

The rural women's voice : the Dimitra Project



The Dimitra Project is an information and communication project of the FAO. Since 1998, the project has contributed to improve access to information for African peoples - particularly women - by, strengthening their capacity to make their voices heard throughout the society.

Dimitra, in cooperation with ten organizations among its partners and network in Africa, is striving to: update a database of rural development organizations in Africa (with some 1,600 entries as of today); strengthen network members' capacities; highlight best practices (mainly through the publishing of a widely disseminated six-monthly report), and implement any other activities as needed.

Dimitra is also part of the FAO's "Knowledge management and gender" programme. As such, it reinforces full acknowledgement of gender issues and information / best practices sharing among the various FAO programmes and divisions present in West Africa.

Capacity Strengthening

Dimitra contributes to build the capacity of its partners and network members on the latest IT technologies or participative communication techniques. Best practices sharing and cooperation among network members also contribute to build their advocacy, networking and awareness raising capacities

The case of SAMWAKI, Dimitra's partner in South Kivu

In the Southern Kivu region (Democratic Republic of Congo), women conditions are hard to the extreme. Sexual violence is a dreadfully frequent practice and HIV/AIDS has increasingly grown into a major public concern.

Since 2006, SAMWAKI has been implementing a regional programme of "listening groups". SAMWAKI built on a women grass-root organizations' initiative aiming to support the creation of urban listening groups and to distribute solar-powered radio sets to increase radio broadcasts' audience. Nowadays SAMWAKI encourages such initiative. The programme also includes capacity building activities, such as training in gender issues and participative communication techniques.

SAMWAKI groups are composed by both men and women. Today they constitute a framework for discussion over relevant local development issues. One of their core activities aim is to encourage peoples' participation to debates over the incidence of HIV/AIDS in the villages. The aim of the discussions is to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS and rural women vulnerability to it.

Gender education in one the strategies adopted by the groups in order to achieve these goals coupled with the use of community radio stations which allow them to reach a wider audience.

This programme is a synergy model: Dimitra launched and supported such programme and its funding comes from Belgium's Fondation Roi Baudouin, in collaboration with German Cooperation's GTZ-Santé.

Dissemination and CIT

As well as other Dimitra's partners' activities, SAMWAKI experience could be replicated and adapted accordingly by other members of the network. All of Dimitra's activities are "capitalized" (through booklets, CDs and other media) so as to allow a wider divulgation to the benefit of the many.

Generally speaking, DIMITRA reinforces network mobilization through its ongoing cooperation with local broadcasters and rural women's organizations and, whenever possible, through the use of information and communication technology (IT), highlighting local related issues decided in participation with the interested rural communities.

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