

“During the first training, I challenged the participants, urging them to reduce their clothing expenses (clothes and other luxury trimmings) in favour of investing in computer equipment and training: training prepares you for a lifetime, but clothes only last for one event.”

One woman told me that after following my advice, she has already been set aside 200,000 CFA francs. She only now needs 150,000 FCFA to afford a laptop. I am so happy to hear this news and I am sure she will achieve her goals because when women ask, God is willing” stated Sylvestre Ouédraogo, director at Yam Pukri in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

[Web 2.0 Tamed: Experiences of rural women in Africa](#) from [CTA](#) on [Vimeo](#) .

The celebration of International Women's Day provides a good opportunity to amplify this optimistic message: if rural women want ICTs to sustainably change their lives, then God will grant it. The magic of the computer, and especially the mobile phone, have entered the lives of rural women, opening horizons that previously would have been inaccessible to them. In the Dominican Republic, the management of the small agro-processing cooperative in the village of La Cienaga has been transformed by the use of ICT.

In Uganda, with support from the Women of Uganda Network, rural women use a variety of ICTs, for example, they combine a listening club for rural radio with mobile telephony. This has led to better contacts with the outside world and greater opportunities to enhance their agricultural production.

In Mali, rural women of the Sikasso region combine video and photos to make digital content, which has greatly improved the marketing of their products.

In the rural fishing villages of Benin, women fish processors from the NGO, AquaDeD, are using video, television and mobile phones to learn new conservation techniques and to sell their produce to Togo and Nigeria.

In Ghana, the Kalang Centre found both the time and the space socially suitable to enable more of the shea butter producers, mainly girls and women, to benefit from ICT training.

And the list continues.

Beyond improving revenues and new business opportunities, overcoming the fear of the equipment and gaining self-confidence related to the use of gadgets previously more used by men, is indicative of a genuine revolution.

Although much still needs to be done, the seeds of curiosity for innovations in the ICT field have been sown. Rural women, novices in the field of ICTs, are now becoming fully aware of the power of these tools to dramatically change socio-economic relations, open new opportunities and expand their circle of knowledge and opportunities. It will take a combination of advised policy choices, well-oriented, private-sector investment decisions and convincing media campaigns before the majority of rural women can have access to ICTs.

With the recent food crises, there has been unanimous agreement of the irreplaceable role of agriculture as a lever for real development. Rural infrastructure including those which make access to the global village a reality through ICTs thus merit critical attention.

It is therefore imperative that a multifaceted advocacy take advantage of this favorable environment to identify the more significant obstacles to more meaningful access to ICTs for rural women and that the resolution of these issues be placed highly enough on the priority agenda. The just established UN Women will certainly be a platform of choice for this cause.

The support and contribution to the RESACIFROAT network and GENARDIS project strengthened CTA's determination to pursue activities to promote the relationship between Gender and Agriculture in the Information Society.

By Oumy Ndiaye, CTA