



## INTERNATIONAL SERVICE MAKING CONNECTIONS

LINKING DEVELOPMENT WORKERS AND CIVIL SOCIETY



### *connecting with . . . Janie Elliott Bini*



**November 2004**

Women in Burkina Faso face formidable obstacles to their development. Living in a patriarchal and patrilineal society they experience unequal access to land and resources despite representing the overwhelming majority of farm labour. They find it difficult to participate in credit schemes due to a lack of capital: generating income especially in the rainy season is difficult as domestic chores (wood-fuel collection, fetching water, cooking and cleaning) must be combined with work in the fields. Female excision, tek-teké (an exchange of wives, usually without the wives' consent) and underage and forced marriages, although illegal, continue. The rate of female illiteracy, at 91% the second highest in the world, is also a significant barrier to women's progress and development.

Buayaba, a local NGO based in Burkina Faso, was created in 1995 by a group of women wanting to work together to address these issues, empower women and young girls and maximise their potential in society. Buayaba's aim is to act as an intermediary between development partners, government agencies and village groups and to support these grassroots groups through training and capacity building. It works with 45 village community groups and has offices in the national capital Ouagadougou and in Fada N'Gourma, the capital of the Eastern Province of Gourma. Buayaba intervenes in a wide variety of areas, with current projects including: microcredit and literacy programmes; production and export of shea butter and shea butter products; training for women to make nutrient-rich baby food; an extensive rubbish collection programme; awareness raising, radio broadcasts and training in rural villages on HIV/AIDS, the importance of female literacy and the legal rights of women and young girls.

Since April 2003, Buayaba has been working in partnership with International Service to implement a three-year income generation and livelihoods programme. The programme is a result of village surveys conducted by IS and Buayaba which identified women's income generation as an urgent need, with participants affirming that management training, credit and literacy courses communities would help them to devise their own solutions to some of the problems they face. Financed by the European Union, the programme has four main components: microcredit, capacity building, literacy classes and support for income generating activities, especially shea butter production. The project aims to support the poorest women to acquire the skills, knowledge, confidence and financial means to manage their own businesses and improve both their standard of living and standing in society. The programme has entered its second year and is already showing positive results.



#### *Credit*

So far Buayaba has helped 14 village groups to set up a village bank, each one composed of 30 women, with a total of 420 clients. Each village bank has a management committee which has received training from Buayaba in credit management and group organisation. The idea is that when the three year programme has finished, the banks will have sustainable funds and be run by the management committee. Instead of needing to provide collateral and deposits to obtain credit, the women form five solidarity groups composed of six women which guarantee that each member will



repay their loan. Buayaba also helps each member to work out their current and projected cash flow in order to work out how much they can afford to borrow and to plan their repayment. The credit scheme is now in its second six-month cycle and has helped the women to meet the costs of school fees and medical care for their families.

Fati Manly (pictured left) runs a successful market gardening business thanks to a loan from the IS programme. With four children to support and her husband absent, Fati is one of many women in Burkina who must support their family alone. The location of her plot near the lake in Fada allows her two harvests : in the rainy season Fati cultivates corn, okra and tomatoes while in the dry season she plants onions, lettuce, carrots and cabbage. Fati took a loan of £50 last year to buy seeds and fence off her garden to protect it against straying cattle and pigs and this year borrowed £100 to extend her plot and plant 30 more beds.

#### *Literacy*

Buayaba has set up ten literacy centres in the villages surrounding Ouagadougou. The literacy programme teaches not only reading, writing and numeracy, but also broaches social, environmental and health issues. The classes are in the local language and incorporate traditional stories and folk tales which were previously only passed on orally. Classes take place for six hours every day except Sunday from January through to May, and the class times are adapted to the women's outside commitments, whether at home or at the market.

#### *Shea butter production*

Two shea butter production units have been built, one just outside Fada N'Gourma and the other in the village of Yamba, 30 kilometres north of Fada. Buayaba has formed and trained a management committee for each production unit and has also conducted technical trainings on shea nut extraction, treatment and conservation to help the women involved in the project to improve their traditional techniques of shea butter making. Buayaba has just received a substantial order for 20 tonnes of shea butter, so the production units will be working to capacity!

#### *Capacity Building*

I have been working as an IS Development Worker with Buayaba since September 2003 to build the capacity of its' staff and to support their work with community organisations in the field. I have been giving computer classes in Word and Excel to help each staff member computerise their project information, compile reports for funding partners and also trained them to use and update the databases I have created to monitor the microcredit and rubbish collection programmes. Workshops have been conducted on participatory monitoring and evaluation techniques, which offer deeper insight into the impact of Buayaba's programmes than traditional 'group question and answer' approaches which rural women can find intimidating. Support is also being given in project cycle management to help Buayaba staff conceptualise, plan and implement projects, involving beneficiaries at every stage of the process.

If you are interested in learning more about AFD/Buayaba's activities and how you can get involved, their website can be found at: <http://www.afdbuayaba.kabissa.org/>

Photos: Janie with Tani at the computer; the Buayaba Production Unit sign; Fati Manly in her vegetable garden. All IS/Buayaba.

***Note: this message has been shortened and included in the International Service Annual Review 2004. This is the full original text from Janie. From December 2004 the Annual Review will appear on the website. For hard copies, please contact Betty East at the address below.***

### **Janie Elliott Bini**

Capacity Builder with Buyaba  
in Fada N'Gourma, Burkina Faso  
since September 2003

### **INTERNATIONAL SERVICE MAKING CONNECTIONS**

57 GOODRAMGATE YORK YO1 7FX  
DEVELOPMENT AWARENESS COORDINATOR  
[bettyeast@internationalservice.org.uk](mailto:bettyeast@internationalservice.org.uk)  
[www.internationalservice.org.uk](http://www.internationalservice.org.uk)