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Ch Sushil Rao, TNN | Nov 22, 2013, 04:28 PM IST

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HYDERABAD: Short films made by a 11-year-old Mayuri from Pastapur in Medak district will be screened in the [Senegalese Seed Fair](#) in March next year. Mayuri who is part of the Deccan Development Society (DDS) delegation has also been invited to address a number of schools in the region and share with the local children her own work of combining schooling with [agriculture](#) filmmaking.

The Deccan Development Society has forged an alliance with African nations on the issue of millets and food sovereignty. Many West African

nations are getting ready to follow in the footsteps of Deccan Development Society in relentlessly pursuing the model of agriculture that encapsulates ecological farming, biodiversity, food and nutritional security along with health and ecological security, according to P V Sathesh, national convenor, Millet Network of India.

The Millet Network of India (Mini) of which the DDS is [the national](#) convenor, has fore grounded millets, the cultivation of which embeds biodiversity, ecology and farmer self reliance. Last week a delegation from DDS was invited to attend the West African Regional Assembly of COPAGEN, a network that is present in nine West African countries such as Senegal, Burkina Faso, Togo, Cote D'Ivoire, Mali, Benin, Niger, Guinea, Guinea Bissau and is engaged with millions of West African farmers. The regional assembly acknowledged the intellectual inspiration provided by DDS to their work in West Africa.

"We were also very happy to see that the research on Bt Cotton pursued by DDS in Adilabad, Nalgonda and Warangal from 2002 till 2007 was being followed both in letter and spirit to find out the impact of Bt cotton in Burkina Faso, one of the larger countries in West Africa," Sathesh said.

Following in the footsteps of DDS, they had formed community research groups making farmers as researchers and regularly monitored and collated data. "Within a year they are likely to arrive at some significant data to find out the truth behind the exaggerated claims being peddled by the transgenic industry to [spread](#) more Bt cotton in Africa," Sathesh said.

The DDS team of Narsamma, a [peasant](#) farmer, Jayasri Cherukuri, coordinator of MINI and P V

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Satheesh, Director DDS and National Convenor, MNFI, made a presentation on the work done by the network which was appreciated by the Regional Assembly.

As a follow up of this Assembly, DDS and COPAGEN have decided to intensify the farmer exchanges between the Africa and India and focus on women farmers of the two regions so as to lead the food sovereignty movement in West Africa. Satheesh said this was as a major intercontinental initiative of DDS and the Millet Network of India.

DDS has also forged a strong link with the Senegalese Association of Peasant Seed Producers which currently includes 15 farmer organizations that in turn have some 63,000 member farmers, a majority of whom are women. The association's main activities are to collect and track local seed varieties, create seed production gardens, train women in the creation of traditional grain banks and most importantly, to hold an annual Senegalese seed fair at which farmers exchange and borrow seeds. It also holds a regional farm seed fair every two years, which is attended by farmers from Senegal, Mali, Benin, Togo, Niger, the Gambia, Guinea Bissau, and France.

DDS is a major invitee to this Seed Fair in March 2014. A 15-member delegation of DDS will attend the festival. The delegation will consist of experienced women farmers from DDS who will share their experiences in enhancing the biodiversity as well as increasing the productivity from the current 600 kgs/Ha to 1200 kgs/Ha. They will also demonstrate the various millet recipes developed by DDS.

Since the common language of West Africa is French a number of literature and films on millets produced by DDS will be translated into French by a French organisation called BEDE which is the major facilitator of the March Seed Festival.

Satheesh said the Afro-Indian Millet Alliance which was under the planning stages since 2012 February is now being realised with the active participation of over 10 African nations and DDS.

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