

Open and Distance Programme for Rural Women

Sylvie Siyam Siwe
Protege QV, Cameroon

Clarisse Loumou Loe
Alternative Sante, Cameroon

THE CONTEXT

In the Upper Nkam culture in Cameroon, with about 200,000 inhabitants, women (51% of the population) are the core of the community, in charge, from generation to generation, of the management of the household and the transmission of cultural heritage. But when comes the time to take decisions that can influence the future of the community, because of the weakness of their resources, their illiteracy and cultural inhibitions, they are marginalised. Considering its advantages, open and distance learning seems to be the best solution to solve this problem.

The initiative described here, supported financially by the Seed Grant Small Innovative Project of Global Knowledge Partnership, aims to use open and distance training programme through radio broadcastings and video tapes, to empower rural women by giving them the skills to be able to implement income generating activities and to practice effective local leadership.

METHODOLOGY

First of all, we tried through a participative approach, to identify the real needs of women that could be provided to through distance learning. After that, to enhance the appropriation of the project by the community, we identified good partners among groups of women and chose to work with them. We then elaborated a training programme and the training material most suitable to transmit the messages. After choosing the radio as one of the best ways to train the women (Daly, 2003; FAO, 2001; Girard, 2003), we set a contract with a community radio station usually listened to by the women. The training programme was then broadcast over that community radio.

Stakeholders in the Initiative

The main stakeholders in the initiative and their duties were:

- **PROTEGE QV:** Owner, in charge of the overall coordination, the administrative duties, the recruitment of experts, the contacts with the local women groups, the follow up and the evaluation.
- **ALTERNATIVE SANTE:** Partner, responsible for the medical content of the project.
- **RADIO RURALE FOTOUNI:** Partner, in charge of the broadcastings.
- **Women Groups:** Beneficiaries.
- **Local Trainers:** From women groups, in charge of transmission of messages to local groups, and support of the sustainability of the project.

In the Grassfield region of Cameroon, more than 90% of the women are members of at least one association or other women group. The Upper Nkam division of Cameroon has more than 100 women groups, with at least 30 members and with regular meetings on weekly or monthly basis. We chose those women groups as one of the best ways to contact the beneficiaries and inform them about the project. On the basis of their involvement in current development activities, ten women groups (653 members overall) were identified as potential partners.

Identification of the Real Needs

To ensure the relevancy of the training content, we used a participatory approach through field survey to identify the real needs of women. The questions in the survey form aimed to find obstacles to efficient involvement of women, and the most current needs in terms of training and support. It also permitted evaluation of the feasibility of different solutions (how many people have a radio set, what language is most suitable, what days and at what time do they listen to the radio, how many can read and write, what are the subjects they want to be informed on, etc.).

The survey was done by interviewing 500 women in the division during a week. Out of the 500 forms completed, 472 were valid and could be processed. The completed forms were processed and a report of that investigation was published.

Some important results of the survey are as follows:

On the Sample

- The women interviewed came from 31 villages.
- 67.7% of the interviewed women were aged between 26 and 50 years.
- 50% of them had not completed elementary school.
- 44% were in a polygamous marriage.
- The most spoken language was Félé (77%), a local language, followed by French (72%).

On Women Activities

- The most current activity was farming (53%), followed by selling of products (24%).
- 85.6% of the interviewed women declared that the main difficulty encountered was finding funds for their businesses.

On the Radio

- The radio stations with the highest audience ratings are the national radio (CRTV) and Radio Rurale FOTOUNI.
- Women listened to the radio on Saturdays and Sundays especially before 9:00 a.m. and after 6:00 p.m.
- 52% of the interviewed women thought that there was a lack of information on how to prevent dis-

eases like malaria, diarrhoea, cardiovascular diseases, and menopause related diseases.

- The best ways to inform on family health were group discussions (62%), health centers (25%), radio (12%).

On Local Leadership

- 98% of the interviewed women were members of at least one association.
- Only women who have completed elementary school and the first cycle and secondary school were in the staff of mixed associations (women and men).
- To be better involved in municipal councils, women knew that they needed some training.

Elaboration of the Training Programme and Material

To provide the needs identified through the survey, three main subjects were identified: local leadership, family health, and income generating activities. A training program was elaborated with three main axes:

- Using women groups for lobbying and practising leadership,
- Creation and management of Income Generating Activities (IGA), and
- Family health.

Table 1. Training material

THEME	AIMS	RADIO PROGRAMS	VIDEOS	HANDBOOKS
Income generating activities	How to create and run income generating activities in rural area	What is an IGA* IGA at home Importance of IGA for women Role of information to promote IGA Finding funds for IGA Using cooperatives to fund an IGA	Funding an IGA with a cooperative, "MC ² of BANKA", Funding with NJANGI, International Women's Day fair Pottery Women IGAs	How to evaluate the fund needs to start a business Finding funds to start a business
Family health	First aid, family health and care	Why have interest in health Girls and women health (part 1) Girls and women health (part 2) Cardio-vascular diseases (part 1) Cardio-vascular diseases (part 2) The role of nutrition in human health	Mother to child transmission in the community Child health care in little towns: Upper Nkam division example Child way from home to hospital Sexual education	Communication methods Children health Women health Cardio-vascular diseases
Local leadership	Using women groups for lobbying	Presentation of the program The groups authorized by the Cameroonian law How to create an association How to register an association How to register a GIC*** The role of information in local leadership The role of women groups in development (part 1) The role of women groups in development (part 2) Importance of school to girls	Speaking in public "GIC Essayons Voir"	How to create an association The role of women groups in development How to organize a training

*IGA: Income Generating Activity

3 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/open-distance-programme-rural-women/11437

Related Content

Measuring the Maturity Level of a Community Portal

Lejla Vrazalic and Peter N. Hyland (2005). *Encyclopedia of Developing Regional Communities with Information and Communication Technology* (pp. 481-487).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/measuring-maturity-level-community-portal/11427

Ruminating on Microfinance as a Contrivance of Economic Development and Women Upliftment: A Case of India

Manpreet Arora (2022). *Multidimensional Approach to Local Development and Poverty: Causes, Consequences, and Challenges Post COVID-19* (pp. 134-153).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/ruminating-on-microfinance-as-a-contrivance-of-economic-development-and-women-upliftment/295692

E-Health Solutions in Rural Healthcare in the Mbaise Area of Imo State: Nigeria

Elochukwu Ukwandu and Sylvanus Iro (2013). *International Journal of E-Planning Research* (pp. 40-44).

www.irma-international.org/article/e-health-solutions-in-rural-healthcare-in-the-mbaise-area-of-imo-state/78890

A Transdisciplinary Inquiry Into Sustainable Automobility Transitions: The Case of an Urban Enclave in Cape Town

Elizabeth Henshilwood, Mark Swilling and Marjorie L. Naidoo (2019). *International Journal of E-Planning Research* (pp. 13-37).

www.irma-international.org/article/a-transdisciplinary-inquiry-into-sustainable-automobility-transitions/230902

Smart Health From the Hospital to the City: Regulatory Challenges for Upcoming Digital Healthcare Systems

Cristiana Lauri (2022). *Smart Cities and Machine Learning in Urban Health* (pp. 1-19).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/smart-health-from-the-hospital-to-the-city/292638