



# Dimitra Newsletter

RURAL WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT



- 🎯 **Information, communication and gender**  
*Workshop in Katanga \* Listeners' clubs in South-Kivu \* Pilot projects Niger*
- 🎯 **Access to land and political participation**  
*The situation in West Africa*
- 🎯 **Women's rights**  
*Early marriage in Ethiopia \* Sexual violence in the DRC*



# Editorial

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Dear Friends,

This 13th edition of the newsletter provides an opportunity for Dimitra and its partners to inform you about their activities over the last six months. It will also present other issues, such as the situation and rights of rural women producers, the right and access to land, food and sustainable agriculture, the impact of HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, new information and communication technologies, and so on.

Dimitra is continuing to work in the field of information and communication for rural populations – women in particular – and to develop its key principles: partnership, participation and networking. Increasingly Dimitra is acting as an interface and a convenor: it facilitates access to and sharing of information; operates as a communication channel that contributes, through local support organisations, to connecting grassroots organisations to decision-making bodies and vice versa; brings together the technical resources and expertise of different FAO services and other United Nations and development agencies; and, lastly, backs the organisation of cofinanced workshops.

In South Kivu, the programme Strengthening the Gender and Communication Skills of Community Radio Stations, Listeners' Clubs and Rural Women's Networks kicked off with an inaugural workshop in Bukavu. In Lubumbashi, the workshop Strengthening the Information, Communication and Gender Capacities of Farmers' Organisations and Community Radio Stations in the Province of Katanga highlighted the importance of the need to boost civil society's information, communication and organisational capacities as well as its ability to speak out for its rights. This is particularly important in a province with such a wealth of mining resources and yet such a poor population. The workshop also stressed the crucial role of community radio stations.

In Senegal, a sub-regional workshop addressed strategies to increase rural women's participation in decision-making bodies, looking specifically at the development policies of their land. The participants identified and analysed the sociocul-

tural, economic, legal and political obstacles preventing or delaying rural women's participation in these bodies in their respective countries, and also drew up strategies to remedy the situation.

An exchange visit to Senegal's Thiès region gave members of the Dimitra network from Senegal, Niger, Mali and Guinea the chance to share their expertise in areas such as sustainable agriculture, credit/savings, fish, fruit and vegetable processing, etc. Also in the area of sharing expertise, the organisation Diobass presents knowledge fairs and the dynamics of farmer action research in Burkina Faso, where farmers of both sexes have demonstrated their ability to come up with innovative solutions and create a dynamic for change.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on Africa is immense. To mitigate the epidemic's impact on rural populations, the FAO has set up Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools, where children orphaned by AIDS and other young and vulnerable people learn to improve their agricultural and life skills. The preliminary results of an FAO study show the importance of equal property rights in preventing sexual violence and reducing women's vulnerability to HIV/AIDS.

Continuing with the topic of women's rights, the organisation SOFAD from the Democratic Republic of Congo presents the situation regarding sexual violence in South Kivu and strategies for fighting it. In Ethiopia, in a bid to combat the common practice of early marriages, a UNEPA project is combining a system of mentoring with a programme for acquiring life skills and a literacy project.

We hope that you enjoy the newsletter and look forward to your reactions.

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## DRC – Workshop on information, communication and gender in Katanga province

A workshop on Strengthening the Information, Communication and Gender Capacities of Farmers' Organisations and Community Radio Stations in Katanga province was held in Lubumbashi from 4 to 8 June 2007. The event was organised by the Réseau Femme et Développement du Katanga (REFED-Katanga - Women and Development Network in Katanga) and Dimitra, with the involvement of a wide range of partners such as CONAFED (National Committee for Women in Development), the King Baudouin Foundation, the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC), the Canadian International Development Agency, the Health Unit of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ-Santé), UNDP and UNFPA.

The workshop brought together some hundred men and women, representatives of grassroots organisations and community radio stations, from across the province of Katanga. Katanga is huge, and they had to use every conceivable means of transport to reach Lubumbashi: aeroplane, train, motorcycle and bicycle. Some participants travelled for up to 10 days to attend the workshop! A crèche was set up for women participants with young children to allow them to take a full part in the discussions.

The workshop's objective was to reinforce the local populations' capacities in information, communication and gender. Four main topics formed the basis for the exchanges of experiences and testimonies. Gender was an overarching theme that was addressed throughout:

1. Access to land and the structuring of farmers' organisations in the light of mining development and its impact on society and food security;
2. Widespread information on the law against sexual violence and the end to impunity;
3. Rural communities' involvement in the fight against HIV/AIDS;
4. Gender and communication for development and improved access to information and communication for rural populations.

The workshop was officially opened by the Minister for Rural Development, Mr Charles Mwambo Nsimba, in the presence of FAO representative Mr Gana Diagne. The Minister stressed his interest in improving the training skills of rural women and reiterated the crucial role of communication in development and democracy building. In addition, he encouraged the participants to create synergies by organising themselves, using in particular the support of the media and rural community radio stations. He also expressed the hope that other workshops of this type would be held in rural communities.



Artisanal mining seriously threatens the health and safety of the women and children who work there.

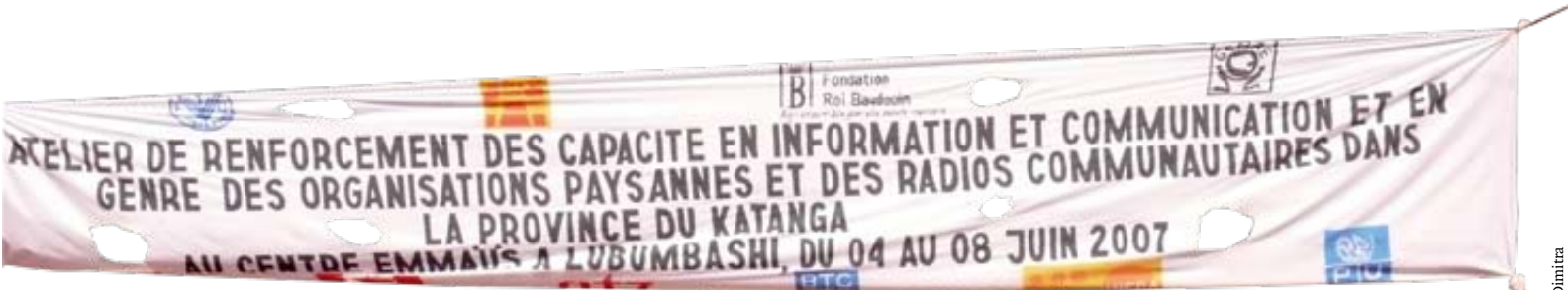
### The impact of mining on food security

Katanga is a province that has great mineral wealth. However, mining, which represented over 80% of the national budget before 1990, has not led to sustainable socioeconomic development of the region. What is happening is what is commonly called the "mineralisation of the villages", i.e. the abandonment of agricultural activities for mining – either due to people moving from one sector to the other or because they sold their land (willingly or under duress) to mining companies, leading to a crisis in food supplies and a rise in the prices of products which are becoming less and less freely available on the markets. In patriarchal societies, women, who do not have direct access to land, are particularly badly affected by a situation of this type. Losing direct access to the production of food resources, they and many children are forced to work in artisanal mining, endangering their health and safety.

### Widespread dissemination and repackaging of the law against sexual violence and involvement of rural communities in the fight against HIV/AIDS

In the DRC, the population has suffered hugely from the acts of violence that were committed during the war and which are still going on to this day. Sexual violence was used to terrorise the population and the climate of impunity, thriving due to the gaps in the judicial system, has contributed to making these practices commonplace (see article on p. 19-20). Widespread dissemination and repackaging of the law against sexual violence is eagerly awaited by rural populations. UNFPA gave the participants to the workshop image boxes and also presented the results of the Joint Initiative to Combat Sexual Violence, which involves coordinated aid to offer general support to victims (legal, economic and psychosocial assistance).





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The communities play a fundamental role in the fight against HIV/AIDS, and BTC and GTZ contributed their expertise and experience in this field. BTC encourages people to talk about the disease, enabling the communities to play an active role in identifying and implementing solutions; GTZ-Santé familiarises the population with the means of transmission of the disease and the importance of voluntary screening. The disease also has a devastating impact on the lives of young people, who are orphaned without any agricultural knowledge to ensure their survival. In some countries, FAO's Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools (JFFLS) provide a framework to train them in vital agricultural practices (see article on p. 15). FAO also presented its projects on urban and peri-urban agriculture and on managing emergencies in the province. These explanations were much appreciated by the participants.

#### Gender and communication for development

As both men and women are players in community development, they must have equal access to information and to communication and information tools. All members of society must be able to make their voice heard and outline their specific needs. However, it is clear that women in particular are kept out of decision-making and face numerous obstacles when it comes to having their views taken into account.

Although it is recognised in the new Congolese Constitution, there are numerous obstacles (most of them associated with customary practices) to the principle of gender equality. The participants' testimonies bore witness to the huge gap between theory and practice.

#### Improved access to information and communication – the role of community radio stations

Community radio can help to re-establish the balance that is crucial to the development of a rural community as a whole. However, rural women explain that the radio in the house often belongs to the man and their workload means they don't have much time to listen to programmes. Conversely, community radio stations only rarely talk about issues specific to women. Support for community radio listeners' clubs is one way of ensuring the participation of all.

The destruction or lack of maintenance of the DRC's infrastructure has led to rural areas being extremely isolated. In the field of information and communication, radio remains virtually the only medium to which people have access. Its main advantages are that it uses local languages and focuses on the interests and needs of the community. But radio stations also have to cope with problems preventing them from fully performing their role: lack of equipment, financial difficulties, the resistance of the authorities, the political context, and so on. This means that networking of radio stations would

be a good way of sharing resources that they wouldn't be able to raise by themselves.

#### Strategies and recommendations

After a day of group activities, the participants drew up strategies and recommendations:

- **Access to training and information:** widespread dissemination and repackaging of the legislation (mining laws, laws on sexual violence, etc.), provide information on individuals' rights, raise awareness on gender issues, provide information on HIV/AIDS, establish a national policy of access to information and communication in rural areas, grant community radio stations exemption from administrative taxes, etc.
- **Strengthen the capacity** of farmers' organisations and the Congolese judicial system. Local languages need to be used for communication, and rural women must be trained and encouraged to become literate.
- **Lobby** the government to implement the legislation; or, at a local level, in the fight against certain habits and customs, to develop civil society by creating farmers' platforms supported by NGOs.
- **Involve local communities:** boost dialogue, create synergies, organise exchange visits and the sharing of experiences.
- **Communicate knowledge:** pass on the findings of the workshop to communities at the local level and communicate the recommendations widely using different media (a film, a brochure, radio programmes, a bulletin, playlets, etc.).

✱ The full recommendations and a link to all the workshop presentations are available on Dimitra's website: [www.fao.org/dimitra](http://www.fao.org/dimitra)

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The Minister for Rural Development, Charles Mwambo Nsimba, encouraged participants to create synergies by organising themselves, using in particular the support of the media and rural community radio stations.



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## South Kivu: Radio listeners' clubs to reinforce gender education and fight against HIV/AIDS and its impact on food security in rural areas

After many years of having no access to the information they needed on HIV/AIDS, the rural areas of South Kivu province are gradually learning about this pandemic and the devastation it causes. Village men and women and journalists from rural community radio stations have been gathering in radio listeners' clubs to fight together against the spread of the disease in their villages and its impact on food security.

The poor state of the road network in the rural areas of South Kivu province is at the root of the almost complete isolation of most of the territories there. This makes it very difficult for inhabitants of the various villages in the province to exchange goods and services and share their ideas and experiences. Not only that, but there is a severe lack of information and communication resources, despite the remarkable progress made in new information and communication technologies (NICTs).

As they hesitantly emerge from a decade of armed conflict, these rural areas are now faced with a new struggle: the fight against HIV/AIDS. The disease is spreading, aided by a lack of adequate HIV/AIDS awareness-raising programmes for the grassroots population and the absence of information and communication tools.

The action taken by the few organisations involved in the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in isolated rural areas is having little effect because their extensions workers don't have the necessary training and because the logistical resources needed aren't in place.

### Increased awareness

It is impossible to provide an accurate estimate of the number of working hours of women in the rural areas of South Kivu province. What is clear, though, is that they work day and night, from very early in the morning to very late at night, after everyone else has eaten and gone to bed. It is women who shoulder the heavy burden of taking care of the family, ranging from providing food to looking after their health, and educating their children. Given their social status in these communities, where certain customs and religions ensure that they are marginalised still further, not only are rural women and girls at severe risk of infection with HIV/AIDS but they are also the ones who have to deal with the negative impact of the disease if it occurs in their family or village.

Only recently have rural women in South Kivu become aware of what is happening, even though the pandemic is well established and has claimed many victims. Women suspected of witchcraft are being falsely accused of causing the situation.

### The impact on food security

Only recently have rural women in South Kivu learned of the impact of HIV/AIDS on their communities, especially on agricultural production and food security, the continuation of the family line and the social relationships within families and in their regions. Clear and relevant information is provided by the FAO and GTZ-Santé, amongst others.

The picture looks so bleak that at a workshop organised in Bukavu by Dimitra in February 2006, the rural women of South Kivu made a commitment to focus on fighting HIV/AIDS.

### Networking for communication and exchange

The starting point for this initiative is SAMWAKI's observation that there are women's groups in almost every village in South Kivu. The members of these grassroots organisations are called Mamans Majambere and Mamans Mulungano ("women of development" and "united women"). In one organisation, some women chose to work in their respective areas on a rotating basis, while in the other, five to ten women paid a modest contribution into a mutual aid fund.

In order to allow the women of these different groups to get to know each other and share their experiences, SAMWAKI set up eight communication structures, each regrouping two or more 'Mulunganos' operating in the same geographical area.

The exchanges within these communication structures were so frequent and the subjects discussed were so diverse that collectives of rural women were established, bringing together



Rural women have created radio listeners' clubs in order to express their opinions and needs more effectively.

organisations working for women in rural areas. Thus synergies or collectives of rural women were created in each of the province's eight rural territories.

The networking drive has continued in this vein through to the formation, in November 2004, of the REFERUSKI, Réseau des Femmes Rurales du Sud-Kivu (South Kivu Rural Women's Network). This network is an ongoing forum for consultation and exchanges of ideas and experiences between rural women in the province and other development actors.



### Listeners' clubs: an excellent means of expression

This organisation gives the province's rural women the chance to coordinate their activities following consultation. Wanting to express their opinions and needs more effectively and take part in the various discussions on the development of their areas, they created radio listeners' clubs in isolated villages in the rural territories. Nowadays these clubs, with equal numbers of male and female members, are a forum for consultation and discussion on important issues surrounding the development of the rural areas of South Kivu.

One of the main activities of the clubs is getting the whole rural community involved in the discussion about the issue of HIV/AIDS in the villages. The goal is to put a brake on the spread of the pandemic and make rural girls and women less vulnerable to the effects of this disease.

Gender education is one of the strategies adopted by the radio listeners' clubs (which work with community radio stations to make their voice heard better) with a view to meeting the objectives they have set themselves.

The radio listeners' clubs give men and women the opportunity to talk about HIV/AIDS: an issue long regarded as a taboo subject that no-



*The radio listeners' clubs help to lift the taboos on HIV/AIDS. Voluntary screening is being encouraged in the clubs.*

body dared speak about – certainly not in front of their children, let alone in public.

The clubs represent a step forward, although many more advances need to be made to win the fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS and reduce its impact on rural communities in South Kivu.

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## Strengthening the gender and communication skills of listeners' clubs

**Inaugural workshop of the programme "Strengthening the Gender and Communication Skills of Community Radio Stations, Listeners' Clubs and Rural Women's Networks in South Kivu"**  
Bukavu, 8 to 11 February 2007

The listeners' clubs programme was launched in 2006 by Dimitra; it has the financial backing of the King Baudouin Foundation and is supported by GTZ-Santé. In South-Kivu, it is implemented by SAMWAKI.

The fight against the spread of HIV/AIDS in rural areas is one of the main topics of discussion covered by the radio listeners' clubs. Information on HIV/AIDS taken from various sources and discussed in local languages by the listeners' clubs' members is an effective tool for dealing with people's lack of knowledge and misconceptions about the pandemic and the vulnerability of rural women to the disease, as well as its effects on agricultural production and food security in particular.

The inaugural workshop of the programme brought together participants from the entire province of South Kivu – eight journalists from the rural community radio stations, 15 members, women and men, from pilot radio listen-

ers' clubs and 10 delegates from grassroots rural women's networks. Its objective was to raise participants' awareness of gender equality and encourage them to take it into account in development strategies, including communication programmes for combating HIV/AIDS.

A number of subjects linked to the central topic of the workshop were discussed, including radio production techniques, communication to promote development, the position of women in the media in South Kivu, ideas on gender and communication, human rights, the role and functioning of a radio listeners' club, an overview of programme types used on rural community radio stations, communication about and the fight against HIV/AIDS, etc. The presentations were followed by discussions and complemented by group activities.

The recommendations that came out of the discussions included bolstering the training of peer HIV/AIDS educators (grassroots rural

men and women) and setting up HIV/AIDS screening centres in the most isolated villages in the province. The participants also expressed their desire for the quick set-up of appropriate means of communication to support the activities of their listeners' clubs.

The fight against HIV/AIDS has thus become a matter for both men and women. Issues which were previously regarded as taboo subjects are gradually becoming a topic of family conversation around the fire at night. However, considering the complexity of the disease and the strategies for combating it, there is still much work to do...

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Adeline Nsimire of SAMWAKI (see contact information above)

## Sub-regional workshop – strategies to increase rural women's participation in decision-making bodies

The sub-regional workshop held in Mbour, Senegal from 3 to 5 July 2007 gave 85 men and women – members or partners of the Réseau National des Femmes Rurales du Sénégal (RNFRS - National Network of Rural Women of Senegal), and representatives of Dimitra's focal points in Burkina Faso, the Gambia, Guinea, Mali and Niger – the chance to discuss the problems facing rural women in participating in the decision-making bodies in their country. Strategies were drawn up to encourage women to get more involved.

The workshop – entitled *What strategies should be adopted to increase rural women's participation in decision-making bodies so they can implement development policy in their territories?* – was organised by the RNFRS, ENDA-Pronat and Dimitra, with the financial support of the Belgian Technical Cooperation (BTC) and the Swiss Development Cooperation Office in Senegal.

The meeting was the follow-up to a workshop organised by the same partners in February 2003 on rural women's access to land. That workshop had, among other things, stressed the importance of developing strategies for including women in decision-making bodies so that they could fight for their cause more effectively.

The recent workshop's main objective was to identify and analyse the sociocultural, economic, legal and political obstacles preventing or delaying rural women's participation in decision-making bodies in the countries of West Africa.

The meeting was a way of boosting women's self-confidence and so encouraging them to play a more active role in the political life of their community. It was also a tool for supporting collaboration between rural women and community radio stations, promoting a better knowledge of men and women's rights and duties in relation to their communities and the institutions governing them, and working out strategies to ensure increased involvement of rural women in decision-making bodies.

Group activities and more informal exchanges of experiences between participants drew on the input of communications and presentations on the situation in the various countries of the sub-region.

### Senegal

In Senegal, as in the other countries in the sub-region, women make up 52% of the population and 51% of the electorate yet they are marginalised in the areas of decision-making at all levels. Aware of this, the RNFRS decided to draw up an analysis of the situation in four rural areas of the country. The results of this



*In Senegal, as in the other countries in the sub-region, women make up the majority of the population and of the electorate yet they are marginalised in areas of decision-making at all levels.*

participatory research, presented at the workshop, confirmed that overall women are indeed under-represented in decision-making bodies. The article on page 10 provides more details of this survey.

Awa Guèye, a lawyer specialising in local government law and gender, examined the legislation and the access that women have to decision-making spheres in the context of the decentralisation process in Senegal. She showed that, with the legal framework in place and the reform proposals that have been put forward, the proportion of women in the local authorities should increase at the next local elections. However, to meet this objective, women will have to mobilise en masse and lobby for equality.

### The Gambia

Siga Fatima Jagne, from the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group, took the Gambian experience as a basis for presenting strategies for improving rural women's participation in decision-making bodies. It is important to build women's capacities not only through legislation but also at the economic level: a woman who is economically independent will have fewer difficulties playing a role in public life and taking part in decision-making and will also be able to advocate for equal rights.

To increase their production and therefore their power, rural women – most of whom work in agriculture – must have access to resources for production, meaning land first and foremost. Therefore, one key strategy to





*Despite the mechanisms put in place by Guinea to improve the representation of women in society, they continue to be discriminated against and marginalised in public life.*

improve their lot is to fight for their rights to land. Thought also needs to be put into relieving women of some of their work burden so that they can have some free time to get involved in other activities.

Education (including functional literacy) is another key strategy for getting rural women involved in the decision-making process. There has to be female capacity building in fields such as leadership and management. They must learn to have confidence in themselves and dare to express their opinion in front of men.

The government needs to recognise the contribution that rural women make to the economy and the role that they can and must play in decision-making at national level. Politically, they need to be given support to be elected, not appointed. Finally, men must also be involved in this dialogue, as they have to realise that sharing power is important.

#### Burkina Faso

The Groupement Féminin de Benkadi pour la promotion de la femme rurale (Benkadi Women's Group for the Advancement of Rural Women) is involved in building women's organisational and practical capacities, promoting income-generating activities and fighting illiteracy. To strengthen rural women's participation in political decision-making, Benkadi decided to organise training programmes for its members and to join the Union des Femmes de la Région Ouest Africaine et du Tchad (UFROAT – Union of Rural Women of West Africa and Chad). UFROAT, which was represented at the work-

shop by its President Ira Haoua, and the Réseau d'Appui à la Citoyenneté des Femmes Rurales de la Région Ouest Africaine et du Tchad (RESACIFROAT – Support Network for Citizenship of Rural Women from West Africa and Chad), represented by its President Rosalie Ouaba, want to be unifying frameworks for rural women, promoting exchanges between them at national and sub-regional levels.

#### Guinea

Mbalou Fofana Sylla, from the Association Guinéenne pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (Guinean Association for Promoting Organic Farming), talked about the mechanisms put in place by Guinea to improve the representation of women in society. The political will to boost women's role is expressed in the declarations by authorities at all levels. However, despite the regulatory and legal provisions, women continue to be victims of discrimination – which translates itself in their marginalisation when it comes to participating in public life.

While attention is being paid to rural women in advancement and support policies, their marginalisation is reinforced by poor development of their role as economic actor, lack of knowledge and illiteracy, poverty, the weight of their household burden, a lack of commitment by the government, and so on. Despite the primary role that rural women play in ensuring food security, and although they are key figures in finding solutions for development problems, their contribution remains undervalued in the strategies that seek to further this development.

Communication, freedom of action and material and financial independence can help rural women achieve their potential. Moreover, if women were to enjoy the same opportunities and resources as men, they could prove that they are effective and dynamic and essential partners in the development of their land.

#### Mali

Despite the important role they have in political life, the level of representation of women in Mali's decision-making bodies remains very low. Women are seen as voters but rarely as candidates for election themselves. Yet equal democratic rights can only be achieved through a balanced proportion of men and women on electoral lists. This political objective is currently a central demand of the women's associations in Mali, but unfortunately a draft law setting a quota of 30% women on all electoral lists was rejected by the National Assembly.

Mah Keita Tamboura, President of the Association Sigui te Mogo Son and Chair of the council of the district of Koulikoro, spoke about her professional and political journey. The lessons she learned from her experience were that women need to know their roles and responsibilities in terms of local development and have to fight hard for their cause.

#### Niger

As in the other countries, there are a number of constraints that hold back rural women's advancement in Niger: sociocultural pressures, an unequal distribution of roles and responsibilities in the division of labour, inequality of access to economic opportunities (land, paid employment, etc.), a discriminatory differentiation of rights and duties between men and women, and so on.

These factors explain the low rate of female representation and participation in decision-making bodies and rural development policies. Legally there is no discrimination on the basis of gender which prevents them from taking up positions of responsibility on an equal footing with men, and some progress has been made (for instance, the adoption of a law on quotas). And yet women continue to be under-represented or even completely absent from political decision-making bodies and elections.

The ONG VIE Kande Ni Bayra, which was represented at the workshop by Daouda Mounkaïla, is active in the field of basic education and adult training. For rural women and their participation in decision-making bodies, ONG VIE's activities focus on the synergy between





literacy centres for women and community radio stations (see article p. 12); training illiterate municipal councillors; providing guidance for community organisations; and building rural women's capacities through community extension work sessions.

Following the presentations, the participants discussed barriers and strategies to adopt in the economic, political, sociocultural and legal spheres.


The discussions on **barriers** underlined the ones identified during the presentations. The most significant obstacles are:

- Then the working groups drew up a number of **strategies** to remedy the situation:

- **sociocultural:** access to equipment relieving women of some of their household work burden; raising women's awareness of their rights (to land, etc.) and providing women with information about these rights; supporting women's groups; organising women such that they have access to information; improving women's literacy and promoting schooling of girls; programmes to train women leaders in the areas of lobbying, leadership and organisational management, communication techniques and negotiation;
- **economic:** putting in place a local and sub-regional consultation forum to stimulate exchanges of products and experiences; mobilisation of resources to fund women's economic activities; encouraging women's entrepreneurship and family farms; creating an environment favourable to economic development;
- **political:** training women leaders and raising their awareness of relevant matters; improving female solidarity; putting pressure for women's rights on religious and political leaders; setting up networks/consultation forums on the issues surrounding women's participation in decision-making bodies;

choosing female candidates based on their skills; boosting women's economic power, **legal**: training grassroots female paralegals; promoting the establishment of legal structures at local level; repackaging legislative and religious texts on women's rights, translating them into local languages and disseminating them to rural communities; introducing legal topics into literacy lessons.

At the end of the workshop, a number of **general recommendations** were also drawn up. For instance, on returning home all the participants should share the workshop's discussions, experiences and recommendations with his or her organisation and community. Another recommendation encouraged the enlargement of the RNFRS in Senegal and the setting up of a rural women's network in West Africa.

 **All the documents relating to the workshop can be consulted on the Dimitra website. For additional information, please contact:**  
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# Senegal: Rural women's participation in decision-making bodies – an analysis of the situation

The Réseau National des Femmes Rurales du Sénégal (National Network of Rural Women of Senegal – RNFRS) carried out a study on the state of rural women's participation in decision-making bodies in four disadvantaged regions: Ogo (in the Matam region), Kounghel (Kaolack), Botou (Tambacounda) and Tankanto Escale (Kolda).

The goal of this analysis was to determine the sociological issues, institutional obstacles and the tools that can be used to improve rural women's participation in local decision-making bodies and provide community responses.



The results of the research, which was funded by the Swiss Development Cooperation Office in Senegal, were used as a basis for discussion at the sub-regional workshop (see article p. 7-9).

## Methodology

The research team adopted a participatory approach to gather information. It visited every area for three days, interviewing the focal points of the RNFRS and the leaders of grassroots organisations, holding individual or group discussions with the members, and collecting documentation. At the end of each visit, a meeting was held with the various representatives to go over what had been learned, to provide a community response and discuss strategies which would make it easier for women to join decision-making circles.

Every field visit was followed by a meeting to sum up the results with the organisation committee, which was made up of the RNFRS and three support organisations: ENDA-Pronat/Dimitra, the African Network for Integrated Development (RADI) and the Association Nationale des Maisons Familiales Rurales (AN-MFR – National Association of Rural Family Households).

## Statistical results

The survey showed that in these four rural areas, women gather in *groupements de promotion féminine* (GPFs – women's advancement groups) or *groupements d'intérêt économique* (GIEs

– economic interest groups) of the Maisons Familiales Rurales, but are also represented in mixed community bodies, such as the Rural Council, the village development associations, the school parents' association, the Cadre Local de Concertation des Organisations de Producteurs (CLCOP – Local Consultation Forum for Producer Organisations), the health committees and drilling committees, the Union des Comités Ecologiques de la Vallée du Miniky (UCEM – Union of Ecological Committees of the Miniky Valley), etc.

The overall picture is that women are still under-represented in these decision-making bodies. But they are there – indeed, sometimes they even hold important positions such as vice-chair or treasurer. For the most part, though, men remain stubbornly opposed to women having a real say in decision-making bodies of this kind.

## Difficulties and constraints

Participants in the survey identified the following as the most obvious **constraints** preventing women from participating in official bodies:

- illiteracy and a general lack of education of women;
- household work burden;
- villages' isolation;
- women's lack of self-confidence;
- husbands'/men's lack of confidence in women's abilities;
- lack of information (on meeting times and venues, positions available, women's rights,

the electoral code, etc.);

- husbands' absence due to the high level of emigration;
- poverty;
- early marriages (preventing young girls' schooling).

The **consequences** of these difficulties can be summarised as follows:

- men are holding on to information;
- women can't attend meetings and/or are having trouble keeping to the meeting times;
- women can't take on certain responsibilities (secretary, treasurer, manager, etc.);
- women are afraid of being away from their family.

These factors explain why female villagers are often put off applying, and so don't take up a position, and why women's concerns aren't (adequately) addressed.

It was noticed that in organisations where there is a high proportion of women, for example in the CLCOP, the necessary information is disseminated effectively before the meetings.

## Strategies

The following strategies were put forward in the four regions:

- increasing women's literacy and schooling girls (and keeping them at school);
- training women and raising their awareness;
- relieving women of some of their workload;
- supporting and boosting income-generating activities.

Other strategies proposed:

- strengthening the law on equality in all areas of decision-making;
- promoting networking and exchanges of information among women;
- consultation meetings between women to decide on which positions they aspire;
- making men more aware of the role and position of women.

## Conclusion

The study clearly showed a link between socioeconomic development and the involvement of women in decision-making processes. It also highlighted the fact that – despite the many provisions and laws promoting the inclusion of women in decision-making bodies in Senegal – the few rural women who do take up decision-making positions don't keep them for long or hold non-strategic positions.



Following the sub-regional workshop in Mbour, a number of participants from Niger, Mali and Guinea made an exchange visit to the Thiès region, facilitated by ENDA-Pronat and the RNFRS.

The delegation from Niger was made up of Elhadji Abdou Salissouni, Hadjia Djermakoye Maidanda, Ms Haoua Bizo, Ms Haoua Almouneré and Ms Fatouma Albarka, who are all involved in the Belgian Technical Cooperation's Increasing the income of women in the Dosso region project. Guinea was represented by Ms Mbalou Fofana Sylla of the Association Guinéenne pour la Promotion de l'Agriculture Biologique (Guinean Association for the Promotion of Organic Farming), and Mali by Ms Mah Keita Tamboura of the Sigui te Mogo Son Association. The group was accompanied by Ms Fatou Sow Ndiaye of ENDA-Pronat and Ms Maartje Houbrechts of the Dimitra project.

The first visits took place in the Niayes region, together with RNFRS President Ms Tiné NDoye. At Cayar, the delegation met the members of several women's groups, who explained how they are organised in the fish processing sector. After the exchanges, some members of



# Senegal: Exchanging and sharing experiences in the field

the delegation bought an impressive quantity of dried fish!

In the village of MBawane, the group witnessed an example of healthy and sustainable agriculture in a farmer field school for organic farming run by Ms NDoye with the support of ENDA-Pronat. In the fields, the villagers – men, women and children – grow crops of onions and other common Senegalese vegetables using organic farming methods and are experimenting with new crops such as fennel and broccoli. Then Ms Farima Ammar, President of the Mutuelle d'Epargne & de Crédit de la Fédération des Agro-Pasteurs de Diender (the Savings and Credit Union of the Diender Farmers and Shepherds' Federation), outlined the history and the functioning of the union.

The day was rounded off by a visit to the Fruit and Vegetable Processing Centre in Keur Dame Lo. The centre's coordinator showed the in-

frastructure and the various stages of fruit processing. At the end, participants were treated to coconuts and dried mangos, which were simply delicious!

The following day, the delegation spent a few hours in the village of MBayène, in the rural community of Keur Moussa. They were given a guided tour of the village by village councillor, President of the village's women's group and administrative secretary of the RNFRS, Ms Thérèse MBaye. She talked about the history of the village, focusing on the processing by the villagers of palmyra palm products into furniture, wickerwork, baskets, brushes, and so on. She explained how a simple weekly contribution of 100 FCFA by the village's women gradually developed into a fully fledged village fund, then into a community shop and finally into a credit and health union.

A visit to the organic products fair in Thiès and a meeting with representatives of the Association Nationale des Maisons Familiales Rurales (ANMFR – National Association of Rural Family Households) and the Fédération des ONG Sénégalaises (FONGS – Federation of Senegalese NGOs) brought these exchanges to an end.

The participants in the exchange visit were unanimous in their verdict: they had been delighted by everything they had learned over the few days of their stay and went home brimming with new ideas, creativity and motivation. They expressed a desire to make many more such visits, which are hundred times more useful than any documents or books one could think of.



The village of MBayène, specialised in the processing of palmyra palm products by all its inhabitants, men and women alike, has developed an advanced cooperative system which includes a village fund, a community shop and a credit and health union.



## Niger – Developing synergies between community radio stations and literacy centres for rural women

The debates during the “Rural women, literacy training and communication” workshop in Dosso (December 2006) highlighted the need to develop synergies between community radio stations and literacy centres in order to meet the training and information needs of rural women.

The objective of the workshop, initiated by Dimitra, in Dosso on rural women, literacy training and communication (see Dimitra Newsletter 12) was to present literacy training as a factor for development in general and a tool for promoting the role of rural women in particular.

The communication aspect was included in the workshop following analysis showing that community radio, like literacy training, is one of the essential tools for communication and information dissemination that is well-suited to the socio-economic and cultural context of rural women in sub-Saharan Africa.

### Strategy used during the workshop

After presentations on several experiences of literacy training for women in Niger and the sub-region, four thematic working groups were created to:

- identify the main obstacles to literacy training for rural women;
- outline the content for teaching/training courses that would offer quality education for rural women;
- establish the impact that literacy training has on schooling for girls;
- consider problems connected with rural women's access to media.

The various discussions concluded by highlighting the need to develop a synergy between community radios and literacy training centres to meet the training and information needs of rural women.

### Two pilot projects

The non-governmental organisation ONG VIE Kande Ni Bayra was asked to look into developing this synergy through a pilot activity. The village of Tanda (Department of Gaya) and the town of Téra (Department of Téra) were identified as test areas.

In these areas, radio station staff, extension workers in literacy training centres, municipal authorities and other development NGOs listed and analysed the topics covered by radio stations and literacy training centres. They concluded that community radio and literacy training centres are two entities that can and must develop together and enrich each other.

In **Tanda**, rural women in literacy training centres listen together to subjects debated on the radio. They then discuss the issue in order to establish their position and define strategies to prompt the changes expected. The radio station then visits the centre to record the women's responses and to stimulate debate among women listeners on other aspects of the issue or on a different topic.

In **Téra**, the women engage in debates in the literacy centre and their conclusions are then recorded by the radio station and aired in the presence of qualified resource persons.

In both cases, it has been encouraging to see a communication strategy develop where rural women not only have their voice heard but also help raise awareness in their community, where their voices on the radio clearly push back barriers.

### Conclusion

Following the encouraging results obtained, and in line with the commitments made by

the various technical and financial partners that funded the workshop in Dosso, ONG VIE Kande Ni Bayra has agreed to develop a pilot programme that will cover Téra, Dosso, Gaya and Loga. The technical partners, who remain members of the steering committee, have agreed in principle to support and implement this programme which could be called “Developing synergies between literacy training centres and community radio stations for rural women”.

To be continued...

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In the framework of their literacy training classes, women listen to and discuss community radio programmes on subjects which are of interest to them. Their reactions are recorded and later broadcasted by the radio.



## National meetings on information and communication strategies for rural women's networks

In February 2007, Wougnet and Enda-Pronat, Dimitra's partner organisations in Uganda and Senegal, organised a follow up activity to the Dimitra/CTA online discussion on rural women's networks that took place from January to June 2006. This NICT initiation activity was financed by the CTA.

One of the recommendations of this e-discussion was that in subsequent discussions, grass-roots women's organisations and networks – including those without internet access – should be more closely involved, and this through face to face meetings. In support of this recommendation, national meetings were held in Uganda and Senegal with financial support from the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA).

### Senegal – Strengthening rural women's networks in the field of information, communication and the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas

This workshop, organised by Enda-Pronat and the Réseau National des Femmes Rurales du Sénégal (National Network of Rural Women of Senegal – RNFRS), took place from 12 to 16 February 2007 in Thiès. The five days of intensive training introduced 18 women from different regions across Senegal, to new information and communication technologies (NICTs) and provided them with an opportunity to share their experiences in the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas.



During five days of intensive training, 18 women have been introduced to new information and communication technologies and have exchanged experiences on the fight of HIV/AIDS in rural areas.

On the first day, the participants were introduced to NICTs, familiarised themselves with software packages, such as Word and Excel, and completed practical exercises. An e-mail address was then created for each participant and a discussion list was drawn up.

Presentations given in plenary meetings on the impact of introductory courses for NICTs and the impact of HIV/AIDS was followed by an online discussion between the participants on their own experiences and particular knowledge. These discussions were continued in three working groups that addressed the following issues:

1. HIV/AIDS, levirate and sororate marriages and the harmful impact they have on the agricultural sector.
2. The consequences of HIV/AIDS for natural resources and food security.
3. HIV/AIDS in the agricultural production cycle, malnutrition and poverty.

The discussions shed new light on inter-related challenges posed by the HIV/AIDS epidemic and food insecurity. Several recurrent key

themes provided links between the sessions and highlighted the need to integrate food security into the fight against HIV/AIDS at the planning stage in order to curb the pandemic more effectively.

These themes included: recognition of the connections between the agricultural sector, food security and HIV/AIDS; access to food as an essential factor for reducing vulnerability and susceptibility to the disease and improving activities connected with prevention, treatment, care and those living with HIV; the fact that HIV/AIDS is one of the many factors that have repercussions on communities affected by food insecurity; the need to establish several partnerships in order to guarantee sustainability and facilitate the implementation of strategies aimed at boosting their impact. Finally, several ideas were proposed for advocacy work and the possibility of influencing policies and programmes.

The participants recognised that this introductory course on NICTs was a support tool that would help them promote the inclusion of food

security into initiatives to fight HIV/AIDS. They agreed that it was important to ask for a range of more comprehensive measures targeting prevention, treatment, care and a better life for those living with HIV, measures that include food and nutrition security in a continuum of policies and activities.

Strategies and recommendations include:

- encouraging people to use condoms to halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and to go for screening tests;
- avoiding stigmatisation of AIDS victims and taking care of those suffering from AIDS and their families;
- offering access to anti-retroviral drugs;
- improving information and awareness-raising strategies for AIDS;
- boosting women's economic power;
- improving organic farming in rural areas and the production of local seed, and increasing rural women's capacity for poultry farming, cattle raising, etc.;
- facilitating exchange visits between the different areas of intervention;
- repeating NICT training.





### Uganda – National meeting on information and communication strategies for the sustainability of rural women's networks

The Uganda meeting was held on 23-24 February 2007 and was organised by WOUGNET, Women of Uganda Network. The meeting drew participants from rural women's networks and organisations working with rural women in 13 districts across Uganda (Apac, Arua, Busia, Gulu, Kampala, Kasese, Kayunga, Lira, Luwero, Mpigi, Mukono, Nebbi, and Pader).

The meeting had four objectives:

- to strengthen rural women's networks and build capacity in information sharing and networking;
- to exchange experiences and knowledge on the impact of HIV/AIDS in rural areas;
- to analyse the effects of HIV/AIDS on food security and rural community life;
- to define common activities to reinforce organisations and networks.

Participants' expectations concerned:

- **Knowledge sharing:** on HIV/AIDS and women, on the Dimitra project, on WOUGNET; and **networking:** with WOUGNET and the other participants;
- **Capacity development:** gain more knowledge and skills, learn how to improve networking, learn to use ICTs to empower the rural women;
- **Creation of partnerships:** develop strong relationship that will help in networking and collaboration.

The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share their views and to discuss the challenges met in networking and dealing with the impact of HIV/AIDS. They were first introduced to the background of the workshop, with a summary of the online discussion report and a presentation of strengthening information sharing and networking among rural women's networks.

In working groups, participants then identified the key general challenges for rural women's networks. These were situated in five areas:

information and communication, infrastructure, financial issues, lack of knowledge, and cultural and societal norms. The opportunities formulated to address these challenges were clustered into four categories: information sharing and networking; advocacy and lobbying; establishment and access to communication infrastructure; and capacity building.

Common information and communication strategies used by rural women's networks were divided into traditional and modern ICTs – gatherings and face to face discussion, letter writing, radio information, brochures and posters as opposed to e-mail, internet and mobile phones.

A discussion on advancing African agriculture (amongst other means by networking with agricultural organisations) was followed by presentations on the impact of HIV/AIDS, with a focus on food security and rural communities' livelihoods, and on the strengthening of rural women's networks in Uganda. All presentations were followed by group discussions.

Finally, recommendations were formulated as to how to strengthen rural women's networks. These fell into two categories: 1. partnerships and collaborations; and 2. information-sharing and networking. Three regional networks were created, each formulating concrete initial activities to be undertaken following the meeting.

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## Marek Fund: Gender equality through sport

The Marek Fund is dedicated to the memory of Marek Schoenmaeckers, who died in a car accident on 28 September 2006 at the age of 19. His sudden death left his parents and friends shattered, for Marek radiated an intense love of life and was a driving force in a wide range of projects. In order to help them to overcome their grief and to perpetuate the memory of their son, brother and friend, his parents, sister and friends decided, with the help of the basketball club Fresh Air de Jette, the King Baudouin Foundation and FAO, to set up a Fund in his memory. It hopes to convey Marek's love of life and sport, as well as some of his fundamental values, such as friendship, the capacity to surpass oneself and the conviction that one can take action and change the world to make it a better and fairer place.

Marek spent his early childhood in Africa and he loved its people and their cultures. The aim of the Marek Fund is to contribute to the promotion of equality between girls and boys in Africa through sport, in particular basketball (which Marek himself played), and the acquisition of values for life such as respect for oneself and others and team spirit.

The project is aimed at some 200 girls and boys who are learning to play basketball at their schools in the town of Dosso in Niger. It gives the youngsters an extra motivation to stay on at school. The project aims to encourage gender equality, to ensure that young people are valued within their community, to listen to them and to communicate certain messages, for example on combating HIV/AIDS, early marriage, and the importance of schooling for girls. One of the challenges is to kindle in these young people the desire to take part in sport, to be proud of their community and to play a role in it.

Apart from sports equipments, the project will send a group of young Belgians to Dosso in November 2007, to provide basketball training and also to share experiences in other areas, such as dance or drama.

In 2006 the UNDP Human Development Report ranked Niger as the poorest country in the world. The level of illiteracy among the population is as high as 83% and there are many food security and health problems. The women of Niger play a crucial role within their communities, although there is still a long way to go in terms of combating discriminatory customs and traditions which weaken their efforts. We hope that the Marek Fund will be able to contribute to empower girls and women in their communities.

Eliane Najros, Marek's mother

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# Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools

## A response to counter the impact of HIV and AIDS on orphans and vulnerable children in Southern and Eastern Africa

Since 2004, FAO has established “Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools” in several African countries, with the objective of mitigating the impact of the AIDS epidemics on the rural populations, and specifically of empowering orphans and vulnerable children and youth by improving their livelihoods and their agricultural and life skills.

HIV and AIDS have a tremendous impact on rural African societies: families and social networks of solidarity are disrupted, children are orphaned, the rural livelihoods and the mechanisms of knowledge transmission are grievously affected. **Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools** (JFFLS) were developed by FAO, together with the World Food Programme (WFP), other UN agencies, national governments, NGOs and local institutions, as a way to counter the impact of HIV and AIDS on orphans and vulnerable children, to reduce their vulnerability, and to improve their livelihoods and long-term food security.

### The methodology and curriculum of the JFFLS

The JFFLS are an adaptation of two successful participatory learning methodologies to the needs of rural youth: Farmer Field Schools (FFS) and Farmer Life Schools (FLS). During a whole agricultural season, a group of 30 children/youth (boys and girls between 12 and 17) follow the life cycle of crops, and make links and inferences regarding their own lives and problems. They meet once, twice or thrice a week in the field, during a whole afternoon, and learn by doing and exploring. An interdisciplinary team of facilitators accompanies the children in the field: a school teacher, an agriculturalist/extension worker and a social animator, proficient in drama, dance and creative activities. Community volunteers always work in close collaboration with the facilitators. The curriculum of the JFFLS is built around four main pillars: (1) the school site and the field activities where children learn by doing; (2) the special agricultural topics; (3) life skills and (4) cultural activities (theatre, dance, singing, etc). The learning activities in the school site follow the local agricultural cycle. Depending on the choices of the children and the peo-

ple of the community which own the project, those activities range from laying out the site, preparing the land, seeding or planting, and weeding and thinning to constructing suitable storage units, storing harvests, making compost, managing livestock, establishing a nursery and irrigating vegetables. The JFFLS curriculum integrates and links the agricultural learning with life skills according to monthly themes, with a holistic perspective which is its trademark and peculiarity. Art, theatre, song and (traditional) dancing play a central role in encouraging self-expression and integration with peers; they also help to build trust, explore risks, solve problems and develop more gender-equal attitudes.

### From a pilot to a full-fledged initiative

The JFFLS were developed as a pilot initiative in Mozambique in 2003. Since then, they have been refined, scaled up, and enthusiastically adopted by different stakeholders in nine African countries, namely: Kenya, Malawi, Namibia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Significant creative adaptations and innovations of the original concept took

place in those new settings, following the local ecological, social and cultural contexts. First implemented through faith based organisations (FBOs), the JFFLS are now in most cases embedded in the formal education system, providing new inputs to this sector in terms of participatory learning and Good Agricultural and Life Practices (GALP). When possible, the JFFLS are also coordinated with the adult FFS network. The School Feeding Programme of WFP, providing food to all schools which host a JFFLS, is a powerful incentive for the youth to participate with energy to the learning activities.

Since 2006, the JFFLS approach has been ex-



panded to the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya (and soon in Uganda), with a particular focus on orphans and vulnerable children resulting from civil violence and displacement, with support provided by the United Nations System-wide Work Programme on Scaling-up HIV/AIDS Services for Populations of Humanitarian Concern.

### Challenges

Different learning materials are being produced for the JFFLS: a “Getting started” manual, some Facilitator manuals, and participatory Monitoring and Evaluation tools. In 2007, the JFFLS programme will be expanded and consolidated, after having been labelled as one of FAO’s “Best practices”. The key challenges are: (1) the consolidating of the approach; (2) devising viable strategies of sustainability by developing alliances with governments, NGOs and UN partners to scale-up the JFFLS while (3) maintaining its technical quality and its core and non-negotiable elements, namely the unique synergy between agricultural skills, life-skills and the participatory field experience.

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# Equal property rights, gender-based violence and vulnerability to HIV/AIDS

Preliminary findings from an FAO research on HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and property rights in Western Kenya highlight the importance of equal property rights in preventing violence and in reducing the vulnerability to HIV and AIDS of women. Recommendations call for policy action at a national and local level.

In 2006, the Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division (ESW) of FAO conducted a study in Busia District (Western Kenya), in the context of the UN System-wide work programme on 'Scaling up HIV/AIDS Services for Populations of Humanitarian concern'.

The objective of the research was to contribute to the understanding of how sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and gender inequality heighten the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS of girls and women in populations of humanitarian concern. More specifically, the study aimed to substantiate the idea that **equal property rights have an influence on this relationship**, and that gender equality in this respect **reduces the vulnerability to HIV/AIDS**. The study aimed also to support the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive livelihood interventions.

The preliminary findings of the study (yet to be officially presented and published) stem from the analysis of both qualitative and quantitative methods, more specifically from a questionnaire administered to 200 abused and non-abused women. They indicate that violence and fear of violence are important risk factors contributing to the vulnerability of HIV infection for women and girls, that they are widespread and deeply entrenched, and have severe impacts

on women's health, social development and economic well-being.

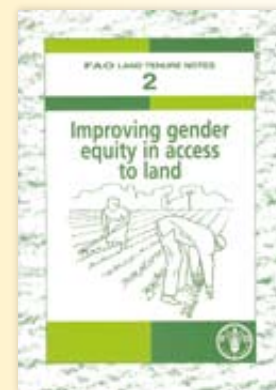
The study brings evidence to show that **property ownership plays a role in both preventing SGBV and in providing options to leave abusive relationships**. In the location studied, large household property such as land, the family house, large livestock and large household items are mainly owned by husbands/partners, although a few women also own these major properties. Non-abused women are more likely to own property independently than abused women. In comparison, widowed and separated women are more likely to own property independently than women in formal and customary unions. In addition, women who are financially autonomous are more likely to leave an abusive relationship quickly. Overall, property ownership for women is crucial, but alone does not prevent SGBV. It does, however, give women more empowerment and ability to leave a violent relationship, education and awareness being identified also as crucial factors.

The report recommends urgent action at a policy level by a wide range of actors – individuals, families, community leaders, the criminal justice system, community-based organisations, NGOs, governments and international stakeholders. Gender equality should be promoted through awareness-raising and sensitisation campaigns and policy implementation at local and national levels.

On the other hand, the study recommended the improvement of livelihood sources and an increased access to economic empowerment programmes for women and girls. Empowerment and livelihood based participatory programmes like the Farmer Life School and Farmer Field School could be an adequate response, at the same time providing a forum to discuss the challenges and strains that SGBV issues put on customary law and on some local cultural practices.

## \* Sources

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## FAO Land Tenure Notes 2 Improving gender equity in access to land

This guide has been prepared to support NGOs that are working to promote more equitable access to land for women and men in rural communities. Land has cultural, religious and legal significance, and is the basis for food production, shelter and economic activities. In most societies, access to land has favoured certain individuals and groups at the expense of others. Women are one of the groups that often have fewer and weaker rights to land.

The guide addresses gender relations and how their structure affects access to land. It provides some answers to the questions of "what is access to land" and "why is gender important". The guide presents strategies to improve gender equity by evaluating the current situation to identify what gender issues exist, by informing people of their rights to land, and by working to empower the marginalised. The guide concludes by describing strategies to ensure that gender and access to land are properly addressed in land tenure projects such as land reform and land titling and registration.

FAO, 2006

\* Available for download on  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)





# Diobass – Spotlight on the dynamics of farmer action research in Burkina Faso

At the Knowledge Fair in Tanlili in April 2007, some 80 representatives from farmers' organisations and action research groups met to present the results of their research to the local population and share their experiences with rural development actors. A genuine opportunity to share expertise and disseminate innovative farming solutions in a social context, knowledge fairs are the outcome of a research process and bear witness to the social dynamics of farmers' organisations.

African farmers' communities possess many skills and practices that are currently under-used. There is considerable potential for innovation that could offer solutions to the problems and challenges faced by rural communities. The main difficulty in making the most of local expertise lies in creating the methodological tools required to develop research activities that bring farmers and technicians together around shared topics. Farmer action research seeks to respond to this challenge. Using local expertise and potential, innovative solutions suited to the local context are updated, tested, validated and then disseminated.

## The major role played by communication

Farmers know a great deal about their local environment and the potential it offers (material medica, natural resources, organisation of society, etc.) but lack the analytical tools, basic knowledge (causes or carriers of diseases, ecological phenomena) and working methods needed to develop and use their environment. Technicians do dispose of this knowledge, but are little used to sharing it with farmers. Trained with teaching materials aimed at extension work, they were taught how to communicate a technical message, not to come up with solutions based on the potential or restrictions of the environment. Communication between farmers and technicians is often little efficient when it comes to valuing local skills and resources.

In farmer action research, communication principles are implemented via collective and social processes. They aim to establish balanced relations between farmers and technicians and allow them to share experiences. A fruitful communication process develops that allows modern expertise to be interwoven with popular knowledge. Synergies develop and stimulate farmer-led research activities. The objective of farmer action research is to find endogenous and sustainable solutions for problems identified by the farmers themselves.

## Action principle – developing dynamics among the people

Diobass, Ecology and Society offers methodological support for farmer action research networks in French-speaking Africa. One of these – the Diobass Platform for Burkina Faso – involves

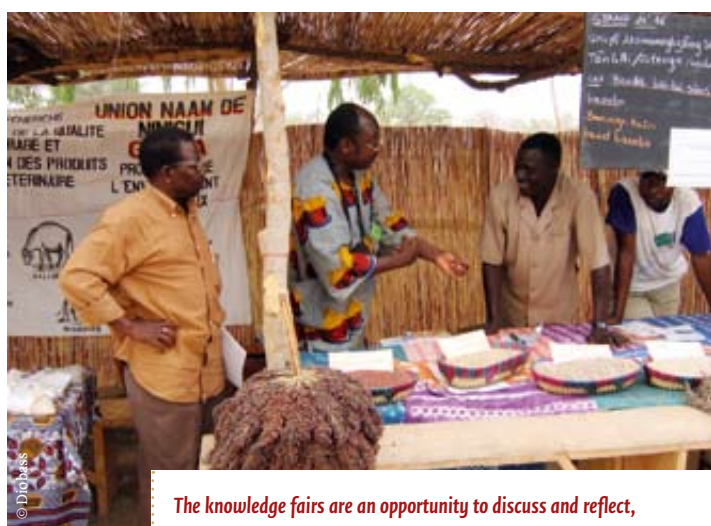
26 farmers' organisations. The network offers an opportunity for communication that allows the member organisations to establish and implement their farmer action research programmes. It is organised into various topic-related areas connected with agriculture, livestock breeding, community health, income-generating activities and management of natural resources. Using an in-depth, systematic analysis of the problems suggested by the farming organisations, action research groups meet on a voluntary basis. Their objective is to develop research activities on specific issues, propose solutions, validate the solutions using technical validation guides and, finally, disseminate the results. The network meets regularly either in connection with a specific topic to share the results obtained or on a geographical basis to assess programme development and plan or refocus future activities.

## Dissemination and enhancement of results

Dissemination and use of the research results is critically important. However, in comparison with other systems that aim to make issues accessible to the general public, farmer action research has a unique strength. Because the innovative solutions have been developed by the farmer researchers in their local context, they can be disseminated easily as long as they are technically effective and suited to the economic or social context. Moreover, the size of the network and the involvement of member organisations also aid dissemination considerably, for example when it comes to drafting and publishing extension guides in national languages, participating in community radio broadcasts on farming expertise, and organising knowledge fairs.

The knowledge fairs are a particularly effective part of this dissemination method. They are an opportunity:

- for actors involved in farmer action research to discuss and reflect on issues;
- to promote and disseminate innovative solutions to local populations;
- for local development actors to consult each other.



The knowledge fairs are an opportunity to discuss and reflect, promote and disseminate innovative solutions and for exchanges between farmers and local development actors.

During the Tanlili fair, the objective of consultation between farmer action research and local development actors was particularly noticeable. In addition to presenting results at the 25 stands manned by the action research groups, public information sessions were organised around thematic panels. Each panel offered an opportunity to share results from farmer research and plan future cooperation between actors involved in rural development: agricultural research, local decentralised authorities, micro-finance, farming umbrella organisations and the chambers of agriculture. The principle behind the panels was to encourage discussion and identify areas of convergence between the different institutions. The farmer researchers were able to demonstrate their ability to come up with innovative solutions and create a dynamic for change. In doing so, they help the concept of farmer action research gain ground in institutions. After all, as relevant as they are, farmer action research processes still suffer from a lack of recognition at the institutional levels.

✱ Further information on Diobass and farmer action research is available at: [www.diobass.com](http://www.diobass.com)





## Rural Ethiopia maintains child marriage practice

In rural Ethiopia, when a girl is old enough to carry a bucket of water, she is ready for marriage. At the time of the marriage, most girls do not know what is happening to them. A recent study conducted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and its civil society partner, the Population Council, only 2.8% of girls married under the age of 10 had met the groom before the wedding day.

“When a girl refused to have sex with her husband he beat her up. After that, she tried to run away to her parents, pleading with them to send her to school. But they refused and married her again. Then she hanged herself,” a 15 year-old in the Amhara region in northern Ethiopia recounts.

Sadly, 89.7% of girls married before age 10 were forced to have sex against their will.

### Obedience and subservience

“The most important reason to marry a daughter early is to ensure her chastity,” reveals Helen Amdemikael, gender and advocacy officer at the UNFPA. To Amdemikael, keeping brides young ensures the obedience and subservience of the woman, who is raised to do the bidding of her husband and his family.

Early marriage also maximizes childbearing. “But this is ironic, as early marriage can cause serious harm to children and young women, actually keeping them from carrying on healthy pregnancies,” warns Amdemikael.

### Illegal but still practised

Illegal in Ethiopia since the passing of the new Family Code in 2000, law enforcement on the issue of early marriage has not been successful. “Once or twice we have people who are kept from marrying off their daughter – denounced by the community – but this is very unusual,” said a lawyer from the Ethiopian Women’s Lawyers Association, EWLA, who prefers not to be identified.

Of the Ethiopian regions, the problem of early marriage is worse in Amhara. There, at least 45.8% of women are married before the age of 15. Betrothal may occur as early as at birth, but marriage normally takes place when the girl is between nine and eleven years old.

### Health concerns

The health problems associated to early marriage range from long-term psychological trauma from forced sex, to premature pregnancies that cause a high rate of maternal and infant mortality. Marriage to older men, who have had previous sexual encounters, also increases the vulnerability of young girls to sexu-

ally transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Among the girls who marry early, the median age for giving birth is 16 years, compared to 22 years for girls who marry at age 19. With only 6% of births in the country attended by a skilled professional, Ethiopia has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, as well as fistula.

### Social impact

“At marriage, the girl becomes a sort of house slave – she is often expected to bear the brunt of the family’s chores: carrying firewood, cooking, cleaning, washing and caring for the animals,” explains Amdemikael. “This is exhausting work for an adult, let alone a small child, compounded by the fact that she is often entirely isolated from any acquaintances or family.”

Kept from school, from socializing with peers and the community, the girls are less likely to acquire skills where they will be able to support themselves.

“I was married at an early age and my in-laws forced me to sleep with my husband and he made me suffer all night. After that, whenever day becomes night I get worried thinking that it will be like that. This is what I hate most,” says an 11 year-old Amhara girl, betrothed at age five.

More recently, a consortium of partners, including the Ethiopian Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, the Population Council and UNFPA, with funding from the Nike Foundation, have begun implementing a literacy based project in rural Amhara region, in the Mossobo Rural Association, located about 40 kilometres from the provincial capital, Bahir Dar.

### The Berhane Hewan project

The project, called Berhane Hewan – Amharic for light of eve – consists of a combination mentoring scheme, life education and literacy programme, where the community negotiates with





# Rural women in South Kivu faced with sexual violence and impunity – an analysis of the situation

Between 1996 and 2003, the wars in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have led to many human rights violations, including thousands of cases of rape and sexual violence.

families keeping the girls at school. By building wells and better ovens in the communities, the project ensures that the house chores will get done in less time, decreasing resistance by families to the absence of the girls from home during a few hours a week.

In April 2007, the project donated 647 pregnant ewes to each of the Messobo girls, as an incentive to guarantee their continued participation. So far, in the 18 months since the project started, the drop-out rate has been very low.

“It’s still early to predict the real success,” said Amdemikael. The real challenge is convincing families that keeping their daughters at school will bring better opportunities for the families, and further, that their daughters will still be chaste women and good wives, even if they learn a trade.

“More and more families are becoming aware that it is better to let the girls go to school, however. Increasingly, girls run away to urban centres to escape early marriage. There, without social support networks, many turn to sex work,” explains Annabel Erulkar, from the Population Council in Ethiopia.

The Mossobo project is scheduled to expand to 12 other communities in Ethiopia this year, in 36 literacy centres. A second component of the project is being extended to young migrant girls in urban centres, to ensure their access to reproductive health and education.

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In most instances the perpetrators of these acts of sexual violence have gone unpunished: only about 111 of all the cases of sexual violence recorded and investigated by various NGOs in South Kivu have gone to court. The results are as follows: cases registered: 52; cases decided: 31; cases pending: 18; appeal cases: 4; number of people arrested: 6; women awarded compensation: 0. These figures clearly illustrate the back-drop of impunity against which the perpetrators of sexual violence have been able to operate.

During the war and the ensuing transition period, most of the offenders were members of armed groups. It was very difficult to track them down and, in the rare cases where this was possible, either their superiors protected them or they held such high positions that indicting them was a risky business. This meant that indirect evidence was the only way of taking them to court. On top of that, the general lack of security fostered by any war saw to it that impunity was the norm.

And that is not all: this situation continues to this day, despite the efforts made in this area by various actors from civil society, the government and the international community. It appears that the situation of impunity regarding acts of sexual violence actually encourages some individuals to carry them out.

Bitondo Nyumba Ndolo, from Fizi, died in Panzi Hospital in June 2005 at the age of 59 after being attacked and raped in May 2005 by soldiers of the national army. To this day, and despite the efforts of the Solidarity Movement of Women Human Rights Activists (SOFAD) and Arche d’Alliance, supported by Amnesty International, her death has remained unpunished and her family and the witnesses are not protected.

## The problem of child soldiers

Nor has the cessation of hostilities put an end to the phenomenon of child soldiers, and the offences committed by them – including sexual violence. What’s more, their crimes are not subject to penal regulations because under Congolese law a person can only be enlisted into the armed forces at the age of 18. As minors, in the eyes of the law child soldiers are not military personnel and so don’t fall under military jurisdiction. Instead, their cases are decided on by a juvenile court judge who is responsible for juvenile delinquency proceedings. However, there is no penalty stipulated by law for juvenile delinquents apart from confining them to a rehabilitation centre – and the problem with this punishment is that there are no more centres of this type in South Kivu.

Furthermore, more often than not charges are only brought against the perpetrator of the sexual violence and not against the intellectual authors of the crime, i.e. those who enlisted the child soldier implicated and all those following the orders of anyone carrying out military activities.

## The difficulties involved in enforcing the law

The Congolese Penal code now cracks down on sexual violence, in response to the lobbying by human rights NGOs, supported by the international community. Tough measures aiming to curb sexual violence are provided for by laws 06/018 and 06/019 of 20 July 2006.

These judicial tools should provide an effective legal framework to crack down on crimes involving sexual violence. However, the following factors mean that the legislation cannot be fully enforced:







### 1. Weakness of the judicial system

The judicial system leaves much to be desired in terms of its quality and lack of adequate resources. There is a worrying shortage of magistrates – for example, Bukavu Regional Court, which has jurisdiction over the eight territories of the South Kivu province, only has seven magistrates (three judges and four people working in the public prosecutor's office), while there are just three magistrates (including one judge) at Uvira Regional Court. Moreover, there is no form of in-service training or re training provided for these magistrates, so that there aren't many magistrates who have human rights knowledge.

### 2. Ignorance of the law

The Congolese population knows virtually nothing about the law, and the amateurish way in which many human rights NGOs work means that their sexual violence records don't carry much value in legal proceedings.

### 3. Customary practices

The practice of dropping proceedings against rapists if they pay some form of compensation to their victim's family means that large numbers of perpetrators of sexual violence escape their deserved punishment – although a) according to the law they are to be prosecuted even if there is no plaintiff; and b) the law has precedence over customary practice.

### 4. Lack of protection for the victim, the counsel for the defence and witnesses

This represents a major obstacle to establishing the guilt of perpetrators of sexual violence. As most of them are armed men, indicting them puts their victims, the victims' counsel for the defence and witnesses at risk of reprisals. Yet there are no specific measures in place to protect these people.

### Gender equality

Article 14 of the DRC's Constitution states the principle of gender equality but implementing legislation has still not been put to a parliamentary vote. Even more importantly, the authorities have not taken any measures to give women equal opportunities to men. There is a need for positive discrimination to ensure that gender equality does not remain a vain hope.

There needs to be sustained lobbying to make the Congolese parliament give priority to putting the gender equality legislation to a vote, and ensure that the government prioritises the legal system by appointing new magistrates and providing adequate logistical resources.



### Strategies adopted by SOFAD to combat sexual violence

The activities of SOFAD, Solidarité des Femmes Actives pour la Défense des Droits Humains (Solidarity Movement of Women Human Rights Activists), focus on the challenges to be faced and strategies to implement to stop these crimes against humanity, with a particular emphasis on effective strategies for providing support to victims of sexual violence and punishing rapists. For example, the organisation works on collecting direct evidence to clear the hurdles that hinder identifying and punishing perpetrators of sexual violence.

Cultural events (theatre and music), conferences/debates, monitoring, lobbying of the authorities and diplomacy form the basis for SOFAD's follow-up and awareness-raising activities.

SOFAD demands urgent action at all levels to combat the various forms of violence with which women are faced, with appropriate consideration for the socioeconomic impact they have on the group that is a victim of rape or any other form of violence.

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## The 2006-2007 King Baudouin International Development prize awarded to Front Line for the protection of human rights defenders

The King Baudouin Foundation has awarded the 2006-2007 King Baudouin International Development Prize to Front Line "for the effectiveness of their efforts to combat the isolation faced by human rights defenders around the world, for the support and protection that they offer them and for their continuing advocacy in favour of an international plan of action for human rights, which is an essential condition for development."

Front Line, the International Foundation for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (Ireland), is the only international NGO that is exclusively dedicated to the support and protection of human rights defenders, particularly those at risk.

Front Line's specific aim is to work for the protection of human rights defenders at immediate risk and to provide practical means to improve their security. Since its creation in 2001, Front Line has worked on behalf of more than 600 human rights defenders in over 100 countries. Front Line combines "round-the-clock" practical support with international advocacy, which promotes visibility and the recognition of human rights defenders as a vulnerable group.

The King Baudouin International Development Prize, which amounts to 150,000 euros, was presented to Mary Lawlor, the Director of Front Line, on 8 May 2007 at the Royal Palace in Brussels. "In accepting this Prize I am deeply conscious of the extraordinary bravery of human rights defenders who get up every day not knowing when or if an attack will come or even if they will be able to return to their families in the evening. It is their bravery in challenging oppression and injustice that inspires us all to dedicate our work to helping them", said Ms. Lawlor.

Ms Gégé Katana, of the Congolese organisation SOFAD (see previous article) was also present at the ceremony and testified to the work of Front Line in the DRC.

✳ [www.kbs-frb.be](http://www.kbs-frb.be)

# Equal in eating, drinking and owning land

## Right to Food to help women improve their lives

The deprivation of the right to food often remains unheard and unnoticed. Despite enormous progress in global food production, 854 million people worldwide are still suffering from chronic under-nutrition and hunger. This massive human rights violation affects more than one-eighth of the world's population. Women suffer the most.

Right to Food problems are often rooted in law. Access to natural resources such as land or water is a case in point. Often, women are not recognized as equal to men before the law. Women's economic independence and ability to feed themselves are limited. Less than 2% of all land is owned by women. Family law may restrict administering property; inheritance of land is often denied. Further, discrimination affects aid policies and distribution schemes. It occurs in agrarian reform which frequently excludes women from obtaining land.

Most of the hungry belong to the marginalised parts of society: poor subsistence farmers, fisherwomen, wood dwellers in mountainous areas and other geographically, climatically and socially disadvantaged regions. Hunger hinders development and the lack of income and economic activity is a cause for new hunger. In addition, the majority of victims comprise members of ethnic or religious minorities, people discriminated against by tribal or social origin, people living with HIV and other illnesses, refugees, elderly, and children. None of those groups usually have much of a say in political and economic decision-making.

### Legal instruments and the human rights-based approach

The human rights-based approach to food security seeks to change this. The rights approach is as much about the outcome, ending hunger and malnutrition, as it is about empowering people to take control of their lives and ensuring a fair and transparent policy-making process to achieve these goals.

The 156 nations that ratified the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are obliged to ensure every person's access to the resources that enable her or him to produce, earn or purchase enough food to not only prevent hunger, but also to ensure health and well-being. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires States parties take into account the particular problems faced by rural women. It stipulates that they receive equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.

Furthermore, the Right to Food Guidelines (Voluntary Guidelines to Support the Progressive Realization of the Right to Adequate Food in the Context of National Food Security), accepted by all FAO member states, affirm the need



for "gender-sensitive legislation" and equal access to "productive resources, including credit, land, water and appropriate technologies".

### Pioneers for the Right to Food

In Brazil, mobilisation for social inclusion and food security by more than 800 different NGOs and support of the government has led to a successful "public-private partnership" towards realising the human right to adequate food. The policies rely on human rights-based accountability and recourse-mechanisms for the individual.

In a ground breaking decision in India, the Supreme Court has ordered all states to serve hot school meals in all government schools. In Uganda, Indonesia, South Africa, Sierra Leone and Mozambique governments have based policies on the right to food. Other countries are about to follow suit.

The FAO is advancing the Right to Food both for its intrinsic value and as an instrument for positive change. The Right to Food Guidelines provide the necessary internationally agreed reference guide and checklist for action. FAO's newly established Right to Food Unit helps governments and civil society to make changes. It offers legislative assistance, helps assess budgets and monitor policies from the human rights perspective and provides advocacy and training material for "rights-holders" and "duty-bearers" alike. A closer collaboration between Dimitra and the Unit is equally envisaged.

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# The Fourth Word Congress of Rural Women: A worldwide gathering of rural women

The 4th World Congress of Rural Women (WCRW) took place in Durban, South Africa from 23-26 April 2007. The aim of the Congress was to discuss universal and wide-ranging issues confronting rural women today and to share concrete experiences of successes in addressing these worldwide.

The WCRW is an international gathering of rural women, which occurs at four-year intervals. The hosting of this fourth edition by South Africa was informed by the resolutions of the 2002 Congress held in Spain.

Cecilia Yuyi, Programme Assistant at PROD- DER (The NGO and Development Directory of South Africa), attended the WCRW and confirms that "It was an opportunity for women all over the world to come together and share ideas." The Congress raised issues pertaining to rural women's development and how they can maintain their lives and spoke to the means and ways in which they can participate in the economy through the use of land and agriculture.

It provided rural women with the opportunity to interact with their counterparts from other parts of the world and, importantly, with potential donors. One of the topics discussed during the four-day gathering was the role played by governments in empowering rural women.

According to Yuyi, the idea that governments should provide rural women with micro-finance as a means of helping them to overcome poverty was strongly promoted.

On the negative side, Yuyi noted the exclusion of the rural women as key main speakers. Although the event was ostensibly for and about rural women, she observed that very few rural women were provided with the opportunity to present their own thoughts. "It was high profile people speaking to rural women about the plight of rural woman," she said.

Her observation was underscored by a demonstration of some 600 South African rural women outside the conference venue, protesting at the fact that they had been excluded from the Congress. One of the points raised by the aggravated women was the exclusion on technological grounds: they argued that many rural women had not been able to sign up for the Congress as they did not have access to e-mail or fax machines.

To break out of this pattern of having intellectuals and governments speak down to rural women, the Minister of State for Women and Child Development of India, Renuka Chowdhury, remarked that the next Congress should be held in a rural setting. The question remains whether this will truly remedy the problem...

However, despite the fact that the WCRW faces a few challenges, it must be acknowledged that it is a step in the right direction, as rural women badly need a platform where issues of concern to them are raised and discussed.

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✳ For more information on the WCRW, go to:  
[www.nda.agric.za/docs/WCRW/Default.htm](http://www.nda.agric.za/docs/WCRW/Default.htm)

## Madagascar – profile of a grassroots women's organisation FIVEMI, Fikambanana'ny Vehivavy Mihary

The FIVEMI Rural Women's Association, launched in 2005, has 50 members, aged between 20 and 50, all of whom are housewives.

### Financial independence

The objective of FIVEMI is to free women from financial dependence on their husbands and help them find sources of income for their homes. It aims to emancipate each of its members through employment and, above all, to provide them with vocational skills for their sector of activity.

The association carries out many activities in the agriculture and livestock breeding sectors, but is primarily active in the craft sector. It has been observed here that women complement each other well and develop synergies in terms of creativity. They produce different articles, such as bread carriers, spice holders, baskets, hats, mats, small bags, handbags, purses, rucksacks, embroidery, vases and decorative flowers.

The women use local materials such as ravin-dahasa (grown close to paddy fields) and aravola, collected, ground and dried in the sun. To buy raphia and penjy that have already been processed, they have to travel to the capital.

### Development of activities

The association did not originally have any funds but lived on contributions from its members, who strove to find outlets where they could sell their products. In a bid to raise its profile among tourists, the association joined a handicraft union, worked with shops to have its handicraft products displayed, and attended various fairs.

Through these initiatives, FIVEMI started to receive orders that have gradually contributed to its success. The majority of the association's customers are tourists who are particularly interested in craft products. The association deducts 10% from the price of articles sold in order to cover its operating costs, the rest of the income going to the producers.

### Working methods and organisation

In addition to monthly meetings, the President convenes a planning meeting when larger orders are placed. The members then organise themselves accordingly, in function of the size

of the order and the range of skills each member has.

### Problems encountered

Despite a growth in activities, the association has encountered obstacles such as a lack of funds when orders peak and a lack of training that prevents talent from being developed into a genuine professional activity. Another problem which hampers the development of this industry is the intermediaries, who ask for payment and thus reduce the profit made on the articles produced. Raw materials also should be processed using more modern techniques in order to boost profits.

The association, however, is striving to improve its activities and there is no doubt that the perseverance of the members and their solidarity will lead them towards success!

✳ For further information, contact  
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Manandona  
District Antsirabé II  
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Madagascar

## PUBLICATIONS

### 20 Key Gender Websites in French

This paper lists 20 websites in French which provide a variety of information on gender. These include sites from southern and northern based organisations and multilateral organisations who are involved in gender equality work and advocating for women's rights.

BRIDGE Bibliography 17  
[www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bibliographies.htm](http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/bibliographies.htm)

### Act, Learn and Teach: Theatre, HIV and AIDS Toolkit for Youth in Africa

What is the most effective strategy to educate the public, especially youth, in developing countries, about the HIV/AIDS pandemic? There may not be an easy answer. However, the use of theatre in creating public awareness about the disease has a lot of promises. Given the sensitive nature of HIV/AIDS in many societies, theatre provides a subtle way of addressing and exposing the issue in an indirect way. This is the objective behind this toolkit which focuses on the particular use of drama in HIV/AIDS education.

UNESCO & CCIVS, September 2006  
[unesdoc.unesco.org](http://unesdoc.unesco.org)

### Better Forestry, less Poverty: A Practitioner's Guide

This guide offers suggestions to practitioners and the rural communities they serve on ways to prevent, mitigate and reduce poverty through forest-based interventions. The document highlights the importance of tailoring activities to local circumstances and of using participatory approaches to design and implement interventions.

FAO, 2006  
[www.fao.org](http://www.fao.org)

### Bringing Women into Governance

This handbook focuses on efforts to bring women into governance, illustrating ways that organisations and activists around the world can foster greater gender equity in civic engagement, advocacy, voting and governance efforts to improve the quality of life for everyone. Six chapters highlight key approaches to supporting women's leadership to make governments worldwide more responsive to the needs of women.

CEDPA, 2006  
[www.cedpa.org](http://www.cedpa.org)

### Citoyens et média : guide pratique pour un dialogue entre citoyens et média

(Practical guide for dialogue between citizens and media)

This publication is a major contribution to the UNESCO campaign promoting citizen media and dialogue with the media, in particular between radio stations and civil society groups, and supporting the creation of citizen associations. The guide describes French-speaking countries in Africa and the Maghreb, and suggests good practices in line with the local population's identity and characteristics. It also includes a number of possible models, approaches and tips derived from experiences in other regions.

UNESCO, 2006 [in French only]  
[unesdoc.unesco.org](http://unesdoc.unesco.org)

### Community Radio Social Impact Assessment - Removing Barriers, Increasing Effectiveness. Challenges, Findings, Reflections, Experiences, Lines of Actions for Community Radio Stakeholders - AMARC Global Evaluation 2007

In a 2006 AMARC conducted a long-range participatory action research seeking to identify the barriers that limit the potential positive impact of community radio and explore ways to increase the effectiveness of community radio in achieving poverty reduction, development objectives, inclusiveness and democracy building in local communities.

AMARC, 2007  
[evaluation.amarc.org/evaluation.php](http://evaluation.amarc.org/evaluation.php)

### Developing Radio Partners: Guidebook on Sustainability

Through studies of six local independent radio stations, this guide on local radio management and sustainability proposes a different understanding of sustainability. The studies highlight different factors, including context, leadership, management, partnerships, programming, human and technical capacity, will, community support, audience research and many others, and show how they work together to contribute to the overall sustainability of stations.

Developing Radio Partners, 2006  
[www.developingradiopartners.org](http://www.developingradiopartners.org)

### Empowering Young Women to Lead Change

This manual is designed to enable young women to prepare and facilitate training on a host of issues that are important to them. It was developed by young women from different regions and contains modules on young women's leadership, economic justice, HIV/AIDS, human rights, peace, self esteem and body image, sexual and reproductive health, and violence against women. It contains many tips and activities for facilitators for working with young women.

World YWCA / UNFPA, 2006  
[www.unfpa.org](http://www.unfpa.org)

### Engaging Boys and Men to Empower Girls: Reflections from Practice and Evidence of Impact

This text reflects on the ways boys are socialized to see girls and women as sexually subservient. It also documents lessons learned from some of the emerging experiences in engaging boys and men in empowering girls and women in diverse settings. Experience shows that men and boys can and do change attitudes and behaviours in the short-term as a result of programme interventions, and that such outcomes are, in nearly all cases, positive for the well-being of women and girls, and men and boys themselves.

UNDAW, 2006  
[www.un.org/womenwatch/daw](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw)

### Gender and law. Women's Rights in Agriculture

This study analyses the gender dimension of agriculture-related legislation in a selection of different countries around the world, examining the legal status of women in three key areas: rights to land and other natural resources; rights of women agricultural workers; and rights concerning women's agricultural self-employment activities, rang-



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## WEBSITES

### FAO Right to Food Information and Knowledge

Through this interactive website, users can increase their awareness of the human right to food, access resources for capacity-building at national and international levels, and find guidance, methods and instruments to assist in implementation of the right to food at the country level. Resources include training materials and an e-learning course, and a virtual library containing manuals, technical papers, policy briefs, case studies and publications.

[www.fao.org/righttofood/portal\\_en.htm](http://www.fao.org/righttofood/portal_en.htm)

### Gender and Water Alliance (GWA)

GWA aims to promote women's and men's equitable access to and management of safe and adequate water, for domestic supply, sanitation, food security and environmental sustainability. It believes that equitable access to and control over water is a basic right for all, as well as a critical factor in promoting poverty eradication and sustainability.

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

### ITRAINONLINE

The Resources for Women section of this Website is aimed at both trainers and end users and offers links to resources specifically targeted at women. The resources are divided into the following categories: general women- and gender-related training resources; women-focussed ICTs; resources grouped by topic.

[www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/women](http://www.itrainonline.org/itrainonline/women)

### Rural Innovation Systems (RIS) Information Portal

This portal of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) not only provides free access to full-text electronic documents but also offers relevant links to newsletters, discussion groups, websites, and bibliographic databases, as well as access to directories of organisations and projects.

[portals.kit.nl](http://portals.kit.nl)





ing from women's status in rural cooperatives to their access to credit, training and extension services.

FAO Legislative Study No. 76 Rev. 1, 2006 (\$28)  
www.fao.org

#### ⊙ Ideas for Working with Girls

This CD-Rom consists of free games, training manuals, workshop guides, etc. for teachers, trainers and development workers who are working for and with girls. It includes interactive and participatory training guides and resources on rights, empowerment, violence against women and girls, HIV/AIDS, sexuality and reproductive health and leadership development.

IWTC, 2006  
www.iwtc.org

#### ⊙ In Search of Equality: A Survey of Law and Practice related to Women's Inheritance Rights in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

The focus of this survey was the legal situation of inheritance rights in 10 countries in the region, as well as women's actual experiences with respect to inheritance. The report reveals the complexity of the issues, identifies causes and consequences of inheritance rights violations, and recommends key changes, based on a human rights framework. The main finding is that inheritance laws should be reformed to embody full gender equality. Far more challenging will be the eradication of the cultural roots of discriminatory customs, traditions and notions. Education must also take high priority as most women are unaware of their rights.

COHRE, 2007  
www.cohre.org

#### ⊙ Linking Livelihoods and Gender Analysis for Achieving Gender Transformative Change

This paper is one of a series which addresses livelihood issues in access to natural resources. It reviews the key elements of livelihoods and gender perspectives and their "fit" with each other. It draws attention to the challenge of addressing gender issues within natural resource-based development programmes using a livelihoods perspective. The paper emphasises the need to go beyond gender role analysis and proposes some generic questions to help analyse changing gender relations. It also looks ahead towards ways in which the gender project might be framed in the future, and advocates for more support to non-farm natural resource-based interventions for building livelihoods, especially the livelihoods of rural women.

FAO, LSP Working Paper 41, 2006  
www.fao.org

#### ⊙ Question de genre. Un livre jeu sur l'égalité entre femmes et hommes au Nord et au Sud (A question of gender: a gamebook on gender equality in the North and the South)

For reading and playing (by yourself, in twos, threes or in a group), this gamebook featuring 20

illustrated colour cards on gender equality is suitable for all. It tackles the subject from various angles: testimonies, statistics, analyses, new ideas, extracts from legislation, games and tests. This is a book to be read and a game to be played, with examples and quotations from the Northern and Southern Hemispheres.

Le Monde selon les Femmes, 2007 (€10)  
[in French only]  
www.mondefemmes.org/publications

#### ⊙ Sexual Violence: Weapon of War, Impediment to Peace

Forced Migration Review (FMR) 27, March 2007

FMR 27 explores the challenges and opportunities for combating sexual violence in conflict, post-conflict and development recovery contexts. It builds on momentum generated by the June 2006 International Symposium on Sexual Violence in Conflict and Beyond, jointly convened by UNFPA, the EC and the Government of Belgium. Practice-oriented submissions from 40 specialists from a wide range of humanitarian agencies highlight key issues and challenges, best practices, innovative programmes and recommendations.

Refugee Studies Centre & UNFPA, 2007  
www.fmreview.org/sexualviolence.htm

#### ⊙ The Other Half of Gender: Men's Issues in Development

This book is an attempt to bring the gender and development debate full circle, from a much-needed focus on empowering women to a more comprehensive gender framework that considers gender as a system that affects both women and men. The book explores definitions of masculinity and male identities in a variety of social contexts, drawing from experiences in Latin America, the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa.

The World Bank, 2006 (35\$)  
publications.worldbank.org

#### ⊙ The Shame of War: Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Conflict

This reference book and photo essay of portraits and testimonies of the sexual violence women suffer when men go to war examines the scope and nature of this violence and looks at the different ways the international community is addressing sexual violence against women and girls during and after conflict.

OCHA/IRIN, 2007  
www.irinnews.org

#### ⊙ The State of the World's Children 2007 - Women and Children: The Double Dividend of Gender Equality

This report examines the discrimination and disempowerment women face throughout their lives – and outlines what must be done to eliminate gender discrimination and empower women and girls. It looks at the status of women today, discusses how gender equality will move all the Millennium Devel-



opment Goals forward, and shows how investment in women's rights will ultimately produce a double dividend: advancing the rights of both women and children.

UNICEF, 2006  
www.unicef.org

#### ⊙ What Happened to the Women? Gender and Reparations for Human Rights Violations

This book chronicles human rights violations against women in the context of violent conflict, with a focus on what these crimes mean to the women themselves and what happens in their aftermath. A key subject is that of reparations to women who have suffered, and a consideration of how these procedures can take into account the particular nature of violations suffered by women, while contributing to increasing women's status as equal citizens.

SSRC, 2006  
www.ssrc.org

#### ⊙ Women Ink. Catalogue of Books and Training Resources on Women and Development

Featuring over 70 new books from women's organisations and mainstream university and small presses worldwide, this catalogue is a "must have" for academics, activists and development practitioners who want to keep current on new thinking in the field of women, gender and development.

Women Ink., International Women's Tribune Centre, 2006

To receive a free copy, contact joey@womenink.org

#### ⊙ Working with the Media on Gender and Education: A Guide for Training and Planning

This guide is designed to help education and gender campaigners work more effectively with the media to promote gender-equitable education. It explores issues relating to gender equality in education and contains practical advice on working with the media. Throughout the guide suggestions of activities (accompanied by a set of worksheets) to help groups generate discussion and explore the issues addressed in more depth are given.

Oxfam, 2006  
www.oxfam.org.uk