

## Summary Report for Mali And Burkina Faso Exposure Training

### I. Duration of Visit : February 23<sup>rd</sup> to March 9<sup>th</sup>,2012

### II. Background of Participants:

There were in all 10 participants five from Mali and five from Burkina Faso who attended the training. The participants were primarily concerned with the management and regulatory affairs of the unions established by them. The name of the union run by the Burkina sisters is **Ten Tietaa Union**. It has approx 4000 total members and they are mainly cereal producers. In all there are 135 village groups of which 61 are male groups and 74 female groups. **The union is also involved in activities like soil restoration, water conservation, ware house receipt, water pumps, technical committee formation (managing committees) training, finance & credit research and contract reforestation** It is in South-west region near border with Ghana and is targeted by donors because of high levels of food insecurity.

The Mali team also has an organizing group called **Femmes en Action**. It has approximately 1500 total members and they are primarily involved in processing cereal and fish. Few of the members are also involved in horticulture, fabric dyeing, sewing and imparting pottery trainings. It has in all 39 cooperatives comprising of 34 female and 5 mixed-gender. The head quarters is centered in Bamako. It is built on the idea of “defense of women’s interests and socio-economic empowerment within their member organizations”

### III. Preparatory phase

The FAO has been supporting smallholder market integration through capacity building for inter professions and other producers organizations, in staple food crop value chains. This included supporting women organizations of producers and processors in a variety of cereal based value chains from the West African region. As part of institutional and organizational strengthening, a group of West African women leaders representing women professional organizations participated in an exposure and dialogue program hosted by SEWA in 2010. The aim was to allow African women leaders involved in basic agricultural commodities, to acquire insights and a deeper understanding of some of the factors, processes, policies and institutions that constrain or enable access by the women farmers to the markets.

Following the EDP, FAO developed a new diagnostic approach for institutional and organizational change to help foster producers organizations and cooperatives develop greater capacity to integrate markets and improve the economic services to its members. The GAIN approach was designed by comparing the SEWA model and the West African women organizations, their governances, strengths and weaknesses. A workshop was also held in November 2011, in Mali that was attended by a senior team from SEWA. The agenda was to understand the main income generating activities, the structure and governance, degree of integration into the market, access to market integration, access to

credit, training and capacity building of the members of the organizations run by the African women. The SEWA team put forth recommendations to address the existing needs and issues of the African leaders. They were

- Restructuring and effective management of the farmers' cooperative with clearly defined responsibilities
- To set up a proper Rudi supply chain with proper equipments, market linkages and working capital
- To give awareness trainings to members on the credit and savings system and organize exposure visits for understanding organizing, collective production and marketing.
- To impart management capacity building training to strengthen the groups.

Based on the recommendations by SEWA and the approach developed by the FAO the following objectives were set for the exposure and training visit for the visiting team.

#### IV. **Objectives Of the Visit:**

- A training program for the leaders of women producer organizations from West Africa.
- Develop a guide on integrated capacity building for men and women producer organizations to facilitate their market integration
- Contribute to the documentation of the best practices manual whose audience will include producer organizations and national policy makers responsible for institutionalizing national strategies targeting the improvement of competitive and inclusive basic food commodities among producer organizations.
- Provide technical assistance and follow up mission to West Africa of participating women producer organizations.

#### V. **Summary of The Training:**

The SEWA team greeted the Mali & the Burkina team by arranging a welcome dinner. The purpose of the dinner was to know the background of the participants and understand the expectations from the training program. Suggestions were also elicited from them in order to structure the program more effectively. The program was restructured keeping in view the team's training requirement to enable them to make the maximum out of the visit and fulfill the objectives of the visit. The facilitators of the training and exposure visit were also introduced to the team. The training schedule was supplemented with the practical demonstration of the concepts for which SEWA team planned to take them to the members' economic organizations, cooperatives and federations operated and managed by the members.

On the first day of the training, the team attended the Executive committee meeting at the SEWA tree Growers Cooperative at Ganeshpura. The team was explained in brief the election procedure, the goals and responsibilities of the executive committee. The team appreciated the bottom to top approach followed by SEWA. One of the main objectives of the training was to gain insight regarding how to mobilize the communities for organizing, and understand the formation and sustenance of self help groups. Training on "***Community Based Organizing***" was

imparted to them at the Kheda Jhilla Swashryee Mahila Bachat Mandal Association, at Anand. The teams were also keen to understand the micro credit and the savings methodology followed by the members of the savings groups for which the team had a detailed discussion with the members of the Swashryee Mandals. The team learnt the concept of getting credit for microenterprises on the basis of the savings, which was new for them.

The team was keen to understand the Rudi Supply Chain since food security is a major challenge faced by the team members in Africa. The training also included an in depth understanding of the supply chain, the way of procuring and processing and distributing profits effectively within the system. To understand the basic structure of the supply chain, the team also visited Pij Community learning Center (CLC) wherein the Rudi activity is predominant.

The visiting team understood the costing and profit margin calculation in great detail when they visited the CLC at Surendranagar which is involved in activities like salt processing, castor procurement, and processing other spices. It was here that the team grasped the essence of networking and learnt how to set up a robust supply chain. The team also visited a salt farm to understand the process of salt formation and had a brief interaction with the salt pan workers to understand the struggle faced by the members initially. The hardships faced by the salt pan workers were an eye opener for the team as they realized that the conditions of the workers were extremely difficult. The team felt that the interaction was very fruitful as they learnt that struggle is an inherent part in achieving success in any endeavor.

To understand the concept of self help groups and to understand the formation, the team visited the CLC at Radhanpur. The center is actively working with the artisan groups that are important in the craft supply chain. The artisan members are also the shareholders of SEWA Trade Facilitation Center, a not for profit company of SEWA. The team also had an interaction with the artisan member groups to understand their functioning and understood the concept of formation of the self help group, the bylaws and the functioning with the help of training at the CLC. The visiting team imbibed the learning quite well and was confident, that with this knowledge they will bring about the necessary changes in their bylaws and will also focus on linkages with the government and other organizations for sustainability.

With every exposure visit and training the inner confidence and enthusiasm within the teams grew deeper and this became very evident with the level of participation the members showed in the training. The team felt that the training they had undertaken at SEWA will enable them to organize and govern efficiently. As one of the team members shared ***“There is no other organization like SEWA”***

Just a day before the wrap up, the team also celebrated the festival of colors “Holi”. The team enjoyed themselves thoroughly at the celebration. A feeling of sorority filled the atmosphere during the day.

## **VI. Feedback by the Team:**

Dabire Elina, a participant from the Burkina Faso team said that, ***“SEWA’s message is for all our African sisters. The groups of Burkina & Mali are functionally different, where as in***

*SEWA a commonality runs through all the groups. The master trainers have very good command on what they deliver and they have good information of the topics. Moreover the leaders articulate very well and they are also aware of the current affairs. The RUDI value chain was a great learning for me. The way in which the Rudibens do marketing is amazing.*

Maria Poda shared her experience in the following way, *“I was very impressed by the savings and credit mechanism incorporated by the members at SEWA. The members here start with savings to come out of poverty cycle. It is savings that instills confidence among the members. Through savings the women can access different kinds of loans. In my country we start directly with the loans. Here I learnt how the savings can lead to credit particularly for small scale producers. Here credit starts with savings.*

Francoise Meda said, *“I saw that every member respects one another. This was evident on the very first day at the Executive Committee meeting at Ganeshpura. Everyone was listening patiently. The atmosphere that was there between the leaders and the members was very light. Every member respects the date of the meeting.*

Some Johhana opined, *“I was very impressed by the structure of SEWA. I feel that structure is very necessary in order to connect with the group. The union of groups unlike in SEWA is not differentiated. Every member respects one another. If you respect someone you get the respect back. It is SEWA that gives confidence to its members and the members in turn trust their SEWA. I am impressed by the way SEWA works by identifying the issues in a village. It may be possible that few members may not agree with certain things but SEWA does not impose anything on its members.*

## VI. Way Forward:

The team shared that it intended to do the following activities after going back to their country.

- Credit and savings: The team shared that it would raise awareness among the existing members and that it would set up savings committee
- Internal seed production: As regards the seed production they would identify different potential producers from different supply chains.
- Assess real production and commercialization of surplus capacities & also evaluate consumption versus sold amounts
- Strengthen the federation by applying the learning from SEWA.
- Proceed to a mapping of available training themes and subjects
- Make training premises available
- Rethinking the Union’s structure and governance (from leader-based to members-based)

- Study the feasibility of setting up decentralized authorities
- Organize meetings and discussion between various cooperatives to identify what the needs are
- Involvement of local and national partners in this action plan.

## VII. Snapshots from the training

