilation/cutting. It highlights the consequences of violence on women’s reproductive health, leading to more maternal deaths and increased risk of contracting HIV. Another important consequence of sexual violence is unintended pregnancy, particularly during armed conflicts. The report concludes that violence against women has yet to receive the priority attention and resources needed at all levels to tackle it with the seriousness and visibility necessary. It therefore recommends that the UN system and all other donors should provide increased resources for national action plans to prevent and eliminate violence against women.

UNFPA fully agrees with this recommendation, which is in line with the Brussels Call to Action, adopted in June 2006 at the International Symposium on Violence against Women in Conflict Situations and Beyond.

UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid confirmed that widespread impunity not only encourages further abuses and suffering, it also sends the signal that male violence against women is acceptable or normal. “It is time to end tolerance and complicity,” she said. “We cannot make poverty history unless we make violence against women history. We cannot stop the spread of HIV unless we stop discrimination and violence against women and girls. We cannot build a world of peace, development and security until we end violence against women and girls. We will never put a stop to violence against women until men

## International and regional human rights instruments and texts relevant to sexual violence

The international community has, through legally binding treaties as well as through declarations, resolutions and other statements, recognized that sexual violence is a human rights issue and has committed to preventing and addressing the consequences of sexual violence. The Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI) has a section on its website which provides links to the key international and regional documents which address sexual violence:

[www.svri.org/en/humanrights.htm](http://www.svri.org/en/humanrights.htm)

are made partners and both girls and boys are raised in a culture of mutual respect and responsibility, and equal opportunity.”

\* Source: [www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=880](http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=880)

\* Read the Brussels Call to Action: [www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06](http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies/symposium06)

\* Download the in-depth study on violence against women: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/index.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/index.htm)



## South Kivu: a Farmer Field School to help combat manioc disease

### Fighting manioc mosaic

In November 2005 twenty-one women and four men completed their training in farming techniques at the Farmer Field School (FFS) in Miti, in the region of Kabare (30 km from Bukavu). The course, set up by SEPA-CONGO, gives women farmers from South Kivu the opportunity to learn new farming techniques to prevent the spread of manioc disease, which is increasingly taking hold in this region. Entitled "Mungu Akonkwa" (an expression in Mashi which means "God be praised"), the FFS got out of the starting blocks on 13 October 2004. It began with the planting of healthy manioc cuttings, which were harvested on 15 October 2005 to coincide with World Rural Women's Day.

### A unique initiative

The Mungu Akonkwa FFS is the first of its kind in South Kivu and during its first year was an almost clandestine operation. Teachers and trainees alike deliberately opted not to invite any media coverage of a school that had no desks and chairs and in which the majority of "students" were illiterate. What is more, unlike in the many adult literacy centres springing up in this region, they do not attend, pen and paper at the ready, to learn basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

### Convincing the community

Mrs Rose, aged 45, is one farmer who took part in the training course. She confides, "My husband found out from one of my fellow students that I was attending the course. He couldn't understand why and kept telling me each day that I was wasting my time. Even I myself wasn't sure I would actually get anything out of it. In fact I promised myself I wouldn't tell anyone so that no-one could subsequently make fun of me." This is not an isolated case: many other women farmers tell similar stories of experiencing severe criticism from their husbands and the wider community. They are accused of laziness and of opting to neglect their work in the fields in favour of spending the whole day resting and engaging in small talk with the irresponsible staff of INERA.

Mungu Akonkwa is the first initiative of its kind within the agricultural community of South Kivu, where rural people live exclusively from the harvest from their own lands and for many years now have not received any technical assistance from state services. Some can still remember the colonial era during which local farmers worked on vast swathes of land under the supervision of the white overseers. The work was certainly hard, but the harvests were amongst the best. Since independence, the agriculturists work-

SEPA-CONGO (Service d'Encadrement des Paysans - Farmers' Assistance Service) is an organisation of women farmers based in Miti and is part of INERA, the Institut National d'Etudes et de Recherches Agronomiques de Mulungu (Mulungu National Institute for Farming Research). Its main activity is the propagation of seeds in pursuit of the twofold aim of combating plant diseases (first and foremost manioc mosaic) and reintroducing food security in the region. To these ends, SEPA-CONGO has set up a Farmer Field School project entitled "Mungu Akonkwa" through which it trains farmers in South Kivu – women and men alike – in farming best practices.



© Eliane Najros

The Mungu Akonkwa Farmer Field School is the first of its kind in South Kivu, and focuses on practical skills to improve farming techniques.

ing in the different jurisdictions that cover the rural areas of the DRC face problems linked to a lack of training, material and financial resources, leaving them unable to help farmers increase their production capacities.

### Learning by doing

The training provided by the FFS focuses on practical skills. To begin with, the trainees helped divide up the field which INERA had made available free of charge to SEPA-CONGO. The individual plots were then farmed taking account of factors such as distance between plants and rows, variety of cuttings, crop season, optimum date for harvest, weeding and pruning, to name but a few.

The value of the training was shown by comparing the sample manioc cuttings taken from each plot on the day of harvest. Study of these samples demonstrated that the farming techniques learned produce a manioc yield that is six times greater than that for traditional farming methods. Victorine, aged 52, is resolute,

"I will most definitely not be returning to traditional methods in my own fields. I have discovered that in fact I was wasting my land and my energy for nothing!"

Mrs Nocy, President of SEPA-CONGO, is determined to continue the course into the future: "We want to train as many local farmers as possible. This training programme offers us an opportunity to combat falling manioc yields due to the mosaic virus which is ravaging our fields. If we don't do something the famine will worsen and people will die. But resources are scarce. We are counting on FAO and INERA to maintain the activities, but we also need support from other players in the agricultural sector. The results from this first phase of training are encouraging, in particular the number of women who have taken part. Women are the driving force behind our local agriculture."

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## LinkS: the relationship between gender, local knowledge systems and agrobiodiversity for food security

In a recent research paper, Yianna Lambrou and Regina Laub explore the linkages between gender, local knowledge systems and agrobiodiversity for food security by using the case study of LinkS, a regional FAO project in Mozambique, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Tanzania which ran over a period of eight years and is now concluded.

### Gender & agrobiodiversity

The project aimed to raise awareness on how rural men and women use and manage agrobiodiversity, and to promote the importance of local knowledge for food security and sustainable agrobiodiversity at local, institutional and policy levels. It did this by working with a diverse range of stakeholders to strengthen their ability to recognize and value farmers' knowledge and to use gender-sensitive and participatory approaches in their work. This was done through three key activities: capacity building, research and communication. The results of the LinkS project show clearly

that men and women farmers hold very specific local knowledge about the plants and animals they manage. Local knowledge, gender and agrobiodiversity are closely interrelated. If one of these elements is threatened, the risk of losing agrobiodiversity increases, having negative effects on food security.

### Fight the loss of genetic diversity

For example, knowledge amongst Masaai in Tanzania about how to maintain animal genetic diversity resources differs according to age and gender. The loss of genetic diversity means women are less able to participate in decision-making about preserving resources. This is because they have to make sure their families have enough to eat and plant next year's crop. The project also found that HIV/AIDS has a significant impact on seed management: the relation between the epidemic – affecting primarily women – and the consequent loss of female crop knowledge of seed varieties had previously been unknown. Another interesting point was the extremely limited exchange of information between husband and wife,

leading again to a loss of knowledge and of agrobiodiversity.

### Think global, act local

Increased productivity, economic growth and agricultural productivity are important elements in poverty reduction. The diverse and complex agroecological environment of Sub-Saharan Africa requires that future efforts be based on more localized solutions while maintaining a global outlook. Food security will have to build much more on local knowledge and agrobiodiversity with a clear understanding of gender implications while keeping in mind the continuously changing global socio-economic and political conditions.

\* **Source:** 'Gender, Local Knowledge, and Lessons Learnt in Documenting and Conserving Agrobiodiversity', Research Paper No. 2006/69, UNU-WIDER, by Yianna Lambrou and Regina Laub, 2006.

#### Download the paper:

[www.wider.unu.edu/publications/rps/rps2006/rp2006-69.pdf](http://www.wider.unu.edu/publications/rps/rps2006/rp2006-69.pdf)

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\* **To read more about the LinkS project,** consult the project website: [www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/default.html](http://www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/default.html)



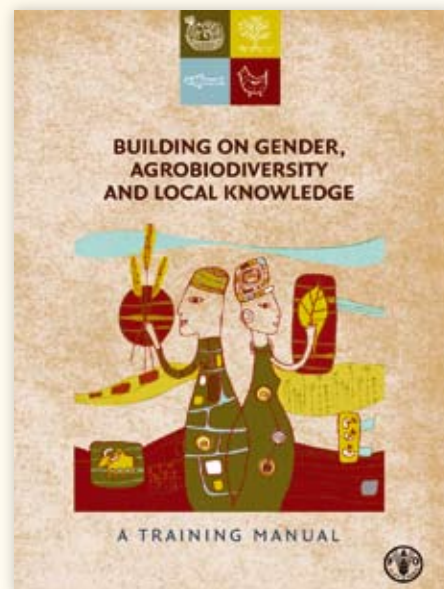
## LinkS – A Training Manual

This training manual is based on the extensive training experiences the training staff and the participants acquired during the LinkS project. It focuses specifically on the linkages between local knowledge systems, gender roles and relationships, the conservation and management of agrobiodiversity, plant and animal genetic resources, and food security. Its aim is to promote a holistic understanding of these components. The training objective is to strengthen the institutional capacity in the agricultural sector and to recognise and foster these linkages in the relevant programmes and policies.

The manual is aimed at a wide target group, but is useful as a conceptual guide for trainers, as resource material for participants in training courses (mainly researchers and extension workers), and as reference material for others working within the context of agrobiodiversity management, gender and local knowledge.

The manual is divided into five modules, each containing fact sheets covering key aspects and linkages between agrobiodiversity, gender and local knowledge. The fact sheets include short case examples to show practical evidence of the relevance of the topics in order to permit flexible use of the manual and a list of key points to help the reader synthesise the information covered. It also contains additional sheets to allow trainers to adapt the program to the situation and demands of the participants. The manual also includes some exercises to encourage participants to bring in their own experiences, share their ideas, and apply them to their own work situation.

\* **The manual can be downloaded in English, French and Spanish from:** [www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/resources/resources.html](http://www.fao.org/sd/LINKS/resources/resources.html) and is available as a hard copy or on CD-ROM.



## South Africa

# Rural Women's Movement: a profile

The Rural Women's Movement (RWM) was initiated in 1998 and was formally launched in a workshop for 250 rural women in November 2000. The RWM is a volunteer-based rural organisation that takes up issues of land, gender and development at both local and national levels.

### Equal access to land

The organisation is a convergence of KwaZulu Natal women from different political backgrounds coming together to fight for gender equality. Gender equality for the RWM means the possibility of women gaining independent access to land, regardless of any relations to male kin that they may have. Nonhlanhla Ngubane, a volunteer for the RWM since its inception, states "It is very hard for women to gain access to land unless the land is acquired by their male relatives."

### A gender-sensitive movement

Presently, the RWM consists of some 500 community-based organisations (CBOs) that provide life training skills to rural women and men. Thulani Ngubane, another active member of the RWM, stresses that though the organisation is geared predominantly towards empowering women, it does not alienate men, "It is gender sensitive."

### Emancipation of rural women

The RWM grew out of the idea of the emancipation of women in the rural areas and this entails their ability to acquire land to ensure their security. Accordingly, it has four programme areas. Firstly, it facilitates women's active participation in local government, hoping to cement their role within these institutions. Secondly, the organisation assists women to acquire land tenure.

### The impact of HIV/AIDS

While trying to help rural women acquire their independence, the women of the RWM saw that their surrounding communities were slowly being undermined by HIV/AIDS. The organisation realised that the untimely deaths of men and women within these KwaZulu Natal communities resulted in young children being left to fend for themselves. As a response to this situation, the RWM's third programme area is HIV/AIDS training for women and orphans.

### ICT training

Lastly, the RWM provides ICT training for rural communities as a means of facilitating women's empowerment. The RWM has formed a link with Human Rights Internet (HRI), an international organisation which provides the exchange of information within the worldwide human rights community. To assist the RWM's

ICT training programme, HRI has provided them with a person on a five-month contract to train rural women in basic computer skills. The organisation is hopeful that HRI will also provide it with a person to upscale the training to a more advanced level.

With the development of a website, the RWM is assured a strong presence in the international field. Nonhlanhla is positive that this move will help the organisation advance to even greater heights.

### Information means knowledge

Nonhlanhla says that the RWM has helped her gain a lot of knowledge about what is happening around her and how this knowledge can help her shape her own world. "When I first joined the RWM, I was a woman who knew nothing, but now I have gained so much information because of the RWM I have been able to meet and learn from different people."

Organisations like the RWM do their work in order to ensure the realisation of rural policy transformation that is truly gender sensitive.

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#### \* Source:

SANGONeT: [sanganet.org.za](http://sanganet.org.za) (NGO profiles)  
and RWM: [www.rwm.org.za](http://www.rwm.org.za)

## SANGONeT and Dimitra

SANGONeT is the Dimitra Project's partner for southern Africa, covering Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland. If your organisation is based in one of the named countries, has been active for at least two years and benefits rural populations, and women in particular, please submit your organisational profile to SANGONeT by completing the Dimitra questionnaire, available at [www.sanganet.org.za/dimitra](http://www.sanganet.org.za/dimitra)



Activities at the community level include workshops on handicrafts as part of the RWM economic empowerment.

## Thetha! The SANGONeT ICT Discussion Forum

SANGONeT's Thetha forums provide NGOs with an opportunity to discuss information communication technology (ICT) challenges facing the sector.

The forums highlight ICT policy issues and promote practical applications, and form part of SANGONeT's broader objective to increase the use and awareness of ICTs within the NGO sector in South Africa.

Starting in July 2006, SANGONeT started to expand the Thetha initiative to the rest of Southern Africa. Thetha forums were held in Namibia, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Angola.

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# Communication for Development

## A major pillar for development and change

### World Congress on Communication for Development Rome, 25-27 October 2006

The focus of this first World Congress on Communication for Development (WCCD) was to effectively promote the mainstreaming of communication into development policies and programmes and to promote strategic partnerships and alliances in this field. Its ultimate objective was to demonstrate that communication for development is essential for meeting today's most pressing development challenges and, as such, should be fully integrated in development policy and practice.

The Congress, jointly organized by FAO, the World Bank and The Communication Initia-

tive, was structured around four broad thematic areas: health; governance and empowerment; sustainable development; and emerging sectors and new frontiers. It brought together communication professionals engaged in development initiatives, policy makers, development practitioners, donor and civil society organisation representatives, community representatives, and academics from around the world to share experiences and best practices in this growing field. Discussions and presentations focused on what works, what doesn't, and how communication for development contributes to better development effectiveness.

The Congress' recommendations included the following:

- Overall national development policies should include specific communication for development components.
- Development organisations should include communication for development as a central element at the inception of programmes.
- Adoption and implement of policies and legislation that provide an enabling environment for communication for development – including free and pluralistic media, the right to information and to communicate.
- Strengthen partnerships and networks at international, national and local levels to advance communication for development and improve development outcomes.
- Move towards a rights based approach to communication for development.

\* **More information:**  
[www.devcomm-congress.org](http://www.devcomm-congress.org)

## Communication: a key tool in combating poverty!

During one of the WCCD sessions, Dimitra presented its network in Africa and invited Mrs Tine Ndoye to speak about her experiences "on the ground".



Mrs Tine Ndoye while presenting at the WCCD

Mrs **Tine Ndoye** lives in the rural area of Diender. She learned to read and write and has been working towards the development of her region for more than 20 years. She founded the *Fédération des Agropasteurs de Diender* (Federation of Farmers and Shepherds of Diender), a farmers' organisation which covers 24 villages and currently counts some 1,500 women members. She is also the President of the *Réseau National des Femmes Rurales du Sénégal* – RNFRS (National Rural Women's Network of Senegal), which serves some 36,000 women living across all of Senegal.

During her presentation, Tine Ndoye described communication in rural areas as "a key tool in combating poverty". She supported this theory by means of some concrete examples, set out below.

### Mobile telephones

As part of a project entitled "Manobi", those women who are members of the mutual fund of the *Fédération des Agropasteurs de Diender* were offered mobile telephones at an affordable price as well as training on how to use them. These mobile telephones enable the women to connect to "Xam marché" to find out the daily market prices. This information is of great benefit to farmers – both men and women – working in this community as it enables them to obtain a better price for their vegetables.

### Rural radio

Enda-Pronat, the RNFRS and Dimitra worked together to organise a project development workshop entitled "Women, rural radio and the new information and communication technologies". The aim of the project is to enable grassroots organisations to strengthen their base and exchange information amongst themselves and with decision-makers via rural radio stations and NICTs. Several of the women from the RNFRS will be trained in the use of these technologies and broadcasting slots will be set aside in the schedules of the local radio stations. Community radio will become a social communication tool for the RNFRS and all the women concerned by this project.

### Recommendations

Finally, on the basis of her own experiences, Mrs Ndoye indicated the following im-

provements that could be made to access to information and training with respect to communication for development:

- presence of women on decision-making bodies (at the level of rural councils, which decide on distribution of land);
- provision of information and training so as to understand relevant laws and legislation;
- access to own capital (strengthening of income-generating activities).

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## Community radio sidelined at WCCD

Radio experts and communicators working on community radio have urged the WCCD to give community radio its rightful place as a development tool in the communications debate. They are dismayed that the global meet has overlooked the vital role of community radio in empowering people and strengthening democracy in many regions, including conflict zones.

For example, civil society experiments coupled with strong advocacy efforts in Senegal worked so well in providing a voice to rural marginalised communities that even the government joined the fray and started providing funding to community radio stations. New ICTs have also enabled people to create their own media space in Africa.

Grace Githaiga, President of AMARC Africa, said that community radio has created a forum for African women to express their views: "Women are managing radio stations in rural areas and for the first time in their lives are being able to articulate their poverty and helplessness themselves and in their own language. At the same time, people who listen to these programmes walk into the radio stations, speak to the manager, and air their opinion, something that is impossible to do with mainstream media."

Experts voiced hope that the WCCD will take up their plea to provide more legitimacy and space to community radio as a strong and effective development communication tool.

✳ Excerpt from an article published on *OneWorld South Asia*, 27 October 2006:  
[us.oneworld.net/link/gotoarticle/addhit/141638/7263/116003](http://us.oneworld.net/link/gotoarticle/addhit/141638/7263/116003)



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## Know How Conference 2006

### "Weaving the information society: a gender and multicultural perspective"

Women's information services and centres don't just collect and disseminate information, they make sure that the information that the customers need is available and accessible. Once every four years women and men working in these centres come together to share strategies, invent new ways of making information available and plan joint ventures. For one week, the world community of women's information providers design the information future for those that seek.

Using information to bring about gender justice was the goal that brought 500 women and men together to meet in Mexico from 21 to 26 August 2006 for the 2006 Know How Conference.

The conference goal is to increase the availability, accessibility and visibility of information relevant to advancing the position of women and girls throughout the world, and to share documentary efforts, strategies and tactics. Four main objectives were put forward: to establish strategies for the development of the

work of gender/women's libraries, centres and networks; to generate specific policies to attend to the information needs of indigenous and rural women; to narrow the digital gap for women and information; and to construct the Latin American Network of Information Centres and Libraries on Women's and Gender Studies.

Three themes were woven into the fabric of the conference:

- Globalization, culture, information and gender:
- Policies for development of librarians in the context of the Know How community.
- Strategies and alternatives for financing.

APWINC, the Asia Pacific Women's Information Network Center and Sookmyung Women's University announced that they will host the next Know How Conference, in 2010.

✳ More information:  
[www.knowhowcommunity.org](http://www.knowhowcommunity.org)

## Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life 2006

On 5 October 2006, the Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF) awarded its 2006 Prize for Women's Creativity in Rural Life to 14 Laureates. Five of the laureates are based in Africa, in Benin, Kenya, Liberia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The award honours creative and courageous women and women's groups around the world for their contribution in improving the quality of life in rural communities, for protecting the environment, transmitting knowledge, fighting against diseases, marginalisation and traditional practices, as well as for contributing to conflict resolution and building peace. Established in 1994, WWSF has so far awarded 317 prizes in more than 100 countries.

✳ More information:  
[www.woman.ch/women/1-introduction.asp](http://www.woman.ch/women/1-introduction.asp)



One of the Prize Winners:  
 Rufine KOUKOU from Benin

## Promoting Women's rights

Rufine Koukoui, 67, a secretary by training, was forced to leave her job at 52. An active promoter of women's rights, she decides to create a cooperative to produce and promote quality soap based on local, biologically produced raw materials such as palm and coconut oil, sesame seed, neem and other plants. Despite multiple challenges, Rufine Koukoui has achieved multi-pronged results through her untiring efforts.



On 13 October, Dr Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 2006 for their efforts to create economic and social development from below. Lasting peace can not be achieved unless large population groups find ways in which to break out of poverty. Microcredit is one such means. Development from below also serves to advance democracy and human rights. Muhammad Yunus has shown himself to be a leader who has managed to translate visions into practical action for the benefit of millions of people, not only in Bangladesh, but also in many other countries. Loans to poor people without any financial security had appeared to be an impossible idea. From modest beginnings three decades ago, Yunus has, first and foremost through Grameen Bank, developed

## Dr Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank awarded the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize

microcredit into an ever more important instrument in the struggle against poverty. Grameen Bank has been a source of ideas and models for the many institutions in the field of microcredit that have sprung up around the world.

Every single individual on earth has both the potential and the right to live a decent life. Across cultures and civilizations, Yunus and Grameen Bank have shown that even the poorest of the poor can work to bring about their own development.

97% of the Grameen Bank's borrowers are women. Microcredit has proved to be an important liberating force in societies where women in particular have to struggle against repressive social and economic conditions. Economic growth and political democracy can not achieve their full potential unless the female half of humanity participates on an equal footing with the male.

Yunus's long-term vision is to eliminate poverty in the world. That vision can not be realised by means of microcredit alone. But Muhammad Yunus and Grameen Bank have shown that, in

the continuing efforts to achieve it, microcredit must play a major part.

\* [Source: nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2006/press.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2006/press.html)

\* [More information on the Grameen Bank: www.grameen-info.org](http://www.grameen-info.org)

The Grameen Bank was also rewarded the **1992 King Baudouin International Development Prize** "for its recognition of the role of women in the development process, and the originality of a system of financial loans contributing to the improvement of the social and material condition of women in rural environments, and their families."

\* [More information on the Prize: www.kbprize.org](http://www.kbprize.org)

## Global Microcredit Summit 2006

The Global Microcredit Summit 2006 took place from 12-15 November 2006 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. More than 2,000 delegates from over 100 countries participated at the event, assessing progress made toward the Campaign's goal of reaching 100 million of the world's poorest people by the end of 2005.

In 1997, the first Global Microcredit Summit in Washington, DC was led by Dr Muhammad Yunus. From 1997 to the present, the Microcredit Summit Campaign has relentlessly pursued its goal, maintaining a steadfast commitment to the Summit's four core themes: 1) reaching the poorest, 2) reaching and empowering women, 3) building financially self-sufficient institutions, and 4) ensuring a positive, measurable impact on the lives of the clients and their families. The Microcredit Summit Campaign is a global effort to put first those whom society has put last - to restore to people control over their own lives and destinies.

In addition to marking the culmination of the first phase of the Campaign, the 2006 Summit will also officially launch the Campaign's extension to 2015 with two new goals:

1. Working to ensure that 175 million of the world's poorest families, especially the women of those families, are receiving credit for self-employment and other financial and business services by the end of 2015.

2. Working to ensure that 100 million of the world's poorest families move from below US\$1 a day adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP) to above US\$1 a day adjusted for PPP by the end of 2015.

\* [For more information on the 2006 Summit: www.globalmicrocreditsummit2006.org](http://www.globalmicrocreditsummit2006.org)

\* [More information on the Microcredit Summit Campaign: www.microcreditsummit.org](http://www.microcreditsummit.org)

*"Microcredit is a critical anti-poverty tool and a wise investment in human capital. Now that the nations of the world have committed themselves to reduce by half by the year 2015 the number of people living on less than \$1 a day, we must look even more seriously at the pivotal role that sustainable microfinance can play and is playing in reaching this Millennium Development Goal."*

— United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan

## Women's empowerment through sustainable micro-finance: rethinking 'best practice'

This paper by Linda Mayoux argues that there is a need for a serious rethink of many currently accepted 'tenets of Best Practice' in the light of existing evidence of gender impact. There is evidence of significant potential for micro-finance to enable women to challenge and change gender inequalities at all levels if there is a strategic gender focus.

\* [www.genfinance.info](http://www.genfinance.info)



## BOOKS

### HIV/AIDS

⊙ **SEAGA Livestock Guide: Planning with a Gender and HIV/AIDS Lens**

This publication aims to support those working on livestock-related programmes and projects to more effectively respond to the different needs, priorities, constraints and livelihood strategies present in rural communities or households. It provides a brief overview of some of the key socio-economic and gender issues related to livestock production, and considers the impact of HIV/AIDS on livestock production and related activities. It also looks at strategies for mitigating the impacts of HIV/AIDS (and other chronic illnesses) on food security and agriculture in terms of the role of livestock production.

FAO, 2005  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

⊙ **European Philanthropy and HIV/AIDS**

This report is an analysis of information on 2005 HIV/AIDS spending by European foundations, trusts and charities. It draws on European Foundation Centre (EFC) mapping activities on HIV/AIDS funding, and aims to extend and improve on prior reports on this subject.

European HIV/AIDS Funders Group, 2006  
[www.efc.be](http://www.efc.be)

⊙ **Joining Hands – Integrating Gender and HIV/AIDS: Report of an ACORD Project using Stepping Stones in Angola, Tanzania and Uganda**

The project used Stepping Stones – a gender-focused, participatory process that involves working closely with ‘peer groups’ based on age and sex in communities over a period of several months. The process has been described as a ‘journey’ that uses a range of participatory methodologies aimed at helping people develop the skills and confidence to understand and challenge prevailing norms and customs that reinforce the effects of poverty and other factors in their environment that make them vulnerable to HIV and AIDS.

ACORD, 2006  
Available in English and Portuguese  
[www.acordinternational.org](http://www.acordinternational.org)

⊙ **Tap and Reposition Youth (TRY): Providing Social Support, Savings, and Microcredit Opportunities for Young Women in Areas with High HIV Prevalence**

SEEDS presents innovative and practical programme ideas to address the economic roles and needs of low-income women. Projects described in the series strengthen women’s productive roles and help integrate women into the social and economic sectors of development.

SEEDS n° 23, The Population Council, 2006  
[www.popcouncil.org](http://www.popcouncil.org)

⊙ **Reclaiming Our Lives. HIV and AIDS, women’s land and property rights and livelihoods in southern and East Africa – Narratives and responses**

A study drawing on research, workshops and personal and organisational testimonies, covering

Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. It aims to raise awareness of the heavy impact of HIV/AIDS on women’s property rights and livelihoods and the active steps being taken by many grassroots organisations to respond to the crisis. It looks at a number of creative initiatives such as the Memory Book Project in Uganda.

HSRC Press, 2006  
[www.hsrcpress.ac.za](http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za)

⊙ **The Land and Property Rights of Women and Orphans in the Context of HIV and AIDS. Case studies from Zimbabwe**

This publication covers analysis of the study sites in Seke, Buhera, Chimanimani and Bulawayo Districts, land and property rights of widows and other vulnerable women in those sites, livelihood strategies, obstacles and options, policy issues and recommendations. The study highlights the vulnerability of widows to property rights violations.

HSRC Press, 2006  
[www.hsrcpress.ac.za](http://www.hsrcpress.ac.za)

⊙ **Women Lead in the fight against AIDS**

The stories of a dynamic group of 12 women who are on the front lines in the fight against AIDS. Each has a powerful story to tell about AIDS in her country. Their stories help us understand how the pandemic affects the lives of women and their families, and the way forward.

Centre for Development and Population, UK, 2005  
[www.cedpa.org](http://www.cedpa.org)

### Access to land / food security

⊙ **A place to live: Women’s inheritance rights in Africa**

This publication gives an overview of laws and policies affecting inheritance rights and their effects on women’s lives in 10 Sub Saharan African Countries.

COHRE, 2005  
[www.cohre.org](http://www.cohre.org)

⊙ **Better land access for the rural poor: Lessons from experience and challenges ahead**

This paper reviews recent policy and practice to improve land access for poorer groups. It examines shifting approaches to land reform, different means to secure land rights and to achieve more equitable land distribution, the particular vulnerability of certain groups to losing their land rights, and the need to address land rights within conflict resolution and peace building. It concludes with broad recommendations for protecting land rights of poorer and more vulnerable groups.

IIED, 2006  
[www.iied.org](http://www.iied.org)

⊙ **Food Security in Practice No. 2: Using Gender Research in Development**

This practitioner’s guide bridges the gap between research and practice by providing up-to-date, relevant information on why and how gender

## FUTURE EVENTS

⊙ **Living on the Margins – Vulnerability, social exclusion and the state in the informal economy**

26-28 March 2007, Cape Town, South Africa  
[www.livingonthemargins.org](http://www.livingonthemargins.org)

⊙ **ICTs for Civil Society – SANGONeT Conference and Exhibition**

June 2007, Johannesburg, South Africa  
[www.sangonet.org.za](http://www.sangonet.org.za)

⊙ **Women’s Worlds Congress 2008 – 10th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women**

3-9 July 2008, Madrid, Spain  
[www.mmwwo8.org](http://www.mmwwo8.org)

⊙ **World YWCA International Women’s Summit on HIV/Aids**

4-7 July 2007, Nairobi, Kenya  
[www.worldywca.info](http://www.worldywca.info)

issues, when taken into account, can improve the design, implementation, and effectiveness of development projects and policies.

IFPRI, 2006  
[www.ifpri.org](http://www.ifpri.org)

⊙ **Land Tenure Reform and Gender Equality**

This Research and Policy Brief examines the extent to which women’s interests are reflected in the new generation of reforms to land tenure, including land titling, and the new possibilities opened by democratic transitions that have placed inequalities in land distribution back on national agendas.

UNRISD, 2006  
[www.unrisd.org](http://www.unrisd.org)

### Access to education

⊙ **Beyond Access: Transforming Policy and Practice for Gender Equality in Education**

In a world in which poverty, social prejudice, and poor-quality provision cause an estimated 100 million girls to drop out of school before completing their primary education, it is not enough for governments to pledge themselves to increase girls’ access to school. This book presents a vision of a transformational education which would promote social change, enable girls to achieve their full potential, and contribute to the creation of a just and democratic society.

Oxfam, 2005  
[www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

⊙ **Girls’ education towards a better future for all**

There are still 58 million girls worldwide who are not in school, the majority live in sub-Saharan Africa and South and West Asia. A girl growing up in a poor family in sub-Saharan Africa has less than a one-in-four chance of getting a secondary education. The MDG to get as many girls as boys into



primary and secondary school by 2005 is likely to be missed in more than 75 countries. This strategy document sets out the action DFID will take and the leadership it will provide, with others in the international community, to ensure equality of education between men and women, boys and girls.

DFID, 2005  
[www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

## Women & ICTs

### ☉ Supporting women's ICT-based enterprises: A handbook for Agencies in Development

A handbook for development agencies designed to assist anyone working to support women's ICT-based enterprises, specifically micro and small-scale enterprises in developing countries. It looks into the management and operational issues of women's ICT-based enterprise, with an overall aim to deliver more and better women's ICT-based enterprises.

IDPM / DFID, 2005  
[www.dfid.gov.uk](http://www.dfid.gov.uk)

## Violence against women

### ☉ Researching Violence Against Women – A Practical Guide for Researchers and Activists

This manual draws on the collective experiences and insights of many individuals, and in particular from the implementation of the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women in over 10 countries. The manual has been developed in response to the growing need to improve the quality, quantity, and comparability of international data on physical and sexual abuse. It outlines some of the methodological and ethical challenges of conducting research on VAW and describes a range of innovative techniques.

WHO / PATH, 2005  
[www.path.org](http://www.path.org)

## Fundraising

### ☉ Women's Fundraising Handbook (English, French and Spanish)

This handbook provides advice on raising money to fund women's rights work. It is especially designed for first-time fundraisers and for women's groups in developing countries.

Global Fund for Women, 2005  
[www.globalfundforwomen.org](http://www.globalfundforwomen.org)

### ☉ Writing a Funding Proposal

This toolkit deals comprehensively with how to plan, research and write a funding proposal and the follow-up required once it is written and sent off. This toolkit is aimed specifically at those who do not feel confident about writing funding proposals and who may not have much experience in it.

CIVICUS, 2005  
[www.civicus.org](http://www.civicus.org)

### ☉ Where is the Money for Women's Rights? Assessing the Role of Donors in the Promotion of Women's Rights and the Support of Women's Rights Organizations

This report is the result of an ongoing action research initiative launched by AWID. It aims to explore trends in the funding landscape to propose possible strategies for women's organisations to get the resources they need to advance in their work.

AWID, 2006  
[www.awid.org](http://www.awid.org)

## Gender issues

### ☉ Engaging men in gender equality: positive strategies and approaches – overview and annotated bibliography

BRIDGE Bibliography 15, 2006  
[www.bridge.ids.ac.uk](http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk)

### ☉ Gender for journalists: toolkit

On-line training toolkit  
 CPU, 2006  
[www.cpu.org.uk](http://www.cpu.org.uk)

## FILMS

### ☉ Mamans Congo

Film of Olivier Malvoisin on the role and vision of women candidates in the DRC elections.

e-mail: [malvoisin@perso.be](mailto:malvoisin@perso.be)

## WEBSITES

### ☉ Communities Responding to HIV/AIDS Epidemic (CORE) Initiative

The CORE Initiative partners with community and faith-based groups to advance multi-sectoral responses to the HIV/AIDS epidemic through grants, capacity-building and networking.

[www.coreinitiative.org](http://www.coreinitiative.org)

### ☉ CELAC, Creating & Exchange of Local Agriculture Content

CELAC aims to develop agricultural content from rural farmers for dissemination through digital technologies, radio, and print. It aims to establish community knowledge brokers, undertake routine knowledge sharing and create new opportunities.

[www.celac.or.ug](http://www.celac.or.ug)

### ☉ Food Security Information for Action

This website provides access to food security related information and resources produced by the European Commission and FAO Food Security Information for Action Programme. Its overall purpose is to enhance national capacity to use food security information from different sectors and sources for more effective anti-hunger policies and programmes.

[www.foodsecinfoaction.org](http://www.foodsecinfoaction.org)

### ☉ Women's ICT-Based Enterprise for Development

This website provides online guidance and networking about women's ICT-based enterprises in developing countries. The purpose of this project is to help increase the number of sustainable ICT-based enterprises run by groups of poor women in developing countries.

[www.womenictenterprise.org](http://www.womenictenterprise.org)

### ☉ WLLA, Women's Land Link Africa

This site is to serve as an information hub where organisations, individuals and groups at all levels, from the grassroots to the UN, directly and indirectly working on issues of women's housing and land in Africa can exchange and share ideas, initiatives and strategies.

[www.wllaweb.org](http://www.wllaweb.org)