

Communication for development, adaptation to climate change and food security

The Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative (CSDI), a project initiated by FAO and the Italian Ministry of the Environment and Territory, is promoting communication for development in the fields of climate change and food security.

Global food security is threatened by new challenges linked to climate change. Desertification, floods, and other sudden and intense climatic phenomena cause lower agricultural productivity and impact negatively on people's livelihoods.

To rise to these challenges, a people-centred policy framework is necessary which supports the livelihoods of rural populations in developing countries and seeks to strengthen the resilience of food production systems. This calls for a combination of short, medium and long-term measures designed to strengthen rural institutions, facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information, and encourage people's participation. Climate change adaptation necessitates coordinated multidisciplinary actions involving multiple stakeholders and a social learning process.

The use of ComDev

Communication for development (ComDev) plays a major role since it combines participatory methods and processes with a range of media and tools, from rural radio stations to information and communication technologies.

In so doing, ComDev seeks to meet the information requirements of rural populations and other stakeholders.

The CSDI Initiative seeks to enhance and extend ComDev services in Bangladesh, Bolivia, the Caribbean and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and in this framework is providing them with communication tools and methods tailored to their respective local needs.

For example, in Bolivia the project has used Participatory Rural Communication Appraisal (PRCA)¹ tailored to agricultural innovation and the communities' adaptation to climate change. In the DRC the focus is primarily on rural radio stations, which have a fundamental role to play in sharing knowledge about agricultural technology.

The project is developing partnerships and forms of collaboration with development institutions and programmes, universities, NGOs and parliamentary groups with a view to building communication skills for adaptation to climate change and for food security.

To achieve this, the CSDI strategy comprises three dimensions:

Knowledge-sharing

The experiences and lessons learned concerning the use of ComDev methods and tools for adaptation to climate change, food security and associated fields (such as natural resource and disaster risk management) are systematised and disseminated internationally through reports, publications and training material. The CSDI also uses social networks like Facebook, Twitter and its own website (www.csdinitiative.org).

Capacity building

Networking and partnerships are two essential factors for supporting rural institutions and populations in using ComDev and promoting communication as a key element in their development programme. Several networks in a number of regions have been strengthened in order to improve information dissemination and dynamize cooperation between institutions, NGOs and communication professionals.

Technical assistance

The activities of CSDI on the ground focus on national and regional communication plans and strategies.

The communication strategy in the DRC

Over the past 20 years or so, overall annual precipitation has risen in many regions of the country, whilst the frequency and intensity of extreme climatic phenomena (heavy rainfall, coastal erosion, flooding, heat waves and seasonal droughts) have also increased. Rural populations are generally unaware of the impact climate change can have and of the options available to them for adaptation. Information and advice for farmers about climate change are nonexistent.

For the past three years, the CSDI has been working in Mbanza-Ngungu, in the Cataractes district of Bas-Congo province, to sup-

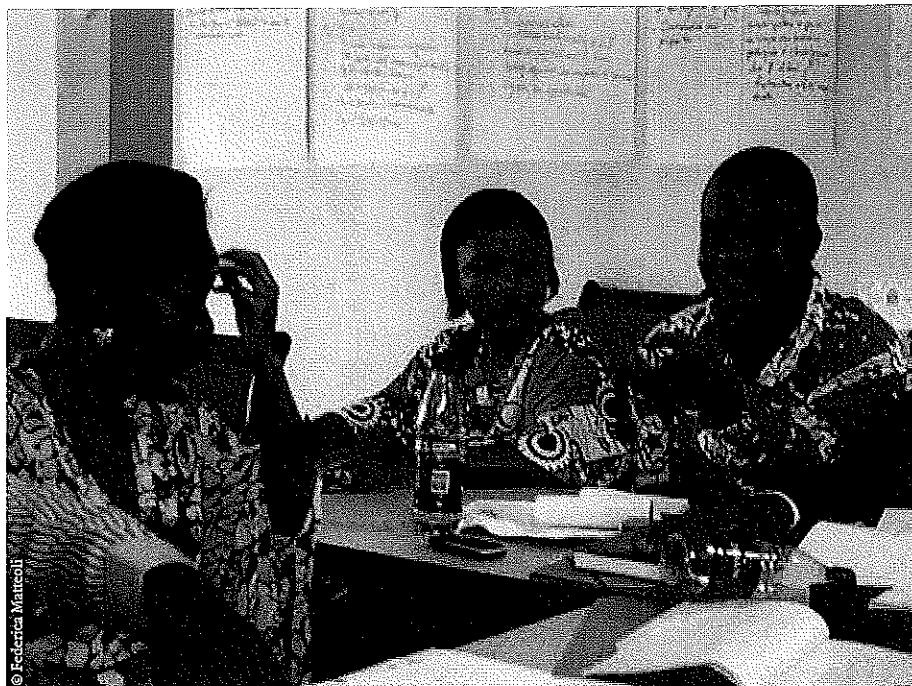


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port a programme of rehabilitation of the agricultural and forestry research developed by FAO and funded by the European Union. The objective is to disseminate the results of research into the cultivation of manioc and agroforestry practices. The main activities include training journalists from partner radio stations in agricultural technologies and communication, as well as producing programmes and strengthening collaboration between researchers, extension workers and farmers via rural radio.

The positive results of the project have prompted the National Institute for Agronomic Study and Research (INERA) to integrate ComDev more closely into its work, especially in connection with topics like food security and climate change adaptation. In addition, synergies with the Faculty Institute for Information and Communication Sciences (IFASIC) have been identified and there are plans to:

- develop a training module on communication for rural radio stations;
- organise a workshop to evaluate the current situation of communication in the Ministries of Agriculture and of Rural Develop-



ment, of good practices in communication, and of rural radio stations;

- draw up a communication and gender awareness-raising plan to support the development of strategies for adaptation to climate change and for food security.

Gender and communication workshop on the strategy for climate change

The CSDI recently organised a workshop gathering development actors to look into the integration of communication and gender in a strategy to address climate change and food security. The workshop took place in Kinshasa on 14 and 15 April 2011 and its participants included officials from the Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Sustainable Development and Gender, journalists from rural radio stations, teaching staff from IFASIC and researchers from INERA.

For gender sensitization, the workshop called upon Dimitra, which will be an important partner in the second phase of the project in the DRC. Indeed, Dimitra will be contributing to the launch of information and communication activities with a gender approach in rural areas and to the creation of community listeners' clubs.

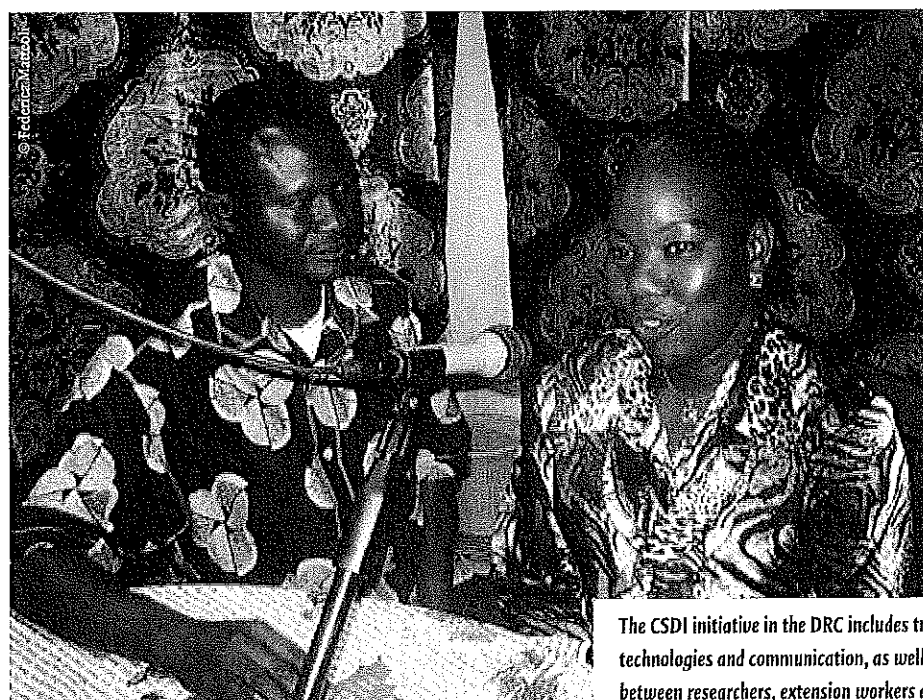
The purpose of the workshop was to establish a diagnostic of the current situation concerning development communication, gender and climate change at the country's ministries, taking into consideration the needs of the different actors. This diagnostic will be used to develop a communication and gender awareness plan for fostering the development of strategies for food security and climate change adaptation.

Among the needs identified by the participants for a next phase of the project, the following actions can be highlighted:

- Build the capacities of institutions in ComDev for climate change with a gender approach
- Build the capacities of communication actors in ComDev for climate change with a gender approach
- Strengthen the knowledge of women and men farmers and the general population on climate change with a gender approach, through community listeners' clubs and rural radio stations, and with the support of the Dimitra project.

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1 http://www.fao.org/sd/dim_kni/kni_050901_en.htm



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