

## **RAF/99/013: REGIONAL CELL FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLATFORM**

### **1- THE MULTIFUNCTIONAL PLATFORM:** a tool to alleviate rural women's poverty

#### **a) Context**

A rural woman's working day in Africa is extremely arduous and this hectic schedule leaves her neither time nor energy for herself or her children. There is certainly no time left to develop any kind of profitable business activities.

This general lack of time and the unequal workload accounts for the fragility and vulnerability of rural women. It has direct and adverse consequences too for the men and the children, in fact for the whole community. Lightening the arduous work of village women is therefore a priority in order to effectively combat poverty. So that time saved can be devoted to education, health and child care, as well as to generating extra income.

The multifunctional platform, owned and managed by village women, is an instrument with a durable impact on several different dimensions of rural poverty. It reduces women's labour, particularly non-productive labour, through an integrated socio-economic approach.

#### **b) Platform's description:**

- It is a simple, inexpensive energy source at the village level,
- It provides energy for milling, dehulling, charging batteries, welding, food processing, pumping water, lighting....
- It reduces many of the women's burdensome, exhausting and unproductive tasks (fetching water, grinding cereals...), offers women income-generating opportunities and management experience and , increases women's social status as they become more economically independent,
- It is paid for, owned and managed by rural women, through the women management committee,
- It is made of locally available equipment and is installed and maintained by local private artisans,
- It stimulates the creation, the development and/or modernisation of other artisan activities in the villages (e.g. blacksmiths, mechanics, carpentry, etc...).
- It can run on oil pressed from pourgher nuts (*jatropha curcas*),



#### **c) Strategy to ensure the platform's sustainability**

It is vital that the project ensures that:

- women can purchase and manage the platform in a durable way,
- that women's economic activities and revenues increase,
- the offer for equipment and maintenance is available, constant in quality and affordable,

Thus, the following strategies are implemented:

1. A flexible, decentralised and client-oriented approach is followed, adaptable to specific situations encountered in different villages. The project only responds to expressed demand from villages for a multifunctional platform. This ensures ownership and appropriation of the platform by the villages and its autonomous management.

2. To ensure maximum benefits to women, the ownership and management of platforms is entrusted to a group of organised village women. Training and technical support are provided to build up their management capacities.
3. to capitalize and add value to national resources and competencies, all technical operations required by the platform are handled by the private sector (purchasing, installation, repair, and maintenance). The programme only intervenes in this area to network mechanics with villages and, in some cases, to upgrade their skills. The programme also informs villages of existing financial and management support facilities in order to allow them to finance the platform.

**Adhering to supply and demand principles ensures the sustainability of programme activities.**

**d) Results indicators:**

The participatory feasibility study made in each village, before installing a platform, enables the project to make a baseline survey including specific indicators for that particular community. Results can later be identified and measured on the basis of that baseline survey. 79 platforms, including 50 supported by the project, are operational in Mali and 13 artisans are capable of installing and doing the maintenance of multifunctional platforms. These platforms have shown results in the following areas:

- Ownership by the private sector, responsible for installing and doing the maintenance of platforms: 19 platforms have been installed without any intervention from the project.
- Increase time for rest, for physical recuperation, and better health (sleep time is 2,5 hours longer because water is available in the village: women no longer have to wake up at 3.30 a.m to fetch water).
- Increased consumption of food (when time and energy levels are depleted at harvest time, for example, women simply cannot cook food in time for work or school. Introduction of the platform frees time for food preparation)
- Increased capacity to produce (on self-owned plots and husbands' plot).
- Increased capacity to earn extra income (sale of cash crops, commerce, processing of shea butter or rice milling for sale).
- Better health through safe water from boreholes.
- Increased in education levels (schooling of young girls who are released from time-intensive activities, training and literacy classes for women).

**e) Cost of the platform**

The costs of equipment and of the installation of the basic module (e.g.: engine, mill, dehuller, alternator, battery charger, house) is about 4,500 dollars, with 50-60 % financed by the beneficiaries and 2,000 dollars subsidised by the project. Depreciation and variable costs (maintenance, remuneration for female operators) are borne entirely by the Women Management Committee.

A drinkable water-distribution network can be installed, which cost about US\$ 12,000 for 2000 meters of pipes, a 30 cubic meter tank and 4 taps. It is also possible to install a electric lighting distribution network, with 215 bulbs, that cost US\$ 13,000. The project finances the costs of these infrastructures and only the costs of consumables (taps, individuals connections...) are borne by villages. The project encourages villages to embark on chargeable electric lighting or water distribution that contributes to ensuring the sound financial situation of the platform and facilitates the depreciation of the pump and other consumables. Here, the depreciation concerns only worn-out parts (pumps, taps) but not the infrastructures themselves, in order to take in account the financial capacities of villages and overall policies for financing infrastructures.

**2- OBJECTIVES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE REGIONAL CELL**

**a) objectives:**

1. Assist development partners and projects to integrate the multifunctional platform in their activities to reinforce their impact in the field, especially in their fight against poverty affecting rural women.
2. Development of a data base related to methodological, technical, financial, economic and social information on the platform in order to ensure the transfer of knowledge and skills and to disseminate the information related both to the implementation of the different national projects and to the understanding of the platform concept and approach.

**b) Services provided**

1. Feasibility mission to interested countries, to define, with UNDP offices and national authorities, the priorities to be considered and determine potential partners at the financial as well as organizational and technical levels. The manager should also appraise whether there is available funding at national level to cover the formulation/training mission, which account for US\$ 15,000.
2. Train projects personnel, project partners, beneficiaries and artisans to feasibility studies, management of the platform and to install and do the maintenance of multifunctional platforms.
3. Formulate a specific logical framework with result indicators to facilitate an efficient monitoring and evaluation of the results achieved with the platform's implementation. The Regional Cell also provides a Results Management Programme, including a data bank, designed specifically to monitor and evaluate results obtained by pilot platforms, both at a local, national and regional level.
4. Promote the exchange of information and experiences between all actors concerned and draw lessons learned from activities in the different countries. Taking advantage of the acquired experience by the project underway in Mali, the value added of the Regional Cell is:
  - Reduction in the number of international consultancies needed by national pilot projects, especially on methodological issues (eg. management system, contract aspects, follow up/evaluation). Adaptation of the methodologies and tools developed and utilized in Mali will be made on a case by case basis by national projects, with the assistance of the cell.
  - Economies of scale for training activities,
  - Reduction in the time required for the formulation, approval and the implementation of national projects.
  - Bring in a client approach to increase the satisfaction of governments interested in the platform, and thus, contribute to a better image of UNDP.
5. Assist for the mobilization of resources, based on the results of pilot experiences, and using the network of partners showing an interest for the platform.

**The Regional Cell offers its expertise and provides the tools and competences that have been developed in Mali and can be adapted to a new context. The receiving partner and/or project finances the training costs as well as the cost for installing the first platform. The total contribution required is approx US\$ 25,000 but it can be shared among several projects and/or countries that would be interested to participate in the implementation of a pilot platform experience.**

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