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## FARMERS GET ORGANISED TO WATCH VIDEOS

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Videos do more than encourage farmers to try new agricultural techniques. If the videos are good enough, and relevant enough, they may inspire farmers to organise themselves to watch the videos, overcoming the lack of TVs, DVD players and electricity.

In 2007, videos on rice transplanting were shown to Houéda farmers in southern Benin, to help train them to improve their yields.

Not having all the equipment needed to project these videos, the farmers began to organise themselves into small groups by district, so they could watch the videos.

The rice growers gathered around those who had video-watching equipment. They all contributed to buying the fuel to power the generator. At first, only men attended, but they would go home and tell their wives about the video.

Because they could not go to other households nor join the men's groups, the women also started a group. The group acquired the necessary equipment, such as a second-hand generator, a DVD player, and a television set.

They elected a leader who kept the equipment. For every video session, the women helped pay for the fuel for the generator. At first the women's group only

had eight members, but at later sessions many more women from various households gathered.

Before and during every agricultural season, men and women now find themselves once again in their groups, to watch and discuss the rice videos. This allows the groups to share their experiences, and to discuss the challenges they face as they improve their yields, and in so doing, their standard of living.

In some districts, the introduction of videos also enabled the birth of video clubs for youth, a projection centre by a farmers' organisation offering video services, and the creation of women's groups.

The activity of showing videos has brought about a lot more than the dissemination of new knowledge into the communities of southern Benin.

It has stimulated farmers to organise themselves into (men's, women's and youth) groups to be able to share experiences, change practices, increase production yields, and as a result improve their living conditions.

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