

BENIN ACTIVITY REPORT

Q1, 2013

A. Overview

- **Accomplishments**

Health & Nutrition

- Participation of THP-Benin in the first edition of "Nutrition Open Doors Day" initiated to raise public awareness on the need to avoid the 'Double Burden of Malnutrition'. The Day was organized by the Regional Training Center for Public Health (IRSP) in Ouidah (Benin) and the Montreal (Canada) University's Nutrition Department. On that occasion, The Hunger Project – Benin presented to visiting public the Moringa-based recipes including Moringa powder.
- Three (03) awareness raising workshops on family planning have been held in the epicenter of Guinagourou and resulted in 11 women adopting the family planning method called "'Jadelle'".
- Five (05) people have been selected and trained as members of the COGECS (Health Centers' Management Committee) of Guinagourou's health unit. The role of this committee is to ensure a follow-up for the health unit's management and mainly to improve the attendance rate of epicenter partners through continuous sensitization of populations

Priority of the first 1000 days of life

- A total of 91 animators in ten (10) epicenters (Zakpota, Kissamey, Akpadanou, Wawata, Dékpo, Avlamè, Kpinnou, Ouissi, Bétérou and Tré) implemented nutrition monitoring activities including Child immunization sessions with the collaboration of the Public Centers for Social Advancement (CPS) of each community. Three members of THP-Benin's staff took part in the training sessions
- A total of 16 animators were trained in the epicenters of Klouékanmè and Guinagourou to implement the seven essential child nutrition actions (ENA) that need to take place within the first 1, 000 days. The training took place in both epicenters with the support of agents from the Public Centers for Social Advancement of the two areas. Three THP-Benin's staff members took part in the training sessions.

Food Security

- The operation warrantage, initiated in 2012, has entered into the destocking/selling stage. In total, 16,340kg of maize and 275kg of cowpea have been destocked / sold by the 22 partners (12 women and 10 men) in the epicenter of Kissamey, Dékpo and Zakpota. This will continue in the second quarter and will be extended to warranted

¹ Jadelle is an implant system that provides effective, long-acting, reversible contraception for women. Two thin, flexible rods made of silicone tubing and filled with levonorgestrel, a synthetic progestin, are inserted just under the skin of a woman's upper, inner arm in a minor surgical procedure. Protection from pregnancy is provided within 24 hours, when insertion is performed during the first week of a woman's menstrual cycle. The woman rapidly returns to her normal fertility when the implants are removed.

food (maize, cowpea and soya) in the epicenters of Daringa, Bétérou and Sonon/Guinagourou.

- Thirteen (13) workshops have been organized in the epicenters of Kissamey, Dékpo, Akpadanou, Kpinnou and Zakpota to inform /educate partners on the ways and benefits of recycling organic wastes generated in the villages. In total, 240 men and 174 women participated in these workshops. The activity is part of the expansion of the initiative "clean village, fertile farms" started in 2011 in the epicenters of Kissamey and Dékpo. Two (02) tricycles were bought and made available to partners of the epicenters of Wawata, and Akpadanou to facilitate the transportation of biodegradable waste from village households to farms. The initiative will continue in the second quarter.
- A total of 182 men and 286 women participated in 11 workshops organized ahead of the beginning of the farming operations in 12 epicenters (of Wawata, Akpadanou, Kissamey, Dékpo, Zakpota, Avlamè, Kpinnou, Klouékanmè, Bétérou, Daringa, Guinagourou and Gbé gourou). The workshop focused on capacity building and the right use of needed inputs to ensure good harvest. This also resulted in identifying the actual areas where support from is needed Hunger Project: seeds, fertilizer, seedlings of cashew, palm, oranges and a local apple (*Irvingia gabonensis*).

Literacy and Education

Eleven (11) literacy classes run by 11 teachers (8 men and 3 women) at the epicenter of Klouékanmè: in total 330 partners (222 women and 108 men) took part in the literacy sessions.

Those 11 literacy teachers were trained in VCA workshop running and on themes related to the window of opportunity of the first 1000 days of life. This has the advantage to extend literacy teachers' skills to other areas including VCA workshop running, etc. The training related to the first 1000 days of life also involved the members of the village and epicenter committees.

Celebration of International Women's Day

On March 8th 2013, THP-Benin celebrated the International Women's Day at Akpadanou epicenter. The theme of this year's celebration was "**Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls**". In total 519 partners (169 men and 350 women) from the epicenters of Akpadanou, Dékpo, Kissamey, Zakpota, Avlamè, Tré, Ouissi, Wawata, Bétérou and Daringa participated in that celebration.

It also recorded the participation of local government leaders (first deputy to the mayor, district chiefs, village chiefs, traditional leaders) **who took the commitment to work towards ending violence against women and girls in their communities.**

Investors' visit to Benin

It took place from 21 to 29 March 2013 and recorded the participation of 26 investors.

During their visit, the investors inaugurated Klouékanmè epicenter and visited Akpadanou and Zakpota epicenters.

At Akpadanou epicenter, a training center (equipped with 4 computers and 1 printer) was inaugurated by the investors.

At Zakpota, the investors directly interacted with community partners in their homes/households. This permitted them to assess the actual living conditions of that epicenter's populations and to know more about the progress they (women and men) have experienced as partners of Hunger Project.

Visit of students from the University of Columbia to Benin

THP-Benin received, from 12 to 19 March 2013, the visit of three (03) students from the University of Columbia, United States, sent by the GO.

This visit had for goal to improve THP's Monitoring & Evaluation system and follows a preliminary investigation conducted by those students in other Program Countries. It confirmed the priority need for an exchange/sharing tool among Monitoring & Evaluation Officers.

The objective of their stay in Benin was to collect feedbacks in order to refine the « Google site tool » that they have developed to support the Monitoring and Evaluation Officers in their work.

During the visit, the students collected THP-Benin's feedbacks on the tool. In addition, the students visited Zakpota epicenter on March 18th 2013; they interacted with representatives of the various committees at the epicenter on the impact made by THP-Benin's actions on living conditions. A full report has been written by the SIPA group and can be requested to the Africa Department if necessary.

- **Challenges**

Health & Nutrition

By cultural considerations, men are quite reluctant to any means of birth spacing. Any message addressing the reproductive health issue is most of the time misunderstood. To remedy this, family planning awareness raising sessions were **preceded by VCA workshops** for men in order to induce their adhesion to family planning activities.

This resulted in a large participation of men in the various workshops on reproductive health at Guinagourou epicenter.

- **Innovations**

Community Mobilization

The innovation is to train versatile animators so that they could work on various aspects of our integrated approach. The literacy teachers also trained on VCA workshop running and the first 1000 days initiative are a good example in case as reported on the Education and Literacy section.

Lessons Learned

Community Mobilization

The experience of mobilization in Klouékanmè epicenter once again put emphasis on the need to have village chiefs, traditional leaders and local officials really involved in the mobilization process. The most important lesson we have learnt is to have them and other focus groups have their say in a preliminary consultation before elections of committees as well at village as at epicenter levels.

Entrepreneurship Development

The support to entrepreneurs based on selected business plans did not allow supporting all holders of business ideas in attending trainings on the various entrepreneurship development workshops.

During this quarter, series of activities including VCA animation, training and advisory support were implemented for holders of business ideas in the epicenters. This approach has attracted strong support from partners for the program's actions and has created a group dynamic for the management of income generating activities

B. Advocacy & Alliances

THP-Benin welcomes the Dutch Ambassador to the Country Office in Cotonou

Accompanied by Ms. Olivia DIOGO, Expert in Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights, His Excellency Jos van Aggelen, the Dutch Ambassador, was received on January 9th, 2013 on the premises of THP-Benin by the Country Director.

During the visit, the discussion focused on the promotion of women's political leadership and on Reproductive Health with the view of identifying support thrusts from specialized institutions to THP-Benin's epicenters.

The discussion concluded on the following:

- THP-Benin welcomes any support to women's political leadership. The Dutch Embassy will facilitate contact with specialized institutions/organizations for partnership which will lead to consistent intervention in the epicenters in these programmatic areas
- THP-Benin will contribute, through the implementation of the epicenter strategy, to mobilizing and identifying women at the epicenter who are potentially more skilled to make the move into the political arena.

The Dutch Ambassador and a delegation from the Dutch Ministry of Cooperation to Kissamey epicenter

Following the external evaluation recommended by the Dutch Embassy prior to the partnership with THP-Benina mission from the Dutch Ministry of Cooperation, led by the Ambassador to Benin, and visited Kissamey epicenter on 6 February 2013.

The mission was very attentive in interacting with the epicenter partners. The visit offered the mission the opportunity to have their own assessment of the dynamic and impact of the epicenter strategy. At the end of the visit, the Ambassador expressed the satisfaction of the mission and announced to the epicenter partners that THP-Benin and the Embassy agree in principle for a partnership in coming days.

Jeunesse Sans Frontière's President visits THP-Benin's Country Office

As part of the prospective dynamic of potential partners, THP-Benin discovered through the written press that the NGO JSF has commissioned a Moringa processing unit since October 24th 2012 in Tori-Bossito district. THP-Benin contacted JSF and its President-Coordinator Mr. Marcelling AIGBE paid a visit to THP-Benin on 17 January 2013.

The purpose of the visit is to explore possible partnership thrusts in making widely available the Moringa powder and other derivatives.

Working session with local officials of the Commune of N'Dali

A working session was held with the local officials of the Commune of N'Dali (the Mayor of N'Dali and the First Deputy Mayor). During that session the implementation of Health and nutrition activities and the upcoming "Three Moringa Tree Days" campaign in the Commune of N'Dali were discussed. Lands to be planted with Moringa trees by the Commune have been identified and visited at the end of the session.

Coordinating Doctor of the Dassa Health Zone visits the Ouissi and Tré health units

The purpose of the visit was to see for himself the progress in those health units

Partner witha national NGO 'GRADIB' for the production of cashew and Moringa seedlings

THP-Benin has renewed the partnership with GRADIB-NGO for the production of cashew and Moringa seedlings on a site at Kpahouingnan, a partner village of Ouissi epicenter.

NB : *See photos attached*

C. Human Resources & Travel

Staff Changes <i>Please list any arrivals or departures and a brief summary of the reasons.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None
Extended Absences <i>Please list the Senior Management Team's vacation dates, as well as any other staff members' long-term absence, including maternity leave)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Micro Finance Program Officer (hospitalization and sanitary rest from February 5 to April 10, 2013)
Staff Development <i>Please list any staff member trainings or professional development activities.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training of the M&E Officer on the « google sitetool » by a team of Students from the University of Columbia.
Epicenter Visits <i>Please list the epicenters and the number of staff visits in parentheses next to them.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Akpadanou (17)• Avlamè (8)• Bétérou (7)• Daringa (6)• Dékpo (7)• Gbégourou (4)• Guinagourou (9)• Tré (10)• Wawata (10)• Kpinnou (6)• Ouissi (10)• Gohomey (2)• Kissamey (13)• Klouékanmè (24)• Zakpota (19)

D. Next Quarter Priorities

- Implement the second edition of the Three Moringa Three Days Campaign, i.e. (i) awareness raising on the nutritional value of Moringa, (ii) plantation of Moringa trees, and (iii) making available Moringa derivatives including cooking or processing demonstrations
- Continue the training of animators on the essential nutrition actions (ENA)
- Have the cartographies (as M&E tool) for the epicenters of Avlamè, Bétèrou, and Kissamey done.
- Continue mobilization activities and VCA trainings in phase 1 epicenters (Gohomey, Lahotan and Dasso)
- Continue youth training activities in the epicenters of Akpadanou and Wawata on ICT (computer training).
- Equip and do additional repairs to make the rural banks of Ouissi and Wawata aligned on recommended standards.
- Start the implementation of an initiative called "Ministerial Conferences" aiming to present our integrated development strategy (Epicenter strategy) to the decision-makers at the highest level of Benin's government representatives.