RURAL WOMEN, DYNAMISATION OF NETWORKS AND THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV/AIDS IN RURAL AREAS

FAO-Dimitra/CTA Workshop

June, 2005

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In memory of Sissel Ekaas

This publication is dedicated to the memory of Sissel Ekaas, former Director of the Gender and Population Division at FAO (1998-2004), who passed away in Oslo on June 23, 2005.

Sissel devoted her entire career to reducing gender inequalities and working for the rights of rural women.

We sincerely valued her active participation in the previous Dimitra Relaunch Workshop, which was held in Brussels in October 2002. This photograph was taken on that occasion.

Sissel's support for the Dimitra project was greatly appreciated and her optimism, energy and determination remain with us and continue to inspire our work.

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FOREWORD

Dear friends,

As many of you already know, Dimitra is an information and communication project implemented by the Gender and Population Division of FAO with the aim of empowering rural populations by building capacities and facilitating access to information. These are crucial tools in the fight against hunger and poverty, and in the promotion of gender equality.

The project works with local partners in Africa and the Near East and is a tool to enable rural women, through their associations and grassroots organisations, to make their voices heard. Modern and traditional information and communication technologies are used to encourage networking and share information.

Dimitra uses a participatory approach throughout its activities and at the launch of each new project phase the partner organisations have come together in Brussels to exchange ideas, experiences and determine a shared agenda of priorities and future actions. In June 2005, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU (CTA) and the Dimitra project decided to organise a joint Workshop which brought together 22 representatives of the partner organisations from the two networks.

CTA partners work in the African, Caribbean and Pacific regions. The theme *"Rural women, dynamisation of networks and the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas"* reflects some of the pressing issues of concern faced by both Dimitra and CTA. By sharing their objectives and the challenges they face, the Workshop participants were able to draw up a common action plan based on their experiences and best practices.

As a follow-up to the Workshop, Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) in collaboration with ENDA-Pronat, Senegal, and the Pacific Islands Energy Gender Network are hosting a one-year online discussion on the Dgroups forum, entitled *"Strengthening rural women's networks with regards to information and communication, and combating HIV/AIDS in rural areas"*. This ongoing electronic discussion is hosted in English and French and brings together the Dimitra/CTA networks involved in the June 2005 meeting as well as other organisations interested and involved in supporting rural women's networks.

Since the June workshop, ENDA-Pronat now integrates a module on HIV/AIDS into all its agricultural training activities. In Senegal and the DRC, Dimitra and the FAO communication for development service work on building synergies between rural radios and rural women networks. A workshop with rural women's networks and rural community radios was organised in South Kivu, DRC in February 2006 and another is scheduled in Katanga in December, with the support of the King Baudouin Foundation and other donors.

This publication draws together the many elements that made the June workshop so powerful and enriching – showcasing the results of lively brainstorming sessions, the individual experiences of the Dimitra and CTA partners, action strategies for the future and the results of interactions with development stakeholders.

We trust you will enjoy reading it and look forward to your reactions.

Marcela Villarreal
Director, Gender and Population Division, FAO

List of Participants

- Ali Abdoulaye   [ONG-VIE | *Niger*]
- David Barnard   [SANGONeT | *South Africa*]
- Aristide Bashige Ndjuzi   [GTZ-Santé | *Democratic Republic of Congo*]
- Isolina Boto   [CTA | *Belgium*]
- Faten Bouktif   [CREDIF | *Tunisia*]
- Christine Butegwa   [FEMNET | *Kenya*]
- Yogita Chandra Bhikabhai   [PEG | *Fiji Islands*]
- Janet Cox Achora   [WOUGNET | *Uganda*]
- Cynthia deWindt   [Facilitator | *Curaçao*]
- Tiziana Franceschelli   [Dimitra Project | *Belgium*]
- Mourad Gourouhi   [AMSED | *Morocco*]
- Judith Gracey   [Dimitra Project | *Belgium*]
- Jean-Pierre Ilboudo   [FAO | *Italy*]
- Isabelle Kalihangabo   [PROFEMMES/TWESE HAMWE | *Rwanda*]
- Rose Mensah-Kutin   [ABANTU for Development | *Ghana*]
- Pierre Paul Misigaro   [CTA | *Belgium*]
- Elise Muhimuzi   [CONAFED | *Democratic Republic of Congo*]
- Lubinda Mutemwa Tafira   [ZAW | *Zambia*]
- Eliane Najros   [Dimitra Project | *Belgium*]
- Fatou Ndiaye Sow   [ENDA-PRONAT | *Senegal*]
- Oumi Ndiaye   [CTA | *Belgium*]
- Adeline Nsimire   [SAMWAKI | *Democratic Republic of Congo*]
- Rosalie Ouoba   [RESACIFROAT | *Burkina Faso*]
- Rose Rajbansee   [CNRWP | *Trinidad & Tobago*]
- Vololomihaja Rasamimanana   [ONE | *Madagascar*]
- Angès Rubagire   [Réseau des Femmes | *Rwanda*]
- Mariam Sow   [ENDA-PRONAT | *Senegal*]
- Alan Stanfeld   [Dimitra Project | *Belgium*]
- Wilbert Tengey   [ACHD | *Ghana*]
- Sophie Treinen   [FAO | *Italy*]
- Ghaleb Tuffaha   [CARDNE | *Jordan*]
- Stella Williams   [Food Basket | *Nigeria*]

Structure of

12 June

Arrival and Welcome

◎ Arrival of the participants
◎ Coach tour of Brussels
◎ Welcome dinner

13-15 June

Groupwork Sessions

◎ Exchange of ideas and strengthening of links between Workshop participants, *Résidence Palace, Brussels*

Understanding Our Past

◎ **FAO-DIMITRA and CTA Networks**
   The networks and organisations consider what they have achieved so far.

◎ **Rural women & the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas**
   An opportunity to take stock of significant events and milestones in the fight against HIV/AIDS

Focusing on the Present

◎ **Looking at the important external trends and events which have influenced the networks**
   The participants discuss how they are responding to current trends and think about what they would like to do in the future

◎ **"Prouds" and "Sorries" - Owning Up**
   The participants focus on what they see as their contributions to successful networking and what they need to do to become more dynamic

◎ **Sharing symbolic artefacts**
   Through sharing of traditional objects, the participants consider some of the common influences on networking for rural women's development

The Future of Networking for Rural Women in 2010

◎ **Looking ahead together**
   Outlining plans and hopes shared by the participants and working together to bring meaningful and positive changes for rural women, and FAO-DIMITRA & CTA networking in the year 2010

Bringing It All Together in a Common Vision

   The partners focus on producing common action plans and giving their ideas mobility

the Workshop

16-17 June

Information Crossroads

◎ Interaction and exchange between donors, stakeholders and the Workshop participants

King Baudouin Foundation, Brussels

Sustainable Networks

The group is presented with information from donor agencies such as the World Bank, UNAIDS, WHO, ACP Secretariat, CONCORD, the Belgian Development Cooperation, etc. on funds available and the criteria & procedures used by the various agencies

Interaction and Exchange – North Meets South

Exchange and interaction with representatives from different agencies, including FAO, the King Baudouin Foundation, CTA, the Ugandan and South African Embassies

Voices from the South

The participants share the outcomes of their groupwork sessions with decision-makers, representatives of international agencies and NGOs

Commitment for the Future

The participants evaluate lessons learnt during the Workshop and commit to work together in the future with a common purpose

The Workshop at a glance

A STEP ALONG THE ROAD TO STRONGER NETWORKS

When the Dimitra Project and CTA (the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation ACP-EU) brought together 22 representatives of their networks from Africa, the Near East, the Caribbean and the Pacific regions in Brussels, they paved the way to strengthen existing links and build new ones.

The theme of the Workshop was "Rural women, dynamisation of networks and the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas". This reflected many of the common concerns and challenges faced by the organisations, regardless of the diverse sectors and countries represented. By pooling knowledge, experience, plans and solutions, each participant brought something valuable to the discussions and left packed with energy, fresh ideas, increased motivation as well as an enlarged netwok built on support and exchanges!

OBJECTIVES

Defining common objectives

The main objectives of this get-together were:

◎ to look at ways of enabling networks to grow stronger, attract funds to assure their sustainability and develop strategies together to strengthen one another;

◎ to strengthen information collection and management skills and build capacity in communication techniques;

◎ to exchange experiences and knowledge on the impact of HIV/AIDS in rural areas, particularly on women, who are the principal victims of this pandemic and to analyse its effects on food security and rural community life;

◎ to define common activities that could reinforce the various organisations and networks participating in the Workshop.

Exchange and enrichment

The Workshop got off to a strong start, with bonds quickly forming amongst the participants thanks to a convivial welcome dinner and tour of Brussels.

The first three days were to focus on defining common areas of interest and improving networking skills. The Dimitra and CTA partner organisations set out to explore their past and present experiences for lessons to share and considered ways to plan future initiatives together.

On Monday morning the Workshop got into full swing with a presentation of its objectives and programme. This was the moment for the participants to speak about their activities and background and to share what they personally hoped to take away from the meeting.

By dividing discussions between plenary and small-group discussions, everyone had the opportunity to make a contribution and exchange personal experiences of successes and failures.

ACTIVITIES

Laying strong foundations

Working successfully as a network means acting together with a common purpose. The small-group discussions provided a perfect opportunity for the participants to explore synergies, and consider how they can work more closely together and bring changes to their communities and wider environment. Following brainstorming sessions, the resulting information and ideas were structured and presented as clear visual maps and timelines for more in-depth discussions on important trends, activities currently underway and possible future actions.

This also helped to focus on how to create efficient networks and enabled everyone to visualise critical issues and concerns which they have in common.

Building on common experiences

Some key issues which formed the basis of the groupwork discussions included improving the status of women, capacity building and strengthening partnerships as well as defining and developping information and communication strategies. Sessions were also devoted to exploring links between AIDS and poverty, how to go about organising training and information meetings and considering ways of securing more institutional and political support.

Facing up to the challenge of HIV/AIDS

The HIV/AIDS pandemic represents an enormous challenge to all the organisations represented at the Workshop. Since they work in rural development and not in the health sector, it is mainly in this context that they are fighting the pandemic. In spite of its heavy toll on agriculture and food security most of the response to HIV/AIDS has come from the health sector. As AIDS continues to spread rapidly in rural areas, where the overwhelming majority of those affected are the rural poor, the agricultural sector is increasingly in dire need of support. This means revising the content and delivery of its services as well as the process of agricultural knowledge transfer in communities where the workforce is dying out before skills can be passed onto the next generation.

Considering new approaches

In the smaller groups, discussions centred on concrete actions which the participants could take to tackle HIV/AIDS in rural areas, especially amongst women.

The partners' current work focuses on issues such as the campaign for free drugs, developing a legal framework to address

HIV/AIDS, advocacy for more resources for people living with HIV and awareness-raising campaigns.

Future actions proposed include placing more emphasis on addressing the impact of AIDS on livelihoods and food security in rural areas and working to further integrate HIV-infected persons into the community.

The plenary sessions also acted as a forum for sharing practical experiences and examples of different approaches, including those of FAO and CTA, to the fight against HIV/AIDS. These ranged from the establishment of Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools for vulnerable children to sensitisation of all sectors of society, information provision, networking and support at national and regional levels.

Finding the right tools to link up

Effective information and communication strategies are key to the day-to-day work of all the organisations and the participants reflected together on the most effective information tools and techniques to strengthen their networks and fight against HIV/AIDS.

Defining and using appropriate and innovative information and communication technologies would also ensure that the Dimitra and CTA networks continue to establish future strategies and partnerships.

Exploring the potential of rural radios

Rural community radios play an essential role in helping highlight local knowledge and experiences, raising awareness and enabling people to work towards social change. They also promote the involvement of the community and the development of local content. In the past ten years, community radio has established an innovative role for itself in development processes in Africa, helping address crucial issues such as human rights, livelihoods and governance.

Detailed information on the potential and practicality of rural radio and the accessibility of online exchange and learning through IMARK (Information Management Resource Kits developed by FAO and Dgroups (electronic discussion groups sponsored by the World Bank and FAO, amongst others) opened up new avenues for the participants to explore in their mission to improve information sharing with, and for, rural women.

Tapping into our shared resources

Before coming to Brussels, all the participants were requested to bring an artefact with them which they considered symbolised networking and rural women.

It was striking how many of these artefacts had common themes, for example weaving and the way in which it draws together many different threads of colour and patterns; the links & beads in a chain or bracelets symbolising that when women stand strong together they are seen and heard; the wood carved from trees that have deep roots and which remains a living material.

One particularly evocative symbol which captured everyone's imagination was the nomads calabash. This wooden eating bowl is made by one ethnic group, embellished with leather and weaving by another person and used by many people to eat together, when they share a meal. Everyone takes their turn to dip in their hand and take food from this common source.

This experience reinforced the message that the commonalities of the networks are more important than their differences and encouraged greater mutual understanding. As a result, everyone was further motivated to combine their ideas into a joint action plan that the group could collaborate on at local, national and regional level.

Building capacities and sustainability

On its fourth day, the Workshop moved to the premises of the King Baudouin Foundation and the format changed from open discussions and groupwork to formal presentations and specialised information exchange.

The emphasis still remained strongly focused on how to build the capacities of the organisations represented and strengthen and sustain networks.

Donor agencies, including the World Bank, UNAIDS, the World Health Organisation, the ACP Secretariat and the Belgian Development Cooperation provided information on financing sources and outlined their application criteria and procedures. Representatives of rural organisations need to be well informed and trained so as to access available funding. Too often it is only large organisations that are already acquainted with application procedures which benefit from financing, while smaller organisation repeatedly struggle to get a first step on the ladder.

The important information gathered during this session also fed into and enriched the action plans that the groups had started drawing up at the close of the groupwork sessions.

Information exchange with development actors

The final day of the Workshop was set aside for interactions between participants and representatives from various agencies, including FAO, the King Baudouin Foundation, CTA, the Belgian Development Cooperation, the European Commission, the Commission on Women and Development, the European Confederation of NGOs (CONCORD) and the Ugandan and South African Embassies, and representatives from ACP countries.

This open discussion enabled the participants to share the results of their work with a wider public and set the scene for a dynamic exchange of lessons learnt and information between Donors, international organisations, NGOs, and networks working to improve the livelihoods of rural populations, particularly women.

Concrete plan of action

During this session the participants presented the strategies for the future they had worked on in the small groups. It was also the moment to present their common and final action plan, which drew together the many strands they had defined and discussed. This document highlighted the need to build on the network's past experiences and develop their skills and know-how through training, exchange meetings and lobbying strategies. In particular it emphasised the need to strengthen the organisational and operational framework of rural women's organisations to promote the emergence of national networks; as well as finding a way to link focal points to encourage more regional networks. Looking ahead, the participants plan to draw up and carry out an action programme against HIV/AIDS, together with the national rural women's networks, which takes into account the essential aspects of food security and illiteracy.

Another step towards stronger links

As the Workshop drew to a close on Friday evening everyone sat in a circle to reflect on the achievements and lessons of the past week and, as a result, what they were willing to commit to in the future.

Judging from the comments, the meeting met its objective of strengthening the two networks with a better capacity to exchange and share information. In addition the participants produced joint strategies for sustainable activities to benefit rural women, enabling the Dimitra and CTA partners and members to collaborate further in the future.

During the course of the five days the participants worked hard, enjoyed themselves, strengthened their links and forged a common vision.

In their own words: *"The power of people connecting with each other around issues of common concern was powerfully demonstrated"*.

RESULTS

The main resolutions taken at the close of the week's discussions were:

◎ to share information on the discussions held in Brussels with the wider network members;

◎ to inform other groups and rural communities on the information gathered during the Workshop;

◎ to disseminate this information through newsletters, during oral presentations, on websites, etc.

◎ to strive to mobilise financial resources and secure greater support through combined efforts with other networks ;

◎ to increase exchanges with networks from other countries and regions met in June;

◎ to make more use of new ICTs, in particular to exchange ideas prior to the organisation of the next meeting and to follow up on the June discussions.

COMBINED ACTION PLAN CREATED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

Objectives	Actions
To strengthen the organisational and operational framework of rural women's organisations, with the emergence of national networks in mind	To organise meetings for information and awareness-raising concerning the dynamics of the rural women's networks
	To develop local and regional partnerships
	To organise training sessions for rural women's associations (network dynamics, information management and HIV/AIDS), in order to empower rural women.
To establish a mechanism for linking focal points with a view to the emergence of regional networks	To reinforce the institutional and organisational capabilities of the focal points, in particular by organising training, exchange meetings and by acquiring logistical material (ICTs and others)
Together with the national rural women's networks, to draw up and carry out an action programme against HIV/AIDS, taking into account the aspects of food security and illiteracy	Information and training meetings concerning HIV/AIDS, agricultural policies, environmental protection (conventions on desertification, biodiversity, etc), education of women and young girls
	Meeting to determine lobbying strategies to be adopted by the rural women's networks concerning the issue of the HIV/AIDS pandemic
	Implementation of mechanisms allowing the rural women's networks to take part in implementing, monitoring and assessing strategies combating poverty in these countries

Evaluation: the evaluation should include a participatory assessment, involving the rural women's networks first and foremost

Methodology: a participatory approach

A DYNAMIC FACILITATION PROCESS: BRINGING NETWORKING TO LIFE

An inclusive methodology

Cynthia de Windt, who very successfully facilitated the 2002 Dimitra Workshop, was called upon once again to bring her skills, energy and humour to the animation of this event.

The meeting was held for the first three days at the International Press Centre (Résidence Palace) and the subsequent two days at the King Baudouin Foundation premises.

Preparing for the meeting required close cooperation between Cynthia, Dimitra and CTA teams. However, the practical experiences of the Dimitra and the CTA partners were the real driving force at the heart of the Workshop and the process of participation and consultation proved to be key factors in its ultimate success.

Defining themes

Several months prior to the event, the participants contributed written accounts of their ongoing work in one or both of the areas to be covered by the discussions, i.e. *'The sustainability of networks'* or *'The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women'*. These outlined common concerns and actions as well as the challenges faced by the organisations on a day-to-day basis.

A review of the conclusions of the last Dimitra Workshop in 2002 also highlighted several themes that required further exploration, particularly a strong desire to focus on improving networking skills and creating more opportunities for South-South exchanges.

In addition, this planning stage took into account the Dimitra partners' responses to a self-assessment questionnaire sent in November 2004. This looked at the impact of the project on their ongoing work, how they use information they re-

ceive through the network, the positive and wider impacts of information exchange and their proposals for sustaining the network and building on its achievements.

The Workbook

On the basis of the contributions sent by the Dimitra and CTA partners, Cynthia produced a "workbook" to structure the group discussions during the Workshop. This provided an empty framework to be completed by the participants as they explored and shared their own experiences. As such it fulfilled its role as a 'map' to guide the discussions in this diverse group at various stages of networking experience, yet with similar partners in similar working environments.

In order to ensure the discussions remain focused, the partners worked their way through an array of tasks which helped them discover sometimes hidden resources in themselves along the way.

Planning for clear thinking

The methodology followed four basic rules:
– "Get the whole system in the room"
– "Think globally before thinking locally"
– "The group self manages its work"
– "Seek common purpose rather than conflict management"

The participants helped set the Workshop's priorities at each stage of the journey and worked together to lead the activities and discussions, hence increasing their sense of ownership over the final results and action plans. This 'hands-on' approach means they will be able to replicate the facilitation process if they want to organise similar events with their own member organisations and networks in the future.

This representation of a 'four-room apartment' signified the process which the participants would go through on their journey to building a cohesive network with common goals.

Building on common life experiences

The groupwork helped the diverse participants to review the Past, reflect on the Present and project a possible Future together. By completing three timelines the participants were encouraged to consider their experiences and influences at international, organisational and personal levels. This demonstrated the similar situations encountered by all of the Workshop participants, regardless of differences of language, continent and

Ground rules

In order to ensure that everyone could have their say and important points would be recorded for future discussion, analysis and action, some ground rules were established:
– All ideas are valid
– Everything is written on flip charts
– All participants listen to each other
– Time frames are observed
– We are seeking a common purpose
– Differences and problems are acknowledged

Groupwork

A working agreement was established between the organisers and the participants. The organisers set tasks, monitored timing, led large group discussions and helped focus on keeping the purpose of the Workshop clear and to the forefront. The participants agreed to provide information and make sense of their experiences, manage their own small discussion groups and develop future scenarios and action steps.

The spark of interest was lit during plenary sessions when everyone had their say and in-depth discussions in smaller mixed groups provided the opportunity to really explore issues in depth and exchange experiences, ideas and solutions.

Changing working groups for different tasks encouraged a fusion of skills and experiences which crossed barriers of language and geography.

As an important part of the methodology, Cynthia presented "The cycle of understanding and dynamisation".

The cycle of understanding and dynamisation

4 Room Apartment
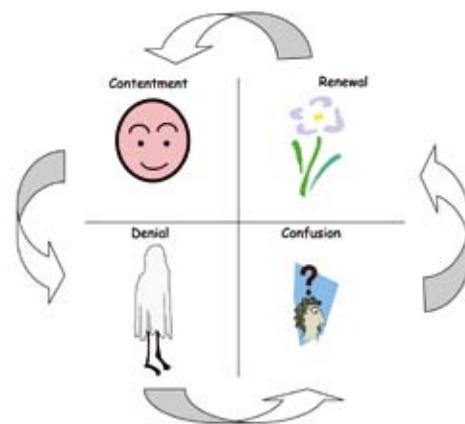
sex and created a solid foundation of understanding on which to build common objectives and activities.

Symbolism of networking

Each participant brought to the Workshop a symbolic artefact to represent networking with rural women.

Some examples of objects included: an image of a computer made of bent wire; woven cloth from Ghana; batik-printed cotton pagnes from Zambia; a woven bead ornament; a chain-necklace; a beaded bracelet; wood carvings; small sculptures; a calabash used by nomads from the Sahel.

The sharing of these objects inspired a great deal of fascination and emotion. The value of these symbols has emotionally touched each participant regardless of his/her origin. This emotional sharing played a unifying role within the group.

Evaluation

The best measure of the success of the Workshop methodology comes from the participants' comments at its conclusion. There is no doubt that they gave the participative approach the 'thumbs up'. Here are just some extracts from the comments:

◎ **"We have had great opportunities for exchange"**

◎ **"I enjoy learning about other peoples activities"**

◎ **"Although our organisations are very different, we have similar objectives"**

◎ **"By the end of the first day we became a cohesive group, crossing language, cultural and geographic borders."**

GROUPWORK

THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE AND SHAPE OUR WORK, OUR GOALS AND OUR LIVES

To encourage the participants to discuss the multitude of factors that influence them in their work and their daily lives, they noted down particular events, incidents and experiences over the past 10 years, which they felt held particular significance. These were divided into key themes of their work: influencing factors on a global scale, influencing factors concerning HIV/AIDS and rural women; influencing factors linked to the Dimitra and CTA networks and factors which have influenced their personal lives.

Influencing factors at local, national and global levels

– Growing networks of women at the grassroots level
– More national networks established
– Formation of global and regional networks
– Improved distribution of information
– Advances made in communication tools and techniques
– Political repercussions on social development and global entities
– Global commitments made on development issues
– Increased North/South collaboration
– Protocol to African Charter on Human and People's Rights/Rights of Women in Africa
– African Development Forum
– World Food Summit
– Beijing+5 conference
– Declaration of Millennium Development Goals
– World Summit on Information Society
– Beijing+10
– World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002)
– Madrid conference: focus on rural women

Implications

◎ Challenges of improving the welfare of people at the grassroots level

◎ Finding ways to turn commitments into decisions and actions – from the policy makers at the highest level to the grassroots

Influencing factors concerning rural women and AIDS

– Continuing spread of AIDS in Africa (example Uganda)
– Creation of international awareness/campaigns
– Objectives set by Millennium Development Goals
– Intensified advocacy on national levels because of international processes
– More information disseminated in rural areas
– Enhanced roll-out of antiretroviral drugs
– Awareness about better nutrition
– More awareness on the impact of AIDS on food security
– Better international statistics available to inform awareness and policy processes (e.g. UNAIDS)
– More national networks established and better coordination between networks/authorities
– Protocol to African Charter on Human and People's Rights in relation to womens rights in Africa.

Implications

◎ The devastating impact of AIDS on rural communities and on women in particular is increasingly recognised

◎ Need to find urgent and lasting solutions to problems such as access to information, medical treatment, resources, isolation, etc.

Influencing factors linked to Dimitra & CTA networks

– Help to support rural women to prepare to actively participate in community life
– Help encourage rural women to speak out about their situation for their whole community
– Networking has helped connect various organisations
– National meetings have been held
– Information and periodic meetings are organised
– Members participate in regional forums and sub-regional meetings
– Debriefing and information notes are distributed
– Activities relate directly to rural women's livelihood concerns

Implications

◎ Positive influence on how rural women can actively participate at various levels

◎ Need to continue to encourage creation of networks of women at the grassroots levels

Influencing factors at a personal level

Changes in terms of:
– Work
– Family life
– Networking experience
– Creation of new NGOs
– Participation at international conferences
– Development of gender activities

Implications

"When rural women discover that urban women take the power they realise that they have to organise themselves better!"

KEY THEMES

◎ Communication
◎ Women's networks
◎ Capacity building
◎ Information strategy
◎ Links between AIDS/Poverty

◎ Institutional support
◎ Improve inferior status of women
◎ Political support
◎ Human-rights based approach linked to development issues
◎ Reproductive rights

◎ Local, National and Regional partnerships

"It's amazing that we have achieved
so much, worked so hard and been
so creative while enjoying ourselves
together. "

WHAT ARE WE DOING RIGHT NOW?

Some examples

◎ Strengthing our organisations and networks

– Proactively raising funds
– Working for sustainability
– Focusing on staff development, accountability and actions for good governance
– Encouraging/mobilising networks to work together
– Training, fund raising, proposal writing
– Mentoring, transferring skills
– Organising workshops and seminars
– Providing legal, logistical and other practical support to partners and networks
– Working with universities, international women's networks, local NGOs and regional networks
– Creating an alliance of CBOs and NGOs at national level

◎ Fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS

– Advocating for more resources for people living with HIV/AIDS
– Developing an effective legal framework relating to HIV/AIDS
– Integrating prevention and the fight against AIDS into development projects (micro credit, literacy, income-generating activities)
– Working on a primary strategy to fight HIV/AIDS & reinforcing the agricultural sector
– Empowering AIDS orphans
– Promoting the integration of the "right to life and to health" approach in the fight against HIV/AIDS
– Campaigning for free drugs

◎ Advocating for change

– Working/advocating for gender equity/equality
– Mobilising women
– Lobbying for good governance
– Advocating for political commitment
– Raising awareness amongst policymakers
– Advocating for policy making on HIV/AIDS, bearing in mind the poverty aspect
– Developing communication strategies which recognise and value traditional communication techniques and which take NICTs into account
– Awareness raising on reproductive rights
– Working in coalition to pass a domestic violence bill

◎ Making innovative use of communication tools and techniques

– Developing a comprehensive strategy with community rural radios
– Using alternative and traditional communication media: puppets, drama, popular media
– Providing training/ support using ICT tools
– Providing technical support (troubleshooting), ICT training, community radio, local content development,
– Communicating by mobile phones, face to face visits and using local languages
– Using printed material, video, audio and TV to relay messages
– Trying to influence communication policies to take rural women's needs into account
– Participating in e-forum discussions, using mailing lists, e-newsletters etc.
– Using Internet telephone
– Promoting World space radio (digital sattelite radio)
– Forging links with communication programmes
– Producing Websites, newsletters

◎ Working to improve lives in rural areas

– Supporting poverty alleviation programmes to improve livelihoods
– Working to improve women's economic, legal, social status
– Building on achievements
– Empowering through information (access)
– Bringing men and women together
– Working on cross-cutting issues – integrating a human rights based approach across all programmes
– Disseminating information and training on rights (education, land, citizenship)
– Providing support to women to fully enjoy their rights
– Strengthening rural women's status
– Taking a human-rights-based development approach
– Building capacities through training

PROUDS AND REGRETS

The participants have many achievements of which they are proud. One session devoted time to sharing initiatives that had been successful for them. On the other hand they also identified areas where they need to concentrate more efforts in the future to improve the impact of their actions.

We are PROUD that ...

- We have established networks
- Our network has a strong reputation
- We provide up to date & useful information for advocacy
- We provide capacity building opportunities
- We are carrying out advocacy work at regional and international level
- We stay positive and persevere
- We get a lot of positive feedback
- We are regional coordinators for Dimitra
- We are able to reach out and work with many urban/rural women
- We advocate for men to promote and support women's issues and rights;
- Young women can read in their local languages
- Rural women participate in the drafting of action plans

- We capitalise on the experiences of farmer organisations
- We value local knowledge
- We have set up a concertation framework for rural women
- We have implemented a South-South cooperation dynamic
- We have integrated HIV prevention into development programmes
- We carry out decentralised training
- We mobilised several partners during the 15th October World Rural Women's Day celebrations (influenced the Ministry for Gender and Promotion of the Family)
- We lobby to influence women so they can participate in decision making
- Women took action as citizens and participated in elections (training entitled "Women can do it!")
- We advocate for changes to discriminatory laws
- A rural women's network has been established in South Kivu
- Women's grassroots leadership is beginning to emerge
- Voluntary HIV testing and advice centres and centres for prevention of transmission of HIV from mother to child have been established with the involvement of grassroots organisations from South Kivu
- Women's networks have been established in Madagascar, the Comores, Mauritius and the Seychelles
- We have created a list of hospitality contacts (Caribbean)

We REGRET that ...

– There is a lack of accessible information & resources
– We did not do enough to raise gender awareness amongst policy makers
– We lack people willing to participate and share information
– The human aspect is sometimes minimised as ICTs advances
– We do not carry out enough fundraising
– We have not maximised ICT potential within the network (eg. Skype)
– We allow tradition and culture to discourage gender initiatives
– We have not involved enough traditional authorities in the networking process
– Not enough attention is paid to AIDS awareness information dissemination
– We do not have enough direct contact with Dimitra rural women's organisations
– We lack access to new ICTs
– We do not have direct contact with member organisations & rural women, only web-based contacts

– We do not invest adequate time in the Dimitra project/rural women networks
– We do not have sufficient funds to do everything we want to do
– There is a lack of political commitment in my country
– There is a limited number of rural women participating
– We have not been able to train more women in reproductive health
– Associations have limited access to ICTs
– There are insufficient partnerships at local levels
– We lack a clear communication strategy on HIV/AIDS in rural areas
– Our financing sources are not sufficiently diversified
– There is a lack of support to our networks and members
– Due to lack of financing our newsletter can no longer be published
– Violence against women is always present
– We lack time
– We lack financial and human resources

WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES?

Bringing real change at policy levels
- Raising awareness on policy concerning reproductive rights
- Intensifying advocacy efforts to pass laws related to reproductive rights
- Encouraging participatory processes
- Increasing advocacy on women's participation in decision making
- Driving the role of civil society in lobbying for changes for rural women
- Developing and implementing action plans

Enabling better access to appropriate information
- Increasing access to ICTs/ tools in rural areas
- Making content of information and communication campaigns more relevant
- Tailoring programmes to different audiences
- Building links between rural women and community radios – training rural communicators
- Increasingly strengthening links with new information technologies
- Exchanging more information through stronger and broader networks

Continuing to act as agents of change
- Continuing to increase women's legal, economic and social status
- Increasing representation of women and sensitising men to be gender aware
- Joining regional women's networks
- Building a stronger alliance with FAO/Dimitra/CTA
- Developing a long-term strategic plan
- Continuing to exchange information and experiences
- Taking a multi-sectoral approach
- Gaining greater institutional support
- Bringing information to the grassroots level

Making advances against HIV/AIDS
- Giving priority to addressing the impact of AIDS in rural areas
- Working to further integrate HIV- infected persons into the community
- Making the availability of free/cheap drugs a reality
- Having improved healthcare facilities
- Channelling information on the impact of HIV/AIDS from the grassroots up to policy makers
- Securing gender equality – which goes hand-in-hand with the fight against AIDS

Seeing our networks & organisations go from strength to strength
- Networking women's networks and working to increase sustainability
- Sourcing further funding and partners
- Representing ourselves at international forums
- Strengthening advocacy and lobbying skills for greater impact
- Strengthening sub-regional networks
- Adopting common strategies and actions
- Improving coordination to find synergies

Strategies for the future

VISION OF THE NETWORK IN 2010

Together the participants considered how the network might look like in 2010

The network will function on several levels:

◎ **Local** ◎ **National** ◎ **Regional** ◎ **International**

Local level
Vision 2010

Local networks are composed of grassroots organisations, NGOs, women's and mixed groups and collectives working for rural women. Committed communities are well trained, informed and equipped.

National level
Vision 2010

More national networks are formed strengthening and giving weight to the voices of rural populations and grassroots organisations. Government policy relates to rural women's livelihood concerns.

Regional level
Vision 2010

Intra/inter network linkages and capacity building with sub-regional groups. Members of local organisations and networks participate in regional forums and sub-regional meetings.

International level
Vision 2010

A dynamic, effective network composed of local networks which are trained, informed and equipped with appropriate information and communication materials (valuing traditional tools as well as the acquisition of new information and communication technologies).

Potential partners

– UN agencies (e.g. UNAIDS, UNDP, UNIFEM, WHO, etc.)
– The European Commission
– Foundations (e.g. Aga Khan, King Baudouin, Bill & Melinda Gates, Ford, etc.)
– World Bank
– African Development Bank
– Other bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors

Focus of advocacy work

Reinforce efforts to bring change to legal and institutional policies, e.g.
– Violence
– Domestic Relations
– Land Tenure
– Gender Equity

Strategies to develop

– Lobbying and advocacy
– Information and communication tools and techniques
– Improved structures
– Concrete actions
– Careful planning
– Effective networking
– Effective response to information needs
– Strengthening of capacities and training

Hopes for the Networks in 2010

Increase the scope of the networks to build new partnerships and address other vitally important issues, as:
– Increased food production for sustainable livelihoods.
– Improved nutrition
– Integrated projects that combine issues of HIV/AIDS, information technology, food security
– Policies in place that focus on access to information and gender issues that involve women in leadership roles and decision-making mechanisms
– Meeting the challenges of literacy and gender equity
– Harmonising networks to increasingly reach out to include other partners

USING NETWORKS TO FIGHT AIDS IN RURAL AREAS

Main objectives pinpointed during the discussions:

◎ Contribute to the reduction of HIV/AIDS transmission in rural areas
◎ Contribute to the empowerment of rural women

Needs
– Contribute to the development of rural women
– Strengthen the economic capacities of rural women
– Promote the dynamisation of networks
– Fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas

Available Resources	Necessary Resources
Members of the Dimitra & CTA Networks	More trained rural communicators
Rural women's groups	Communication equipment
Local women's networks which already exist in rural areas	Permanent Offices in rural areas
Political actors	Institutional support (changes to functioning)
Offices	Financing of activities
Rural extension workers	
Material resources	

Actions
– Build capacities
– Plan activities
– Mobilise resources
– Relay information by raising awareness
– Train rural women
– Encourage women's entrepreneurship

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION CAPACITIES

An important step towards strengthening networks involves considering how Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can help build capacities and facilitate rural women's fight against HIV/AIDS.
Participants in one group worked on developing an appropriate communication strategy to meet their needs.

What do we really mean by ICTs?
These cover:

– traditional information and communication technologies, including radio, television, newspapers, newsletters, fax, landline phones, pamphlets, posters;
– new ICTs, including Internet, computers, mobile phones, camera phones, e-mail, Skype.

Are there any links between networks, rural women, HIV/AIDS and ICTs?
Yes:

– women and girls are most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS;
– there is a need for interventions that target social change, especially gender relations and behavioural change;
– everyone should have the right to information and communication - "Information is power";
– ICTs can act as a platform for advocacy and for facilitating networking activities e.g. mobilising rural women to reach out to policy makers;
– ICTs are useful tools for sensitisation of rural women, for example by diffusing information on their rights.

What role do rural radios play?
Reaching out effectively to local communities is a key concern for many of us and rural radio can help provide the answer:

– radios (especially community radios) are crucially important communication tools in rural areas;
– radio promotes accessibility to information and communication;
– the creation of rural radio stations facilitates the participation of the community in the production of local content;
– it is important to create a feeling of ownership of the information and of the radio itself;
– rural radio is the best mode of communication using local languages;
– it is the most popular communication tool in most ACP countries.

How can we adapt traditional and new ICTs to our actual needs?
So as to maximise the impact and potential of ICTs, appropriate strategies must help integrate them into ongoing activities and programmes.

– training of Trainers (network members and rural women) on the use of new ICTs;
– gender training of women and men radio producers;
– training women organisations to produce local content for media (radio, print, video);
– establishing relationships and agreements with existing community radio stations for allocation of regular airtime to produce network programmes;
– setting up community radio stations in rural areas;
– exploring the potential of mobile phones and community multimedia centres to contribute to development actions.

"We reiterate the need for networks to continue using new and traditional ICTs to produce and disseminate information to members in the ACP countries."

Participants at the Workshop

What are the obstacles?
Our organisations face many challenges in terms of accessing and using ICTs. Some of these are:

– lack of information and knowledge of the existence and use of ICTs;
– women's workload hinders their participation in ICTs and development in general;
– rural/urban digital divide and gender digital divide;
– lack of infrastructure for old and new ICTs;
– lack of access to ICTs;
– lack of equipment for old and new ICTs.

We also face other constraints at an environmental level such as:

– the fact that the policy framework for community radio is not conducive for its development in some countries;
– ICT policies are not in place in some countries or do not address key issues;
– the low level of literacy among women;
– the need to ensure that ICT interventions are placed within broader framework of social change.

What solutions do we envisage?
Some recommendations to help us improve our networking activities:

– work closely with local and regional networks e.g. actively seek technical assistance, financial support;
– actively exchange information between different networks, between the rural women themselves (horizontal communication), and between networks and partners (vertical communication).

As far as communication tools and techniques are concerned there is a need to:

– support training programmes on new and traditional ICTs, especially community radio;
– provide equipment for set up of community multimedia centres (CMCs) in rural areas;
– provide support for advocacy programmes targeting communication and HIV/AIDS policies;
– promote literacy programmes for rural women.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING COLLABORATION AND SYNERGIES

The Workshop highlighted many common factors between the work of the CTA and Dimitra partners. The results of the groupwork sessions made it clear that the organisations were keen to plan joint projects and strengthen their collaboration and synergies.

◎ Focusing on common and specific themes such as HIV/AIDS and strengthening networks helped to strengthen bonds between the participants

◎ Through exchange of experiences and discussions, everyone learnt more about the particular challenges and priorities facing the other participants and how they were addressing them

◎ The fact that the Workshop itself was such a success is an illustration of the high degree of collaboration between the various organisations

The common factors which link our work and aims:	• Rural women • Information and communication • Use of ICTs and media • Advocacy • Influencing policies
Complementarities that can result from closer links:	• Wider geographical coverage • Better impact at local, national, regional and international levels • More opportunities for capacity building on gender issues • Increased gender awareness and gender mainstreaming in policies • More opportunities for training of CTA/Dimitra members
In concrete terms this collaboration can take form through activities including:	• Participation preparations for The World Rural Women Congress in 2006, South Africa – particularly concerning the participation of rural women • Using Dgroups to continue the discussion after the Workshop and in preparation for the Congress • Creating a CTA/Dimitra mailing list in each organisation • Integrating the newcomers in the existing network mailing list and databases • Providing reciprocal links from all participants' websites • Mentoring each other in specific fields • Increasing the use of ICTs and rural radios • Using the IMARK CDs: on electronic documents; digitization and digital libraries; and electronic communities discussions • Training for facilitating electronic communities • Exchanging experiences, lessons learnt, good practices between the members • Facilitating the access of local content to rural women through training of trainers in order to learn how to repackage the information in appropriate and local languages • Creating advocacy/lobbying groups at national, regional and international levels for acquisition and supply of equipment, infrastructure and connectivity for rural communities
In our own words...	• *"We regret not being able to make full use of all the posssibilities offered by new ICTs"* • *"We want to integrate new ICTs to communicate in our local and international networks"* • *"We need new technologies for communication. It takes me 5 hours to cover 80 km to go to the nearest cyber café and I have to stay overnight"*

Linking up with other development actors
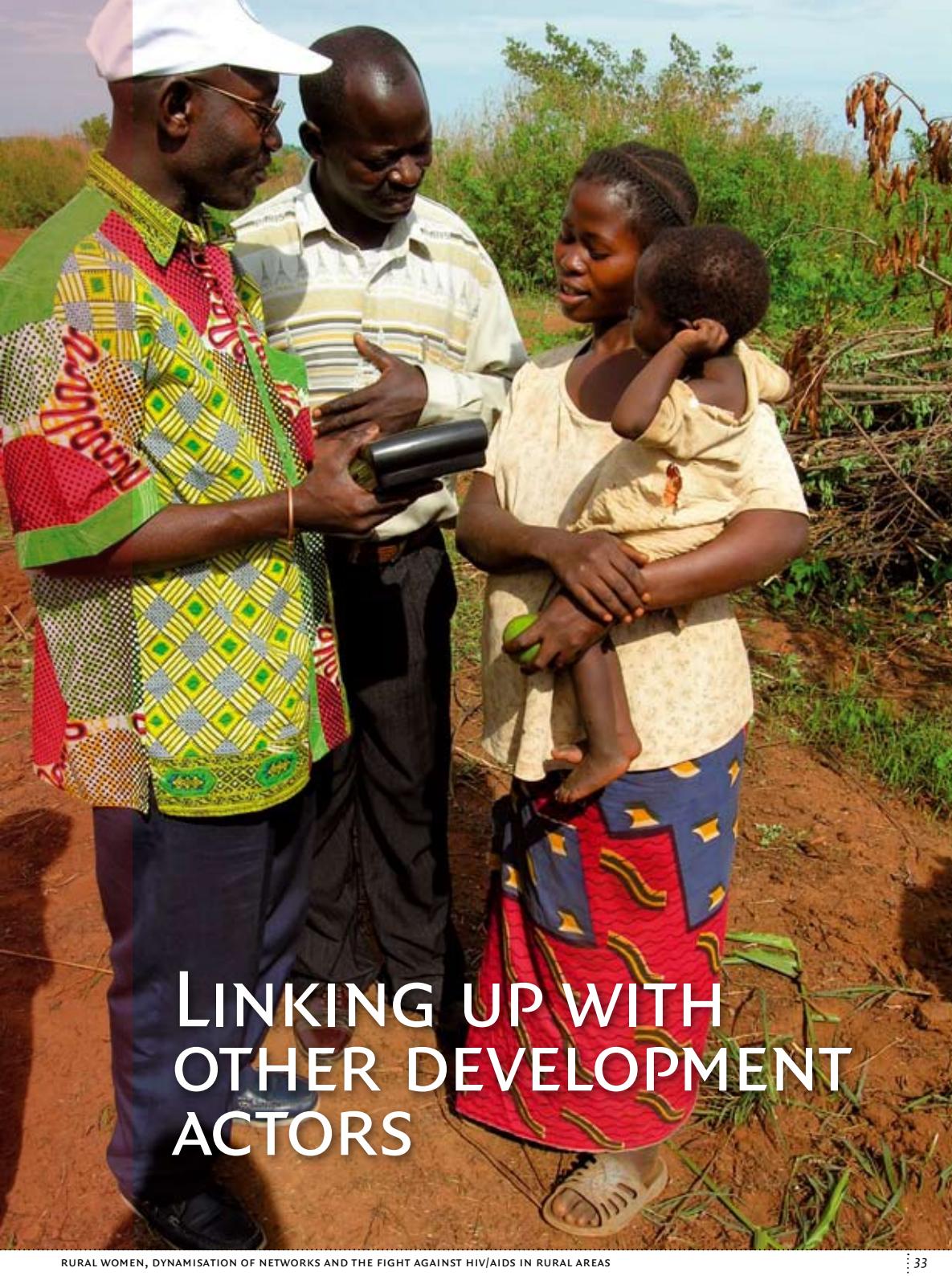
A large number of representatives of support and financing bodies brought their expertise to the fourth day of the workshop, enriching the discussions with detailed information on funding possibilities, application procedures and criteria for success. This session also emphasised the benefits to be drawn from building partnerships and coalitions with other similar-minded organisations to raise visibility and attain common objectives.

Practical information was provided by donor agencies including the World Bank, UNAIDS, WHO, ACP Secretariat and the Belgian Development Cooperation. During candid exchanges of information, topics included the difficulties encountered by organisations in accessing funds and resources at local level, how to identify appropriate contact persons, priority themes favoured by donors, and guidelines for presenting propositions to donor organisations.

At grassroots level access to such information and resources remains problematic, hence the need to share information and to reinforce capacities.

◎ Reinforce local capacities to better access available funding

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is a World Bank development priority. Jean Delion, Senior Social Development Specialist at the World Bank described its funding of projects and programmes on HIV/AIDS. Many organisations are unable to navigate the complex procedures needed to access funds and on the whole women's organisations fail to submit applications. It is therefore essential to build capacity at the grassroots level if local organisations are to reap the benefits of World Bank funding.

Women's networks in particular need to find more entry points for getting involved in initiatives at local level and in AIDS planning structures.

◎ Work together to increase impact

Solange Kouo Epa of the World Health Organisation spoke of the organisation's involvement in the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. This fund aims to attract, manage and disburse resources to fight these pandemics, while relying on the knowledge of local experts. It also depends on the partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and affected communities. The Global Fund seeks to complement the finance of other donors and to use its own

grants to mobilise additional investments by donors and by recipients themselves. However once again, local organisations are often discouraged from applying for these grants due to the lengthy and difficult administrative processes that they would have to go through.

◎ Share best practices

Denis Haveaux, Liaison Officer to the EU for UNAIDS looked in detail at the increasing feminisation and globalisation of HIV/AIDS. He outlined the various activities of the organisation and the opportunities and procedures for local organisations seeking to access funds. UNAIDS does not implement projects but ensures the use of its funds and coordination at the country level. One of the problems highlighted was the difficulty faced by sub-Saharan NGOs in trying to represent their interests in Brussels. Calls for proposals to access funds are published via Internet and UNAIDS offers support in completing the necessary documentation to submit an application.

UNAIDS advocates for capacity building as a sustainable response to ensure scaling up of HIV prevention. A strong emphasis is placed on analysing key national information, developing local understanding of the epidemic, developing national goals and targets and documenting good examples and best practices of HIV prevention programmes, particularly those targeting vulnerable populations.

◎ Micro project – maximum impact

Marianne Degrugillier of the Belgian Directorate-General for Development Cooperation (DGDC) spoke about the Cooperation's funding procedures for micro projects and its work with local NGOs in partner countries, several of which have an AIDS component. The available budget for this work totals around 3 million Euro per year.

The DGDC currently works in 18 partner countries. These include:

– **Africa:** Algeria, Benin, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Morocco, Mozambique, Niger, Uganda, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, South Africa, and the Palestinian Territories;
– **Latin America:** Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru;
– **Asia:** Vietnam.

Through all its activities, the DGDC favours a participative approach which encourages empowerment and ownership. This is often difficult to achieve with large sectorial programmes.

How can we turn our plans into projects?
Practical advice on building and sustaining networks

Many small-scale projects are currently being implemented by the DGDC. These projects are known as micro-projects or micro-intervention programmes (MIPs).

The main objective of a MIP is to promote sustainable human development by providing direct support to economic, social and cultural activities of common interest. More specifically such programmes set out to offer financial or logistic support with implementing civil society initiatives.

Specific sectors and themes for which funding is available include: basic healthcare, education and training, agriculture and food security, basic infrastructure and community building.

Gender equality, respect for the environment, social economy and the fight against HIV/AIDS are considered cross-cutting issues.

In the support it brings to the fight against HIV/AIDS, Belgium pays particular attention to vulnerable groups such as women and adolescents. The DGDC also supports projects on the prevention or treatment of HIV/AIDS outside of the medical context, such as those related to youth work, work with street children, the re-education of child soldiers, women's movements, etc. Support is also provided to NGOs to mitigate the economic impact of AIDS, for example through adjusting credit loans in communities that have been hard hit by the disease.

◎ Build frameworks for success

There was also a strong focus during the discussions on support organisations and frameworks which can provide invaluable advice assistance to organisations at grassroots level. Isolina Boto and Oumy Ndiaye provided the participants with an overview of CTA programmes and its role in supporting cooperation between organisations in ACP countries and actors at EU level.

Much of CTA's work in this context focuses on raising awareness of the Centre's programmes and activities in Brussels. In turn they inform CTA's programmes on key development issues discussed in the ACP-EU context and develop relationships with other organisations, which may lead to joint programmes and initiatives in the future.

Representatives of CONCORD, the European NGOs Confederation for Relief and Development, which was set up in 2003, also participated in this session. Their main objective is to enhance the impact of European development NGOs at the level of the European Institutions. With 18 international networks and 20 national associations from the European Member States and the candidate countries CONCORD represents more than 1500 European NGOs. In addition to its Gender Task Force which works actively at European level, the Confederation has produced a Gender Resource Tool Kit to work towards meeting gender equality goals.

Recently CONCORD priorities have centred on issues including: future financial perspectives and aid, development education and public awareness, EC micro-credit policy, and the necessary untying of aid and establishing alliances with other sectors of civil society to reach a critical mass.

◎ Work towards clarity and transparency

This session of exchanges proved very interesting in underling the difficulties faced by local organisations in tackling the complex procedures for obtaining financing and support for activities.

Thanks to the open approach of the representatives of the various organisations and agencies, issues of concern were acknowledged and explored from various angles.

These discussions also helped to further encourage the participants to build on and extend their existing partnerships and combine their skills for greater all-round impact!

Friday 17 June
King Baudouin Foundation

This last day was the culmination of the group discussions and the perfect opportunity to showcase everything that had been achieved so far. It was also the chance to capitalise on the wealth of skills, experiences and know-how present to reinforce links and partnerships for the future.

The beautiful building of the King Baudouin Foundation hosted this final workshop session and dynamic exchange of views and ideas amongst representatives of local organisations, donors and policy makers through presentations, question and answer sessions, debate and discussions.

High on the agenda was interaction amongst multi-lateral and bi-lateral donor agencies such as the King Baudouin Foundation, the Belgian Development Cooperation, European Commission, UNAIDS, the World Health Organisation, the Belgian Women and Development Commission and ACP Ambassadors.

◎ HIV/AIDS – Empowerment and knowledge for change

The Director of the Gender and Population Division at FAO, Marcela Villarreal, made a presentation on FAO's response to HIV/AIDS, food security and rural poverty. This provided a detailed overview of the effects of the pandemic in rural communities, particularly concerning its impact on food security, rural livelihoods and social structures.

The Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools were presented as a successful example of how FAO is striving to preserve agricultural knowledge and empower young people to provide for themselves, thereby helping to ensure long-term food security and avoid HIV/AIDS. These schools also encourage gender equality, life skills and self-esteem.

For many of the participants this provided a different perspective on HIV/AIDS, with an insight into linkages between the pandemic and the sustainability of the agricultural sector. Indeed many participants referred to their appreciation of this valuable information during the final evaluation of the workshop.

◎ Provide care and information in the community

Luc Tayart de Borms, Managing Director of the King Baudouin Foundation, spoke on the role of Foundations in terms of capacity building, mobilisation and opening up access to funding.

In particular he described the Foundation's current activities in the area of HIV/AIDS. To date the majority of the actions undertaken have dealt with issues of care and treatment in combination with information, communication and education activities through community-based organisations. The Foundation intends to build on these activities to encourage more policy debate on HIV/AIDS and to help civil society have better access to the funding available.

During the discussions which followed, it was suggested that the Foundation consider mobilising other European foundations to address the broader effects of HIV/AIDS in terms of rural poverty, gender and food insecurity in order to increase the impact of their actions and promote synergies between health and agricultural sectors. FAO could participate in such an initiative, for example, by helping to build and develop the strategy based on their experiences.

"Together we can move mountains!"

◎ Impacts of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihoods

The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security was also taken up by Jorgen Maersk Pedersen, Director of the FAO Liaison Office with the European Union and Belgium.

His presentation underlined the gravity of the situation whereby, *"The traditional security nets, which contribute to food security in times of need, crumble in the worst affected communities, where families and their neighbours are too overwhelmed to help one another with food, loans, help in the fields or just caring for the orphans."*

Mr Pedersen also emphasised the need to review laws and customs regarding access to land and to resources, in order to preserve the livelihoods of widows, orphans and other poor households suffering from HIV/AIDS.

◎ Information: a precious resource

Hansjörg Neun, Director of CTA, spoke on the topic "ACP networks, a pillar for our development work". CTA works to advance agricultural & rural development in African, Caribbean and Pacific countries by promoting the transfer, exchange and effective utilisation of information. Through its activities, CTA raises awareness amongst the ACP and EU partners by highlighting the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on the agricultural sector in ACP countries.

CTA places great value on information and communication tools and techniques which are considered precious resources in preventing and mitigating the effects of HIV/AIDS. The integrated use of communication tools and channels is particularly favoured. Thanks to ongoing information exchange through their networks, CTA is well-positioned to identify the specific information needs of women and children/young people, and hence to develop appropriate services.

◎ Dynamisation and consultation in networks

Hélène Ryckmans, President of the Commission on Women and Development, shared her experience of dynamising networks.

In Belgium, the Women and Development Commission provides a unique exchange and consultation space for experts, development NGOs, women's NGOs, Universities, and the DGDC, in particular the Gender Unit and the Cabinet of the De-

velopment Cooperation. It also includes the Belgian Technical Cooperation and the Dimitra project in its work.

Hélène suggested that the setting up of such bodies would constitute valuable consultation spaces and institutional lobbying tools in all the European and Southern countries.

◎ HIV/AIDS and the challenge of the Millennium Development Goals

Kris Panneels, Director of Multilateral and European Programmes at the Belgian Development Cooperation focused his presentation on the increasing gravity of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and particularly its devastating effect on women and those who are most vulnerable. Making reference to the latest UNAIDS report, he pointed out that the number of people worldwide living with HIV has topped 40 million for the first time.

Belgium's efforts in the fight against AIDS are concentrated on sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the countries of the Great Lakes region (DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda and Tanzania) and South Africa. It is the strategic mission of the Belgian cooperation to work together with the international community and the national authorities to make a contribution towards attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): "Halt the spread of HIV/AIDS and begin to reverse the trend on a global scale by 2015".

Mr Panneels outlined his organisation's strategic objectives in the fight against AIDS. These include:

– supporting local policies for fighting AIDS through capacity building, innovation and applied research;
– cooperation with the international community, including to the "Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria"; support to UNAIDS" and to the World Health Organization;
– integrating HIV/AIDS into all projects and programmes and encouraging other Belgian development actors to integrate HIV/AIDS into their organisations and projects/ programmes;
– improving the coherence between Belgian actors and policies: knowledge gathering and the sharing of experiences;
– increasing the number of Belgians who support the fight against AIDS in developing countries through campaigns, the media and forming coalitions.

To give an idea of Belgium's contribution to fighting HIV/AIDS in terms of investment: its contribution to UNAIDS amounted to around 7.5 million euros for the period 2001-2003. A total sum of 14 million euros was earmarked for the period 2004-2007.

The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria finances health care projects in the poorest and hardest-hit countries. For the period 2001-2003, the Belgian contribution to this Fund amounted to 17.848 million euros. Belgium intends to continue and increase its support to the Global Fund, given that only an exceptional and long-term effort will make it possible to attain sustainable results.

Through the United Nations Population Fund, Belgium is supporting the three-year programme "Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Promotion and HIV Prevention Programme in sub-Saharan Africa" for a total sum of around 3 million euros. The goal of the project is to improve the sexual and reproductive health of young people in Mali, the Ivory Coast and Niger, with a special focus on increasing awareness of HIV/AIDS, especially how it can be prevented.

For organisations at local level, the main channels for accessing Belgian funds and technical assistance are through Belgian NGOs, representatives of the Belgian Technical Cooperation and Belgian attachés at local embassies.

Hear our voices!

For the workshop participants, the session entitled "Voices from the South" was an occasion to share the outcome of the previous days' work with decision-makers, representatives of international agencies and NGOs.

All the strategies which had been drawn up together, as well as the common action plan were presented to this diverse and extended audience. This was also the chance for the Dimitra and CTA partners to share personal experiences and speak of the challenges they face and solutions they have found to source funds, build partnerships and exchange information.

COMMITMENTS
FOR THE FUTURE

At the end of the workshop the participants gathered in a circle to share their thoughts about what the week of working together had meant to them and how they would build on their common action plans.

After speaking, each person took their turn to write their thoughts on a piece of paper which they placed into the calabash, symbolising the spirit of partnership and cooperation.

The overwhelming consensus was that everyone felt their skills and knowledge were reinforced and they energised by the exchange of views, ideas and practical information.

This brought the workshop to a close in the spirit that 'anything is possible' if everyone pulls together, takes time to listen to each other and shares crucially important information to drive projects forward and sustain the networks.

"

◎ I feel that the power of people connecting with each other around issues of common concern was powerfully demonstrated.

◎ I am motivated to work to create local and regional partnerships.

◎ I am more aware of the devastating impact of AIDS on women's lives.

◎ I have a clearer vision of the vital role of rural radio and ICTs.

◎ I have a better understanding of the links between HIV/AIDS, food security and effective networks.

◎ In addition to working with CTA, I can serve as a focal point for FAO/Dimitra project in my country.

◎ I now see clearly why I need to form networks regionally & internationally.

◎ I am inspired by the creativity at this workshop which can bring meaningful development and help strengthen the existing networks.

◎ I have learnt more about the impact and outreach of working through networks.

◎ I see the potential power of information:

◎ I now have a better knowledge of donor systems i.e. that they are accessible. I will make this information available to our members.

◎ I know that creating networks and collaboration between NGO's and donors is possible – it is a multi stakeholder process.

◎ The discussions over the week led to an awakening of awareness for me.

◎ I appreciate the power of speaking out & sharing experiences & the common vision that people can share no matter where they come from.

◎ I have seen that the networks here share so much in common and that we can all make a difference when we join together as a dynamic network. Working as a team really made a difference to the final results.

◎ I offer my thanks to Cynthia for her very interactive methodology. We had fun.

◎ We are more aware of the amount of help available and how to access it.

◎ I appreciated the atmosphere of friendship.

Looking ahead, we commit to:

◎ Continue our involvement in the Dimitra project and strengthening our
relationships with other partner organisations.

◎ Support rural women's networks, and the use of ICTs in rural areas.

◎ Continue to work to strengthen our network and share relevant information.

◎ Network in preparation for the 2006 Rural Women's Congress via electronic
discussion groups (Dgroups).

◎ Implement ICT and community knowledge centers for Gender,
HIV/AIDS and food security.

◎ Work much more closely through networks and participate in training processes.

◎ Continue to exchange information with members and with new partners we met at
this workshop and promote training of women organisations on the use of ICTs.

◎ Work hard to fight against HIV/AIDS.

◎ Network further and include new networks on our current mailing lists.

◎ Help rural women to fight against HIV/AIDS and strengthen linkages
in ACP countries.

◎ Forge strong, dynamic and committed networks.

◎ Integrate the fight against HIV/AIDS into our other activities so as to have a
comprehensive approach.

◎ Do our best to share the skills and knowledge that we have acquired.

◎ Work much more closely with networks in rural areas, taking into consideration
their priorities and concerns.
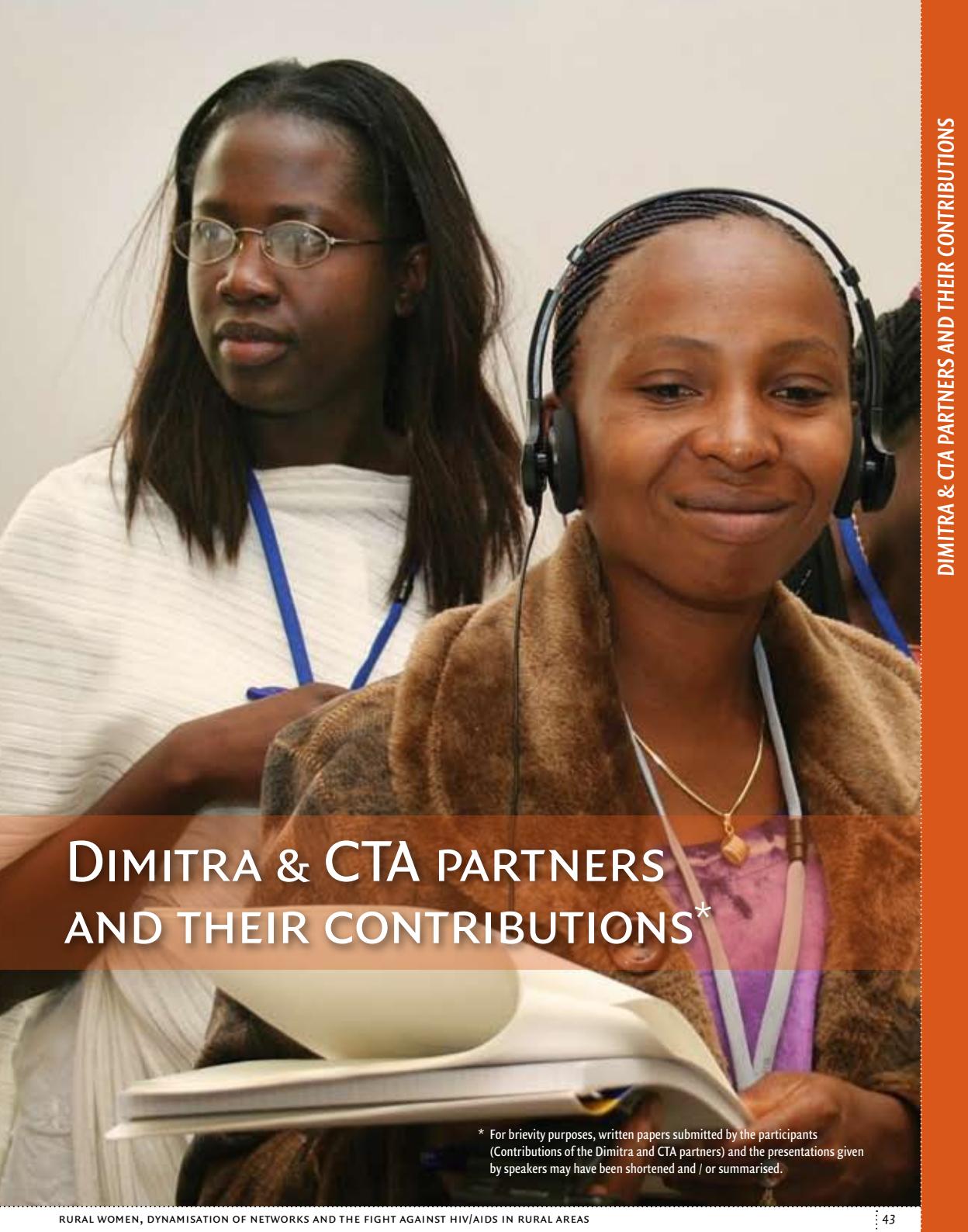
Dimitra & CTA partners and their contributions*

* For brievity purposes, written papers submitted by the participants
(Contributions of the Dimitra and CTA partners) and the presentations given
by speakers may have been shortened and / or summarised.

Meeting the expectations of the Millennium Development Goals also means bringing out the power of expression and action of rural women at the local level

Mr Ali Abdoulaye

ONG VIE *Kande Ni Bayra*

Ali Abdoulaye is the Dimitra Focal Point for the Sahel, the Coordinator of ONG VIE, the President of ROSEN (Réseau des ONG du secteur de l'Education du Niger) and an extension worker/trainer in non-formal education.

His vocation: advocacy in favour of quality education for all and particularly for young girls and rural women.

His favourite pastime is camping in the African savannah.

NIAMEY | NIGER

Mobilising and dynamising networks

Introduction

Our organisation is referred to by the following acronyms and expressions: **VIE** Kande Ni Bayra which stands for: **Volontaires pour l'Intégration Educative (Volunteers for Educational Integration)** "Bring your knowledge" (or your share of knowledge). A number of constraints hinder the pace of the activities we undertake with grassroots communities. To name but a few:

– unfavourable prejudices towards modern schooling, which are still strong in certain areas;
– unfavourable prejudices towards the education of women and girls;
– increasing or chronic poverty among rural populations;
– the low level of political culture in rural populations and even among some elected politicians at national (Members of Parliament) and local (town councillors) level,
– prevailing illiteracy.

From 1998 to 2005, our NGO has put considerable effort into raising awareness and knowledge of the socio-cultural, economic and socio-political challenges of education, whether aimed at children or adults.

Activities

Initiatives taken by VIE, in terms of creating associations and village structures, have helped to mobilise the population (both men and women) on issues of community interest (education, health, economic development, the fight against poverty, etc.). Fortunately, in some areas such as Dantiandou (Kollo), the level of local organisation is now such that communities enjoy real autonomy in the management of their affairs.

This provides a strong base for indigenous development. In all the regions, villagers have understood that the key to development action is ownership of information and capitalisation of experiences and skills.

Our organisation began its activities in 1998 with an experimental programme in the area of literacy, using our own funds.

From 1998, it was able to extend its field of activity thanks to the financial backing of the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives and the French Development Cooperation.

The request from the Swiss Development Cooperation to carry out its programme of non-formal education in the areas of Gaya and Maradi consolidated our organisation's mission.

In the private sector, its partners are the NGO Aide et Action, OXFAM Quebec and OXFAM GB, the FAO, and the Network of Education Sector NGOs in Niger (ROSEN).

At international level, VIE is working in partnership with some Canadian NGOs who regularly send trainees to support it but also to learn about the specifics of real life in the south of the Sahara.

Under the guidance of our NGO, ROSEN has been able to mobilise the political authorities at the highest level with regard to the issue of education; both the President of the Republic and the Head of the Government intend to take part in the ceremonies held on days dedicated to education.

This can be seen from the fifteen (15) steps of the President of the Republic and other actions which underline the priority that must be given to education.

Functioning

VIE Kande Ni Bayra has an executive committee which manages its programmes. It operates under the leadership of a coordinator, assisted by technical staff in charge of the various areas of education managed (community schools, programmes for Non-Formal Education).

A Board of Directors monitors operations by assessing how various activities are implemented.

Besides the administrative support from the Board of Directors, VIE also relies on solid technical support from a resource team of people who are qualified in several areas: linguistics, sociology, anthropology, law, decentralisation, school administration, organisational management, etc.

Meetings are held regularly (on a weekly or monthly basis) depending on the need for consultation in order to effectively manage the various projects.

Communication tools & techniques

Through our activity reports, we can communicate with all our partners: financial (sponsors), technical, State or collateral or other organisations (sister organisations).

We also exchange views with rural populations and networks of literacy and extension workers during meetings at various levels.

Television is sometimes used to promote our NGO and our network, or to add our voice to particular advocacy efforts during formal occasions such as the Education for All Week (World Education Week).

We communicate with extension workers in the field, as well as with local NGOs and associations via telephone and e-mail.

Meetings with local populations are usually carried out in the field, in the areas where they live. Due to the difficult access to some regions and the difficult conditions involved in holding these educational meetings, VIE does not always manage to honour its commitments within the desired time frame.

The communication tools we have access to are not sufficient to allow regular quality exchanges with our partners, particularly those in the field.

It would not be extreme to consider an alternative such as rural radios or specialised cyber-cafés for these types of partners.

In the same way, any replacement, however modest, of our logistical material would have a positive effect on exchanges between rural populations, extension workers in the field and coordination staff.

Were these facilities available, they could have a positive impact on day-to-day work and give an additional boost to the programmes.

Funding

VIE Kande Ni Bayra is continuing to pursue some activities with its own funds in the area of Dantiandou, which it sees as its research and action laboratory. At the same time, with its confidence boosted by the results obtained in the areas of literacy and of community work, it has opted to sign service contracts with various projects or bodies including POTE, Aide et Action, PADEL N'Guigmi, AQUADEV, SNV, etc.

Partnerships

Through carrying out these various projects, VIE has developed a rich partnership at State level through the General Directorate for Non-Formal Education and the Ministries for Basic Education and for Community Planning and Development.

The establishment of the Network of Education Sector NGOs, and the interest raised in agriculture-related actions, following on from the DIMITRA initiative, are significant activities in the working life of our NGO.

We would like the true worth of these modest actions to be appreciated by our sister organisations who are present at this workshop.

The Information Society in support of development

Mr David Barnard

Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT)

David Barnard has been the Executive Director of the Southern African Non-Governmental Organisation Network (SANGONeT) since 1 June 2000. Prior to this he was Coordinator for the Programme for Development Research (PRODDER) at the Human Sciences Research Council from 1992-2000.

David has an in-depth knowledge of the political and socio-economic scenarios influencing the development of Southern Africa, the role and involvement of the international development and funding community, as well as that of the corporate sector in development issues. He has a particular interest in the contribution of information and IT in support of development issues.

David serves on President Mbeki's National Commission on the Information Society for Development.

He holds a Bachelor of Arts degrees in Development Administration and African Studies from the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa.

BRAAMFONTEIN | SOUTH AFRICA

Sustainable management of networks and information and communication technologies

General Environment

During the past year the Southern African NGO Network (SAN-GONeT) has made various strategic changes to its operational focus and organisational structure. A number of SANGONeT's historical and defining information communication technology (ICT) products and services were phased out, delivery strategies changed and new initiatives conceptualised and implemented. (…)

SANGONeT's ICT services and interventions continue to be shaped by the challenge of strengthening the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) in finding long-term and sustainable solutions in response to Southern Africa's development problems. CSOs' capacity for service delivery increasingly requires that attention be given to their ability to use, manage and implement as well as integrate ICTs into their activities. Although many Southern African CSOs are already active users of ICTs, much more needs to be done to build the capacity of the sector in this regard. (…)

In response to this situation, SANGONeT's future activities will be geared towards optimising its activities and resources, and increasing its impact on ICT uptake in the South African CSO sector. The emphasis will be on brokering a wide range of affordable and relevant ICT solutions for the CSO sector in conjunction with private sector ICT services providers, expanding and integrating its range of development information products and services, deepening its knowledge of the CSO sector, intensifying its ICT advocacy and stakeholder engagement activities and consolidating its leadership role on ICT issues in the CSO sector. Local and international developments such as the ICT BEE Charter, Nepad and WSIS also provide a framework for SANGONeT's work.

Key operational strategies to be implemented and pursued in support of these objectives include a streamlined organisational structure, introduction of much needed skills and capacity, strategic alignment and integration of activities across programmes and projects and much closer cooperation and interaction with a range of CSO, government and private sector stakeholders. The successful introduction of these objectives and strategies will ultimately ensure SANGONeT's long-term relevance and sustainability.

Functioning of the network

SANGONeT has been providing networking, information and training services to Southern African CSOs since 1987. It was established to facilitate communication and information exchange between trade unions, social justice organisations and the international community during the Apartheid era. (…)

SANGONeT is the only Southern African CSO dedicated to providing an extensive range of ICT services to the local CSO sector.[1] It was the first Internet Service Provider (ISP) established in South Africa, and is one of very few CSOs in Africa involved in ICT-related issues, as well as providing such services dedicated to the broader CSO sector. (…)

Given the low ICT skills and infrastructure levels of the CSO sector, CSOs involved in ICT issues, such as SANGONeT, therefore have a major responsibility to create awareness among other CSOs of ICT issues in general, and inform them of both the policy challenges in this regard, as well as the practical relevance of ICT solutions in support of their development work. The challenge is to expose CSOs to ICT issues and encourage them to take an active interest in this regard.

Since inception, SANGONeT has worked closely with a wide and diverse range of organisations. Individual needs are addressed in a tailored way. Internet tools are crafted to match their application requirements, be it discussion forums for lobbying and advocacy purposes, or gathering information to assist communities in gaining access to information resources, or popularising the work of an organisation through the World Wide Web.

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1 The concept CSOs includes a wide range of organisations, namely non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), labour unions and religious bodies.

SANGONeT continues to view ICTs as a tool that could build the capacity of users and the communities they serve. It therefore emphasises the need to integrate a variety of information-related tasks through the use of ICTs. As a result, SANGONeT has developed an increasing understanding of the information needs and requirements of Southern African CSOs. SANGONeT's work is therefore customised to support both those who are exploring the possibility of using the Internet and those who already have ICTs in place, but are not using it to its full potential.

Networking initiatives

In March 2003 the Southern African NGO Network (SANGONeT) launched *Thetha: The SANGONeT ICT Discussion Forum*. This initiative aims to provide CSOs with an opportunity to discuss information communication technology (ICT) issues of common concern and to learn from one another's experiences.

The forums focus specifically on the ICT challenges facing the CSO sector, highlighting and promoting practical benefits, opportunities and lessons learned to date. It is an important networking and learning platform and feedback from participants is very positive.

SANGONeT has already organised 15 *Thethas* in South Africa and this initiative will be expanded to the rest of Southern Africa in future. (...) For many CSOs these events are their first introduction to ICTs.

Leadership of the network

SANGONeT is a legal entity with very sound management and governance structures. The SANGONeT Board is the highest decision-making body, with operational implementation the responsibility of the Executive Director and management team. Board meetings are held three times a year, and include detailed narrative and financial reporting. The Exco and Executive Director meet on a regular basis between Board meetings.

The Board also appoints the Executive Director.

Communication tools & techniques

As an ICT-focused organisation, much of SANGONeT's communication with clients, stakeholders and funders are done electronically (e.g. e-mail, Internet, etc.)

In addition to the primary focus on electronic communication mechanisms (e.g. e-mail, Lwati, SN-Announce, SANGONeT website, project websites, etc.), offline strategies are increasingly becoming important to strengthen SANGONeT's advocacy activities. These include the annual SANGONeT conference, *Thetha* forums, project-based focus group discussions and the annual World Development Information Day event in October. Increasingly, these events will focus on broader Southern African issues, while the *Thetha* forums will be expanded to the rest of Southern Africa.

SANGONeT is also considering the introduction of paper-based services to expand the reach of its work, especially as so many CSO are still not ICT-enabled.

SANGONeT uses a combination of electronic mechanisms and face-to-face interactions, complemented by coverage in the media (both print and electronic).

Funding sources

SANGONeT has two income streams, namely grant funding and income-generating activities.

SANGONeT's main funders are the Ford Foundation, CS Mott Foundation, Atlantic Philanthropies and International Development Research Centre. Income is generated through our web design and online marketing services (e.g. SN Announce), as well as the implementation of projects on behalf of clients.

Partnerships

SANGONeT is a member of the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Civicus, Impact Alliance, Internet Service Providers' Association (ISPA) and the South African National NGO Coalition (SANGOCO). We work closely with specific organisations in these networks on issues of common concern.

Fighting for the social promotion of women

Mr Aristide Bashige Ndjuzi

GTZ-Santé

Aristide Bashige is a graduate in Management and Specialist in Organisational Science at work. He is the coordinator of GTZ Santé, which is the technical office of the German Development Cooperation, in the South Kivu Province / DRC.

His particular expertise focuses on the fight against HIV/AIDS. Aster provides technical support to the drawing up, planning, management, coordination, follow-up and evaluation of projects and programmes.

In associative circles Aristide worked with the SWAA, the Society for Women against Aids in Africa which strives for the social promotion of women in every sector.

GTZ-Sante Activities in South Kivu with King Baudouin Foundation Funding

Context and Justification

Ten years of crisis and war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has resulted in a breakdown of the country's socio-economic fabric and the society's serious exposure to major epidemic diseases and other societal problems, including HIV/AIDS.

The DRC shares borders with nine different countries. HIV/AIDS is most prevalent in the countries to the east and the south-east, i.e. Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia and Tanzania. The vulnerability of the Congolese communities in the east of the country has been heightened by the growing intrusion presented by the populations of these countries for the people of the DRC.

GTZ, in collaboration with the King Baudoin Foundation, decided to launch activities related to voluntary counselling and testing for HIV (HVTC – HIV Voluntary Testing and Counselling) and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT) in two cities in the DRC: Bukavu and Lubumbashi, located respectively in the east and the southeast of the country. (…)

Goals

– To contribute to reducing the transmission of HIV/AIDS through global support for infected persons, voluntary HIV testing and counselling, and prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission.
– To increase access to good quality HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) services and prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV in Bukavu and Lubumbashi.

Expected outputs

– Two HIV/AIDS voluntary testing and counselling centres are receiving support and are operational. They offer good quality services and include activities designed to communicate information on changing behaviour, in each of the two targeted cities;
– Two PMTCT sites are receiving support and are operational; they offer good quality services that include efforts to enrol the active support of the community, in both the targeted cities.

Strategies

– Partnership and collaboration with the national multisectoral programme to combat HIV/AIDS and the local NGOs, leading to social involvement and assumption of responsibility;
– Promotion of the concepts of continuity, complementarity and a global approach to care and services;
– Capacity-building and training for grassroots resource persons and various service providers;
– Rehabilitation and equipment;
– Community involvement and sensitisation of the target groups;
– Establishment of a network of resource persons to share experiences;
– Prioritisation of ongoing support and accompaniment for HIV positive mothers/children;
– Regularity and efficiency in follow-up, supervision, assessment and coordination of activities.

Achievements (results and activities)

Voluntary counselling and testing (VCT) phase

Support for Chai VCT in conjunction with the Fondation Femme Plus

Description of project

The aim of this project is to contribute to HIV/AIDS reduction by creating awareness about its serological importance and by developing a positive and responsible attitude towards HIV/AIDS infection. GTZ/Health is helping the Fondation Femme Plus to

set up a Voluntary Counselling and Testing Centre (VCTC) in the 8e CEPAC Chai hospital and in carrying out the activities provided by a good quality VCTC.

In 2003, preparatory activities were started with the construction of a wall, cubicles for counselling and for a secretariat, as well as an awareness-raising centre. VCTC staff were identified and a voluntary counselling and testing training course was organised for the staff and other people involved, e.g. "people living with HIV" volunteers from the Fondation Femme Plus.

Technical activities started in December 2003 after the Gouvernorat of the South Kivu province inaugurated the center. Two laboratory technicians from the 8e CEPAC Chai hospital carry out the HIV tests. They have been trained to use the HIV tests. Fondation Femmes Plus, with technical backing from GTZ, has developed the work tools and ordered materials for the VCTC.

Teaching and support materials such as information panels, T-shirts and picture boxes have been produced. Female extension workers go out every day to meet with their target groups in the various urban-rural districts covered. Weekly forums, using videos, and educational discussion days are organised in the awareness-raising centre.

Since June 2004, the same activities have been developed in another district area where the residents are so poor that they live in slum houses.

These activities (and they are still underway) have enabled many people to find out about their serological results and to adopt low risk behaviour.

(…)

Prevention of HIV Mother-Child Transmission (PMTCT) phase

(…)

The project has the following goals:

– Promote the inclusion of PMTCT in the Kaziba general hospital and later, in other maternity services that meet the criteria in the Kaziba health zone;
– Strengthen the VCT activities in prenatal consultation at Kaziba hospital by building the capacity of the Kaziba hospital service providers and other health-training activities in the zone that could be targeted by a PMTCT project in the future;
– Promote high quality VCT and HIV/AIDS services in the Kaziba hospital maternity service and laboratory and in other health training activities in the targeted zone;
– Improve the quality of the reproductive health services in the Kaziba hospital;
– Make the community more aware of PMTCT;
– Encourage referral of HIV+ women and their children to voluntary HIV prevention and PA services;
– Promote efforts to provide support for HIV+ women and their children.

This should be done in the following manner:

– A minimum package of PMTCT activities are to be introduced in the maternity services in the Kaziba hospital;
– The first phase of the project is aimed at 1700 women;
– In 2003, training was organised for service providers of the Kaziba hospital and other healthcare facilities in the zone that could be targeted by a PMTCT project in the future;
– The training was followed by an awareness-building session for community leaders in Kaziba and training for laboratory technicians on how to use the rapid HIV tests;
– The capacity-building activities for PMTCT and family planning service providers ended with a seminar for reproductive health workers;
– Two cubicles for counsellors were built as an annex to the building that is used for prenatal consultation in order to ensure greater privacy for VCT for pregnant women. The inputs needed for the project were delivered to the Kaziba hospital;
– A training session on the management of essential drugs were held. Management tools were discussed and introduced to ensure healthy management of the project's activities. Increasing awareness of MTCT in the CPN and in the community, e.g. in the churches, has been started and is being supervised;
– A SSP/GME phase (essential inputs and medicines, training, etc.) and family planning (inputs, training, etc.) is included in the PMTCT phase to make it stronger;
– After the project was revised in March 2004, GTZ continued supporting the Kaziba hospital and strengthening the facilities that were already operating in the Ibanda zone (the Chai Cidasa maternity service in the urban-rural areas has been receiving support since August 2004).

(…)

Current difficulties

– There are still people whose behaviour is risky.
– The number of women who have been accurately advised about HIV/AIDS is still very low.
– Women are still being raped and subjected to sexual violence.
– Sexually transmitted infections are not properly dealt with.
– Persons living with HIV/AIDS are still subjected to stigmatism, discrimination and hence rejection.
– Very few persons living with HIV/AIDS have access to antiretroviral drugs.
– Rural areas are not covered by the HIV/AIDS control services because of security problems and lack of technical and financial support.
– Associations working to combat HIV/AIDS often do not have the training required for successful prevention activities.

– There is no well-defined policy for various sorts of coverage (except medical coverage since the medical and social criteria have been defined).

Social involvement (advocacy and awareness-building) is still the foundation of the multisectoral fight against HIV/AIDS.
At this stage, female educators are especially calling upon other women to help popularise preventive measures.
Several women's associations such as *Fondation Femmes Plus*, AMAMA (*Association mamans maendeleo*), SWAA (Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa), GRACE (Grassroots Alliance for Community Education), FESA (*Une femme en soulève une autre*) are especially involved in the GTZ/Health intervention zone in South Kivu.

The rural women's associations, must therefore continue to make their voices heard if a well-adapted, relevant answer is to be found to this question.

Communication and international gender training

Ms Faten Bouktif

Centre de Recherche d'Etudes, de Documentation et d'Information sur la Femme (CREDIF)

Faten Bouktif has been the Coordinator of International Training on "Gender, Population and Development" in the Centre for Research, Studies and Documentation on Women (CREDIF) in Tunis since 1996

She has also been a professional journalist since 1987 and currently writes for the newspaper "Le Temps", an independent daily, for the Social and Cultural Services.

Faten also contributes to the publication "Info-CREDIF".

She holds a Masters Degree from the Institut de Presse et des Sciences de la Communication in Tunis with a specialisation in Public Communication.

Reflecting and acting together to strengthen rural women's networks

(...)

Background

CREDIF is a public, non-administrative centre, under the auspices of the *Ministre des Affaires de la Femme, de la Famille et de l'Enfance et des Personnes Agées* (Ministry of Women's, Family and Children's Affairs, and the Elderly). It was created to monitor and evaluate the conditions of women in Tunisia and progress in gender relations. CREDIF has launched considerable research, actions and activities on various groups of women and some specific issues relating to women. It has various mechanisms such as the *Réseau d'Information Femme* (Women's Information Network – RIF) for Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, *Mécanisme de Suivi de l'Image de la Femme à travers les médias* (a tool for monitoring the image of women in the media), the *Observatoire de la Condition de la Femme* (an observatory to monitor developments on the condition of women), as well as national and international training programmes. It is participating more and more in fighting gender-based unequal opportunities and in providing more support for women's groups. The role of CREDIF at the crossroads of various government and non-governmental institutions is constantly growing stronger.

Recognising that quantitative and qualitative data were not only important in analysing gender issues but also in identifying, formulating, implementing and then assessing actions and programmes designed to better guarantee equal opportunities for men and women; at the end of 1993 CREDIF created the *Observatoire de la Condition de la Femme.* This monitoring mechanism provides decision makers with objective, scientifically reliable information on the current condition of women and men in Tunisia and how they are changing, in order to better formulate and target their actions.

Mission of the Observatoire de la Condition de la Femme en Tunisie

To help build up knowledge on the condition of women in Tunisia and incorporate gender in the planning process, the *Observatoire de la Condition de Femme* (OCF) has been assigned to:

– collect and analyse statistical data disaggregated by gender in Tunisia;
– draw up relevant indicators to monitor change in both women's and men's conditions;
– carry out studies and research designed to increase knowledge on socio-cultural relations between the sexes;
– raise awareness amongst decision-makers and planners of the need to include gender analysis in the planning process and in the formulation and evaluation of development programmes and projects;
– help decision-makers draw up policies designed to provide more guarantees for equal of opportunities for men and women.

(...)

International training sessions and study visits

Since its inception in 1996, CREDIF has been organising training sessions and study visits for African officers and senior staff working on women's affairs, social development planning and human resources in the public sector, as well as in associations and NGOs. These activities have made it possible to build up a network of partners who share information on questions related to gender, population and development throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

Impact of the DIMITRA project

Since 2000 when the Dimitra project started in Tunisia, tangible results have been obtained in fulfilling the goals that were

set out in the letter of agreement between CREDIF, FAO and Dimitra:

CREDIF activities include:

– introduction for senior staff to the concept of networking and using Internet to promote networking;

– gradual assimilation and uptake of this information/communication tool on the NGOs, associations and research centres in Tunisia by CREDIF's own bodies, i.e. *Observatoire de la Condition Féminine,* which uses the DIMITRA database in its research-action on women craftworkers and by the service responsible for international training on "gender, population and development" which has used the database to disseminate announcements and reach out to associations.

The supervisory Ministry is also interested in the project. Its department for programme planning, and certain NGOs have used the Dimitra database in their preparatory work for a rural women's development plan in Tunisia. Furthermore, this Ministry adapted and then used the Dimitra questionnaires to identify other organisations. The Ministry also received the encoding manual.

At another level, Tunisian institutions (ministries, research centres, etc.), associations and NGOs that work directly or indirectly for rural women also benefited from the project. They had new opportunities for sharing information on a much larger scale and could optimise their own experiences and those of their network partners in other countries.

Strong appreciation was shown especially for the information support tools designed by the Dimitra project (Website, newsletter, manual, CD-ROM, etc.).

The project has encouraged people to take a fresh look at the condition of rural women and provided an opportunity to discover other NGOs that were little known or unknown. It also provided opportunities for exchange at an international level.

With regard to the objectives of the second phase of the Dimitra project, as described at the Second Phase relaunch workshop (20-24 October 2002), progress has been made in promoting information exchanges and experience sharing as well as in contributing to building up our partners' capabilities in the field of information and communication.

On the other hand, little progress has been made in consolidating and expanding the Dimitra network in the Maghreb countries since the number of NGOs and organisations that were identified and included in the network has barely risen.

Proposals on network sustainability and increased visibility and effectiveness.

– Carrying out an in-depth study on sustaining the network in a constantly changing context and encouraging the creation of a dynamic system that facilitates:

• creativity and the development of regular, on-going exchanges among its members;

• training to acquire knowledge and know-how that is then conveyed to the grassroots level;

• adaptation to organisational change and the restructuring of the network so that it can promote dialogue and debate on good practices in the field of participatory community development and will be driven by projects and innovative activities in various contexts.

(…)

Facilitating communication and training for women

Ms Christine Butegwa

African Women's Development & Communication Network (FEMNET)

Christine Butegwa is the Communications Officer at the African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET).

Her areas of expertise include gender, women's human rights and development communication.

She has considerable experience in facilitating communication and women's human rights training. She also has sound experience in adult-training, development of training materials and evaluation as well as strategic planning.

Christine led the development of a project for women entrepreneurs in East Africa to use Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to increase their market share in regional and international markets.

With funding from UNIFEM, the project developed a Training Manual on the use of ICTs by women entrepreneurs.

NAIROBI | KENYA

Regional networking and sustainability: FEMNET's experience

Introduction

The African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET) is a regional membership-based non-governmental organisation. It coordinates and facilitates the sharing of information, experiences, ideas and strategies among African women's NGOs through communication, networking, advocacy and training for the advancement of women's development, equality and other women's human rights in Africa. (…) FEMNET currently has over 400 members spread across the African continent and beyond. Membership includes both subscribed members and partners. FEMNET is governed by a Constitution and a governance and administrative structure that include national focal points in African countries, an elected Executive Board and Board of Trustees, and a Regional Secretariat. The FEMNET Secretariat office is based in Nairobi, Kenya. (…) FEMNET was created in 1988 as a coordinating body for the African women's movement in preparation for the 1995 United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing. FEMNET provides an interface between women's organisations at national level and decision-makers at regional and international level. FEMNET chose communication and networking as a key tool for achieving its liaison role with key stakeholders including the women's organisations and women's groups, governments, the United Nations, and other regional and international organisations.

As a regional network, FEMNET operates in an environment that presents both exciting opportunities and major constraints. For example, Africa's current move towards economic and political integration through such structures as regional economic communities and the African Union is viewed by both African leaders and donors as one of the major ways that the African continent will achieve development, equality, justice and peace. FEMNET is in a position to engage with such structures and processes to ensure that women's rights are promoted and gender mainstreamed. FEMNET has also advocated for the rights of African women at international forums such as the United Nations Commission for the Status of Women (CSW) and the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS).

However, in carrying out its mandate, FEMNET faces several political, economic, social and cultural constraints.

Example of a networking initiative

Development of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, hereinafter referred to as *the Protocol*, is a regional human rights instrument that specifically promotes the rights of African women. The Protocol makes reference to regional and international commitments on women's rights and even goes beyond these by, for example focusing on concrete actions and goals needed to promote and protect women's rights. The Protocol affirms four broad categories of rights: civil and political rights; economic, social and cultural rights; the rights to development and peace; and reproductive and sexual rights. After a process that began in 1995, the Protocol was finally adopted by the African Union (AU) Summit in Maputo in July 2003.

FEMNET's involvement in the process leading up to the adoption of the Protocol began in 2001. (…) FEMNET started a mailing list as a communication tool (…) to encourage debate on the issues raised in the Protocol. Comments generated from this mailing list were instrumental in the development of an agreed civil society organisation mark-up document on the draft Protocol. The Network of CSOs involved in this process had by this time expanded to include organisations at regional, sub-regional and national levels.

Results of the networking initiative

In January 2003, with support from the Equality Now, Regional office for Africa, CSOs held a meeting to strategise on how to ensure the Protocol would be adopted by the AU Summit in July 2003. (…)

FEMNET is involved, together with a coalition, *Solidarity for African Women's Rights (SOAWR)* consisting of 19 organizations1, in campaigning for the necessary number of ratifications to bring the Protocol into force. From a cyberspace ad hoc network where membership was fluid, the network has now evolved into a more structured form with roles and responsibilities. FEMNET coordinates communication within and to the network, provides content for the coalition's publications, organises regional meetings of network partners, and is the liaison between the coalition and the AU – Gender Directorate and the

Special Rapporteur on Women's Rights of the ACHPR (African Commission on Human and People's Rights).

Challenges

– Funding for the network initiative was not always available.
– Drop out of some members from the network.
– Ad hoc nature of network initiative.
– Expanding the campaign to the whole region.

Way Forward

Members of the network have written a joint proposal that seeks to consolidate and strengthen the network, document network experiences, train national members of the network, and engage decision-makers on the implementation of the Protocol.

Information and communication tools

FEMNET uses both traditional and new information and communication technologies (ICTs) to communicate with members within the network. Two bi-lingual newsletters, *FEMNET News* and *Our Rights*, make use of the more traditional form of print media. Members contribute to the newsletters by providing information on their organisations' activities or areas of interest. An electronic bulletin is also produced every month by the Secretariat and is sent to members through specific mailing lists. FEMNET is overwhelmed with requests from various regional and international organisations to disseminate information to its members. Together with the newsletters, the e-bulletin forms an important communication channel to disseminate this information within the network. FEMNET also communicates with its members within Africa and the diaspora through its web site at www.femnet.or.ke.

The Internet, listserves, e-bulletin and newsletters are also important channels used by FEMNET to communicate with other networks and organisations. More traditional communication channels such as face-to-face communication, newspapers, television, radio, posters and flyers are used to lobby decision-makers at regional and international level.

We realise that there is still a lot of room to maximise the potential of the information and communication tools that we use, especially in terms of improving member participation in these processes so as to promote ownership and the benefits derived from the information we provide. At the same time, there are

other tools that we could benefit from. By using such tools as teleconferencing for example, we could provide a regular platform for our Board members to meet more often without incurring travel and accommodation costs. This would improve the effectiveness of our leadership structures due to faster decision-making processes. However, for this to happen, more of our members need to have access to new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The impact of HIV/AIDS

FEMNET focuses on HIV/AIDS within the human rights and health sectors.

One of the challenges in this area is prevention and treatment care for people vulnerable to and living with HIV/AIDS, particularly women and girls. (...) The biggest challenge facing FEMNET and other women and human rights organization is the continued stigma associated with the disease (...). Through our advocacy and communication efforts, FEMNET seeks to hold decision-makers accountable to protecting women's human rights so as to reduce the spread and effects of HIV/AIDS, and promote the rights of women living with HIV/AIDS. FEMNET does not have an information and communication strategy that specifically deals with HIV/AIDS.

Funding

Funding in general, and shortage of donor funding in particular is something all too familiar in the NGO world. However, this constraint is felt even more by Pan-African organisations such as FEMNET since very few donors fund regional organisations. However, with programs and initiatives such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Blair Commission for Africa recognising the importance of regional integration, this attitude may change.

Additionally, sourcing funding is also dependent on proof of transparency and effectiveness by an organistion. FEMNET's administrative leadership is committed to accountability and effective implementation of projects that have an impact on the lives of African women. (...)

Bi-lateral donors and private foundations make up the majority of our funding base with a small percentage of funds coming from membership fees and royalties. Our partnerships are mainly with NGOs who form the bulk of our members,

although we also partner with non-member NGOs on specific projects. (…)

Conclusion

Networking is not an end in itself but a strategic means of achieving a set objective. FEMNET derives the strength of numbers and expertise from its network members in fulfilling its mandate at regional and international level. In FEMNET's experience, effective communication is the foundation of strategic networking and advocacy. Information produced has to be useful and disseminated in a timely manner to enable network members to be better placed to take advantage of opportunities, to strategically organise and lobby for women's rights at national, regional and international level. FEMNET continues to explore new types of information and communication tools and how to effectively utilise the ICT tools we are currently using in order to achieve our vision of African women collectively organising for equality, development and peace.

1   African Centre for Democracy And Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS), Akina Mama wa Afrika, Association des Juristes Maliennes, Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants, Coalition on Violence Against Women, Equality Now-Africa Regional Office, FAHAMU, FAMEDEV-Inter-African Network For Women, Media, Gender and Development, FEMNET - African Women's Development and Communication Network, Foundation for Community Development, Oxfam GB, Sister Namibia, Union Nationale des Femmes de Djibouti, University of Pretoria Center for Human Rights, Women's Rights Advancement and Protection Alternatives, Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF)

Raising awareness on energy policy in the Pacific Region

Ms Yogita Chandra Bhikabhai

Pacific Energy and Gender Network (PEG)

Yogita works at South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) as Project Officer for the Pacific Islands Energy Policy and strategic Action Plan (PIEPSAP) project.

She also coordinates Pacific Energy and Gender Network (PEG), which is hosted by SOPAC.

Yogita has been at SOPAC since 2002 as Assistant Project Officer assisting in Regional Information Database, technical publications, coordinating regional earth day competitions and other energy projects.

She graduated with a Graduate Certificate in Management from Central Queensland University (June, 2004) and a BSC in Physics and Information Systems from USP (2001). She is also studying for as Postgraduate Diploma in Governance from University of the South Pacific (USP), Fiji on a part time basis.

SUVA | FIJI ISLANDS

Sustainability of networks: the experience of PEG

Introduction to PEG

From an informal group interested in energy and gender issues, a "Pacific Energy And Gender Network (PEG)" was formalised through a Regional Workshop on "Gender, Energy and Sustainable Development" in August, 2003. (…)

The above mentioned workshop further recommended that South Pacific Applied Geosciences Commission (SOPAC) initially host PEG ". This not only provides PEG with a home but ensures long term sustainability. (…)

SOPAC is an inter-governmental, regional organisation dedicated to providing services to promote sustainable development in the countries it serves. (…)

(…)

Communication tools and techniques

Email discussions, websites, and mailing lists have been useful in terms of information dissemination, getting feedback and raising awareness.

PEG presentations and updates at regional and international meetings build awareness on PEG activities, raise concerns of gender issues in the energy sector, enable networking with other professionals and help to identify further funding opportunities.

Besides the above, PEG is currently developing pamphlets, posters, and radio programmes in 6 Pacific countries, as well as a video which will be widely distributed in the Pacific region.

The Network base is in Suva, but most of the working group members are geographically distributed throughout Australia, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa, and Geneva. Effective communication is a challenge. Though information technology has taken us a long way, there are still constraints, such as poor Internet access.

Regular meetings of the PEG working group are essential on an annual basis, at least. In this case, funding for travel and other expenses is necessary.

For any network to be sustainable, a long term strategic work plan is important. This provides guidance and direction for the network. When requesting funds from potential donors this work plan is very effective.

PEG network activities

The PEG Network is currently in the process of requesting funds for a "PEG Working Group Strategic Planning Workshop/ Meeting".

The following outputs are expected:
1) a synthesis of Regional Strategies and Action Plans;
2) a regional paper to present at the World Summit of Rural Women 2006 in Africa & CSD 14/15 (Commission on Sustainable Development); and
3) the preparation of PEG Terms of Reference.

Links with other gender-related initiatives in the Pacific

Links with other gender related initiatives in the Pacific have already been established and are expected to develop further. The networks listed below are already part of the PEG and this will facilitate information exchange.

The following networks are associated to PEG:

– **ECOWOMAN,** established in 1995, is a collective of Pacific women that aims to strengthen linkages between professionals in science and technology, and their urban and rural counterparts in communities, with a vision of enhancing women's involvement in rural resource management, and for a better daily life for rural women. Currently the network does not function due to funding and management issues, although the network members are in the loop.

– **Asia Pacific Gender Science and Technology Project (APGEST)** is supported by UNDP, Apia and Pacific UNESCO. The APGEST aims to ensure women and girls have access to science and technology training and research and to ensure women's needs are incorporated into national and regional science and research activities.

– **APACE Village First Electrification Group (APACE VFEG)** is an Australian-based development organisation, established in 1976. It assists communities in the Asia/ Pacific region to implement low-impact, environmentally-responsible energy for development projects.

– **Melanesian Islands Village Electrification Group (MIVEG)** provides national support to Village Electrification Councils

(VECs), policy issues, greenhouse climate change issues, advocacy etc.

Funding Sources

Initial funding was received from UNDP (Bangkok), Taiwan ROC, ENERGIA (Netherlands), and UNESCO, SOPAC (inkind), Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat (PIFS) (inkind) for the Regional Workshop on "Gender, Energy and Sustainable Development", held from 4-8 August, 2003.

Secondary funding was received from the Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), Netherlands for "Support to Pacific Energy and Gender (PEG) Network to increase awareness on gender issues in the energy sector in the Pacific ACP Region". The one year project was initiated in May 2004.

The specific project activity is *increased awareness on gender issues in the energy sector.*

This is attained by the following **outputs**: (i) information materials developed and distributed in the region; (ii) articles on gender & energy featured in the Pacific Energy Newsletter (PEN); (iii) PEG website developed, including an on-line interactive contact database; and (iv) documentation and sharing of successful experiences, case studies and examples that include community participation.

A user-friendly answer to rural women's information needs

Ms Janet Cox Achora

WOUGNET-Kubere Information Centre

Wougnet was initiated in May 2000 by several women's organisations in Uganda to develop the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) among women as tools to share information and address issues collectively.

Janet Cox Achora is Project Officer for the Wougnet rural access programme based in Apac District, Northern Uganda. The overall objective of the project is to provide and improve access to agricultural information.

Janet's activities include: packaging local agricultural information in user-friendly formats to be used by women farmers, improving information dissemination, as well as setting up an information center which will act as a link between the women farmers in the village and the technical agricultural personnel.

Janet is a trained Community Development Worker with a Masters in Community Economic Development and a degree in Information Science with a special interest in ICTs and how they can be applied in the development process.

Promoting the use of information and communication technologies to strengthen rural women's networks: the case of WOUGNET

Introducing Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET)

Women of Uganda Network (WOUGNET) is a non-governmental organisation initiated in May 2000 by several women's organisations in Uganda to develop the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) among women as tools to share information and address issues collectively.

WOUGNET's mission is to promote and support the use of ICTs by women and women organisations in Uganda, so that they can take advantage of the opportunities presented by ICTs in order to effectively address national and local problems of sustainable development.

(….)

The organisation has directed its efforts towards email and web based activities and how these can be integrated with traditional means of information exchange and dissemination including radio, video, television and print media.

Presently WOUGNET membership includes 80 women organisations – the majority of whom are located in urban areas or town centres where there is internet access, and few in the rural areas. Since inception WOUGNET has made tremendous efforts in information sharing and supporting the use of ICTs by women.

WOUGNET Programme Areas

The main objective of WOUGNET is to strengthen the use of ICTs among women and women organisations, build capacities in ICT use and application, and expand activities to reach out to women in the rural areas. In support of this objective, WOUG-NET activities are carried out in four major programme areas: Information Sharing and Networking; Technical Support; Gender and ICT Policy advocacy; and Rural Access.

Collaboration with other public/private organisations and NGOs

WOUGNET works with women's organisations as well as organisations involved in ICT related activities and individuals within and outside the country. WOUGNET partners include I-Network Uganda, Kabissa and InterConnection US based non-profit organisations, Computer Aid International, and the Asso-

ciation for Progressive Communications (APC) Africa Women. WOUGNET is a member of the National Association of Women Organisations in Uganda (NAWOU) and of the NGO Forum.

In addition, WOUGNET is the secretariat for the Uganda Women Caucus on ICT (UWCI), through which it collaborates with government institutions such as the Uganda Communications Commission and the National Planning Authority; government ministries such as the Ministry of Works, Housing and Communications and the Directorate of Information; and international organisations such as APC and OneWorld Africa.

WOUGNET's Rural Access Project

"Enhancing access to agricultural information for rural women farmers using ICTs" is a pilot project developed under WOUG-NET's three-year development programme (2005-2007). As previously noted, the main objective of this project is to strengthen and support the use of ICTs among women and women organisations, build their capacities in ICT use and application, and expand WOUGNET activities to reach out to women in rural areas.

The project implementation area is Apac District in Northern Uganda. It is one of the most deprived districts in the country. The pilot phase will cover two counties, four sub counties and twelve parishes, targeting about 300 rural women farmers.

(…)

The WOUGNET evaluation carried out at the close of 2003 showed that its activities had increased awareness and participation of women in ICT related activities and increased information sharing and networking among women and women's organisations. However the benefits were still limited to those who had access to Internet, leaving the majority in the rural areas un-served. Hence the need for the 2005-07 WOUGNET programme, and more specifically the rural access programme.

This pilot project is supported by the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Co-operation ACP- EU (CTA). The key activities under this project include:

– identifying information needs and prioritising agricultural information for rural women farmers;

- packaging and disseminating the required information into formats to suit the farmers/local users using appropriate delivery mechanisms - including radio, telephones, print media and the Internet;
- establishing linkages with the CTA Question and Answer Service (QAS) based at the National Agricultural Research Organisation (NARO) to provide answers to farmers' questions;
- establishing the Kubere Information Centre (KIC) in Apac town with links to agriculture focused organisations based in Apac and based nationwide.
- Collaborating and networking with organisations like FOOD-NET, Volunteer Efforts for Development Concerns, (VEDCO) Agricultural Information Institutions nationally, regionally and internationally that work in rural development and rural women.

Networking lessons learned from the WOUGNET experience

Over the past five years, WOUGNET has gained substantial experience in networking, both locally in Uganda, regionally across Africa and internationally. Lessons learned over this time include:
- why are organisations/individuals interested in the network? It is important to identify and nurture the common cause of those interested in the network to ensure its growth and sustainability;
- there is a need to consider a variety of ICTs (new and traditional) to facilitate networking among all members given the disparity in connectivity from location to location;
- it is important to have information that is locally relevant and/ or repackaged. Availing such information in local languages is important too;
- regular monitoring and evaluation of the network activities as well as the information/skills needs of the members is important to ensure that the network remains relevant;

- as the network grows, it is important to allow for and promote the development of special interest groups or partnerships among members and/or between members and the secretariat to pursue opportunities of mutual interest;
- there is a need for regular physical interaction among members, or a subset of members with common interest, in addition to the ICT-related interaction offered via the network.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women

HIV/AIDS is a cross-cutting problem affecting organisations, whether their core program is health-related or not. While WOUGNET does not have a specific programme addressing HIV/AIDS, a number of WOUGNET members do have such programmes. WOUGNET's role is in providing and/or facilitating access to information as may be required by such members. Members can request and/or receive such information via email, telephone, post or at the WOUGNET office in Kampala.

In addition, in May 2003, WOUGNET created a webpage to highlight articles addressing HIV/AIDS with a focus on women and the girl-child in Uganda. Initiated with a Fellow of the Institute of Public Health and Center for Disease Control, Gloria Katusiime, the page is available online at: http://www.wougnet.org/Links/hivaids.html

Funding for WOUGNET programmes

Initially, WOUGNET activities relied entirely upon the input of volunteers. However, since 2003, WOUGNET has been able to attract funding to help strengthen of existing programmes and the initiate of new ones particularly addressing the limited access to ICTs in Uganda. In 2003, WOUGNET received a grant from the Global Fund for Women and in 2004 financial support from Hivos. In 2005, WOUGNET has also received funding from CTA in support of the rural access programme.

Capacity-building in the associative sector

Mr Mourad Gourouhi

Association Marocaine de Solidarité et de Développement AMSED

Mourad Gourouhi is in charge of the Education and Environment department at the NGO AMSED Morocco – Moroccan Association for Solidarity and Development.

AMSED's mission is to bring assistance to the poorest of the population through self-development programmes and capacity-building of the associative sector in Morocco.

Mourad is an economist, specialised in development economics, and has been actively involved in associative work since the end of the 1980s. He is currently on the managerial staff of AMSED and is involved in several other social movements.

He is particularly interested in supporting and strengthening the associative sector, notably on questions of environment and citizenship training.

RABAT | MOROCCO

Project for integration of HIV/AIDS prevention in literacy programmes in Morocco

An integrated approach

At Amsed we aim to integrate awareness-raising on the prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and AIDS in our literacy programmes, for the benefit of illiterate girls and women. (…)

Awareness of the dangers of illiteracy and the necessity to eradicate it are ongoing and topical issues.

Consequently, the concept of illiteracy elimination has developed from a purely literacy approach (i.e. knowing how to read and write) to another, more functional, approach. This concept is closely related to the daily needs and development of the beneficiary.

(…)

The functional approach is, therefore, based on the principle of transferring skills to the beneficiary and not just information and knowledge, which themselves are only a means to an end. (…)

Local organisations understand that the literacy programme represents an opportune moment to introduce a very important aspect into the life of beneficiaries, i.e. raising health awareness in general and prevention of STI/AIDS in particular. The importance not only lies in the fact that the literacy sessions are an ideal tool for raising health awareness, but it is also the opportunity for the participants to share, innovate and learn how to protect themselves against STI/AIDS.

Progress

The interest of the Association Marocaine de Solidarité et de Développement (AMSED) in the integration of STI/AIDS prevention in literacy courses for young girls and adult women, derived from its strategy in the fight against these diseases. The first action was taken in the framework of the Programme d'Appui au Secteur Associatif (Support Programme to the Community-based organisations) in the fight against AIDS, known as the PASA/SIDA, in strategic partnership with the UK organisation *International Alliance in the fight against STI/AIDS.*

An agreement was reached with several organisations active in the field to integrate sessions on STI/AIDS in literacy programmes. The organisations involved in the project work with a hundred or so local groups running development projects, especially with girls and women.

(…)

This initial experience resulted in the following conclusions/recommendations:

– large-scale mobilisation of beneficiaries for their participation in the discussion on STI/AIDS;
– use of appropriate participatory approaches;
– in the field the organisations focus on sessions reserved for raising awareness and do not take an integrated approach;
– the beneficiaries (women) generally follow sessions relating to health awareness and not traditional literacy courses.

(…)

Conditions for success

Integration of AIDS prevention in the literacy programme must come from a real need, the needs of the population concerned, of course, and aim to develop the skills of illiterate girls and women's with a view to the prevention of STI/AIDS. Consequently, it is very important to investigate the role that literacy should play in the programme and development project.

In fact, organisations have noticed that prevention of STI/AIDS, among other important results that can come from stamping out illiteracy, is one of the principal needs expressed by illiterate girls and women. Nevertheless, the success of the integration process requires certain conditions:

– a clear and global vision of the organisation's actions;
– organisation members motivated for integration;
– diagnosis of illiterate girls and women needs with regard to elimination of illiteracy and prevention of STI/AIDS.

(…)

Major achievements

– **26,850** girls and women benefited from 15 sessions on health education;
– **106** rural organisations were mobilised at local levels to work on this theme;
– **801** literacy instructors were trained in prevention and extension techniques and in HIV/AIDS.

Work is currently underway to draft model worksheets for integrated prevention sessions to capitalise on and share experiences with other operators working in the field of literacy.

Defending women's rights in Rwanda

Ms Isabelle Kalihangabo

Profemmes Twese Hamwe

Isabelle Kalihangabo is the first Vice President of the Collective PRO-FEMMES/TWESE HAMWE in Rwanda.

This platform of women's promotion organisations was established in 1992 on the initiative of 13 Rwandan associations.

She is a lawyer and has been a judge at the High Court of the Republic of Rwanda since July 2004.

Isabelle's particular area of interest is the improvement of women's status and the promotion and defence of their rights through different activities. She plays an active role in educating on human rights and women's and children's rights in particular.

She has also taken part in numerous mobilisation campaigns on women's rights and campaigns against violence and discrimination.

From 2000 until 2004, Isabelle has been a Judge at the Supreme Court, assigned to the Department of GACACA Jurisdictions. The Department's main mission was the implementation and setting in motion of participative jurisdictions, responsible for judging the authors of the Rwandan genocide and follow-up of their activities.

She has also worked as leader of a mobile legal clinic for women and children within an association for the protection of women's and children's rights, HAGURUKA, of which she has been a member since 1999. This association is a founding member of the Collective PRO-FEMMES/TWESE HAMWE.

KIGALI | RWANDA

The sustainability of networks and the impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women

How our organisation operates

The collective PRO-FEMMES/TWESE HAMWE (PFTH) has developed gradually from the time it was created to the present day.

The idea of creating a platform of organisations for the advancement of women in Rwanda arose in 1992 on the initiative of 13 Rwandan associations. In 1993, the 13 founding associations adopted the statutes in a particularly difficult context, which was not favourable to the emergence of civil society, as the country was then involved in a civil war which ultimately gave rise to the 1994 genocide.

After the end of the genocide, the PFTH Collective evolved into a framework for reflection, mobilisation and consultation, mainly characterised by the urgent need to rebuild the country. The Collective integrated the associations born out of an urgent desire to resolve the many problems of women and orphans, as well as those born outside the country during the period of exile. Currently, the Collective numbers 40 effective member associations, one affiliate member and one honorary member.

Following the genocide, the Rwandan women members of NGOs took part in the 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. After Beijing, the idea emerged to create a Programme against the backdrop of "Equality, Peace and Development" for all women. In this way, the programme Campaign Action for Peace was initiated, conceived and carried out by the 40 member associations of the collective Pro-Femmes/Twese Hamwe.

Target groups

The interventions are intended for several categories of targets, namely: the members of the collective and of Pro-femmes member associations, the female population, the population at large, community leaders and political decision-makers. In all of these categories, we pay particular attention to women and girls.

Challenges

We have not really suffered any failures as such, but we are faced with a number of challenges:

– Working in a region where armed conflict continues and where women and children are the victims of the conflicts.
– The country's poverty, causing women to remain vulnerable to various situations such as the spread of HIV/AIDS and violence, particularly sexual.
– There is plenty of political good will in the area of gender integration, but this concept must be effective in rural areas, particularly within families.

Results

During its 12 years of experience, the collective Pro-femmes has achieved a lot through its three core programmes: Campaign Action for Peace (CAP), Information, Education, Communication (IEC) and the Institutional Reinforcement of the Collective and its Member Associations (RICOM). (…)

Management

The supreme body of the Collective is the General Assembly (G.A). The General Assembly meets once a year in ordinary session. They elect a Board of Directors, with a two-year mandate, which may be renewed once.

At provincial level, the Provincial Assembly is made up of two delegates per member organisation working in the Province and the members of the Board of Directors.

The day to day running of the Collective is undertaken by an Executive Secretary. (…)

At regional level, a number of Executive Secretaries are recruited with a view to decentralising activities and drawing closer to the people benefiting from them. Currently, four regional co-ordinating secretariats have been set up.

Communication

In order to disseminate information to member associations, the collective has set up an Information, Communication and Education programme. The IEC programme has promoted information sharing between member associations and the public, as well as greater visibility for the actions of Rwandan women both at the national and regional levels as well as at international level.

The collective regularly organises a communications day bringing together all the associations for an exchange of views on their achievements and the programmes planned within the collective.

We have an Internet network and a cyber café to communicate through. We organise conferences and debates with our partners, and radio panels, as well as community dialogue clubs which provide a context for discussion of subjects which hinder peaceful cohabitation. (...)

To get media coverage, we make use of radio, television and newspapers, and we also have a journal called "TWESE HAMWE" in which we publish our activities.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly for rural women

HIV/AIDS is an area of particular interest for our collective, as it mainly affects women, who are our strategic targets.

The collective works closely with other partners working in the area of HIV/AIDS, including the press, radio, television, the government, local and international NGOs as well as various associations of people living with HIV/AIDS

The Collective's actions on HIV/AIDS are in the area of communication for behavioural change. In this context, the collective has organised two large multimedia campaigns, one concerning the fight against stigma and discrimination against women affected by or suffering from HIV/AIDS, and another concerning the reinforcement of young girls' decision-making power in terms of HIV/AIDS within schools.

Within the collective, we are facing a number of challenges including a lack of funding for income-generating projects as well as care problems for people living with HIV/AIDS (medical, social/economic) needs:
– poverty;
– high mortality;
– transmission from mother to child;
– stigmatisation and discrimination.

AIDS is perceived as a shameful illness, which frightens everyone. But almost all the Rwandan community knows that there are no medicines or vaccinations against HIV/AIDS.

We feel that our IEC strategy is truly successful, given our target group of young girls. In this area, the collective has organised conferences and debates in secondary schools with a majority of female students in order to raise awareness about combating AIDS by increasing their ability to make decisions about sexuality. We have travelled through 6 provinces and so far over 40.000 students (45 schools) have benefited from this campaign. We still have 45 further schools to reach by June 2005.

Funding

We have no specific sources of funds, given that the collective has no funds of its own: all our activities are carried out through projects financed by sponsors. We work together with many sponsors such as: UNFPA, UNESCO, UNIFEM, USAID via IMPACT-Rwanda, 11.11.11, INTERNATIONAL Alert, the Canadian Co-operation, the European Union, the Belgian Co-operation, local NGOs, and social ministries.

Spreading the news about gender equality

Ms Rose Mensah-Kutin

ABANTU for Development (ROWA)

Rose Mensah-Kutin is the Regional Programme Manager of ABANTU for Development.

This gender and policy advocacy organisation works to ensure that policies in Africa take the concerns of women and gender equality into account.

She worked for some years in Ghana's National Energy Board, now Energy Commission, as a policy analyst, looking at the socio-economic and cultural dimensions of energy policies, programmes and projects.

Rose holds a PhD in Gender and Energy Studies from the University of Birmingham, UK and a Masters Degree in Gender and Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Netherlands.

Rose is also a trained journalist having worked on Ghana's largest circulating newspaper "The Daily Graphic" for several years as a gender and development expert. She is married with four children.

ACCRA | GHANA

The sustainability of networks, the example of ABANTU, Ghana

Functioning of ABANTU as a Network

Since its inception to date, the nature and character of ABANTU has changed to reflect different circumstances and relationships. In other words, the organisation has evolved over the years to achieve some successes with particular kinds of networking activities.

ABANTU is currently focusing on the following key areas of development as contained in the 12 Critical Areas of the Beijing Platform for Action: economic empowerment, political participation, technology and science, and conflict prevention and resolution. We produce an informative quarterly newsletter that focuses on the gender implications of policies: *ABANTU NEWS*. The newsletter is distributed to NGOs, members of parliament, aid and development agencies and individuals.

(...)

We are a network of people who believe that gender disparity is an injustice, contributes to poverty and is a major hindrance to development. Although we are an independent network, we forge strategic alliances with others in order to advance our cause. ABANTU works with a small staff in regional offices and a network of trainers and Associates in different parts of Africa and Europe. Originally, we worked in offices in London (UK), Nairobi (Kenya), Accra (Ghana) and Kaduna (Nigeria). ABANTU was also governed by an International Board of Trustees consisting of 13 women and men and an Executive Committee of seven. Since 2003, the International Board of Trustees has decentralised decision-making and institutional arrangements of the organisations. Among the decisions was to make the ABANTU-ROWA (Regional Office for West Africa) office an autonomous and self-funded unit, comprising of the Kaduna and Accra offices with a sub-regional board of directors, responsible for overall decision-making. That is how we have operated since January 2003.

Networking Initiatives:
The Women's Manifesto and the Dimitra Project

In the past two years, ABANTU got itself involved in two major networking efforts which provide lessons for civil society groups to promote greater effectiveness in their networking relationships. These are the Dimitra Project and the Women's Manifesto Project.

Dimitra Project

ABANTU for Development became involved with the Dimitra project and was asked to cover the countries of Congo Brazzaville, Gabon, Ghana, Nigeria, Central African Republic, Sao Tome and Principe.

Very little success has been achieved. In Ghana we used our existing networks to discuss the project and to get organisations to provide information about their work. Many of these organisations are looking for immediate financial and material resources to build or strengthen their work. This meant that, even though there is a sense in which they recognise the value of information, they did not consider the project as being of major importance for them. Various platforms were used to talk about the project and get organisations to participate but this provoked little interest.

The Women's Manifesto

The Women's Manifesto for Ghana is an initiative of ABANTU for Development, a gender and policy advocacy organisation founded to increase women's participation in decision-making, policy-making and advocacy. From 2003, ABANTU worked with a cross-section of women and men in women's organisations, various civil society groups, NGOs, policy-makers, representatives of government agencies, organised labour, media women and men, interested individuals and representatives of registered political groups, who came together in The Coalition on the Women's Manifesto for Ghana, to research, develop and produce a Women's Manifesto for Ghana. This tool was finally launched during September 2004, in the context of national elections. (...)

The Manifesto is a political, non-partisan document that outlines broad national issues of concern to women that need to be addressed by government and other relevant agencies within set time frames. (...) The Women's Manifesto for Ghana focuses

on ten themes selected as the most critical through consultative meetings carried out throughout the country. These themes are:

– Women's Economic Empowerment
– Women and Land
– Women, Social Policy and Social Development
– Women in Politics, Decision-making and Public Life
– Women, Human Rights and Law
– Discriminatory Cultural Practices
– Women and Media
– Women, Conflict and Peace
– Women with Special Needs
– Institutions with a Mandate to promote Women's Rights

Communication tools and techniques

There are different ways of communicating with members in the network. In the past the main methods used were meetings and workshops, particularly at the grassroots level, where telephones and Internet facilities are rare. Currently, however, we send packages by courier or through the state transportation system, which has a wide network throughout the country. In the cities and towns, where email and telephones work, these tools are widely used.

Consultative meetings, lobbying opportunities and discussions on public policy provide key opportunities for interaction with other networks, decision-makers and communities. Here the important thing is to be able to convince each of the groups of the relevance of gender issues in order to get their support for the change envisaged. Usually we are able to identify a number of individuals who become our contact points at the different levels for policy-influencing purposes. (...)

Communication tools used reflect the situation on the ground, focusing on what is easily accessible to a particular group and what is easily understood. On the whole, a mix of tools is used reflecting the varying nature of need and usefulness. Interpersonal communication has been a primary communication choice, as borne out by the many consultative fora and training programmes we organise. In addition we use the following tools:

– publications (leaflets, newsletters, fact sheets, books, manuals and posters);
– radio discussions and programmes (Gender Forum);
– drama (collaboration with the Ghana National Theatre);
– publicity in the newspapers, radio and television;
– audio-visuals like video and CD e.g. using recordings of programme activities to produce documentaries and other training materials;
– use of case studies and story-telling;
– Internet and email.
(...)

Funding Sources

ABANTU receives core funding from the Ford Foundation. For several years the Regional Office for Western Africa (ROWA) depended on this source of funding. There were also some funds through the office in London for the work in Nigeria. Other funds gained have been secured for specific programmes and projects. Nigeria has benefited from the assistance of the World Bank, UNICEF and British Council.

In Ghana, additional resources have been secured in the past year from organisations such as:

– Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO): Dimitra Project
– Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES): Manifesto Programme
– Actionaid-Ghana: Manifesto Programme
– Third World Network-Africa: Manifesto Programme
– Media Foundation for West: Africa Manifesto Programme
– IBIS: Manifesto Programme
– CIDA through the UN Gender Support system: Manifesto Programme
– African Women Development Fund: Radio and Newsletter
– Global Fund for Women: Manifesto Programme

Attempts at generating resources through getting organisations to pay for their participation in training programmes has not worked. Thus the organisation continues to depend on monies secured from donor sources, which does not create much opportunity for self-reliance and sustainability.

Partnerships

ABANTU's main interest is in forging strategic alliances with policy makers, NGOs and private organisations. The organisation has been extremely successful in its partnerships with NGOs because of the direct relationship of vision and interest in the area of advocacy among civil society groups. Sometimes, there are differences even here in terms of positions taken on issues and general political orientation. For example with reference to The Poverty Reduction Strategy, ABANTU followed the policy framework from conception through process and impact whereas some partners may only focus on implementation issues. (...)

Conclusion

The main lesson learnt from our networking efforts is that the process and information generated benefit a cross section of the communities in the country. This has been particularly so where the project has been conceived from within the country. Knowledge processes are seen as directly arising out of felt needs. This means that our interest should be to use a mix of methods and tools for networking purposes, rather than focusing on one method.

Finally there is a need for civil society organisations to be principled and committed to the goal and ideals they set for themselves. Development of mutual understanding and strengthening of each other's capacities is one way of achieving our goal of influencing policies to promote gender equality.

Exchanging, informing, raising awareness and training

Ms Elise Muhimuzi

Comité National Femme et Développement (CONAFED)

Elise Muhimuzi coordinates and manages the Comité National Femme et Développement – Conafed in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

She is a social extension worker and has been working in the area of information dissemination and training to support women since 1993.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo it is important that all women throughout the country are mobilised to act through civil society and take steps towards leading the country to a State of Law.

Congolese women from all 11 provinces have resolved to work in a network to exchange information, inform each other, raise awareness and train other women. The network named – National Women and Development Committee "CONAFED" was created with this aim in November 1997 and since then Elise has been its Permanent Secretary.

Conafed deals with men's and women's issues within Congolese society, and the gender approach is at the heart of all their work.

KINSHASA
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

The fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas in the Democratic Republic of Congo

(...)

Presentation and functioning of CONAFED

The Comité National Femme et Développement - National Committee for Women and Development, (CONAFED) is a network of women's organisations, which was created in 1997. Its scope of action covers all of the DRC's 11 provinces, including the city of Kinshasa. It includes 360 member organisations spread among the 11 Réseaux Femme et Développement (Réfed) (Women and development networks), with one in each province of the country.

Conafed's mission is to work to strengthen civil society by the promotion of the gender approach, women's leadership and a framework for dialogue amongst NGOs and associations for equality, solidarity and standardisation of rights and duties among men and women in Congolese society. (...)

Functional organisation

The administrative structure of Conafed consists of a General Assembly, a Board of Directors, a Permanent secretariat (a technical body for the implementation of programmes) and 11 provincial women and development networks.

Under the authority and supervision of the Board of Directors, the Permanent Secretariat provides the following three services:

– promotion of the gender approach;
– women's leadership;
– administration and finances.

Programmes/Activities

Conafed's areas of intervention are: training; information; exchanges; awareness raising, support and guidance to the networks; advocacy in favour of female leadership and gender; lobbying among decision-makers for the equal participation of women at all levels of the decision-taking process; and information and documentation campaigns at community level on issues of local, national and international interest.

At the grassroots level in provinces, this work is done via, by or with Réfed.

Results

At grassroots level

– the increasing facility of women to express themselves in meetings thanks to training and extension work sessions;
– women's increased self-confidence;
– awareness amongst men and women of the violence and injustice to which women are subjected;
– awareness, albeit slight, of the need for complementarities between men and women in household chores;
– the opening up of women and women's organisations to access resources and information for their activities.

At Refed level

– Conafed is the leading women's structure with national coverage;
– Conafed/Refed is undoubtedly the main vehicle for awareness-raising on the gender approach in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
– the emergence of women leaders has brought notable and positive results at the level of the private and public sectors, churches and political institutions through the culture of meritocracy.

At society level

– a certain acceptance of the gender approach in Congolese society in general;
– a certain acceptance of taking women's concerns into account;
– respect for competent women leaders;
– extensive popularisation of the gender approach;
– the notable participation of women in political negotiations during the Inter-Congolese discussions at Sun City;
– 22 women out of 26 in the transition Parliament come from the civil society sector;
– meetings for activity planning jointly organised by the government and other partners in relation to women's promotion issues;
– Meetings organised on the topic of the fight against HIV/AIDS have an increasingly female profile.

In terms of texts, training and others:

– gender interpretation of the Family Code (25 leaders trained);
– creation of gender training tools (14 leaders trained);

– gender surveys in 4 provinces (Lower-Congo, Bandundu, Eastern Kasaï and Katanga);
– national campaign to fight against HIV/AIDS and violence in times of conflict;
– management training;
– training in organisational leadership;
– training in women's entrepreneurship;
– training of young girls in English, democracy and development;
– campaigns against violence;
– campaigns against discriminatory customs;
– campaigns for equal rights and opportunities.

Fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas of the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Current situation in the DRC

The general context of the country can be summarised as one of extreme poverty. This fact reflects the situation regarding HIV/AIDS which is as much a consequence as a cause. Data collected by the the PNLS, the National Programme for the Fight against AIDS (le Programme National pour la lutte contre le Sida) estimates that there were 3 million people living with the virus at the end of 2003 out of a population of approximately 60 million inhabitants. There were 450,000 orphans as a result of deaths from the disease during the same year. The rate of prevalence among the adult population is 5.10% especially for the 20 and 49 age group. For men, the most affected are in the 30 to 35 year age bracket whereas for women, including the incubation period, the age ranges between 15 and 29 years. The most current form of transmission is sexual relations (87%) followed by mother to child transmission (8%); other types of contamination account for only 5%. The man/woman infection ratio is 1:2.

The impact of the disease can be seen in the gradual depopulation of the active population, depriving the country over the medium and long term of vital human resources. Production suffers as a consequence in a predominantly informal system. Stigmatisation implications in a country where consideration of the issue has only started, has even more catastrophic consequences, especially from the social, nutritional and economic viewpoints. Adapted prevention mechanisms and care are desperately lacking. Along with the knock-on effects associated with Opportunistic Infections (O.I.) and stigmatisation, AIDS weakens a large number of the pillars of social and national cohesion. HIV/AIDS and other factors (e.g. conflicts and politico-economic stagnation) can have a destructive effect on human security (the right for protection from hunger, disease and repression).

(...)

Constraints or deciding factors influencing the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas of the Democratic Republic of Congo

– **Beliefs and Religions:** In cases where they dogmatically recommend certain risky practices (unrestricted marital sexual relations without sufficient analysis criteria).
– **Traditions and Customs:** They do not allow a married woman, especially in the village, to refuse her husband, even when infected.
– **Persons displaced by armed conflict:** As there are few or no screening centres in rural areas, rural populations are exposed to contamination by war refugees notably.
– **Training and supervision:** We are informed that in rural areas needles for single use are re-used on several patients without hesitation. The lack of medical training and health specialists has very negative consequences on risks and impact.
– **Input:** The cost of ARV, available in a few urban areas, varies between USD 30 and 50 per month. One can imagine how difficult it is for a rural person to access them when the income per inhabitant is practically non-existent.
– **The political decision-makers:** Difficult situations and lack of a national strategy in the fight against HIV/AIDS is more a question of lack of political will on the part of decision-makers.
– **Armed forces:** 90% of rape of women and girls in the countryside and particularly war zones are perpetrated by armed men.
– **Agriculture and rural areas:** women working in the fields and farmers are defenceless and victims and easy prey for rape and sexual violence especially in the provinces of Kivu, Maniema, Katanga and Eastern Province.

- **High-risk behaviour:** more so than prostitutes, who live from selling their bodies at any price (given the very low income per capita in the Democratic Republic of Congo), girls in outlying and rural areas prefer to risk contracting HIV by having sex with several men (without condoms) and wait months or years before dying, rather than die of hunger in just a few days.
- **(Rural) women:** They suffer from a considerable lack of information, education and communication and do not know, understand or enjoy their rights, nor can they take or be taken in charge, or negotiate their sexual relations without risk.
- **Geographic factors:** the way of life of those living in border areas is different from those living in the interior of the country. Most armed conflicts, rapes and sexual violence occur in the uncontrolled frontier regions.
- **Insufficient media coverage and communication channels:** villages have no radio or newspapers. They are deprived of the necessary information for the development and running of the country. Roads are dilapidated and very insecure.
- **The absence of economic power:** despite the high natural economic potential of the country, rural populations have neither income, nor farming tools, nor agricultural, fishing, poultry, inputs, etc. Agricultural produce derived from using rudimentary methods on the outskirts of towns sometimes cost more than donations and produce brought in from external sources.

(…) In November 2002 CONAFED organised the National Campaign against HIV/AIDS and Violence in times of conflict.

CONAFED will soon have been working for three years with networks and associations involved in seeking solutions to problems raised by the epidemic.

The resources available to local actors only allow for a localised struggle against the epidemic by:
- setting up some Voluntary Screening Centres (VSC);
- marketing of condoms and traditional prevention methods;
- information and availability of ARV in very small quantities;
- local monitoring of the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) and epidemiological surveillance;
- the psycho-social care of PLA and families.

(…)

Conafed is particularly involved in:
- advocacy on a national level for prevention and community care of target groups by:
  1. raising awareness and mobilising public opinion as to the reality of HIV and violence;
  2. promotion of free expression and triggering of awareness and the need for self-defence amongst target groups;
  3. protection of specific rights in local communities and protection against HIV and violence, especially for women and young people;
  4. the emergence of networks of solidarity among communities.

(…)

Funding

Cordaid is the main funder of CONAFED representing 89% of the annual volume of funds injected into the programme.

Complementary or parallel activities have been financed and implemented with the support of the funders below:
- UNIFEM for the campaign against violence perpetrated on women;
- 11.11.11. for the campaign against sexual violence and the campaign against discriminatory customs with regard to women;
- Eddi WINROCK for the scholarship programme for young girls;
- Dimitra/FAO: support to capacity building in communication in rural communities and information exchange amongst the women's association movement in the DRC.

Sustainability and inter-network contacts

Conafed maintains partnership links with all organisations interested in development and human rights issues, specifically women's rights. Campaigns and workshops are often jointly organised with public, private and NGO structures. Thanks to the backing of CONAFED, entrepreneurship initiatives at the level of member associations could form a basis for the lasting empowerment of women's status.

Grassroots communication and networking

Ms Fatou Sow NDIAYE

ENDA-PRONAT
Protection des ressources naturelles

Fatou Sow is Dimitra Project Coordinator for Cameroon, Cabo-Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.

She is also Coordinator of the National Network of Rural Women of Senegal which arose from Phase I of the Dimitra Project.

She is very involved in gender and development, grassroots communication and ICTs, sustainable agriculture, information management and communciation.

Enda Pronat is devoted to protecting natural resources by using appropriate technologies, which allow local plants to be transformed into natural pesticides and for an organic agriculture.

All its action programmes are adapted to local resources and constraints.

Enda Pronat is one of the Dimitra project's most active partner organisations.

DAKAR | SENEGAL

Overview of some actions in the field of HIV/AIDS conducted by ENDA-SANTÉ in urban and rural areas

Health actions in peripheral and rural areas

A synergy between ENDA entities

As part of its collaboration with Enda Pronat, the ENDA Santé SIDA (AIDS health) team employed several members of the National Network of Rural Women in its awareness-raising, training and information activities on HIV/AIDS.

Methodology and fields of intervention

1) Information-Education-Communication (IEC) Communication for Change in Behaviour (CCC);
   – Information intended either for the general public or special groups
2) Training of basic groups in special skills;
   – This training is aimed at information relays, trainers, peer educators, opinion leaders or associations, groups working for women's promotion and village development groups, etc.
3) Community dialogues in rural and semi-urban areas;
4) Strengthening NGO/CBO capacities.

AIDS in rural areas

Several group discussions and information sessions have revealed the low level of understanding of HIV transmission and of rural women's means of protection, as well as the importance of developing negotiation capacities and the group dynamic in order to reduce their vulnerability.

Some factors of vulnerability among rural women

– high rate of illiteracy;
– massive exodus of men to urban areas;
– impoverishment;
– incapacity to negotiate their sexuality;
– early marriage;
– levirate;
– polygamy;
– clandestine prostitution.

Activities in rural areas

Community dialogues

These stimulate reaction in the community while strengthening capacities to discuss and identify underlying factors in the spread of HIV/AIDS.

ENDA Santé chose 12 sites in 5 regions where 26 communities were identified and involved in the implementing of this programme in the fight against HIV. According to the latest epidemiological bulletin, the rates of HIV prevalence in these sites are: 1.2% (Dakar); 1.9% (Diourbel); 1.5% (Fatick); 1.2% (Kaolack); 0.5% (Thiès).

The community dialogue approach aims at building the capacity of individuals and communities to better understand the nature of the epidemic and to consider and initiate changes so as to provide efficient answers to the propagation of HIV/AIDS.

Evidence shows that community dialogues, among other things: facilitate the transfer of lessons learned, sharing of know-how and changes occurring between individuals, communities and organisations.

The following factors could be considered as the start of a process of change:

The acceptance of community dialogues during which people of different generations share information on sexuality and HIV/ AIDS.

– HIV/AIDS is no longer seen as a divine curse;
– recognition of HIV/AIDS as a reality;
– regular and motivated participation of community members in community dialogues;
– the involvement of opinion leaders such as imams, priests, village chiefs, teachers, midwives and health workers among others;
– the involvement of community members in the implementation of activities;
– recognition of the existence of HIV/AIDS, which is seen as a threat to communities;

– identification of certain socio-cultural practices related to the propagation of HIV/AIDS and the commitment of communities to sort them out and get rid of them;

– the effective participation of women and girls in community dialogues;

– people have stated that they are prepared to take the voluntary and anonymous screening test (prenuptial test especially for women and young girls);

– the appropriation of the process by communities;

– community dialogues have reinforced the organisation of female promotion groups, encouraged by income-generating activities (Nganda) and community solidarity (establishment of a solidarity fund that can be used to pay for the transport for screening and supporting infected persons);

– a better understanding of HIV/AIDS by communities;

– improving the image of facilitators;

– acceptance by both parties of treatment for sexually transmitted infections (in a couple);

– increased participation of men;

– an open dialogue among the community on sexual issues.

Making the voices of rural women heard

Ms Adeline Nsimire

Sauti ya Mwanamke Kijijini
SAMWAKI

Adeline Nsimire is the Coordinator of the organisation SAUTI YA MWANAMKE KIJIJINI, "SAMWAKI". This Swahili word means the "voice of the rural woman" in English.

SAMWAKI has its headquarters in the Mugogo locality, Walungu territory in the Sud-Kivu province. The organisation's mission is to help rural women have access to information and communication.

Samwaki created "communication axes" which brought together women's groups to exchange different ideas on topical issues, agriculture, health, small-scale livestock breeding, HIV/AIDS, peaceful resolution of conflicts, gender, education, etc. They also started up the project "Bubusa wall" known as wall radio which consists of translating information in local languages and posting them on notice boards in public places in isolated areas of the province.

In 2004, SAMWAKI brought together some rural women's collectives and organisations from Sud-Kivu to exchange ideas on the possible creation of a framework for sharing information and experiences between the women and rural women's organisations from throughout the province. They started up the Rural Women's Network of Sud-Kivu of which Samwaki holds the Executive Secretariat since 2004.

SOUTH KIVU | DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Strengthening rural women's networks and fighting HIV/AIDS in rural areas

Network sustainability – general context

Our organisation is called *Sauti ya Mwanamke Kijijini*; the acronym for this is *SAMWAKI*. This Swahili phrase means *the voice of the rural woman*. SAMWAKI is based in the province of South Kivu in the village of Mugogo in the rural territory of Walungu, DRC.

(…)

SAMWAKI was founded in 2002 in the middle of the armed conflicts that shook our country for several years (1996-2003). During this period, most of the men fled the insecurity caused by the war, abandoning women, girls and small children to their fate. Rural women became resigned. They carried the burden of families and communities with difficulty by keeping their positions as bread-winning mothers. They were in charge of providing for the family. Meanwhile they were being subjected to the most dehumanising of violations, including rape, sexual violence, torture, etc.

Sympathising with village women, making both them and their actions on behalf of the community more visible, encouraging them to take an active part in the decision-making bodies within their communities… whilst facilitating access to information and communication for them; such were the ideas that supported the creation of SAMWAKI.

SAMWAKI's operations

To begin with, getting SAMWAKI up and running was no easy task, for a variety of reasons:

Mission: it is a long-term job to help a village woman, whether literate or not, understand that access to information and communication holds some value for her.

In the beginning, many would say *"mwanzi anuna ci arhalibwa"*, which means *"you can't eat the news, no matter how important it is"*. Thus lending strength to the idea that the actions of a development organisation must include distributing clothes, food, hoes, etc to the people.

The target itself: We originally chose to speak to some social leaders in the area to convince them of the important role of women in society. Our intention was to persuade them to accept women as partners, not as subordinates, to involve them in all the meetings concerning community life, and especially to give them the chance to express their desires in public.

(…)

Field workers are recruited from the rural community. Although they do have skills in various areas, it became imperative for each of them to receive specific training in certain matters relating to the objectives of the association they are working with (gender and development, computer skills, ICT, communication techniques for combating HIV/AIDS, drawing up and managing projects, agricultural techniques, etc).

(…) Due to the growing insecurity in Walungu, we had to acquire an office in Bukavu.

This also allows the information and communications officer to access many information sources such as the Internet, public radio stations as well as local community ones, which only cover the town and its immediate surroundings.

Currently, the community radio station Maendeleo covers a large part of our area of involvement. For this reason, we are now broadcasting a weekly programme both in the local languages and in French. The programme is called *"Sauti ya mwanamke kijijini"* in Swahili, *"izu ly'omukazi cikala"* in Mashi and *"la voix de la femme paysanne"* in French, which translates to English as "the voice of village women".

(…)

Our target groups are made up of village women gathered into "bands". A number of bands spread over a particular area constitute "the communication axis".

Our indirect targets are local leaders (the guardians of tradition, religious groups, political and administrative authorities, young people, civil society,…) from whom we expect change and understanding which could lead to a decrease in discrimination against women in our rural areas.

Results obtained:

– identification of the NGOs and rural women's networks of Sud-Kivu;
– organisation of meetings;
– convening of a constituent general assembly;
– drawing up of draft statutes and rules of procedure;
– constitution of the network known as *"Sud-Kivu Rural Women's Network"*;
– establishment of an organisational structure for the network;
– drawing up of a proposal for the start of the network's activities;
– planning of activities for the financial period 2004-2007.

Successes:

The creation of the network and the establishment of an organic structure.

Failures:

Poor mobilisation of funds for the effective start-up of activities.
(…)

Informing and Communicating

In order to communicate with our surroundings, we often use letters, sent either in person or by Internet. Sometimes we make use of cell-phones. However, to address the community, we make use of both traditional and modern means of communication (traditional theatre, songs and dances, radio broadcasts, mural bubusa…).

The information tools we use most are: games and drama, Internet, radio broadcasts, posters. In our view we do not have enough tools at our disposal.

If we were able to use radio broadcasts to transmit information, it would be very useful for villages where the spoken word is still predominant and where most of the people can neither read nor write.

Broadcasting could be achieved by setting up a number of audio-visual communication centres, where films and videos could be projected, thus helping to improve the understanding and knowledge of local people, particularly with regard to agricultural techniques. These centres would be set up in all the communication axes created by SAMWAKI.

In the same way, Internet connections remain a major concern for our organisation.

Impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women

We include the topic of HIV/AIDS in our programme and activities, because in rural areas this pandemic is hardly spoken of, if at all, and yet it is decimating entire families there.

We are working with grassroots organisations, women's groups and mixed groups. We are also working with the Government through the Sud-Kivu AIDS Forum. SAMWAKI focuses its work on HIV/AIDS as a development problem. It is seriously affecting the farming-based economy in our villages. Everything pertaining to sex is taboo in Bashi culture (in Sud-Kivu). As a result, these things can not be discussed in the family circle, and even less so in public. This is one of the major challenges that we are working to overcome; ignorance, the false rumours regarding HIV/AIDS which still persist, but especially the gradual nature of changing the behaviour of a population whose morals are becoming increasingly depraved. In order to address all of these issues, we are proceeding by selecting target groups. The theme of the day is passed on through family links (this is however very rare), in the community field, at the drinking-water well, on the way to church or to the market, etc.

With regard to direct impact, HIV/AIDS is still considered to be a shameful disease. We are struggling against the stigmatisation and social rejection that affect people suffering from HIV/AIDS in our villages, but it takes time and money.

HIV/AIDS is having a serious impact on the farming sector. Many fields have lain fallow for several years now because their workers fell ill or died. This leads to a decrease in production and consequently the perturbation of food security for the whole community.

Civil lawsuits and conflicts have broken out between members of families where one or both parents have died from AIDS. Uncles and aunts want to share out the belongings of the deceased without a thought for their orphans.

The imputability arising from contamination within a home divides not only the spouses, but also their families, where one party accuses the other of having killed their child.

Another impact is that children (girls from one year old) and young girls (under age) have become targets for armed gangs, who rape them on the pretext (and/or because they really believe) that having sexual intercourse with a virgin can cure AIDS. There are many cases of this in our area. Besides this, young girls are also preferred by older men who fear that the women of their own generation may already have become infected by HIV/AIDS.

As we mentioned above, AIDS is seen variously as a shameful illness, a result of sin, a divine curse, a disease of city-dwellers, of rich people, made up to discourage young lovers, a very contagious disease, etc. All of this means that anyone suffering from it or suspected of suffering from it is avoided like the plague.

Our information and communication strategy to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS is not efficient enough to have a real effect on the problem.

As mentioned earlier, our workers are in great need of communication training in this specific area, taking the target group into account. This targeted training would allow us to implement new strategies or even to apply those learned during training and adapting them to the realities of our environment.

As well as training, it seems indispensable for HIV/AIDS information, communication and/or documentation centres to be set up in rural areas. The following are some of the other

support systems we would recommend for these centres' establishment:

– radio broadcasting (to be set up in areas which can not receive the broadcasts from private radio stations);
– a video library;
– a documentation centre (collection of manuals, works and other publications on HIV/AIDS);
– games and shows (involving local actors) etc.

These tools could also be used by mobile workers during awareness-raising campaigns aimed at other groups who are more exposed to the risks of HIV/AIDS and who are living in areas far from the SAMWAKI communication centres. This could be the case for schools, churches, mining centres, business centres, professional environments, hauliers, and so forth.

Sources of funding

Member subscriptions, participation of some local partner NGOs, external funding.

– Our partners are both local and international NGOs:
Association ELIMU, PRODES, Action pour l'Education aux Droits (AED), the Women's Network for the Promotion of Rights and Peace (RFDP)… in the province of Sud-Kivu; CONAFED at national level, the Women's World Summit Foundation (Switzerland), DIMITRA Project.

SAMWAKI has undertaken some specific initiatives in the context of networking.

Hoping for a future when rural women can sit beside men under the same 'arbre à palabres' *

Ms Rosalie Ouoba

*Réseau d'Appui à la Citoyenneté
des Femmes Rurales Ouest-africaines
et du Tchad (RESACIFROAT)*

Rosalie Ouoba worked at CESAO for 20 years
– from 1983 until 2003.

She left the Institution in 2003 to set up the Resacifroat
– Réseau des Femmes Rurales d'Afrique et du Chad
(Network of Rural Women from Africa and Chad) which
is dedicated to supporting rural women's associations.

In spite of the difficulties faced by this network in
obtaining the necessary funds to help these associations,
she is happy to work with the women and to hope
alongside them in a future whereby rural women will
be able to sit at the same table, or under the same
discussion tree as men, to decide on their common
future.

Rosalie has a DESS in Public Health and Nutrition in
Development Processes from the University of Paris I.
She also holds a Diploma in Training for Social Action
from the University of Bobigny in France.

* The baobab tree, a symbol of communication.

Reflection on the strengthening of rural women's networks in the fight against HIV/AIDS in rural areas

Introduction

One of the great challenges which African countries are called upon to face is the fight against that great scourge of our times, HIV/AIDS. This pandemic affects the young people and women of the African continent, the very two groups that provide the energy for development.

The Union of Rural Women of West Africa and Chad (UFROAT) was created in March 2000 and has set up relay structures in Benin, Burkina, Mali, Niger and Togo. This union, comprising over 10,000 members, has a great many needs in terms of support – advice, training and counselling. The Support Network for Citizenship of Rural Women from West Africa and Chad (RESACIFROAT) was created in order to provide this support. Its goal is to contribute to the advancement of responsible citizenship among the rural women of West Africa and Chad. Such a citizenship requires, among other things, that rural women are able to take responsibility for their own health and that of their families. However, they can only attain this noble goal if they manage to protect themselves and efficiently combat HIV/AIDS, which is one of the crucial problems for village development.

Objectives of the network

The network's goal is to take part, through conferences and actions, in promoting sustainable and equitable development, for the West-African and Chad communities in which rural women assume their responsibility as citizens.

For this reason, the network has set itself the following objectives:
- to strengthen the organisational and institutional capabilities of the West-African associations of rural women in general, and more specifically those of the Union of Rural Women from West Africa and Chad (UFROAT);
- to develop and/or reinforce the abilities of rural women from West Africa and Chad to express themselves and to act;

- to support rural women in analysing situations, consultation and negotiations, defending and exercising their interests and their rights,
- to provide greater visibility for the initiatives and experiences of rural women;
- to work on consolidating a real regional area for cooperation in sustainable development among member countries,
- to share experiences between the structures of the member countries.

Areas of competence of the network

The areas of competence are linked to the various specialisations of the network's members, namely:
- citizenship through local development, decentralised co-operation, the exercise of rights and duties, etc.;
- management of natural resources;
- research and action;
- support in terms of advice, training and counselling;
- communication for development;
- female leadership in rural areas, (advocacy, lobbying, etc.).

In practice, the network is made up of specialists in rural development, communicators, sociologists, economists, health specialists, etc.

Organisation and operation of the network

The network's working tools are action plans, programmes and projects. These are drawn up based on specific technical themes. Take, for instance, the action plan on natural resource management, a plan which is currently subject to negotiations with the network's partners, notably the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the CTA.

Currently, the network operates by means of e-mails (as a tool for exchanges between members) but also through holding meetings of the Steering Committee. At the present time, the technical committee does not yet have any administrative or

technical staff. The network's Chairwoman is in charge of the committee's operations.

Actions taken include:
– five national workshops (Benin, Burkina, Mali, Niger and Togo) on the involvement of rural women in managing natural resources;
– the elaboration of a sub-regional action plan concerning the involvement of rural women in managing natural resources;
– the organisation of an exchange trip to Niger for the benefit of the rural women of that country, on the topic "Land recovery and development of pastoral land";
– the organisation of an exchange trip to Mali with around twenty rural women from Benin, Burkina-Faso, Niger, Mali and Chad, on the topic "Rural women and positions of responsibility in rural municipalities and inter-village conventions for the management of natural resources";
– the preparation and realisation of a sub-regional workshop to validate the action plan, which is expected to be held from May 9 - 14 2005 in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso.

Action strategy

The network's action strategy is based on mobilising resources and actors, working tools and efficient communications. With regard to the mobilisation of material and financial resources, the network knows that it has to rely on its own abilities. For this reason, not only has it instituted a membership charge and subscription fee, but it has also determined that network members should contribute by carrying out the specific tasks entrusted to them. This is where the mobilisation of material and financial resources goes hand in hand with mobilising human resources.

As regards our working tools, the network has opted for plans, programmes and projects. These are our instruments for negotiating with our technical and financial partners. Finally, the network gives communication an important place in our support strategy for rural women. In terms of internal communication, it is making every effort to remain in constant contact with all its members, by e-mail and by telephone. The technical committee sends out information regarding activities and events to our members fairly frequently (every two to three months). We note that the members have not yet sufficiently developed the reflex to respond rapidly to the various requests from the technical committee.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly among rural women

Among the countries in which RESACIFROAT is involved, a few years ago some of them were displaying rather high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates (up to 7%); fortunately, recent statistics indicate lower rates (3%).

Nonetheless, in this group of countries, there is still a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, mainly affecting those in the workforce, notably women and young people, who make up the bulk of farm workers.

Countries such as Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast have been hard hit, particularly among young people and women.

RESACIFROAT is very much aware of the gravity of the problem of HIV/AIDS, in particular for rural women, on whom food security depends very strongly for the inhabitants of the countries in which the group is involved. However, it is not working directly with this topic, but is rather considering ways and means of involving intervention strategies in its actions, at least in the area of awareness-raising.

This is why, for some time now, the network has determined to raise the issue of HIVAIDS in an informal manner through its meetings with communities. This allows it to state that people are aware of HIV/AIDS, particularly the women, whose work puts them in direct contact with those suffering from the disease, be it husband, co-wife, brother, son, etc.

When asked whether they know about the illness, men are the ones who respond most easily, but always in a superficial way, as if to minimise the feeling of impotence when faced with an illness which no one can cure.

Outside men's sphere of influence, the women express their concerns, particularly those living in polygamous families. Their main observation concerns the limitations of their influence on the behaviour of their husbands.

Women, who have a strategic part to play in combating HIV/AIDS, have a lot to say if give the chance and the right conditions in which to do so. The discussions we held with female participants from five countries during a study trip to Mali have convinced us of this.

Sources of funding

Currently, the network is operating from:
– its own resources, including member subscriptions;
– support from the IDRC, which has financed the organisation of the five national workshops, and the drawing up of an action plan regarding management of natural resources;
– support from the Belgian association *Inter-Echanges,* which has allowed us to organise exchange visits to Niger and Mali for the benefit of rural women;
– the CTA, which, together with the IDRC, is financing the workshop to validate the action plan.

Partnership

The network has made partnership the cornerstone of its strategy supporting rural West African and Chad women. For the time being, it has a special relationship with the Union of Rural Women from West Africa and Chad and its national relay structures. Within each country, it is currently working to identify private and public structures that could belong to its network of technical or even financial partners.

Helping my fellow sisters and their families

Ms Rose Rajbansee

Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP)

Rose is from the twin island Republic of Trinidad and Tobago. Rose has devoted her life to this philosophy.

Her grandmother's belief was that as a woman you should be committed to helping a fellow sister.

Rose is also a community worker and is involved in a number of organizations devoted to development of communities and women.

She has developed skills in group dynamics and in group leadership and through her association with the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) she was chosen to work with the Network of Rural Women Producers (NRWP). Over the years she progressed to become the Coordinator of the regional network, the Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP).

The village where she lives is poor and as there are no public building available her home is used by villagers for numerous meetings, including the Village Council and community women's groups. It is also used as a training centre for programmes offered by public and private agencies.

MANZANILLA | TRINIDAD & TOBAGO

The sustainability of networks and the fight against HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean

General Environment

The Caribbean Region is made up of many territories similar in many respects but each with a degree of uniqueness. (...) Presently, there is no specific governmental policy or programme geared towards the needs of women in the rural sector. To the extent that there is a predominance of agriculturally related activities in the rural sector and in the absence of any public policy related to rural women specifically, it is the Ministries of Agriculture, with responsibility for agricultural development that de facto assumes responsibility for rural women.

There is the phenomenon of the *feminisation of agriculture*, which sees the outward migration of males from the rural and small-scale production entities. Accordingly, there is the associated need for women to spend increasing amounts of time in the field, thus compounding their reproductive responsibilities. Generally, because of the under-valuation of the contribution of rural women to agriculture, we note the marginalisation of rural women within the developmental processes.

Functioning of the Network

The Caribbean Network of Rural Women Producers (CANROP) was formally launched on the occasion of the historic *First Meeting of the Wives of Heads of State and Heads of Government of the Caribbean* held on July 5-7, 1999 in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, which was hosted by the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA).

The overall goal of the regional Network is to equip women to become self-reliant thereby empowering them to improve their socio-economic status. Within this context, the specific objectives of the CANROP are:

– creation of sustainable employment within the rural agricultural sector;
– promotion of self-reliance among rural women producers in particular;
– promotion of products made by rural women producers;
– promotion of relevant training so as to upgrade and develop the human resource capacity of rural women producers;
– strengthening of links among rural women producers;
– advocacy so as to promote and sensitize the wider society to the needs of rural women producers;
– institutional strengthening among rural women's groups;

– promotion of sustainability of individual groups and the Network of Rural Women Producers.

CANROP's vision revolves around creating *a vibrant, unified thriving organisation with well-trained members, capable of supporting their developing needs in the area of value-added activities on a sustainable basis.*

The target group is women engaged in all facets of agriculture and business in the rural areas. The constituent members of CANROP (and the year of establishment) are:

– The Network of Rural Women Producers of Trinidad and Tobago (1998)
– The Rural Women Network of Guyana (1998)
– The Association of Women in Agriculture of Barbados (1999)
– The Jamaica Rural Women Producers' Network (2000)
– The St. Lucia Network of Rural Women Producers (2003)
(...)

One particular networking initiative, which has been employed by CANROP, is the use of *'home hospitality'* whereby members offer their homes to overseas members visiting from other countries for workshops, meetings or business related to the network.

This mechanism has been very effective in forging close and personal links among members and in reducing expenses associated with overseas travel.

Communication tools and techniques

(...)

At the national level, regular communication is maintained through meetings and training workshops and, in one case, through a national bulletin. Communication among the member countries is via letters, telephone and e-mail and facilitated by IICA. However, members still express concerns on the inability to maintain regular communication links among countries. Member networks still rely on the President/Coordinator as the hub to collate and re-distribute information. They also rely on the physical infrastructure of the IICA for office accommodation and information communication.

Communication with the wider environment (other networks, organisations, community and decision-makers) is achieved through inter-locking membership on boards and membership on mailing lists.

Communication techniques include newspapers and radio for advertisement of training sessions and the AGM and bulletins for dissemination of information among members. These tools are largely dependent on the facilities provided by IICA. There is a need for the network to acquire more of these tools.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women

Some of the member countries (particularly Guyana) have introduced HIV/AIDS in their outreach programmes. At the national level, the members are engaged in the distribution of food to the disadvantaged and those affected by the disease.

In some instances, members at the national level collaborate with the churches and other funding agencies. In this respect, CANROP has not only a tremendous obligation to participate but also a tremendous opportunity to serve for we are already there among the people who can be positively impacted. Presently, the network focuses work in the agricultural, economic and health sectors.

Some chapters are linked to CARAPA which is a regional organisation dedicated to growing and processing herbs, in association with marketing and research at the tertiary level. CANROP's goal is to use this information to help its members and other rural women to increase production of herbs for commercial and medicinal purposes.

However, CANROP has the potential to extend its outreach further by:
– providing information and training on palliative care;
– extending awareness on how AIDS is spread;
– providing the first line of counselling on nutrition, rural health; and
– the using of the proceeds of agricultural initiatives in financing AIDS medicines.

The AIDS epidemic tends to follow an exponential curve. After a five percent threshold of prevalence in any society, exponential growth makes it difficult and very expensive to deal with its consequences. HIV/AIDS as a creeping epidemic will soon become a pandemic if action at the grassroots level does not happen. In the region there are many organizations involved in outreach but not many of them are located within the rural areas where the services are needed. This is even more critical in our arena for certain Caribbean patterns make the spread of AIDS even easier:
– men tend to have multiple sex partners even if they are in a permanent relationship. The "outside woman", "child mother" or "outside child" is an accepted phenomenon;
– no condom use or tendency not to use;

– catholics official policy is against condom use – some use that as a reason for not using condoms;
– heterosexual transmission is the main method of transmission. Even among those who are "married by custom, church or courthouse" that is, common-law relationships are becoming vulnerable;
– infection among women and vertical transmissions are recent phenomena;
– male to male transmission has not really being studied;
– there is no real hard data on infected needle sharing increasing the spread. Most of our rural drug users include marijuana and/ or alcoholic addicts;
– older AIDS-infected men infecting poor or poverty stricken women;
– the Caribbean sex industry is in need of study because when these workers both male and female become infected they go to the rural sectors to die and may affect other people in the process. There are no real rural AIDS care and support networks and in this instance there remains much to be done even in things fundamental like reducing the stigma;
– still some people believe that licentious persons get and deserve AIDS;
– transactional sex being forced on women (sex for food, sex for school fees, etc): they include schoolgirls, housewives and children. As such, new groups are being exposed to new risks, and merit specific analysis and targeted interventions.

CANROP's information and communication strategies which use group meetings and workshops can be effective for addressing the issues since the messages can be delivered directly to the community members by their peers, in their familiar surroundings and language.

Funding

CANROP's initial capital was sourced from IICA. Over the years, the regional network has received funds from government agencies and international organisations in the respective countries.

Partnerships

Partnerships with public/private organisations, NGOs etc include:
– The Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)
– The Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Marine Resources
– The Tobago House of Assembly
– The Ministry of Community Development and Gender Affairs
– The Federation of Women's Institutes

Working together for improving the quality of the environment

Ms Vololomihaja Rasamimanana

Office National pour l'Environnement (ONE)

Vololomihaja Rasamimanana is Information Officer in the Quality and Communication department of the National Office for the Environment in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

In her role as communicator, her main activities involve promoting environmental education and communication using appropriate tools for different target groups, including rural women. These tools include information kits, teaching kits, telecentres and training of trainers.

ANTANANARIVO | MADAGASCAR

The strategic sectoral plan for the fight against HIV/AIDS in the rural development sector in Madagascar

Introduction

ONE is the main organisation in Madagascar for environment management. The mandate of ONE can be divided into several axes: the development of instruments and policies for environment management; instrument management; and management of environmental information. Furthermore, ONE also coordinates projects and activities related to management of the Malagasy environment and has set up a gender network across the country.

The fight against HIV/AIDS

In Madagascar, (…) the strategic sectoral plan for the rural development sector is an integral part of the National Strategic Plan to combat HIV/AIDS. (…) The main objective of this strategic sectoral plan is to highlight the need to develop possible response strategies in the immediate, medium and long term, with a view to combating HIV/AIDS and limiting the consequences for rural development (in particular agriculture, fishing, the environment, etc.)

The measures currently employed, whilst necessary, are applied directly from the urban environment without taking into account the local realities or the traditional practices which are still firmly embedded in rural areas.

Prevalence rates in Madagascar are still relatively low (1.1%), as the HIV/AIDS pandemic is at a stage of very low visibility; nonetheless, the Malagasy rural environment is the most severely affected. (…) The threat which HIV/AIDS poses to individuals and to families is nevertheless a real one.

The government has also identified multi-sectoral and decentralised approaches as the most efficient and strategic ways to respond to the epidemic and these must be accompanied by the involvement of public, traditional and religious authorities, civil society and the Malagasy Community.

Therefore, the strategic sectoral plan for rural development is made up of a series of interventions aiming to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to limit its impact

Other complementary interventions have been defined, including strengthening of the legal and institutional framework, reinforcing information, awareness-raising, communication and training, as well as access to and quality of services in terms of prevention and care in rural areas.

Cross-cutting themes have also been taken into account for the implementation of this plan, namely the gender perspective and the identification of good practices.

Rural aspects of HIV/AIDS

The results of the enquiry into HIV prevalence among pregnant women in Madagascar (2003) show that the percentage of people living with HIV/AIDS is much higher in rural areas: HIV-positive women are young (between the ages of 15 and 34), and married in 89% of cases. They stem from the agricultural and farming sectors with a rate of HIV infection of 1.3%. They live in very remote areas, and have not received schooling.

Moreover, the final UNICEF report for 2004 estimates the number of AIDS orphans in Madagascar at 30,000.

We would like to highlight the following points:
The main determining factors identified for the rural Malagasy environment are poverty lack of access to basic infrastructures (education, health services, etc.), food insecurity, gender inequality, the loss of traditional value systems, high mobility and migration in the sector.

The observations made in the different regions at the level of the rural population have enabled us to identify two types of rural area particularly exposed to HIV/AIDS:

– those situated along lorry routes, and particularly along main roads.

– those from which migrants start when leaving to search for work in rural landlocked regions where the land pressure is strong or natural conditions are hard (e.g. southerners migrating northwards).

Impact of HIV/AIDS in the rural Malagasy environment

At its current stage, the impact of AIDS is not yet noticeable in Madagascar. There is insufficient data concerning the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the rural population due to the lack of specific studies.

Possible impacts

– Decrease in the workforce of the institutions working in the sector;
– Decrease in productivity among farmers and breeders;
– Impoverishment of the rural population (due to human losses and the cost of care);
– A mass rural exodus and vice versa in cases where those affected living in urban areas return to their villages.

The various results of analyses carried out on the principal underlying causes of HIV/AIDS show that the status of rural Malagasy women, the difficulty of access to land, etc. may facilitate the spread of the disease.

Experience shows that policies and programmes for rural development built on programmes to reduce poverty, to improve food security and the economic and social status of women, should include programmes to prevent and limit HIV/AIDS.

The National Programme for the multisectoral fight against HIV /AIDS

Partnership

– A permanent commitment of the Head of State, of the government, of political, religious and community leaders is indispensable to a national response (since 1987: CNLS Nov 2002 to the present day);
– Development of partnership at all levels in order to strengthen the means provided to those involved in the fight against AIDS and to the people;
– Decentralisation of the activities combating HIV/AIDS within the Autonomous Provinces.

Medical and social care for PLWHA (People Living with HIV/AIDS)

– The rights of the PLWHA are respected and their responsibilities consolidated;
– Preventive actions are integrated into health and social services in order to improve accessibility;
– AIDS treatment, in particular anti-retroviral drugs, will be made available to the PLWHA.

Socio-economic factors

– The fight against AIDS is integrated into socio-economic development projects and programmes.
– Resources are allocated in line with the vulnerability factors of those affected by HIV.

Screening

– Systematic screening for HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases (syphilis, hepatitis) in all blood donations.
– The HIV screening test is voluntary and confidential, and linked to a VCT service.

A better world where each and every person's rights are respected

Ms Agnès Rubagire

Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural

Agnès Rubagire is the Executive Secretary of the organisation Réseau des Femmes Oeuvrant pour le Développement Rural (The Network of Women Working Towards Rural Development).

The goal of this organisation is to help women from rural areas become actors in their own development and for them to be recognised as such.

Some of her activities include:
– ensuring the support and implementation of activities in the regions;
– gathering institutional support and co-ordinating self-financing activities;
– raising awareness on the organisation;
– managing heritage and financial resources;
– making suggestions to the national co-ordination committee regarding the policies and recommendations controlling the community life of the organisation.

KIGALI | RWANDA

The sustainability of women's networks: an example from Rwanda

Development of our Organisation

Our organisation, which will soon celebrate its 20th birthday, was founded in 1986 and has developed gradually. It was one of the very first non-governmental organisations working for the advancement of women at the time, and its members were professional women working in the Ministries and other Public Institutions.

Women, who make up 53 % of the Rwandan population, are the most affected by poverty, as they have been unusually weakened and destabilised by the consequences of the war, through widowhood, rape, psycho-social and emotional trauma, deprivation of material belongings, etc.

The contribution of the women's network, whose target group is made up entirely of women, mainly from rural areas, is to take charge of the situation. It has adopted a number of strategies aiming to reduce poverty in rural areas.

A group of women known as 'vehicles of progress' in the rural environment is supported by the women's network and these women have been selected because of their innovative activities in terms of farming, animal husbandry and food processing in the rural environment. These women are brought to the fore during World Rural Women's Day and are given awards. Mechanisms to monitor the women have been developed, thus allowing them to extend their activities within their circle so that they can be models and actors for development in rural areas.

The women's network promotes the creation of women's associations working on income-generating activities in order to combat poverty.

Today our vision remains the same and the Women's Network is recognised as a strong institution for the promotion of gender, which has been able to change the mindset of its members. Several studies and research programmes have been carried out on issues concerning women and these have made the public and the decision-makers much more aware of the role of women in the development of the country.

Those benefiting from the women's network are our women members in all the provinces of the country. The men who support our vision of gender have a specific title: they are known as 'vehicles of progress for equality between men and women', and they are associated with our development activities in rural areas and help us to raise awareness among other men.

Constraints within our country and our organisation's contribution to improving this environment

Socio-cultural level

From the socio-cultural point of view, our country is still living with the consequences of genocide; government initiatives have been put in place, aiming for reconciliation among the Rwandan people, but some continue to spread the ideology of genocide among the population. (...) Our association endeavours to train its members in conflict resolution techniques, and encourages them to participate in all measures taken in favour of peace and reconciliation in our society. Examples of this would include participating or being elected to the popular "gacaca" courts and the reconciliation bodies, the "abunzi."

The AIDS pandemic continues to grow despite huge efforts to raise awareness of this scourge. (...) In all the regional assemblies, members are provided with information to raise awareness of the fight against AIDS as well as the opportunities for care of those suffering from it. The number of rapes of women and children increases daily. A law has been enacted, sentencing the perpetrators and even allowing the death penalty if HIV/AIDS has been passed on through the rape.

(...) The situation with Rwandans' exile and return from exile, which has been reflected throughout history, has given rise to a serious problem in terms of land distribution, particularly in rural areas. The Land and Environment Ministry has just passed a law on land distribution as well as a policy on tenure, with a view to reducing such conflicts. The women's network intends to popularise laws and policies on tenure in the rural environment with a view to reducing the disparities caused by land distribution in rural areas, because women, who are mostly involved in agriculture and animal husbandry, are very much affected by this.

Incidences of violence against women and children are increasing daily. (...) The government's efforts to stamp out this malice do not seem to have had much of an effect, which is why civil society needs to invest seriously in combating the violations to which women and children are subjected. The women's network has developed a programme to combat violence against women, and negotiations are currently underway with the do-

nor agency (Norwegian People's Aid) to help us acquire funds to carry out these activities during 2005.

Crosscutting theme: gender

The Women's Network has just developed a project to raise awareness among rural women about the importance of their participation in grassroots decision-making bodies. We are going to take advantage of the elections planned for March 2006 within the districts, sectors, and cells, and our objective is to reach at least 30% of women per number needed in each province.

A gender integration programme among the districts and farmers' organisations is being implemented in rural areas with a view to influencing the districts' development plans so that they can meet the needs of the women, whose voices are not heard at meetings or during votes because there are too few of them.

The general perception of the gender concept is improving very slowly. The Rwandan government is in favour of gender equality; the Minister for Women's Promotion has adopted several provisions and affirmative actions with regard to gender, and a Gender Observatory is included in the Rwandan Constitution of 2003. In spite of all these measures, people still cling to their culture, saying that gender equality goes against it and that women should always be submissive to men and accept to be dominated.

(…) For several years we have been providing training for our members, who have understood the relationship between gender and development. We have therefore enabled these members to become focal points providing training on gender and grassroots development. The challenge we are facing is to continue to raise awareness among men and women in rural areas.

Priority needs in terms of gender, to advance equality in our region

a) Women have internalised the inequalities linked to gender resulting from social structures, and they then perpetuate them through the education they give their children.

b) The need to address the position and strong reactions of men with regard to increasing women's power to obtain greater justice and fairness.

c) The political instability of the sub-region, as shown by the armed conflicts which often leave women to provide for their families' survival alone. Women are the most affected by this and in their hearts they long for true peace. Women are becoming ever more aware that peace does not just mean an absence of war but rather the absence of all those elements that hinder their daily lives, i.e.
– unemployment;
– low income;
– illiteracy;
– difficult access to health care;
– low level of participation in decision-making.

Finally, the absence of a framework for exchange and information/training on gender which would allow empowerment of women and the definition of strategies applicable to our local policies.

Sources of financing

Our funds come firstly from the voluntary work of our members who, beginning by reinforcing gender and development capabilities, are trying to raise awareness in their professional environment and are creating initiatives among rural women to help them get out of poverty and feel like real development actors. We receive a small annual contribution from these members.

Other funds are provided by the sponsors residing within our country, who fund particular programmes and projects. This year these are: the Dutch Embassy, Trócaire, the Canadian Co-operation, Norwegian Peoples Aid, and Aide et Actions.

At international level our institutional partner is NOVIB Netherlands. We are currently in talks with the CNCD Belgium (Brussels) and others.

Partnership with public and private organisations

Partnership with public organisations is inescapable for two reasons. Firstly, we have to work closely with the Ministry for Gender, which is our umbrella Ministry. Secondly, the decentralised entities such as districts, sectors and cells also oversee NGO activities and we have to co-operate with them in order to be able to function in rural areas.

We are members of local collectives with which we have common interests and work closely with them. Sometimes joint activities will be carried out with the members of a collective. (…) Partnership with the private sector is also inescapable because we work with the Chamber of Commerce to reinforce the capabilities of small businesses, as there are some rural women we are training who are involved in rural income-generating activities in the areas of agriculture, animal husbandry, crafts and food processing. (…)

Partnership with NGOs is necessary, because occasionally some of our sponsors prefer us to carry out our activities within a network and we need to consult so as not to duplicate activities in particular areas; we also exchange information in our areas of involvement. (…)

(…)

Conclusion

The Network of Women Working Towards Rural Development and other Rwandan organisations, the organisations of Burundi, of the DRC, of Tanzania, Kenya, etc.; all of these have accomplished an indisputable amount in terms of raising awareness, training, providing information, research and lobbying with regard to gender and lasting peace.

However, much still remains to be done and for this reason men and women who are aware of gender issues need to unite their efforts to create a more supportive and fairer world.

Producing without destroying: for a sustainable agriculture

Ms Mariam Sow

ENDA-Pronat
Protection des Ressources Naturelles

Born in Senegal, Mariam Sow was trained as rural development extension workers.

Today she is the Coordinator of ENDA-Pronat, which is part of ENDA Third World one of the most important non-governmental organisations in Senegal.

ENDA-Pronat works for the sustainable management of environmentally sound agricultural resources.

Active within ENDA-Pronat since 1983, Mariam Sow has developed and managed numerous workshops and international training programs with an emphasis on rural development according to the principles of ENDA-Pronat.

She also regularly organizes communication workshops for women at village level, with the aim of building their self-confidence and their ability to negotiate.

Some of her specific interests include: communication amongst rural women's and mixed groups in the Sahel; communication and food security; alternatives to chemical products; biodiversity and the participation of rural populations to their own development.

Network experiences in the ENDA-Pronat research and action process

Brief overview of Enda PRONAT's programme

Enda-PRONAT (Protection Naturelle – Natural Protection) set out with the aim of ending or at least decreasing the use of those agrochemical products which pose a danger to human, animal and environmental health.

To begin with, information and awareness raising workshops were organised, at national and sub-regional level, for the benefit of producers, development agents and also research institutions (from 1982).

Since 1994, we have been gradually introducing people to another stage of specific experimentation with alternatives to pesticides and fertilisers, starting in the Niayes zone (Rural community of Diender), the Koussanar zone and the River valley. These areas were picked because it is there that pesticides are most used.

The application of these experiments has now led us to redefine a global objective with the producers.

Developing a healthy and sustainable form of agriculture

This global objective covers three points:

1) Strengthening people's organisational capabilities so they are better equipped to take responsibility, commit themselves and make decisions in terms of land resource management.
2) Strengthening capabilities with regard to the producers' agro-ecological techniques.
3) Strategically cutting across the first two points – strengthening producers' communication capabilities.

These experiments are being carried out at national level and are the subject of sub-regional exchange workshops concerning the general issues linked to agricultural practices or the large issues which influence small producers' production systems (e.g. women's access to land, seeds, food security, GMOs).

Methodology and activities

In 2004, so as to put our research action on local development of healthy and sustainable agriculture into practice, we made great use of two constantly evolving teaching tools, which we have been using since 1999: the village approach and the farmer-field school. (...)

The village approach

This approach brings together all the people involved in managing a plot of land. All the local actors (men, women, young people, local representatives, and traditional chiefs) join in a global research process in order to provide rational and sustainable management of the natural resources through sustainable agriculture.

The village approach aims to help villagers to make a diagnosis (historical, organisational, economic...) of their own village, and to draw up a number of strategic work areas according to the results of their diagnosis. Consequently, they can identify and seek out the available human and economic means in order to set up a programme for research and action with the goal of finding solutions to the problems of the village or of the land. The important thing is that the activity should be supported by all the people involved according to the organisational model chosen or defined (village group, union, village assembly etc.). (...)

The Village Approach is a method that effectively helps to reinforce the producers' organisational capabilities for better land-use management through sustainable agriculture.

The activities run by Enda Pronat in its research action are always underpinned by a local organisation, whether at the level of the village, zone, RC, district or at national and sub-regional level.

Examples of networks in partnership with Enda Pronat

Networking is a fundamental part of our approach, with the aim of facilitating and enriching know-how and finding solutions to difficulties encountered. (...)

It is important to note that in this approach to networking grassroots organisations, both women and men are involved. This allows the women to gradually learn about sharing thoughts and power with men. However, this does not exclude women from also networking amongst themselves in order to better share and organise the search for solutions to women-specific problems. Therefore, at this level, two networks are operational.

The women's network of Diender and Keur Moussa

The Pronat programme supports two women's unions in the rural community of Diender and Keur Moussa in their poultry-farming programme. The aim of the programme is to increase women's income and then go on to reinforce their abilities to take control and be fully involved in managing land resources. The programme involves 4500 women in 69 villages. This activity has allowed women to acquire technical know-how in terms of running their family hen houses, and to greatly reduce the epidemic of Newcastle disease. (...)

In addition, the two women's unions intend to start an AIDS awareness and information campaign in all the villages, using the "village approach" method. The women of both rural communities have seen AIDS-related illness and deaths in a number of villages.

Other training sessions on the management of grassroots organisations, and management and organisation of markets have also been arranged.

The National Network of Rural Women in Senegal

Pronat continues to co-ordinate the Dimitra network in French-speaking west Africa. It is in the context of this co-ordination that we conferred with the grassroots and support organisations, leading to the establishment of the National Network of Rural Women in Senegal in 2000.

The Network aims to strengthen grassroots organisations through training and information; to produce detailed information on our experiences with projects led by and for rural and peri-urban women; to develop local knowledge and skills; to contribute to promoting dialogue and exchanges of information between the support organisations (NGO, research institutions, information and training centres, national and international development agencies, etc.); to promote exchanges and partnership between organisations; to initiate and/or reinforce the integrated projects.

The Network's office is made up entirely of grassroots organisations. (...)

Membership

The Network of Rural Women currently numbers 150 grassroots organisations (unions or collectives) and support organisations, located in all the regions of Senegal.

These organisations are established in the rural communities and some peri-urban areas and are organised into women-only or mixed associations.

Activities carried out by the network

With regard to the network's assets, the following has been noted:

– its structures have begun to become visible among governmental authorities;
– the organisation of an international workshop on 'Rural Women and Access to Land', one of the recommendations being that women be granted access to decision-making circles in order to lobby for their cause;
– representation in almost every region;
– visibility of its structures among governmental authorities;
– co-signatory of the credit line provided by the Republic of China (Taiwan) in Senegal;
– member of the National Consultative Committee of the Ministry for the Family and for National Solidarity, where it is represented by its chairwoman;
– participation in the exchange workshop on NEPAD with the Ministry for the Family and for National Solidarity;
– request for membership of the National Council for Rural Consultation and Co-operation (CNCR), which would allow improved participation in decision-making and also to better integrate rural women's concerns in the proposals negotiated by the CNCR with the government;
– participation in the exchange workshop of the national commission for sustainable development, Environment Ministry
– production of a documentary film: Rural Women & Access to Land... between law and reality;
– internal self-evaluation at the workshop Rural Women and Access to Land to launch a programme for alternative education with ENDA GRAF (Group for research action and training);
– participation in the HIV/AIDS programme with ENDA Santé
– material support of the Ministry for the Family and for National Solidarity;
– many of the member organisations are already listed on the FAO's website;
– training given to reinforce women's communication capabilities;
– a workshop facilitating exchange of views on the participation of women in decision-making instances, and on democracy and citizenship, and to increase the political power of rural women in decision-making instances (EDUCAL programme).

International activities

– Participation in the World Congress for Rural Women, Spain (2002);
– Participation in the meeting between North and South, "The World According to Women", Brussels (2003);
– Female Entrepreneurship in Agriculture (Spain, November 2004);
– Participation in the West African Social Forum on Agriculture and the Fight against Poverty (Guinea);
– Participation in Beijing + 10: preparatory committee and Senegalese delegation (represented by its Chairwoman).

Ongoing activities and impacts

The decentralisation process for the network is continuing with the setting up of local units. (...)
For this purpose, awareness-raising radio broadcasts have been made in several areas. (...)

Funding and network sustainability

Given the increasing numbers and variety of its members, the network has to count on the members to manage themselves. To ensure continuity, several actions need to be strengthened:
– improvement of internal resources (membership and members' partnership shares);
– in its action plan, the Network promotes exchange visits and travel for study and meetings in the sub-region;

– given the various activities of the Network, it could become autonomous through the setting up of industry-related networks e.g. a network for organic/conventional producers, a network for supply/marketing, a network for dairies, for fruit and vegetable processing, for fish, etc.;
– the partnership between the Network and other actors (local representatives, NGOs, Consultation frameworks, CNCR) needs to be consolidated;
– the partnership between the Network and other northern NGOs needs to be recognised as a partnership involving bilateral co-operation;
– given that most of the members are involved in farming, among their other activities, their income is not only low but frequently random, so the improvement of credit fund options will allow ancillary actions to be developed.

Continuity is often conditioned by long-term financing, which becomes contradictory after a few years of support.

Conclusion

In executing Dimitra's third project phase, the National Network of Rural Women in Senegal will have to organise itself so as to expand and reproduce its initiatives on a larger scale.
Support is required in order for the Network to become stronger and to reinforce its members' capabilities. Adequate mechanisms and means for action will be put into place according to its various sectors of involvement. In the end, the Network will help unite information stemming from different national and/or sub-regional communities, in order to make many different voices heard.

Addressing women's welfare issues

Ms Lubinda M. Tafira

Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW)

Lubinda M. Tafira is Executive Director of Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW).

ZAW is a non-governmental organisation that was established in 1978 to work for the welfare of women and children.

Lubinda is a past Executive Director of National Family Life Movement of Zambia and the Africa regional consultant for the International Federation for Family Life Promotion (IFFLP).

As a development worker she has organised and managed national and international conferences on different development subjects in relation to gender and HIV/AIDS, reproductive health, poverty and environment etc.

Lubinda is a graduate of Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology, Toronto, a fellow of Georgetown University, Washington D.C. and holds several diplomas in Reproductive Health.

LUSAKA | ZAMBIA

Impact of HIV/AIDS on rural women in Zambia

The Gender Policy in Zambia

(…) Although Zambia is a signatory to many International charters including the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), discrimination against women and youth in Zambia is rife due to lack of instruments and policies that support their welfare in spite of the existence of a gender policy. While a gender policy is in place, and other relevant components to support the welfare of women have by and large been addressed, the Zambian Constitution does not fully recognise the place of the woman. (…)

The development of the Gender Policy in Zambia has adopted an integrated approach, dealing with poverty, culture and socialisation, education and training, health, water and sanitation, labour, employment and social security, land, gender violence, etc.

(…)

Since most customary laws are discriminatory against women, women do not enjoy the full benefits of economic, social and cultural rights. In discussing women's role in agriculture in rural Zambia, it should be borne in mind that organisations such as the Zambia Alliance of Women (ZAW) were established to spearhead the cause for the development of women's rights.

(…)

Participation of rural women in agriculture

In Zambia, women contribute about 70% of agricultural labour; however, women have no control over their labour and they are disadvantaged by their lack of equal access with their male counterparts to agricultural resources such as information, credit, inputs, land, technology and decision-making.

The following policy objectives are aimed at enhancing the participation of women in agriculture:

– ensuring women's increased access to and control over agricultural inputs and markets;

– reducing labour and drudgery among women in agriculture;
– enhancing women's participation in agriculture cooperatives.

Strategies that enhance the participation of rural women in agriculture include:
– facilitation of the rehabilitation and construction of rural infrastructure (storage facilities, market stands, feeder roads, etc.);
– facilitation of timely acquisition of agricultural inputs and markets for produce by smallholder farmers, especially women and youth;
– promotion of the application of labour-saving technology.
– facilitation of gender capacity building for agricultural cooperatives;
– strengthening of the collaboration and the coordination of non-governmental organisations, the private sector, CBOs, religious groupings and other civil society organisations working with women in the agriculture sector and rural areas;
– with regard to HIV/AIDS, farm-based organisations must be supported, so that unemployed village youth can be engaged in home-based care giving, to release women farm producers to engage in productive farm activities and to enhance organically produced vegetables, which in effect are complementary to ARVs.

Cultural beliefs and practices that contribute to female susceptibility to HIV/AIDS continue to be inculcated to the girl child, young women and women in general. The cultural practices include:
– polygamous marriages;
– use of traditional medicines for dry sex making women more vulnerable to STDs and HIV/AIDS infections;
– ritual and sexual cleansing practices;

– traditional education practices and dowry payments for the women;
– the poor educational levels achieved by very few women attributing to limited access to productive resources (land, credit, skills, capital, technology and information);
– poor economic status that creates a gender dependence on male partners, etc.

Opportunities for women's participation:

– the existence of NGOs that work within the agriculture sector, although they need capacity building and scaling-up of their existing activities;
– the development of land policy to advocate for women's issues related to poverty;
– the existence of Victim Support Units (police) to reduce poverty created by property grabbers following the death of the breadwinner, especially a man;
– the on-going global and national programmes on HIV/AIDS, empowering women in particular to appreciate their reproductive rights, must be integrated in all development activities;
– the Millennium Development Goals of the UN;
– the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) is an advantage as it recognises the three cross-cutting issues of HIV/AIDS, Environment and Gender, which relate to agriculture and land issues;
– the need to capitalise on Indigenous Knowledge Systems for integration into modern life styles and development programmes.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on Rural Women Farmers

When female producers are infected or affected, there are devastating consequences. Women are the ones who carry out most of the hard labour on the farm and in the home. When they suffer from HIV/AIDS, less or no food is produced and food security is jeopardised. They are bound to attend to the sick on a full-time basis, caring and nursing, with no time to attend to the crops in the field. Children suffer from malnutrition; household goods and farm equipment are sold to meet medical and basic meal costs.

Barriers restricting women from improving their status

– The Land Act Allows customary laws which confer land ownership on men to apply to the administration of traditional land. The republican constitution recognises the application of customary laws in matters dealing with property. In addition, the procedures of acquiring land and title deeds are still cumbersome and bureaucratic; the acquisition and ownership of land in Zambia continues to be a major hindrance.
– As indicated above, Zambian women are the backbone of agricultural production. However, the bulk of the land they live and produce on is customary land, which is 94% of the total landmass in the country. This customary land is administered by tribal authority, and the permits issued by them cannot be used as collateral to obtain credit from financial institutions.
– Women in rural areas must be empowered by issuing them with title deeds, which can be used as collateral to obtain credit for agricultural inputs and machinery and for increased hectarage to effectively and profitably commercialise their activities.
– The criteria for accessing input micro-credit facilities are unattainable.
– The lack of knowledge and information and exposure is coupled with inadequate (if not complete lack of) education among many women at community level.
– The loss of traditional farming knowledge (Indigenous Knowledge Systems) and methods, contributes to the ongoing food insecurity, coupled with the droughts being experienced and poor early warning systems.
– The lack of entrepreneurship skills and inadequate availability of appropriate production technologies among technological choices available.
– Adverse cultural values prevail, e.g. polygamy and early marriages; sexism and cultural censorship.
– Numerous female farmers' chores; inadequate sharing of duties due to cultural gender roles/oriented etc.
– There is a lack of mitigating mechanisms for those infected/affected by HIV/AIDS.
– Traditional beliefs and practices contribute to restricting women from participating in development programmes at community level.
– The slow pace taken in implementation of the 30% minimum representation of women/involvement in key decision-making positions as stipulated by the Millennium Development Goals and the SADC declarations is restrictive.
– Gender marginalisation is widespread in budgeting at national level.
– Women must carry the persistent and increasing burden of poverty.
– There is a high level of corruption, disadvantaging women in the acquisition of inputs and participation in various development programmes.

Conclusion

A lot needs to be done at grassroots level to ensure that women's needs are taken into account and policies are developed and acted upon. An old adage says, "teach a woman and you will have taught the whole family and indeed the nation" and so we can say too that "develop the potential of a woman and you will have developed a nation".

A strong advocate for gender equity and rural development

Mr Wilbert Tengey

Executive Director
African Centre for Human Development (ACHD)

Wilbert Tengey is a Rural Development Specialist with over 20 years experience in social policy development, programme planning development and management, strategic planning and institutional capacity building.

Wilbert is the founder of the African Centre for Human Development, a growing development organisation in Ghana, and has been its Executive Director for the past 20 years. The Organisation employs 20 professionals.

In the field of development consulting, Wilbert has provided professional advice and services to a wide variety of agencies and international organisations, as well as national and international NGOs in Ghana and other African Countries.

He is also the founder of the Gender Development Institute in Ghana, which advocates gender equity. He has worked in several African countries, and has a network of professional associates all over the world with whom he maintains strong contacts.

ACCRA | GHANA

Reflections on networking: a Ghanaian experience

Introduction: the concept of "networking"

Networking has always been an essential social skill founded on the interdependence of people. It has been used successfully over the years by governments, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the business community. Networking not only reduces the likelihood of competition and service duplication, but also allows the sharing and conservation of limited resources. Collaboration enhances CSOs morale, commitment, and identity, and strengthens collective effort to better exert pressure for advocacy. (…)

Effective networking is based on relationships that are cultivated so that a mutual exchange of information, advice, and support is given and received.

(…)

The success of these networks depends on respecting commonality and helping each other to achieve goals.

An experience from Ghana

(…)

The organisation, African Centre for Human Development (ACHD) was established as an intermediary between development partners and grassroot groups. With grassroots groups, Community Based Organisations (CBO's), Town and Village Development Associations being formed, there was a need to build their capacity and transfer various skills to them to enable them deal with donor organisations and funding partners. ACHD was formed to be the liaison between these small vibrant and enthusiastic groups and the donors. The funding sources of ACHD itself are payments made by development partners and donors for services rendered for them, either in project proposal writing, conducting training programmes, skill-transfer workshops or action-oriented social research.

During the course of our work over the past decade or so, many partnerships have been developed between our organisation, other NGO's, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, and Private Organisations. They have supported our work and benefited from our initiatives.

The beginning of a network

It is from the above work at the grassroots level that the idea of starting a network emerged. In the 1990's, it was fashionable in development to start networks, because it was said to be the best way forward. ACHD started the initiative to bring together other groups using participatory development tools into a participatory practitioner's network. (…)

Our common feature in the Network was that all the organisations and groups were using participatory methods and strategies at the grassroots level. There was a common understanding of the methods being used, and the philosophy of grassroots empowerment. There was no question about the commitment of the individual groups to the cause of social transformation, economic and political empowerment for self-reliance and sustainable development.

Membership of the Network was voluntary. It consisted of Women's Groups, Town and Village Development Associations, Civil Society Organisations and Non-Governmental Organisations. These organisations were working at different levels of society: some were national in character; others were local; there were the financially strong ones and those just starting out. So that right from the beginning, there was no homogenous status and experience among the group.

The needs and expectations of the various members of the Network were different. Because of unequal experiences in the membership, there was a marked diversity of needs and expectations. While the stronger and more mature ones were thinking of sharing experiences, the weaker ones wanted the Network to be a Fundraising Agency, which would meet their individual financial survival needs. These different expectations also created a problem of cohesion and focus. The Network could not meet these different expectations in the long term.

The structure of the Network was another big issue. Some of the members wanted the Network to function like another association, with a rigid structure: a Board, elected Executive Members, members paying dues, etc. Another initial suggestion was that there should be an informal structure, so that one of the organisations would host a secretariat, which would serve as a clearing house for information and bring people together to discuss issues of common concern. But the majority of members opted for a formal Network.

Challenges

(…)

There were conflicts among the membership of the Network. This included mistrust of one another, jealousy of the success of other organisations/groups and back-biting among members. As stated earlier, there was a diverse membership background. Some of the members of the Network as individual organisations were strong and had their own sources of income and projects. The smaller and financially weaker ones wanted the

Network members to share all the resources together. When this was not possible, problems arose. But as was explained to the general body many times over, the purpose of the Network was not to make organisations and groups poorer, but richer and stronger in ideas and impact. The question of sharing financial resources among all members was a big issue, but it was not sustainable. This brought about a lot of misunderstanding within the Network. The idea of a network sharing ideas and experiences was not enough for some members.

Communication tools and techniques

(…)

Communication with members of the Network was by various means. The first and constant means was by letters, electronic mail (email), telephone communications, personal visits, etc. A Newsletter was also produced quarterly to share experiences among the membership of the Network. But each organisation in the Network, also used different means to communicate with their own membership on the ground i.e. exchange visits, drama presentations, adult learning tools, radio programmes and articles in the mass media.

Communication with other networks with similar objectives was carried out through joint workshops, to share ideas and exchange information. Since this was the main purpose of the Network, it was considered important to have frequent communication flow at all levels all of the time.

As the problems of the Network multiplied, many members could not attend the Annual General Meetings. Decisions were taken and communicated to them. Those who broke the rules of the constitution were sanctioned for non-performance. It was this enforcement of the tenets of the constitution of the Network, which eventually drove many members away as they could not abide by their own rules.

The collapse of the Network was inevitable; it was just a matter of time. The structure, membership composition and expectations of the diverse members were not sustainable. It died a natural death.

Lessons learnt from the experience

Many lessons have been learnt from the experience and the failure of the Professional Practitioners Network.

1. A good network is characterised by members who do not only have experience and information, but are willing, when approached, to share it.
2. The relationship of members of the network must be voluntary. There should be no hint of force or coercion being applied or exerted on anyone to join. There must be total freedom of members of the potential group to join or not to join.
3. There must be homogenous members in the network. As much as possible, the network should be that of equals. Inequity, in any form, may jeopardise the good functioning of the network, as these may be underlying jealousies etc.

4. Belonging to the network should not affect the autonomy or independence of the members or member associations. Each member of the network should remain independent and not depend on the network for its own survival.
5. There should be mutual or reciprocal activities such as information exchange and joint action among members of the network.
6. Financial management of the network is very important. Any strategy which cannot be sustained five years hence, should not be attempted.
7. Start in an informal network. "Small is Beautiful" After you have grown to know each other well, have sorted out he question of the **Vision, Mission and Objectives** of the network, then you can expand into a more structured network. By then, you would have sorted out "who will do what" and know the strengths and weaknesses of each other.
8. Have strong committed leaders, who are able to encourage the smaller and weaker ones to develop their own organisations into strong entities.
9. Focus on the Vision of the network and do not deviate from it.
10. A network is not another association. It is formed for the common good of the individual members. No one should try to subjugate another within the network.

Types of Networking

Formal Networking, as the name suggests, refers to a situation where one networks through formal processes. The formal network often has an organisational culture attached to it, such as a formal philosophy, mission, structure, leadership, membership, eligibility, and funding. The formal networks are easily identifiable: boards of directors, economic clubs, affinity groups set up by corporations, executive talent pools, online discussion groups, management groups, professional conferences, and associations.

Informal Networking normally can start anywhere at any time. Informal networking involves bonding, sharing expertise and investing time and effort into others. People have always had the need to build and maintain a network that involves trust and respect for others; the informal network connects people who perhaps otherwise would not have met. It follows very flexible laid down processes. Other networks may be created through people you meet while travelling, attending church functions or simply completing errands.

Informal networks are based on the objective of achieving a reciprocal exchange of information, inspiring each other, achieving personal goals, and helping each other obtain business and career advantages. Again, the emphasis is on a one-to-one networking effort, as opposed to an organisational system that characterises the formal network.

The informal network, without the hierarchy and bureaucracy, encourages the most interaction and achieves the most positive results.

Gender, rural development and training in the Near East

Mr Ghaleb Tuffaha

The Regional Centre on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East - CARDNE

Ghaleb Tuffaha is Assistant Director General and Director of the Development Research and Studies Department, at the Regional Center on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East (CARDNE) in Jordan.

Ghaleb's activities include organising, supervising and facilitating training activities on agrarian reform and rural development, including the preparation of training materials and manuals and preparing project proposals at the national and regional level. He is also responsible for gender issues, small businesses, agricultural extension and revolving and credit funds. He supervises and coordinates studies and research on rural development implemented by CARDNE's consultants.

Ghaleb has an MA in Rural Social Development from the University of Reading, UK, a diploma in Teacher Training in Agriculture and Rural Sociology and a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture.

AMMAN | JORDAN

The sustainability of networks, the experience of CARDNE, Jordan

About the Centre

CARDNE – The Regional Center on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development for the Near East is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation hosted by the government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It currently has nine Member States (Jordan, Tunisia, Sudan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania in addition to the Palestinian Authority as observer). CARDNE was established in recognition of the fact that agrarian reform and rural development programmes adopted by many countries in the Near East would be greatly enhanced and facilitated through regional cooperation and coordination. The Centre was launched following a 1983 FAO-sponsored meeting of representatives and observers from 18 Near Eastern states, which was also attended by observers from the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme.

The Centre is overseen by a Governing Council consisting of all member states, which meets once every two years. An Executive Committee made up of five member states oversees regular activities, and meets at least once a year. The Director General is the legal representative of the Centre, which he directs according to the policies and decisions adopted by the Governing Council. Cardne is funded by Member States according to UN rates and by grants.

Activities

The Centre's mission is to assist national cooperation and stimulate and promote regional cooperation relating to agrarian reform and rural development in the Near East through a network of designated national institutions in Member States (national centres).

Cardne provides its Member States with a broad range of services related to agricultural and pastoral communities in rural regions. Through a network of designated national centres in Member States, it works toward the achievement of the following objectives:

– to assist national action, stimulate and promote regional cooperation relating to agrarian reform and rural development;
– to improve the production, income, and living conditions of small-scale farmers, pastoral nomads, and other disadvantaged rural groups;
– to integrate rural people in the development process; thus promoting their involvement in the social, economic and cultural life of their communities.

The Centre works toward achieving its objectives through a variety of activities, which are always based on participatory methods drawing on the expertise and experience of local communities. These include:

– conducting, promoting or assisting research on various aspects of agrarian reform and rural development in the Near East, with an emphasis on alternative approaches leading to more effective field-action programmes;
– holding consultative conferences, or other meetings, enabling national decision makers, researchers, planners and executives to exchange ideas and experiences on agrarian reform and rural development and to identify areas in which joint collaboration would benefit Member States;
– organising training courses in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects for agrarian reform and rural development, in addition to assisting national centres in organising their own training courses and workshops;
– liaising and providing consultative services and technical support to national centres, other organisations and agencies concerned with agrarian reform and rural development;
– serving as a clearing house and data bank for information on agrarian reform and rural development, and promoting the dissemination of information by preparing and publishing documentation on agrarian reform and rural development.

Functioning of CARDNE organisation/network

The Centre sponsors and implements its activities in each member state in collaboration with the national institutions network. The themes of these workshops are determined by the national institutions according to local needs.

Cooperation with other organizations and agencies

The Centre cooperates with other intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies, whose interests and activities are relevant to its objectives.

CARDNE partnerships

(...)

Cardne collaborates with:

– **International organisations:** Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Rome; Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), Beirut; The International Centre for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), Aleppo-Syria; Inter-Islamic Network on water Resource Development and Management (INWARDAM); The International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM), Paris; The Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), Khartoum; The Arab Centre for the Studies of Arid Areas and Dry Lands (ACSAAD), Damascus-Syria.

– **Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) and Community Based Organisations (CBO):** Queen Zein Al-Sharaf Institute for Development (ZENID), Jordan; Development and Employment Fund (DEF), Jordan; and The Inter-Islamic Network on Water Resource Development and Management (INWARDAM).

Networking

In April 1999, Cardne agreed to act as a local partner with *Dimitra Project – Rural Women and Development* and to cover seven countries of Cardne's member states.

Cardne signed a Letter of Agreement (LOA) with FAO to be a local partner with Dimitra Project – Rural Women and Development/ Phase I (1998-2001) and Phase II (2002-2004). Negotiations are underway for the third phase (2005-2008).

Cardne communicates and implements its activities in each Member State in collaboration with the National Institutions network. It also cooperates with other intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations and agencies, whose interests and activities are relevant to its objectives.

Cardne has a website and plans to have a link to the Dimitra website, in addition to other means of communications.

Education creates knowledge and knowledge creates power!

Ms Stella B. Williams

Food Basket a la Mama Africa
Obafemi Awolowo University

Stella Williams represents the organisation Food Basket a la Mama Africa. She is Associate Professor at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria and a Past Vice Dean in the Faculty of Agriculture.

Stella is also a former National President of Soroptimist International in Nigeria, 1993/94

She is the Chairperson of the Vice Chancellor's Youth Education Initiative called Obafemi Awolowo University Student Support Services (a Work Study Programme) that helps support students to complete their University education.

Stella is a fervent advocate for the education of girls and women in general.

She has a BSc degree in Science, a Diploma in Education (Dip. Ed.) a Master's degree in Fisheries and a PhD in Agricultural Economics and Fisheries Economics.

Stella is involved in a number of activities that revolve around fisheries, food and natural resource management and serves as a Consultant to the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.

ILE-IFE, OSUN STATE | NIGERIA

Awareness raising on HIV/AIDS education in Nigeria

Functioning of the network

The network that we belong to was created by a group of professional women in Oakland, California, USA in 1914. The name of the organisation is Soroptimist International. (…)

We have a joint partnership with groups and people in the public and private sectors. Government officials are always invited to participate in community projects instituted by the club and sometimes we send appeals to both the public as well as the private sector. Club members engaged in public or private sectors are our contacts in the fostering of joint partnerships for community-based action projects. Similarly we invite other NGOs as partners in community-based action projects.

One example of partnership with NGOs in our area has involved participation in fundraising projects as well as in health and education projects. The local NGOs support our work and we also support them in their projects. One of these is the ongoing HIV/AIDS Education project targeting peer-group training and competitions to serve as incentives to youths in the communities where we work.

As professional women actively engaged in successful employment, we are perceived as leaders in the society. We encourage the education of children and we grant scholarships to both girls and boys (but especially to girls) for their educational empowerment. We advise the women on how to improve their status and livelihoods and encourage those with the right skills to engage in political and cooperative groups. We carry out various leadership training for both the target groups locally and sometimes internationally. We recognise leadership skills and honour women and youths who have rendered service to the community.

Communication tools and techniques

The best method employed in sharing communication and information with other members of the organisation is at the monthly meetings or at the quarterly National meetings. Media reports of events inform the community on action projects. Our organisation uses newspapers as the main communication tool, as well as radio programmes and sometimes television.

The impact of HIV/AIDS, particularly on rural women

We first introduced the HIV/AIDS programme as a health education aspect into our club's activities in 1993. The medical corps of members (doctors and nurses) ran market clinics to educate women and youths. At the time most people did not believe that anything as serious as HIV/AIDS was real. However, we continued this process until a famous person died of the disease. This was a musician of international fame – the late Fela Anikulapo Ransome Kuti. His elder brother was a medical doctor and former Minster for health. His mother was a renowned advocate for the education of women and girls. When his brother revealed to the world that Fela died of HIV/AIDS, most of his fans felt that he had committed the worse thing he could in memory of his brother. On the contrary, Professor Olukoye Ransome Kuti felt this was the best service he could render to the Nigerian society to inform them how terrible the HIV/AIDS pandemic is and how much impact it will have if nothing is done to control its spread. His intervention has helped make progress in our rural community.

When we involved the young people in the fight against HIV/AIDS through a peer-group programme, we were rewarded. The youths became great advocates in their homes and among their peers. These youths have their own HIV/AIDS Education clubs, in the Secondary Schools in particular. This effort has helped the network to reach out to the grassroots in the society.

Labour is an important aspect of agriculture. In the rural areas, the women and children provide the family labour, so if the parents die of HIV/AIDS this mean a reduction in the work force or sometimes a complete devastation of economic well-being, hence we focus on several aspects from agriculture to education and health.

Tradition and Culture

The major challenge to our interventions has been from the cultural/traditional and religious sectors. Some religious leaders and most of the male societal leaders believe that we are corrupting young minds and instigating them to fight against the culture of the land or the tradition of the society. Using education as a tool has been most rewarding because the youths can read and see for themselves what havoc the pandemic is causing

in other places and as such can imagine what will happen in their society should the infection get out of control.

Most Nigerians still hold superstitious beliefs about HIV/AIDS. They believe that HIV/AIDS is caused by evil forces and evil curses that have been put on them by their enemies. Most of the people also believe that it is God's way of punishing people for things they have done, so HIV/AIDS sufferers deserve to be punished. This has led to the belief that HIV/AIDS can only be cured by miraculous healing, so instead of seeking medical treatment, they seek cures from religious institutions such as churches, mosques and traditional medicine practices. (...)

Stigmatisation and discrimination – negative impacts on society

Stigmatisation and discrimination are deeply rooted within the fabric of society in Nigeria. The media and work places perpetuate these messages. The media sensationalises the spread of HIV/AIDS and they can use scare tactics to inform the general public. They use words that make the public scared of infected persons and that leads to isolation. Some workplaces dismiss employees who test positive to HIV/AIDS. Most of the population does not have a clear idea of how infection spreads and this makes it easier for them to support stigmatisation[1]. There is now a move in Nigeria to include religious organisations and cultural groups in the planning and implementation of programmes to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS due to the lack of knowledge that exists in Nigeria. An example of this is the new advertisements in Nigeria, the slogan of which is "*I care, do you... stop pretending that HIV/AIDS does not exist*". The billboard represents the latest efforts in Nigeria to show the high-level commitment against the epidemic, and highlights the dangers faced by the country's young people. These measures are important in reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Cooperation between the government, religious and cultural groups is greatly needed in order to win this fight. (...)

Conclusion

Rural communities are often among the highest-risk groups in developing economies. Vulnerability to HIV/AIDS stems from complex factors that include cultural, traditional and socio-economic causes as well as poverty, adolescent sexual habits, the sub-cultures of risk taking and hyper-masculinity among rural dwellers. The subordinate economic and social position of women and youths in most rural areas makes them more vulnerable to infection.

HIV/AIDS in rural communities is currently being dealt with as a public health issue and most of the rural projects have been conducted by both international and local NGOs that have focused on education and health care provision. As the social and economic impacts of the epidemic become more evident; social and economic support increases, as listed under UNAIDS, USAID, DIFID and Faith-based partners. Hence, the more recent action programmes have incorporated HIV/AIDS awareness projects into their plans. There is no doubt that the HIV/AIDS pandemic threatens the sustainability of livelihoods by eclipsing the future of the youths as the leaders of tomorrow. Additionally, the deaths and illness within households place more stress on the members of the households especially the grandparents. Women are easily abandoned when infected compared to the men. Very few women protect themselves through the use of contraceptives in the rural areas in particular. The local NGOs are focusing on women and youths so that the rate of infection can be stemmed through education and peer group activities in the schools, colleges and homes. A gender-based approach towards HIV/AIDS in rural areas is presently being addressed. This approach is of significant necessity in Nigeria's rural population in order to combat HIV/AIDS successfully.

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1 http://www.ipsnews.net/aids2002/africa_2.shtml

Summary of some Workshop presentations*

ISOLINA BOTO | *Head of the CTA Brussels Office*

Why is CTA addressing HIV/AIDS?

– Africa with 10% of the world's population is the most affected continent by the pandemic with 83% of deaths and 9 out of ten new infections
– The pandemic is undermining all the development efforts made in the last 40 years (life expectancy, economic performance)
– HIV/AIDS has a special impact on agriculture and affects agricultural workers
– Most of infected people live in rural areas
– Information and communications tools and strategies can make a difference in increasing awareness on the pandemic
– CTA can sensitize and/or support efforts from ACP partners and beneficiaries at national and regional level
– CTA interventions can support existing programmes by donors
– HIV/AIDS is a cross-cutting issue

Agriculture, rural livelihoods and HIV/AIDS

– Shift of HIV/AIDS from cities to rural areas (especially Sub-Saharan Africa)
– Agriculture and fisheries are affected at multiple levels:
    – Production
    – Processing, marketing, transport
    – Commercial farming, markets, trade
    – Economic effects on agri-food enterprises
– Rural livelihoods are also affected in many ways (environment, social structure and values, safety and social protection, transfer of skills and knowledge…)

Cross-cutting issues: Gender and youth

The female face of AIDS

– Biological factors
– Gender inequalities
    • Socio-cultural factors
    • Feminization of poverty
    • Unequal or unfavorable laws
– Violence against women
– Domestic violence
– Trafficking and migration,
– Rape
– Wars and conflict situations

Youth

One third of all those affected are young (15-24)
– Lack of access to information and preventive services
– Youth-headed households (heaviest asset-loss)
– Lack of schooling
– Violence

Mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in development

HIV/AIDS is not just a health issue

– HIV/AIDS has to be addressed through support to agriculture in countries where agriculture contributes a significant proportion of GDP
– Links between AIDS and food security, rural livelihoods and agricultural systems have to be monitored
– Relation to poverty, power, gender and youth relationships, availability and access to basic services, sexual customs and traditional practices have to be explored
– Need for a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach
– Need for political commitment

Urgent actions and challenges

Research is needed on:

– Impact of HIV/AIDS on production factors
– Impact on non-infected relatives and community
– Policy-oriented sector studies on the future social, economical and political impact of HIV/AIDS
– Innovations and changes caused by HIV/AIDS
– Agricultural research linked with affected communities and with other sectors
– Mapping of rural vulnerability through statistics and data-collection

Information and HIV/AIDS

– Effective communication of valid and appropriate information is the specific remedy for infection rates attributable to a lack of information and misinformation around the epidemic.
– Information must be made widely available on prevention, heavy treatments, effects, comfort of life, hope of longer survival.

ICTs offer the opportunity to:

– Provide information and overcome misinformation leading to silence, denial, stigma and discrimination
– Enable advocacy, mobilisation, networking and capacity building (empowerment of community-based organisations)
– Provide alternative methods of communication where free speech is limited
– Change attitudes and behavior

Information and Communication tools

Combination of audiovisual, sound and print technologies

– Radio, TV, video and digital cameras
– Personal computers, Internet access, e-mail
– Phone (affordability of prepaid mobile phone)
– Training packs and kits
– Internet health care services (e-medical publications, e-consultations, drug supply)
– CD-ROMs
– Printed material (posters, cartoons)

Information and Communication strategies

1. Promoting investment in technology and infrastructure

– Public and private investments (telehealth applications, legal advice, civil register)
– Cell phone subsidies, low cost satellite internet access
– Free software with technological solutions to enable access
– Handheld computers to facilitate field surveys in rural areas

2. Promoting education and awareness raising

– Prevention through education of highest risk groups – distance education
– Population research and epidemiology
– Education of health workers
– Advocacy and lobbying:

– Affordable prevention measures
– The treatment access struggle
– Budget lobbying

3. Networking and capacity-building for local groups

– Building and investing in local, national and regional institutions and initiatives for the development of innovative ICT solutions suited to local contexts
– Twinning of NGO's (in developed/ developing countries; urban/rural)

4. Knowledge sharing

– Inclusion of marginalised groups to describe needs and tools (local content, language)
– Community dialogue and involvement in defining, implementing and evaluating Information and communication programmes
– Development of collaborative mechanisms between Governments/donors and these communities

5. Transmission of knowledge

– Regularity and clarity of health information provided
– Disseminate best practices (community coping mechanisms, community initiatives and organisations)
– Disseminate discipline-specific web resources and on-line training materials
– Disseminate research results in appropriate format

Urgent actions and challenges

– Mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS into ICT initiatives and educational services
– Targeted increased access to ICT
– Allocation of funding to priority sectors
– Governance and accountability on HIV/AIDS
– Strengthening local initiatives and institutions

ARISTIDE BASHIGE NDJUZI | *GTZ Santé*

Example of 'Preventing Mother to Child Transmission' (PMTCT) at the General Hospital Of Kaziba Province of South-Kivu (DRC) with the King Baudouin Foundation and GTZ-Santé

Introduction

– Respect of the criteria for setting up a PMTCT site
– Given the lack of data on HIV prevalence, use of demographic data
– Starting from the use of antenatal consultation (PNC) and maternity services
– Areas and distances the women come from for maternity care and/or PNC

Who should be spreading the message of prevention?

– Religious denominations
– Leaders and village chiefs
– Schools for the youth
– CBOs and other grassroots groups such as:
  – Women farmers
  – Women living alone
  – Women with travelling husbands
  – Tradeswomen (women engaged in small-scale commercial activities)

Approach and strategies

– Community relays identified and recruited within the grassroots groups and the CBOs
– Peer educators by target group

Actions

– Social mobilisation to take the issue on board and ensure the continuity of the project
– Raising awareness in general and among the target groups for behavioural change
– Individual counselling for voluntary screening (promoting informed choice)
– Referral according to the PEC ('Prise en charge' – care and support) needs created
– Creation of volunteer blood-donors' clubs
– Monitoring activities for HIV-positive women and their children

Prominent actors

– Grassroots groups
– CBOs (community based organisations) and other grassroots organisations
– Midwives and other nurses trained in counselling
– Various PEC structures (medical, psychosocial, economic, spiritual...)
– Health professionals working in the sanitary structures involved

Results obtained between 01/01/2004 - 30/04/2005

Women attending the PNC:	2992
Women given individual counselling:	2816
Women who accepted the test voluntarily:	2400
Women diagnosed as HIV-positive:	52
Women who returned for the results:	2176
Total births in the Kaziba maternity hospital:	3693

Other facts

– Only 21 men took part in voluntary screening, 7 of whom were HIV-positive
– Of the 52 HIV-positive women, 31 have already given birth
– Of those 31:
  – 26 opted to exclusively breastfeed for 6 months
  – 5 opted to exclusively breastfeed for 3 months
  – Lack of means meant that none were able to avoid breastfeeding their babies

Conclusions

– Test acceptance rates: 81,3%
– Rates of return for results: 90,6%
– HIV infection rates among pregnant women: 2,1%

This means the project is going well, as it has succeeded in involving the beneficiaries

Proposals/Suggestions

– To duplicate this improved model in other health zones in South Kivu region, the DRC, the sub-region, etc.
– To train more rural women and young people as community relays or peer educators
– To reinforce the capabilities of the grassroots groups, OAC (community based organisations) and networks in terms of prevention (awareness raising...)
– To put in place an efficient system for exchanging information
– To lobby and appeal for the mobilisation of resources
– To draw inspiration from the King Baudouin Foundation model, in implementing activities to fight AIDS
– To put particular emphasis on the aspects of AIDS, poverty, food security and income generating activities.

Support for women's networks in projects funded by the World Bank. Summary of Powerpoint presentation
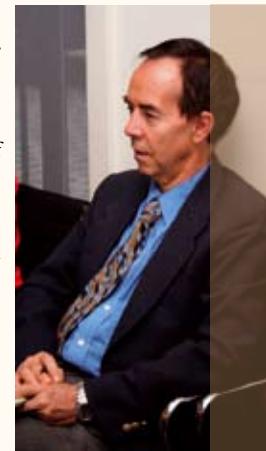
MR JEAN DELION | *World Bank*

HIV/AIDS – a development priority for the World Bank (WB)

– HIV/AIDS is a strategic priority for the development of the member countries of the World Bank (WB)
– The WB uses its experience to help its member states to rise swiftly to a national scale
– The WB has been involved in the fight against HIV/AIDS since 1986, in every region of the world
– The WB is one of the primary international sources of financing for programmes against HIV/AIDS in the world, with more than 74 active projects and a commitment of 2 billion US dollars since 1986
– The WB has speeded up its response through flexible financing

Increase in the World Bank's commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS since 2000

1999: Decision to intensify the action against HIV/AIDS in Africa, in response to a major development crisis .

– The realisation of the need for mass interventions
– The recognition of HIV/AIDS as a development problem which deeply affects society and the economy
– The need to combat HIV/AIDS in an integrated and multi-sectoral way, co-ordinated by efficient national committees
– Support for mass operations through large investments in developing capabilities, providing financing at community level and carrying out monitoring and assessment studies

At IDA 13 (the thirteenth replenishment of the International Development Association – the IDA is the concessional lending arm of the World Bank), the funds set aside for the fight against HIV/AIDS became gifts to the poorest countries, for example in Africa.

The principles of the MAP programs (Multi-Country HIV/AIDS Program) in Africa for example

– Support of the national HIV/AIDS strategies developed by the member states with the support of UNAIDS
– Decentralisation of the administration to support thousands of decentralised initiatives in each country: every actor prepares his own action plan and directly receives funds provided by decentralised offices (for example, in Cameroon, 6300 communities, 70 businesses and 50 NGO's have already received funds to support their action plans)
– Capacity building of the different actors

– Accepting the risks (10 to 20 % of the actions are quite inefficient) at the start, but tight controls, assessment and correction
– Swift diffusion of the successful plans of action, to serve as examples
– Flexible design of the program, adaptation to the context

The World Bank funds projects carried out under the authority of governments; there are no "World Bank projects"

– Each state prepares a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) with the WB and decides if it wants support from the WB for AIDS projects
– Every state defines its national strategy against AIDS in close collaboration with civil society
– Every state prepares its project for the fight against AIDS, the WB assesses this and gives consent for any funding
– The Women's Networks take part in defining the CAS and the National Defence Strategy against AIDS
– They comment on the ways of implementing the financing of the programs
– They can influence the final decisions through parliamentary reviews, which examine and ratify the funding agreements of the World Bank Group

Initial results are encouraging

For example:

– Increase in the number of people who have access to tests and voluntary consulting and testing (VCT) (example year 1: <1% of the number of HIV-positive people; year 3: >10% of this number)
– Increase in the usage of male and female condoms (in the societies which use these condoms)
– Increase in the number of patients who have access to ARVs (anti-retrovirals) (Year 1 – a few hundred; Year 2 – a few thousand; Year 4 – over ten thousand)
– Free access to tests, examinations and ARVs for the poorest people (example 1800 destitute patients in Cameroon)
– Decrease in the stigma: important rises in PLWHA (persons living with HIV/AIDS) living openly; more than 95% of

young people talk about AIDS at least once a week with members of their families
– Decrease in the number of pregnancies in 15-18 year olds

But there are still many problems

– Mass interventions create the concept of "AIDS-Dollars" and "easy money", which can lead to people preparing fictional plans and using funds in inefficient ways.
– Many isolated actions, need to be integrated in coherent frameworks.
– There is a need to need to consolidate the strategies at different levels: national, provincial, municipal and community strategies and action plans.
– There is a need for more precise measuring of results and of cost effectiveness.
– There is a need for more detailed analyses of local factors favouring the spread of HIV and stigmatisation: for example, the power relations between men and women, young and old, rich and poor, (actions taken with the support of TANESA in Mwanza, Tanzania).
– Many countries are preparing national strategies against AIDS for the next four years: the context has changed, the strategies and procedures for implementing the programs will change (the approach to the programs, more rigorous measuring of results).

The Women's Networks are part of some committees directing and controlling the use of funds for the projects financed by the World Bank

– The Women's Networks have representatives in various structures which direct and control the use of public funds, such as the National Committees against AIDS (NCFA) or the Monitoring and Follow-up Committees.
– The NCFA vote on the national budgets every year, at the same time they also debate the use of funds (including those provided by the WB) and improve the implementation procedures for the programs against HIV/AIDS.

Examples of entry points for the women's Networks

In the AIDS planning structures

– Influencing the national strategies against AIDS in the analyses of gender issues
– Establishing a working group on Women/AIDS in the NCFA
– Appointing competent and influential members to represent the Women's Networks in all the committees (national, provincial, municipal, and village)
– Asking these representatives to report to the Women's Networks every 6 months, assessing the successes and difficulties and preparing solutions

At local level

– Organising training courses for the Women's Networks on NCFA procedures with supervisors from the NCFA
– Inviting leading Women's Organisations (WO) to prepare their action plans and budgets, in conjunction with the decentralised NCFA services
– Obtaining and managing initial funding
– Showing proof of results and good management, so as to give the NCFA managers confidence in putting more funds at the disposal of the WOs

The Benefits of Networking for Community Radios. Summary of Powerpoint presentation

JEAN-PIERRE ILBOUDO | *Research, Extension and training Division, FAO*

In Africa, the 1990's marked the opening of the broadcasting scene in many countries. Conditions differed from one country to the next. Sometimes this is partial, with radios which at first glance appear to be independent but which are actually regimented by very restrictive requirements... at other times there is a greater openness.

They are often faced with enormous difficulties due to:

– The austere political environment and legal framework
– Financial difficulties
– Lack of recognition or publicity
– Poorly qualified staff
– Difficulties in renewing the equipment

The solution: a network of community radios, because in such a context it is clear that, individually, the radios would not be able to face up to these constraints to survive and develop, to continue to complete their task. Hence the interest of networking for community radios.

The network may be national or international

At national level

In the network these radios find a formal structure for meeting, for concertation, for action and for exchange
The network is:
– a contribution to establishing the technical, professional and institutional authority of the community radio sector;
– a reliable and efficient structure, capable of collecting, handling and sharing the information, data and all other intellectual and material resources needed to accomplish their task;
– a privileged negotiator with political and development institutions at national and international level.
Some community radios have been able to set up well-structured networks whose abilities have been proven over several years. We might list as examples the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) in South Africa, or the Union des Radios et Télévisions Libres (URTEL) in Mali .

At international level

AMARC, partner of FAO

– The World Association Of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) includes in its network: radios, radio networks, individuals, institutions, radio projects and producers' groups.
– In Amarc, the national networks find an extension of their activities at the international level.
– Amarc defends and promotes political recognition of the regulations and laws of the community radio sector, at the same time as it assists radio broadcasters whose freedom of expression is under threat by sending out alerts. This was the case for instance in Chad, where the radio broadcaster Dja FM was threatened with closure.
– Amarc supports and aids access to the use of those information and communication technologies (ICT) suited to community radios.
– **The promotion of local content and the spreading of information are indispensable to the democratisation of information, to sharing experiences and to the ownership of the communications process by the communities. This is why Amarc has set up a news agency (Simbani) to put local content at the disposal of the radio broadcasters.**
– In Amarc, community radios find institutional support to ensure the smooth running and viability of the stations and networks.
– Training is a crucial question for radios.
– Amarc provides them with training in various areas ranging from seeking funding to digital editing, journalistic writing, women in leadership, etc.

Conclusion

– The main aim of networking is to ensure the viability of the radio broadcasters, to reinforce their powers of action, and to increase their influence in the media sector.
– This expansive programme sometimes clashes with the networks' ability to mobilise resources, both human and financial.
– Nonetheless, close to half of the countries have at least one national network.

CTA – Rural Radio Programme. Summary of Powerpoint presentation

OUMY NDIAYE | *Head of the Department of Communication Channels and Services, CTA*

The aim of CTA's support for rural radio is to strengthen links between researchers, extension agents, farmers and managers of information and communication services

Context & justification:

A favourable environment marked by:
– The liberalisation of the communications sector;
– A gradual democratisation and progressive decentralisation in many ACP (African, Caraibean and the Pacific) countries – Rapid changes denoted by an increase in the number of radio stations in urban and rural areas;
– The new information and communication technologies revolution (Internet, mobile phones) has opened the way for other perspectives and opportunities favourable to the development of radio.

Some challenges:

– Weakness of the information and communication systems at national and regional level;
– Lack of, or weaknesses in, the implementation of information and communication policies, resulting in a lack of human, financial and infra-structural resources;
– Lack of a consensus on the concept of bush radios in certain ACP regions; with as a consequence the production of programmes which are not well suited to the needs of rural communities;
– Low level of training institutions: for a long time, the only training institution in Africa was CIERRO/ URTNA in Ouagadougou.

Areas of intervention:

– **Radio files (RRRP)**
  – Produced by the CTA, covering various themes relating to agricultural and rural development.
– **Training**
  – Organisation of training workshops for journalists and trainers, production of teaching materials.
– **National and regional partnerships**
  – Support for national or local organisations and for the regional bush and community radio networks.

Areas of thematic coverage 1990-2004

– Processing and storage	26%
– Animal health and production	26%
– Natural Resource Management	22%
– Crop Protection	13%
– Crop Production	9%
– Rural dynamics	4%

Areas of intervention - Training Topics 1990-2004

– 25 training sessions at national and regional level – 402 people trained in

– Production Techniques	62%
– Audience Surveys	25%
– Training of Trainers	13%

Conclusion

– The linking of radio programmes with NICTs may make a positive contribution to change.
– It is necessary to build capacities at various levels (journalists, producers) in order to guarantee effective use of radio for development.
– On the other hand, it is important not to overestimate the role of radio in the development process. We need to be aware of the limitations of radio as a tool for transmitting knowledge and abilities. The best impact that can be expected is "to raise awareness, to make people conscious of the difficulties and motivate them to act. Then, to obtain positive results, the torch must be passed on to the agricultural advisers and development partners".
[Sylvia Biraahwa Nakabugu, 2001]

ACP rural networks, a pillar for our development work

HANSJÖRG NEUN | *Director of CTA*

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

First of all I would like to say that I am very pleased to be here today and that I regret not having been able to be with the group this week due to my mission to Niger but I have been well informed about your hard work these days and thank you for that. I would also like to congratulate all the partner organisations who are here today which shows the willingness to collaborate in support of rural communities, in need of our support.

I have been asked to speak on the role of the networks for CTA's development work. As you are aware, CTA also works on the issue of the impact of HIV/AIDS in agriculture and rural communities but my colleagues from FAO and the specialist on this issue Marcela Villarreal, will deal with this topic later on.

About CTA

CTA is an ACP-EU joint organisation of the Cotonou Agreement dealing with agricultural and rural information for the benefit of the 79 African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. As a network, its aim is to provide information to a wide range of stakeholders in the agricultural and rural sector, especially to rural communities. The organisation operates through a series of channels, tools and partnerships which aim to provide information, raise awareness and facilitate dialogue amongst the various stakeholders involved in the agricultural and rural sector in the ACP countries. CTA therefore promotes a series of tools to reach rural communities and rural women's groups in their networking capacities: capacity building through training, contact databases, QAS, rural radio, electronic platforms, thematic web portals, etc.

CTA has a database of 36 000 addresses, works with 8 000 organisations and its bulletin Spore reaches one million readers. This is to say that although CTA headquarters are physically in Wageningen, the Netherlands, we have a whole range of partners and networks we rely on and work with.

Since my colleagues already presented the CTA programmes earlier this week, today I would like to share with you some thoughts on networking based on our experience with the ACP partners.

CTA and networks

"Power does not reside in institutions, not even the state or large corporations. It is located in the networks that structure society." (Manuel Castells, 2004)

You know better than me that networks are broadly defined as groups of people or structures that link actors (individuals or organisations) who share a common interest or a set of values. Each of Dimitra and CTA networks are different in terms of areas covered and audience reached but all of you share common interests and willingness to act together to improve the rural women's life and livelihoods.

Why does networking matter?

Networks make an essential contribution: sharing knowledge amongst communities, linking various groups, collecting and managing information, improving interaction with non-member stakeholders at national and international level, mobilising financial resources and finding administrative and technical support, helping to improve policy processes by informing and influencing policy-makers.

One of the main challenges many of you face is sustainability – scarcity of financial, human and technical resources – as well as the access to information and communication tools, especially the connectivity. Building relationships and confidence takes time and requires long term commitments, not only from members but also from donors or supporting organisations.

Networks supporting rural women

This workshop has put special emphasis on the networks supporting rural women and agriculture because most ACP countries are heavily dependent on the agricultural sector in terms of employment, food security, income, etc. We also know that women play a critical role in the small-scale agricultural sector. But major bottlenecks remain and very often in order to reach women we do have first to reach men, elders and induce social changes. We need to challenge some assumptions: by building a pump next to a village, do we assume we solve the problem of women because they do not need anymore to walk long distances to collect water? Have we thought that the time spent with other women to collect water is perhaps the only time they have for themselves, or for some exchange with women from other villages? We need to look at the social impact of some external interventions by involving women in decisions.

The role of information and communication and the role of CTA

Knowledge is power

– The more information is available, the more essential is to manage it. CTA builds capacity of networks by running services such as the Question and Answer Service, training for rural leaders, rural radio networking, etc.

– New technologies such as the Internet have facilitated our work but main constraints remain still in rural areas, especially on connectivity issues. CTA is willing to support equipment acquisition which is the priority of the new European Commissioner for Development, Louis Michel.

– Finding ways on how best use information to inform and influence policy. CTA does some advocacy work for the rural communities and women groups within the international arena by facilitating their attendance and input to major events in the agricultural and rural sector

– Formalising long-term participatory mechanisms and improving the interaction between researchers, policy-makers and community-based actors. As you pointed out very often rural women do not have the opportunity to interact with other groups and remain in isolation. Workshops like this one allow interaction with all those groups.

– Strengthening the production, management and use of information by our ACP partners by promoting local content and local authorship

– Promoting local networks which are not known sufficiently or are neglected. Some of you have pointed out the need for partnership with local authorities in decentralized governments.

– Improving capacities to monitor and spend donor's funds. CTA gives regular assistance to its networks in terms of financial and management rules.

– Bilateral and multilateral approach is often based on sensitising policy makers but not enough attention is given to the religious leaders and other influential groups who can't be ignored.

Colleagues from ENDA-Pronat in Senegal have well illustrated the positive changes in the dialogue and exchange women have had with men and religious authorities in their communities, on issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Collaborative ways of sharing information – North-South networks

The European networks, platforms and organisations active in development, can assist CTA, Dimitra and its partners to share and transmit information on specific issues. I am glad that European NGO platforms such as Concord have supported this event.

Follow up

What can we collectively do and what can CTA do with Dimitra and the other partners?

– Strengthen existing communities and networks by sharing resources and making use of comparative advantages with other organisations such as FAO, Dimitra and others.

– Promote and support continued dialogue and exchange of information amongst existing communities and networks by increasing our support to traditional and modern information tools: face to face meetings, institutional support, ICT tools, electronic consultations.

– Advocacy work with the EU and ACP policy-makers on the need for additional support to rural networks, young farmers, women's organisations, civil society groups.

– Identification of partnerships and co-funded programmes to inform policy, this can be reflected in public-private partnerships and in assisting you to access funding from the EU and other sources.

More importantly I will listen to your recommendations and will take note of the concrete support you expect from us.

The impact of HIV/AIDS on food security

JOERGEN MAERSK PEDERSEN | *Director of the FAO Liaison Office with the EU and Belgium*

Ladies and gentlemen,

Firstly I would like to thank you all for welcoming me here today. I am going to speak on the impact of HIV/AIDS on food security.

95% of the people affected by HIV/AIDS live in developing countries. In the past a mainly urban problem, HIV/AIDS has gradually invaded the countryside. Most of the people affected by it, throughout the world, currently live in rural areas. In sub-Saharan Africa in particular, where we find 70 % of HIV/AIDS cases, more than two thirds of the population of the 25 most affected countries live in the countryside. Between 1985 and 2000, around 7 million agricultural workers died of AIDS in the 25 most affected countries. These countries could lose up to 26 % of their agricultural workforce by 2020.

In consequence, we are seeing an increasingly serious impact of the epidemic on diet, food security, agricultural production and the rural communities of these countries. All aspects of food security, namely availability, stability, accessibility and use of the food, are affected in the regions with a high rate of HIV/AIDS.

The food crisis that threatened over 14 million people in southern Africa in 2002-2003 has sadly served only to further highlight the interaction between HIV/AIDS and food security. This crisis showed that it is impossible to effectively fight hunger in the regions ravaged by AIDS, if the interventions are not focused on the specific needs of those households affected by HIV/AIDS and do not include measures to prevent the illness and slow down its spread. This southern African food crisis was triggered by the combined effects of recurring drought, economic policy failures and civil unrest. Its impact was worsened by the devastating AIDS epidemic, which had already destroyed millions of families, compromising the farming sector and weakening governments' ability to react. In 2001 alone, the year preceding the crisis, close to 500,000 people died of AIDS in the affected countries, leaving approximately 2.5 million orphans.

HIV/AIDS causes and aggravates food insecurity through its impact on several levels: directly at household level, at community level, and finally at national level.

At household level:

– The situation is principally worsened by the impact of HIV/AIDS on households' ability to produce foodstuffs, due to a lack of workforce and the loss of knowledge on cultivation methods. Most AIDS victims are young adults who fall ill and die during the years when they should be most productive. They leave behind a population with an overly high proportion of elderly and very young people, many of whom are orphans. In some badly affected zones, studies have revealed that more than half the households were headed by women, grandparents or orphaned children. Deprived of a workforce, of resources and of knowledge about basic crops and cash crops, many households moved to producing dietary staples. Others have actually abandoned their fields. A study in Zimbabwe showed that maize production had fallen by 61% among the households where there had been an AIDS-related death. In two districts of Kenya affected by AIDS, a study showed that only 7% of the orphans running farms had adequate knowledge in that area.

– As to the households' food insecurity, it is also increasing, because HIV/AIDS is a great hindrance to the affected households' ability to buy food, due to the impoverishment caused by the loss of the household's belongings and of the productive members of the family. AIDS robs households of their goods and belongings by forcing them to sell off the little that they possess, in order to pay for medical and funeral expenses. A study carried out in one African country showed that the cost of care for patients and the resulting funerals was higher than the average yearly farming income. As a consequence we are seeing a decrease in food consumption among households affected by the AIDS virus. Studies carried out in Tanzania have shown that food consumption per inhabitant drops by 15% in the poorest households when an adult dies.

– Finally, women are particularly vulnerable in households affected by HIV/AIDS. It is usually they who care for the sick and dying, on top of these heavy burdens, they have to provide food for the household. They are more likely to be illiterate, and they have an inferior socio-economic status and fewer rights, which limits their access to resources and social services.

At community level:

– Rural communities bear the highest costs of the pandemic, as many town-dwellers and migrant workers return to their native village when they fall ill. The traditional security nets, which contribute to food security in times of need, crumble in the worst affected communities, where families and their neighbours are too overwhelmed to help one another with food, loans, help in the fields or just caring for the orphans.

At national level:

– According to recent estimates, the pandemic has already decreased national economic growth rates by 2 to 4% per year, throughout Africa. Data also indicates that malnourishment has continued to increase in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, where HIV/AIDS was already widespread in 1991, but is in decline in the countries with lower prevalence rates.

– Thus, the epidemic has important consequences for the official national institutions and their ability to implement policies and programmes to aid rural households. They may suffer considerable losses in human resources when their staff and families fall victim to HIV/AIDS. Qualified staff are often the first to be affected by the illness. The disruption of national services further heightens the difficulties met in satisfying the needs of a population suffering from HIV/AIDS.

– Finally, the decrease in the workforce, in worker productivity and in total production, in addition to the slowdown in overall economic growth could lead to a decrease in the food supply with an increase in the price of foodstuffs, particularly in urban areas. The collapse of commercial companies is likely to compromise the country's currency export and mobilisation capabilities. The epidemic has therefore an important impact on development, because it affects three important factors in economic growth, namely physical capital, human capital and share capital. The UNDP's estimates for South Africa, for instance, suggest that the human development index could fall by 15% in 2010 due to HIV/AIDS.

How should we react to the HIV/AIDS crisis and to its impact on food security?

My colleague Marcela Villarreal, Director of the Gender and Population Division at FAO in Rome, will give you more details of FAO approach to this area.

I would like to briefly mention that the initiatives taken to combat the epidemic must rely on the following principles:

– Firstly, dynamic management and political commitment at all levels are indispensable if the measures to prevent HIV/AIDS and to reduce its effects are to be effective. Without the determined support of political and social institutions, we will not have the resources needed to deal with the epidemic. The support of the authorities at the highest political level is essential for cross-sectoral measures. Prevention of HIV/AIDS in poor communities can only be effective if it is backed up by large-scale aid and development measures.

– Secondly, in developing countries, it is essential for food security groups to be able to take charge of monitoring the consequences of HIV/AIDS in the affected regions and report its effects. It is also necessary to review the laws and customs regarding access to land and to resources, in order to preserve the livelihoods of widows, orphans and other poor households suffering from HIV/AIDS.

– Thirdly, it is essential that we respond to the basic needs, both dietary and other, of destitute households. A view of development that is centred on the human being, multi-sectoral and rooted in the community, is indispensable to the creation and maintenance of conditions that will allow us to curb HIV/AIDS and attack its consequences as efficiently as possible.

– Fourthly, it is possible to combine the fight against HIV/AIDS with food security very effectively, by incorporating HIV/AIDS-related issues into the actions taken to promote food security and, likewise, aims linked to food security into programmes to fight HIV/AIDS.

– Fifthly, information and communication in this area are indispensable. We need to set up powerful opinion campaigns in order to raise awareness among governments, political authorities, ministries, opinion leaders and the general public about the consequences of HIV.

FAO has, therefore, an important part to play in the global fight against HIV/AIDS. The initial goals of the Organization in this respect are:

1. To encourage high level awareness of HIV and a political will to tackle the problems it raises;

2. To reduce its consequences in terms of increasing food insecurity and malnutrition;

3. To promote the reconstitution, maintenance and consolidation of the means of subsistence and security nets of rural societies, and finally;

4. To set up efficient multisectoral and participatory mechanisms in order to ensure food security for the citizens and countries affected by HIV/AIDS.

Naturally, FAO's actions in this area cannot take place without the support and financial participation of the main donor countries. I would like to take advantage of the opportunity I have today, to thank them for the assistance given to the activities of FAO in combating HIV/AIDS in rural areas, especially the action of the Belgian government, in particular for its assistance in implementing important actions in this area such as the DIMITRA project and projects in Zambia, Ethiopia and Mozambique with the Belgian Survival Fund.

Finally I would like to thank and congratulate the DGDC, the King Baudouin Foundation, CTA and also all the team and partners of the DIMITRA project, for organising this workshop today.

Working in North/South/South networks

HÉLÈNE RYCKMANS | *Project Officer of le Monde selon les femmes, President of the Commission on Women and Development*

I would like to thank you for inviting me to take part in the conclusions of your workshop and in particular on the issue of dynamising networks.

I extend my warmest thanks to the Dimitra Project for inviting me to speak on this subject, on behalf of *Le Monde selon les femmes* (M/F: The World according to Women) and of the Commission on Women and Development.

At the 2002 workshop (see report) I spoke on the meaning for us of working in networks.

Le Monde selon les femmes is a development NGO specialising in gender advocacy, training and methodological support and is the only Belgian NGO to run such an initiative with these issues as key focus.

The organisation works towards the implementation of practices to guarantee gender equality, as well as providing support to South/North women's networks. In this respect, it organises gender training sessions and produces publications (gender tools...), notably the magazine and the *Palabras* network.

Le Monde selon les femmes works in networks

In order to extend and enrich its awareness raising work, reinforce its actions and increase the consciousness of development actors particularly those from the North, about gender equality, *le Monde selon les femmes* is active in several networks:

– Belgian networks (the Commission on Women and Development, the Committee of the World March of Women and all the structures, institutions and associations with which we are linked);
– European networks – *WIDE* (Women in Development Europe) and in particular its work on economic literacy (based on popular education and women's day-to-day knowledge);
– South/North.

The networks are there to give a meaning to our commitment. They allow us to build:

– advocacy and shared stands, relayed from South to North and from North to South;
– citizen-driven initiatives, encouraging changes in mentalities and policies.

Objectives of networking

By participating in these various networks, *le Monde selon les femmes* aims:

– on the one hand, to appeal to NGOs, the development cooperation sector, and Belgian and European political actors to address gender issues, and to enrich them through our experience and that of our partners, which we pass on;
– on the other hand, to bring together Southern partners with those from the North. An important emphasis is placed on the essential contributions of women migrants to Belgian society.

The goal is:

– to highlight and value the reflections and methodologies of the South, by promoting information sharing among the groups, and;
– to organise joint activities (for example on the themes of the World March of Women: poverty and violence, around globalisation and privatisation of services, around sustainable development).

Implementing network dialogue

To work together in networks, we rely on the involvement of the M/F members in many networks. At meetings, we promote contacts between associations in Belgium, Europe, French-speaking Africa or Latin America, and we always invite Southern partners or Southern guests who gradually become partners in this way.

Computerised management of resources, the database, and our website are useful tools for these activities!

Le Monde selon les femmes is involved in networks in three areas:

1. **The Palabras project**
2. **Networks of women trainers and gender resource persons**
3. **Exchange and contact networks**

1. The Palabras project

Since 1996, the *Palabras* magazine has been examining development through the eyes of both South and North.

When they come together to discuss on a particular issue, women's groups tell their stories and personal experiences. The idea is that "women's autonomy and empowerment processes, strategies and innovations" can be highlighted. The stories come from three continents (Southern Europe, Latin America

and French-speaking Africa), and are translated into French and Spanish.

Telling their stories gives women internal strength as they know they will be read by others. It also allows them to become aware of the essential and identical challenges faced by women in the North and in the South: discrimination, difficulties in controlling resources, resistance to equality, lengthy procedures and lack of mechanisms for social change. The North has no lessons to teach the South, but strategies can be mutually enriching.

Through its varied articles, the magazine also provides a space to exchange strategies and find some food for thought! For example, the story about leadership training for young women from IDEAS in Chilli has been translated into the mooré language for RECIF's newsletter "Le kwakwa" in Burkina Faso...

In 1998, the magazine gave rise to the creation of a network, the Palabras network.

The Palabras network

The Network was created as:
– A place to exchange information and experience. It allows grassroot groups to exchange information and also to develop joint actions both within the network and outside;
– A relevant network to improve political action and to re-orientate the Belgian government's cooperation policy.

The Palabras network aims to establish reciprocity between groups, because networks have a strategic value in building the identity of women's groups. With the Palabras network as a space for mobilisation, we seek to develop a new code of ethics in their organisational structure and information exchange mechanisms.

Previous Palabras meetings

– 1st Palabras meeting *Creation of the Palabras Network* (1998)
– 2nd Palabras meeting *"The role of support institutions for women and their impact on development"* (1999)
– 3rd Palabras meeting *"The World March of Women"* (2000)
– 4th Palabras meeting *"The importance of women's networks"* (2001)
– 5th Palabras meeting *"Impact of privatising public services, alternatives and international feminist strategies"* (2002)
– 6th meeting of the Palabras Network *"Advocacy for other worlds"* (2003)
– 7th Palabras meeting *"Countering the Globalisation of poverty – Women's strategies – Role of the Belgian NGOs"* (2004)

The Network, which began informally and numbers 140 associations in 2005, aims to have a partnership-based approach:
– to get to know each other (through annual meetings);
– to recognise that we have the same approach, and a common political will.

Since the beginning of 2005, the Palabras Network has become an official network for training and community action on gender (French acronym: RAAC).

Le Monde selon les femmes is co-ordinating this project to raise awareness amongst European public opinion on development issues. The three-year RAAC project is being implemented in partnership with ACSUR – Las Segovias (Spain), CECYM (Argentina), CONAFED (Democratic Republic of Congo) and GRAAL (Portugal).

The general aim of the project is to include gender equality in all activities on awareness-raising, development education and international co-operation, as well as in the policies implemented at various levels.

The project has studied a number of topics such as violence, sustainable development, macroeconomics, and globalisation. The many planned actions focus on four main aspects:
– Creating a network (using NICTs and creating a database of active associations in the North and in the South to exchange information, documents and experience);
– Awareness-raising and advocacy in favour of gender and development (campaigns, lobbying at various levels and in the different countries);
– Training (N/S combined training, training for trainers);
– Producing and adapting teaching and awareness-raising materials (Palabras magazine, teaching, audio and visual materials, advocacy documents, publication of the proceedings of the workshops).

Each year, an international seminar is organised, bringing together the project's partners as well as the key actors involved. This year it will be run jointly with CONAFED, taking place in the Democratic Republic of Congo during the first fortnight in October, and the theme will be new development challenges in Africa.

Another joint activity taking place in 2005 is an awareness-raising and advocacy campaign called "Globalisation – new forms of gender violence" CECYM, in Argentina, is running this event and it will be promoted by each of the partners on November 25th, among other times, as this is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

2. Networks of gender trainers and resource people

The M/F organises international training sessions on gender. Each year, we respond to the request of groups of women from the South (in their own country or in Belgium), and in the last 4 years in particular we have been running (jointly with AIDEP) international training courses lasting 2 months, on gender for sustainable development. All the people trained in gender issues gradually form a network of skills and a base for partnership. They are actors for equality, active in their own countries but also spurring on Belgian co-operation. When they join together to form local networks, their impact increases tenfold!

3. Exchange and contact networks in Belgium

In Belgium in particular, the *Commission on Women and Development* and the Committee of the World March of Women are very important consultation and advocacy spaces.

The Commission on Women and Development, which has just celebrated 10 years of existence, is a consultative body to the Belgian Secretary of State for Development Cooperation.

The Commission's aim is to promote the inclusion of gender issues in Belgian international development cooperation policies and projects.

Its mission is to formulate opinions on the drawing up and implementation of an international cooperation policy on Women and Development; on its own initiative, to provide an opinion on any issue pertaining to the area of Women and Development; to support the initiatives and activities in this area by coordinating, consulting and exchanging information; and to promote awareness-raising activities targeting public opinion on Women and Development.

The CWD's role includes three main elements:

– to provide advice and counsel on cooperation policies, so as to ensure that gender is taken into account. It gives legally required opinions on the political and strategic aspects of Belgian Development Cooperation.
– to question, consider and guide (advocate) in order to strengthen gender integration in Belgian Development Cooperation projects and programmes.
– to raise public awareness, based on the considerations and struggles of Southern women.

In recent years, the members of the CWD have endeavoured to make the voices of Southern women heard and to work in consultation with women's NGOs, on such key subjects as:

– genital mutilation – in co-operation with GAMS;
– the crucial role of women in conflict resolution and in implementing UN resolution 1325 – in co-operation with NVR (the Dutch Council of Women);
– the Millennium Development Goals, by arguing the need to go well beyond these goals in order to obtain gender equality, and by establishing specific files of recommendations on how to integrate gender into all the MDGs, notably through development funding and allocation of new resources to women;
– It is also considering empowerment indicators, by adopting a participatory research approach for developing such indicators.

An informal yet active network

The CWD provides a unique exchange and consultation space for experts, development NGOs, women's NGOs, Universities, and the DGDC, in particular the Gender Unit and the Cabinet of the Development Cooperation. It also includes the Belgian Technical Cooperation and the Dimitra project in its work. We recommend creating such bodies in all the European and Southern countries. I would like to draw your attention to the recent creation, in Belgium, of an Institute for Equality between Women and Men. These skills and this commitment have led to the creation of an informal yet active Gender and Development network. This is a place for consultation, and an institutional lobbying tool to underline the legal commitment of the Belgian Development Cooperation, which has made gender equality a cross-cutting priority, as well as its international commitments, in particular those taken at Beijing. These commitments have been signed up to, and they must be made a reality with everyone's help!

It is fundamentally important to be well aware of the importance of protecting our gains – which can rapidly fade away if political will or means are lacking, but which provide a strong basis for equality between North/South and men/women!

Thank you

New ICTs for networking

SOPHIE TREINEN | *Information Management Specialist, WAICENT* Capacity Building and Outreach Branch, FAO*

Introduction to ICTs

New Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) offer great opportunities for improving communication in rural areas by allowing rapid and efficient information collection, storing, processing, retrieval and exchange. Some practical examples of new ICTs and their applications include interactive websites, electronic communities, virtual libraries, electronic publishing, CD-ROMs, e-mail, on-line databases, video conferencing and mobile telephones.

Advantages

For the Dimitra and CTA partners, such tools can prove invaluable in creating and strengthening interactive and collaborative networks, as they promote horizontal and vertical communication and connect geographically dispersed people. When we use ICTs effectively they can help us repackage information into various forms and formats and provide a rapid and cost-effective way to manage large volumes of data, facilitating decision-making mechanisms and enhancing partnerships with the media.

Constraints

The choice of new ICTs in support of rural and agricultural development can provide several key benefits compared to traditional media. Many of you, however, are well aware of the challenges faced by new ICT projects, such as the high cost of technology, maintenance and access; lack of accessible telecommunication infrastructure and power sources and the use of proprietary technological solutions. Other factors also come into play, such as the non-integration of existing media and communication methods and channels; poor and non–participatory planning; lack of stakeholder involvement, especially women and youth, and an urgent need for capacity building.

A new era in information management

Information management covers the various stages of information processing from production to storage and retrieval to dissemination. Information can be from internal or external sources, and in any format. While new technology can improve communication and the way information is managed and exchanged, the human factor is central to its success. Digital information technologies have changed the ways in which organisations produce and distribute information. As a result we are faced with new opportunities and needs. New job roles are emerging (authors, publication officers, computer officers, web masters, etc.) and new knowledge and skills are needed. With the right training and tools, people from various disciplines can successfully combine their skills and knowledge to develop an integrated workflow and competently manage digital information in their organisation.

Lessons learnt

Lessons learnt from ICT projects enable us to identify eight critical success factors for improving the impact of information and communication:

1. **Adapting Content to Local Context:** is the information sourced appropriately and presented suitably?
2. **Building on Existing Systems and Working with Existing Policies:** does the intervention enhance rather than replace existing channels of communication? Does the intervention offer solutions compatible with and feasible under existing policy frameworks?
3. **Addressing Diversity:** does the intervention respond to the different information and communication requirements of men and women, the young and the old, and other groups (racial, ethnic or socioeconomic) with specific needs?
4. **Building Capacity:** does the intervention strengthen the

capacity of institutions and people to access a wider range of information and to provide the right content?

5. **Ensuring Equitable Access and Empowerment:** does the intervention ensure that information reaches and empowers poor people, as well as enabling them to participate in decision-making processes?

6. **Building Partnership Networks:** does the intervention build horizontal and vertical links as well as shared ownership among communities, organizations and sectors?

7. **Adopting Realistic Approaches to Technology:** does the intervention work to build systems that are socially relevant and sustainable, enhance existing structures, can be extended, and make use of the full range of existing media?

8. **Information Costs:** can the intervention finance the appropriate information infrastructure and content, particularly in remote areas, in a realistic and sustainable way?

Tools to explore

FAO established the *World Agricultural Information Centre* **(WAICENT)** in recognition of the instrinsic value of information in fighting global hunger and achieving food security. Through the WAICENT framework, FAO is able to effectively disseminate the Organization's vast wealth of information on agriculture and food security in accordance with its belief that information is power only if easily and freely accessible. The WAICENT Internet portal www.fao.org/waicent offers a unique and unlimited capacity to disseminate information to millions of users around the world. As part of its efforts to expand access to FAO information, particularly in Member Nations where the Internet is not widely available, WAICENT promotes access to specialised information systems such as FAOSTAT, AGRIS and the Corporate Document Repository by making content available on CD-Rom.

Information management resource kit

Several of these resource and training activities may be of interest to the participants here today, particularly the Information Management Resource Kit, (IMARK), which is a partnership-based e-learning initiative to train individuals and support institutions and networks world-wide in the effective management of agricultural information. *IMARK* consists of a suite of distance learning resources, tools and communities on information management www.imarkgroup.org . Several modules are of interest to the participants: management of electronic documents, Investing in Information for Development, Digitization and Digital Libraries and Building Electronic Communities.

Dgroups

An interesting tool to encourage exchange amongst networks and organisations is *Dgroups*, which is an online platform for groups and communities interested in exchanging information on international development. This service is simple, non-commercial and targeted at low bandwidth users in the South. More information can be found at www.dgroups.org/

Finally, FAO, governments, and other international agencies are implementing a strategic Programme entitled **Bridging the Rural Digital Divide**. The programme highlights innovative approaches to knowledge exchange that take advantage of new digital technologies, and that are based on synergies between information management and communication for development. For more information see: www.fao.org/rdd/

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* World Agricultural Information Center

HIV/AIDS, *food security and rural poverty: FAO's response. Summary of Powerpoint presentation*

MARCELA VILLARREAL | *Director, Gender And Population Division, FAO*

By developing an agricultural approach to the AIDS epidemic, synergies can be created with health interventions. Good nutrition and food security are essential factors in the fight against HIV/AIDS, particularly in light of the fact that even if people have access to the full ART treatment, they cannot take it on an empty stomach.

It is important to promote women's empowerment specifically through equal access to means of production and especially to land. Women's empowerment will have a direct effect on both prevention and mitigation. Contributing to addressing the underlying causes of the transmission of the epidemic and adding an agricultural angle gives special added value and makes interventions more realistic and pertinent for people in the rural areas.

HIV/AIDS affects Food Security through:

– Loss of agricultural labour
– Impoverishment of households
– Loss of knowledge and skills
  • Children taken out of school
  • Institutions
  • Plant diversity, genetic resources
– Social safety nets undermined

Implications

– Decline in land cultivated and range of crops
– Shift to less labour-intensive crops
– Increase in cost of hired labour
– Lower yields, less nutritious food
– Increased soil erosion

This in turn leads to:
– decreased agricultural productivity
– increased food insecurity
– increased malnutrition

Food and nutrition security are central to the response.

Spread of HIV 1984 -1999

The disease can spread very rapidly. Take for example the case of Botswana: in 1984 prevalence was less than 1%. Only ten years later, more than 20% of adults were HIV-positive and now the figure has risen to 35%.

At the initial stages of the epidemic, it is hard to foresee its development. A low prevalence does not mean that the country has been spared. Quite the contrary, prevention activities should start as early on as possible, before the problem gets out of hand.

Zambia: Household Membership in Cooperatives

AIDS acts as a mechanism of exclusion.

The Government of Zambia promoted cooperatives to distribute subsidized agricultural inputs and therefore increase small holder production.

AIDS affected households, especially those headed by women, who could not become members of the cooperatives and therefore could not get access to the subsidized inputs.

The case of the male-headed household with orphans is anomalous. The researchers think that it could be because these are households that remain intact (unlike those that are female headed) and hence they receive the orphans with their working capacity and frequently with some assets.

Orphan Crisis

In 2003, 143 million children were orphaned by AIDS and other causes in 93 countries.

From 2001 to 2003 orphans due to AIDS grew from 11.5 million to 15 million

The subject of my talk is not new, because orphans and children on the brink have always been part of our world. But in 2004 the magnitude of the problem is appalling. Worldwide there are 142 million orphans of which 15 million have lost their parents from AIDS.

Endangered livelihoods

Malnutrition, food insecurity and the risk of HIV infection make up a deadly cycle.
Those affected:
–   have scarce agricultural knowledge
–   are marginalised and exploited
–   are hungry and sick
–   are isolated and invisible
–   suffer from poor self-esteem
–   have no vision for the future

Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools

FAO in collaboration with the World Food Programme and other partners have set up "Junior Farmer Field and Life Schools" as a sustainable response to mitigate the effects of HIV/AIDS and achieve long-term food security in the countries most affected by the pandemic. The pupils are orphans and other children made vulnerable by HIV/AIDS. These schools are designed to help empower them and to improve their livelihoods.

Genesis

–   Farmer Field Schools
–   Farmer Life Schools
–   School Feeding Programme

How?

Improving:
–   Nutrition
–   Agricultural knowledge
–   Life skills
–   Self esteem
–   Gender-equal attitudes
–   Sense of identity
–   Protection

Facilitators

Extension workers
Teachers
Social animators
Volunteers

Demonstration sites

–   *Staples (mid-term)*
    Millet, Maize
–   *Long-term crops*
    Savings, income-generating activities
    Cassava, pineapple, sweet potato
–   *Vegetable Garden*
    Sunflower, beans, carrots, green vegetables, onions, tomatoes
–   *Medicinal plants*
    Indigenous species
–   *Goats, chickens*

Where?

–   Mozambique
–   Kenya
–   Zimbabwe
–   Namibia
–   Zambia
–   Swaziland
–   Tanzania

The use of creativity to introduce complex issues

–   Theatre, social animation, dance
–   Tools of expression and empowerment to raise awareness on issues of:
    •   Gender equality
    •   Children's rights
    •   HIV/AIDS
    •   Trauma

Result: empowerment

–   Agricultural knowledge
–   Food security opportunities
–   Entrepreneurship skills
–   Life skills and self esteem
–   Gender-equal attitudes
–   Primary HIV/AIDS prevention

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Mindmap Efficient Networking

SOURCES OF FUNDING

Co-financing
- FAO
- CTA
- GTZ
- King Baudouin Foundation
- Belgian Cooperation for Development

Additional sources
- UNIFEM
- Swiss Cooperation

Credibility of Dimitra / perceived as /
- Funding Source
- Guarantor for additional funds

CAPACITY BUILDING
- Empower rural women to become actors for development
- With sub-regional groups
- With FAO officials
- With Ministries
- Clarity of own deficiency — Attend to atrophy

COMMUNICATION

Information flow
- from external sources to network
- from network to NGOs
- between network members
- communication mechanisms for information diffusion

North
South

ICTs — NICTs
- D-groups
- e-forums
- Mobile phones
- Websites

Paper
- Newsletters
- Mailing lists
- Questionnaires
- Annotated bibliography on gender

Face-to-face

Film & video

Radio
- Community radio
- Rural radio

Local and traditional media
- Puppets
- Drama
- Song
- Stories
- Dance

Following the groupwork sessions, the Workshop Facilitator used the results of the discussion to produce a mindmap of some of the key 'ingredients' for efficient networking.

This graphical representation groups together the tools, influences and actions of the participants in terms of their sources of funding, vision, structure, activities, communication and capacity building.

EFFICIENT NETWORKING

VISION/QUALITY
- Shared purpose
  - Focus on rural women
  - Recognise dynamic examples
  - Link between HIV/AIDS & Poverty
    - Poverty alleviation programmes
- Commitment
  - Human rights based approach
  - Women's rights
    - Developing legal framework
  - Reproductive rights
- Pro-active
  - Local ownership
  - Initiatives
  - Dynamic
  - Reflection of rural women
  - Look for good proposals
  - Look for new possibilities
- Accountability
  - Actions for good governance

STRUCTURE
- Intra/inter network linkages
- Focal point
  - Local
  - National
  - Regional
- Involving more partners external to Dimitra
- Horizontal organisation
  - South-South
  - From periphery to centre
- Decentralised
  - Bottom-up approach
  - Close links with grassroots

ACTIVITIES
- Sub-regional workshop
- Participation at international conferences
- Field studies
- Joint projects
  - Proposal writing
- Community work
- Meetings
  - Workshop
  - Seminars
  - Conferences
  - Community Forums
- Advocacy
- Coalition building
  - Youth
  - Men
  - Civil Society
  - Private Sector
  - Government
- Training
  - Gender mainstreaming
  - Training of trainers
  - Nutrition
    - Exploring Potential of local crops
  - Citizenship
  - HIV/AIDS