



# MISTOWA

Networks of Regional Market Information Systems and Traders' Organizations in West Africa  
Réseaux Régionaux de Systèmes d'Information de Marché et de Commerce Agricole en Afrique de l'Ouest



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After receiving ICT training, Paul Iroh sells enormous quantities of maize.

## EDITORIAL

*This issue celebrates some of the accomplishments of the MISTOWA project since its inception. The benefits of ICT Training and MIS availability are increasingly becoming apparent, not only to the associations that we directly support but to producers and traders with internet access throughout West Africa. This year, MISTOWA will increase organizational capacity by providing needed advocacy tools to help make regional cross border trade a reality.*

# NEWSLETTER

## Nigerian traders begin to reap ICT training benefits

When the MISTOWA project first proposed the idea of providing Information, Communication Technology training to producer and trader associations in Nigeria, most members were already routinely using mobile telephones, but few had ever used a computer keyboard. Although they knew that computers could be used to compose business letters or send email, most members did not understand that learning how to use a computer or accessing trade information on their mobile phones could significantly improve their day-to-day business affairs.

By coordinating with producer and trader associations in Nigeria, the MISTOWA project organized four ICT classes between September and December 2005 and provided training to 125 of their members at the Community Resource Centers (CRC). These modern, well-equipped CRCs, recognized by USAID, occupy six different sites throughout Nigeria (Kaduna, Abeokuta, Bauchi, Enugu, Calabar and Abuja). Participants attending the intensive two-day course at Abeokuta CRC centre traveled from Lagos, Ibadan, Anambra and Imo states, while those being trained at the Kaduna centre traveled from Kano, Bauchi, Jigawa and Abuja.

The training focused primarily on providing basic computer skills, internet browsing and SMS services. Henry Ekpiken, the MIS-

TOWA Country Project Coordinator, observed that, "many participants knew how to send SMS messages for personal reasons but they did not realize what a useful tool it could be to conduct trade."

The main goal of this initial course was to help participants lose any fear of technology they might have by providing basic skills that would allow them access to information necessary to make informed business decisions. To begin the process, participants created personal email addresses so that they

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## After surfing the web, Burkinabe producers travel to buyers in Accra

This year SOCAMED (The Agricultural and Market Produce Cooperative Society of Debe), a five-thousand member producer's cooperative in Burkina Faso, produced more than 35,000 tons of onions and 1,800 tons of tomatoes to sell. However, when conflict reemerged in Cote d'Ivoire, the usual buyers from that country were elusive and SOCAMED's leadership had no idea where to place these commodities. One SOCAMED member stated that, "A producer's ultimate dilemma is knowing that his commodity will sell. Without a sale, the commodity is useless since the producer can't eat it all."

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## Mile 12 Market, Lagos

The Mile 12 Market was established in 1975 in Lagos State. It is known throughout the region for its size, its chaotic set up and its proximity to Lagos. It now consists of roughly 8 hectares. It acts as a primary distribution point for various markets within the state and the neighboring towns of Ibadan, Oyo, Benin, Cotonou, and Lome.

There are 11 different associations with a membership of over 45,000. The main goods are leafy vegetables, yam, maize, millet, sorghum, rice, cowpea/beans, tomato, onion, coconut and pineapple.

could send and receive email.

On the following day, trainees learned how to browse the internet for potential sellers and buyers and to compare prices. By teaching trainees how to access relevant websites such as, [www.wa-agritrade.net](http://www.wa-agritrade.net), [www.tradenet.biz](http://www.tradenet.biz) and [www.mistowa.org](http://www.mistowa.org), they soon began to compare prices on commodities and search out other information. They also learned to surf the Web in search of information specific to their association's concerns.

To ensure that participants would continue to strengthen their new found skills, MISTOWA has provided five associations with new computer equipment, internet connectivity as well as on going computer instruction.

Equipped with their new tools,

Nigerian traders are beginning to generate new trade opportunities within Nigeria, the sub-region and the international market, substantially increasing their profit margins and strengthening the capacity of their associations. Below are examples of recent business deals that were derived as a direct result of their ICT training:

### SMS--A meeting of the minds within Nigeria

Paul Iroh, Chairman of Lagos Mile 12 Market Association and President of the Grains Association, is well-known among Lagos traders. During the training he met Samuel A. Popoola from the northern, Funtua market in Katsina State. Before their ICT training ended, both men had agreed to exchange commodity price information by using SMS text messaging. As a result of their training, they

realized that SMS messaging would provide them with a cost effective way of acquiring up to the minute price information. Of course, as a buyer, Mr. Iroh was looking for the lowest possible price; and as a seller, Mr. Popoola, was seeking the highest price for his maize. They also exchanged messages with other traders but



*Ahmed Imam prepares millet to sell after ICT training in Kano.*

by November 2005, both men's wishes were satisfied and 20 tons of maize at the rate of \$309 per ton were sold.

That same month Mr. Iroh used his SMS skills to make yet another purchase from Ahmed Imam, a commodity seller from Kano. Mr. Iroh realized that while the price of millet was \$270 per ton in Lagos, it was only \$232 per ton in Kano. Mr. Imam remarked that because of the ICT trainings, he was able to sell 20 tons of millet worth \$5,423 to Mr. Iroh. He realized that without the use of his mobile phone and SMS messaging, he would not have been able to make a productive sale. By using ICT, he is no longer at the mercy of buyers who could easily purchase from his competitors in Kano. Similarly, Mr. Iroh can now identify sellers he never new existed.

Mr. Imam has continued making additional deals not only outside of Kano, but outside of Nigeria. By using both the internet and SMS, he was able to make cassava sales to four separate traders in Maradi, Niger Republic. According to Mr. Imam, "Before I received my ICT training, I would never have met four separate buyers at once-this

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## Dawanau Market, Kano



**Dawanau Market**, established in 1985, with an area of 7 km by 6km, is the largest commodity market in sub-Saharan Africa. The market operates daily with commodities primarily from Nigeria or neighbouring countries for sale to both consumers and traders. The major commodities available in the market include rice, yams, cowpea, sorghum, millet, wheat, cassava, gari, groundnut, shea nuts, bambara nut, sesame, vegetables, maize and soybeans. Vegetables are mostly found in Yankaba market.

The Dawanau Market Development Association (DMDA) was established in 1994 with the aim of unifying all the 16 different associations with a membership of over 8,500 operating in the market.

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To solve its problem, SOCAMED employed the services of Bernard Ouedraogo, an innovative entrepreneur from Ouagadougou, who endeavored to link producer associations to buyers using the internet. Mr. Ouedraogo utilized 'Trade Point,' a commercial resource center established by the Burkinabe Ministries in 1998 ([www.tradepoint.bf](http://www.tradepoint.bf)). He located the West Africa Agricultural Trade Portal ([www.wa-agritrade.net](http://www.wa-agritrade.net)) where he discovered a contact number for Lucy Afua Osei, of the Agbobbloshie Tomato

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## MISTOWA learns about marketing and processing at Senegal workshop



To better understand how producers can engage in the transformation of their commodities into more lucrative processed food, MISTOWA's Chief of Party, Kofi Debrah attended a workshop in Saly, Senegal from December 13-16, 2005. The workshop was sponsored by the Initiative to End Hunger in Africa (IEHA) on behalf of their Marketing and Processing Project. Among the thirty-one participants were food processors, food scientists and project managers from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and the United States.

Topics discussed included the strengthening and development of the food supply chain, issues of quality and hygiene, packaging and labeling, as well as franchising alternatives. Case studies illustrating the accomplishments of one non-governmental organization, Development Workshop Austria (EWA) were examined. This dynamic NGO facilitated the provision of raw materials by a 12,000 member farmer's cooperative to, JABOOT, a private food processing company. As a result of this information, MISTOWA plans to include value addition training in all of its workshops. ■

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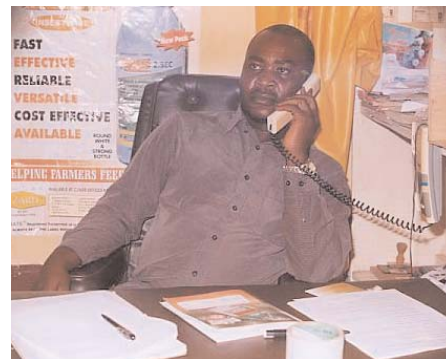
reduces any risk that I would travel with cassava and not be able to sell it for the amount I want."

## ICT makes maize available during off seasons in Northern Nigeria

During the months of August through October, the price of maize soars in Northern Nigeria when supplies are normally low. Using his new ICT skills, Solomon Oyedele, a trader from Lagos Mile 12 market identified Ayodele Peter of the Togo market, who provided 25 tons of maize at the rate of \$270 per ton. Having identified a reliable producer, Mr. Oyedele is making arrangements to purchase future maize supplies.

## ICT opens international suppliers for Indian fertilizer to Nigerian traders

After participating in the ICT training, John Hyginus Oguh a member of FECAIDA, the Agri-Input Development Association of the Federal Capital Territory, rapidly put his new skills to work. Using a combination of technologies, including email, internet and SMS, he made contacts and business deals with BICCO Agro Products Company, an Indian agricultural input company. In December 2005, he secured an order to supply 500 bags of each of the products-BIOFERT and BIONEEM at the cost of \$23 per bag to the Nigerian government. Although Mr. Oguh quickly realized that he could access an international market, he never envisioned, his ICT training would result in an appointment as the Nigerian representative of BICCO Agro Products Company. He is now responsible for the distribution of the organic fertilizer, "BIOFERT."



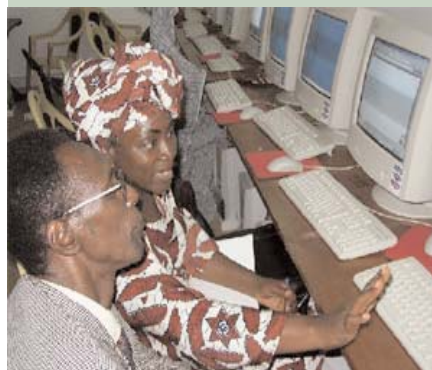
*After ICT training, John Hyginus Oguh becomes a BIOFORT representative and spends time on the telephone.*

## Women traders use ICT opportunity to make business contacts

Either by choice or because of cultural expectations, women are not always free to travel and participate in business workshops or trainings. Yet the few who are able to do so benefit immensely. In January 2006, two female traders, Msuor Tyokegh and Phoebe Usu, who received ICT training in Dawanau Market collaborated to supply Jumoke Balogun in Lagos 37 tons of cowpea at \$402 per ton. They first met Jumoke Balogun in Kaduna and continued to correspond by email. The women have agreed to make future deals.

Although Adenike Adediran, a grain trader, was unable to participate in the ICT training at Abeokuta on 22nd November 2005, she benefited from a friend's participation. Ms. Adediran was told by her friend to contact Alhaji Lamidi in Saminaka market in Kaduna. Consequently, she was able to purchase 30,000 tons of maize at \$309 per ton valued at \$9,270. In early January 2006, she made another follow-up purchase of 500 tons of maize. ■

## MISTOWA helps traders and producers go beyond ICT basics in Cotonou



*West African participants benefit from follow-up ICT training.*

In July 2005, MISTOWA held an introductory computer class in Cotonou, Benin. The two-day class provided members of traders and producers organizations, the foundation needed to use computers independently.

In recognition of the fact that computer training must be on-going in order for it to be effective and contribute to the building of organizational capacity, MISTOWA held follow-up classes in December 2005. The classes were held in Parakou and Banikoara, Benin and were more intensive than the previous foundation class, lasting longer and covering more material. Participants were taught how to surf the web. However, trainers emphasized that the MISTOWA website is not a stagnant tool, and explained to the participants the process for the constant updating of accurate market price information. ■

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Traders Association. The portal which also displayed the prices of onions and tomatoes throughout West Africa, showed that the prices in Agboghloshie, Ghana were very competitive. Encouraged by the finding, Kabore Amado, the President of SOCAMED, and Mr. Ouedraogo agreed to travel to Accra, Ghana to verify that the Tomato Traders Association really function as a viable organization capable of purchasing their commodities.

When the team arrived in Accra, Lucy Afua Osei introduced the SOCAMED members to the GAPTO (Ghana Agricultural Producer Traders Organizations) Secretary General, Agesheka Haruna. GAPTO is the umbrella organization for 16 different commodity associations in Ghana. To their delight, both men were well received by GAPTO. Moreover, they were amazed by how dynamic the organization appeared. GAPTO members explained how MISTOWA's support had transformed them from a loose association to an organization that was responsive to the needs of its members. The Secretary General took the visitors to the heart of the Agboghloshie market to show them the nearly completed, computerized Trade Information Center, made possible by a MISTOWA equipment grant.

Soon the organizations were negotiating the sale through GAPTO of their onions and tomatoes. The two organizations then met the local MISTOWA team to solidify an agreement. The SOCAMED president expressed relief that he, "would no longer suffer because of the encounter with GAPTO." Mr. Amado then added that, "After our first sale, we aim to sign an agreement so SOCAMED will know how much to produce for GAPTO in the future." The posting on the trade portal eliminated the need to bargain the market price for SOCAMED's commodities. Patrice Annequin, MISTOWA's Deputy Chief of Party, remarked that, "It is easier to have confidence in each other when everyone has the same market price information." ■



SOCAMED President Kabore Amado and Bernard Ouedraogo meet with MISTOWA.

## Upcoming events

**30 January- 2 February - Ouagadougou,** Burkina Faso: Advocacy training for producer and trader organizations. Contact Sami Traore [straore@ifdc.org](mailto:straore@ifdc.org)

**13-17 February - Accra,** Ghana: ICT Training for core group of market enumerators uploading prices on the WAG. Contact: Musa Taylor [mtaylor@ifdc.org](mailto:mtaylor@ifdc.org)

**13-16 February - Abuja,** Nigeria: Advocacy training for producer and trader organizations at the Command Guest House, Abuja. Contact: Henry Epkiken [ehenry@ifdc.org](mailto:ehenry@ifdc.org)

**15-16 February - Bobo Dioulasso,** Burkina Faso: Consultative meeting of shea nut/butter collectors and processors to discuss management and quality nuts. Contact: M. Laurentine Ilboudo [lilboudo@ifdc.org](mailto:lilboudo@ifdc.org)

**20-23 February - Abokobi,** Ghana: Advocacy training for producer and traders organizations in Ghana to be held at the Presbyterian Women's Centre, Abokobi. Contact: Manon Dohmen [mdohmen@ifdc.org](mailto:mdohmen@ifdc.org) or Musa Taylor [mtaylor@ifdc.org](mailto:mtaylor@ifdc.org)

**24 March - Accra,** Ghana: Agricultural Businesses Information Center (GAABIC),

Official launching the GAABIC with MISTOWA. Contact: Juliet Biney, Executive Secretary [jbiney@hotmail.com](mailto:jbiney@hotmail.com)

**15-17 March - Tamale,** Ghana, Organizational Management Training for members of the Apex Farmers Organizations of Ghana (APFOG).. Contact: [apfogsecretariat@yahoo.com](mailto:apfogsecretariat@yahoo.com) or Manon Dohmen [mdohmen@ifdc.org](mailto:mdohmen@ifdc.org)

**20-24 March - Ouagadougou,** Burkina Faso, Crop Outlook Conference. Contact: Patrice Annequin [pannequin@ifdc.org](mailto:pannequin@ifdc.org)

**27-31 March - Abuja,** Nigeria, Regional advocacy workshop on road transport constraints. Contact: Manon Dohmen [mdohmen@ifdc.org](mailto:mdohmen@ifdc.org)

**15-19 May - Abuja,** Nigeria: Workshop for public and private sector specialists in MIS and agribusiness trade organizations. Contact: Patrice Annequin [pannequin@ifdc.org](mailto:pannequin@ifdc.org) or Henry Epkiken [ehenry@ifdc.org](mailto:ehenry@ifdc.org)

More details on MISTOWA at <http://events.mistowa.org/>.  
If you wish to announce an event in this column, please send us a message before the 25th of the month to : [info@mistowa.org](mailto:info@mistowa.org)