

BENIN ACTIVITY REPORT

Q2, 2013

A. Overview

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

▪ Health & Nutrition

- Klouékanmè epicenter's health unit is now functional. Three health agents (a nurse, a caregiver, and a tenant of the pharmacy) are recruited to run the unit with the permanent technical support from the commune's health coordination team of Klouékanmè.
- Training was organized on the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) including mainly the nutrition of the mother and child during the window of opportunity of the first 1000 days of life with a total of 80 persons (60 nutritional monitoring animators from the epicenters of Kissamey, Ouissi, Zakpota, Klouékanmè, Tré and Daringa, 18 health agents and 02 THP-Benin staff members). The epicenters of Kissamey, Ouissi, Zakpota, Klouékanmè, Tré and Daringa were concerned. Nutritional monitoring animators, health agents and some THP-Benin staff members were involved.

Priority of the first 1000 days of life

Organization at the national level of the 2nd edition of the "Three Moringa Tree-Days campaign". The theme of the campaign is: ***"Moringa for the nutrition of the mother and the child during the window of opportunity of the first 1000 days of life"***.

The official launch of the campaign took place at Wawata epicenter on June 15, 2013. Many development stakeholders including the National Food and Nutrition Council (under the tutelage of the Presidency), the National Association of the Communes of Benin, the Unions of Beninese Producers through their Federation, International NGOs such as Plan-Benin, Care International, Aide & Actions, and the University of Abomey-Calavi represented by the Department of Nutrition.

Prior to the launch, a press conference was held by the Hunger Project with Benin's Country Director, a University Lecturer, a World Bank Consultant, representatives of the National Association of the Communes of Benin, the Unions of Beninese Producers through their Federation. The press conference and the launch ceremony were covered by thirty three (33) daily papers, ten (10) radio stations and two (02) TV channels including the national television.

After the launch ceremony, the campaign continued in the other epicenters through conferences and discussions on: "child and nutrition issues – leadership of local governments in effective care for the mother and the child during the window of opportunity of the first 1000 days of life". At the end of those conferences and discussions, various stakeholders (city council members, representatives of decentralized government institutions, local NGOs, women groups, partners) who took part in the discussions were invited to plant Moringa trees. A total of 3900 Moringa trees were thus planted through that initiative.

▪ **Food Security & Environment**

- Supply of 102.75 tons mineral fertilizers to partners of THP-Benin epicenters. This shows a great progress compared to 2012 Q2 during which only 16.5 tons were supplied. This allowed 684 men and 477 women to fertilize about 685 hectares of field that promise to give a good harvest.
- THP-Benin has facilitated access to selected 10,135 oil palm seedlings and 5,730 orange seedlings for 550 epicenter partners (418 men and 132 women). The epicenters of Wawata, Akpadanou, Kissamey, Dékpo, Zakpota, Avlamè, Kpinnou and Klouékanmè are concerned.
- Youngsters were trained in the techniques of implementation and monitoring of oil palm and orange plantations. The purpose to create, in each epicenter, due local expertise that may technically support farmers in establishing sustainable crops plantations. A total of fifty (50) youngsters from 8 epicenters (Wawata, Akpadanou, Kissamey, Dékpo, Zakpota, Avlamè, Kpinnou and Klouékanmè) were involved.
- The sales of warranted products (agricultural products part of the warrantage program) started in the 1st quarter continued in the epicenters of Daringa, Bétérou and Guinagourou. A total of 10,900kg of corn and soybeans were removed from storage and allowed partners involved in the warrantage operation to benefit significantly from it.

▪ **Micro Finance Program**

- Organization of a workshop to validate the new rural bank manuals and procedures on May 3rd, 2013. This is part of the steps required for the licensing of the epicenter Rural Banks. Eleven (11) rural bank technical agents and 07 THP-Benin staff members took part in this workshop.
- Two information sessions were held to raise the awareness of the elected committee members and the rural banks' operational staff on the new legal provisions which will govern Decentralized Financial Institutions (SFD) from March 2014. On the whole, 56 epicenter partners and 14 rural bank agents took part in the sessions. An official from the Economy and Finance Ministry in charge of supervising the Decentralized Financial Institutions was the guest speaker at the sessions held on May 10 and June 07, 2013.
- Nine (09) Ordinary General Assemblies (OGA) were held in the epicenters of Akpadanou, Daringa, Bétérou, Ouissi, Tré, Avlamè, Dékpo, Kissamey and Zakpota as part of account rendering in the rural banks. During the OGA, the 2012 activity reports have been presented and approved.

Alongside these OGAs, Extraordinary General Assemblies (AGE) of dissolution of the management bodies of the rural banks of Avlamè, Dékpo, Kissamey and Zakpota were held in line with the new legal provisions for obtaining rural banks' agreement license.

- A study on the reorientation of THP-Benin's interventions in the microfinance field in Benin has been started. This has been recommended by THP-Benin's external evaluation in 2012. It aims to clarify and foresee the role of Hunger Project once the rural banks have the agreement license requiring them to run the activity autonomously. The objective of the study is to suggest a system with the purpose of improving THP-Benin's intervention in financing rural activities and especially agriculture. The expected result is to suggest strategic

options as well as operational mechanisms for an inclusive approach to supporting rural banks, especially the epicenter ones.

▪ **Community mobilization**

VCA sessions in Akpadanou, Kpinnou, Tré, Daringa and Bétérou partner villages have impacted 6 771 people including 4020 women. Village and epicenter leadership in those epicenters have been reshaped to allow a better leadership for village and epicenter committees. Capacity building trainings will be organized during the third quarter to support them to that end.

▪ **Literacy and Education**

- Literacy activities are coming to a close in Tré, Daringa and Guinagourou epicenters for 24 classes out of 42. Those that pass the final evaluation will be able to move on to the next literacy level. The remaining 18 ones will be evaluated by early quarter 3. Classes in Klouékanmè epicenter are still underway. Due to the end of the school year, preschool classes are now closed in the epicenters.

- Literacy activities have been implemented for girls who dropped out of school in the village of Aligoudo (Zakpota epicenter). The precise nature of these activities combine literacy with the dissemination of educational information on reproductive health. This is to help prevent unplanned pregnancies which are very common among girls dropping out of school in Zakpota epicenter. A total of 76 dropout girls of Aligoudo are involved in that initiative.

▪ **Entrepreneurship Development**

- A total number of 162 holders of entrepreneurial initiatives (92 women and 70 men) participated in group sessions in the epicenters of Kpinnou, Wawata, Akpadanou, Dékpo, and Kissamey on the topics: (i) "The importance of maintaining management tools for entrepreneurship development." and (ii) "Finding out markets for products". The objective of these sessions is to encourage the entrepreneurial ability of participants and their commitment to ensure a sound monitoring for their activity.

A total number of 241 farmers (88 women and 153 men) are trained in improved techniques for small lamb, pigs, rabbits and poultry farming in the epicenters of Kpinnou, Dékpo, Kissamey, Ouissi, Tré, Wawata, Akpadanou, and Avlamè Zakpota. The purpose of this training is to make partners of those nine (09) epicenters acquire skills pertaining to improved animal farming techniques. This will allow learners to succeed in their farming and to make a living out of it.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Monitoring and Evaluation animators have been selected and trained in the epicenters of Akpadanou, Avlamè, Bétérou, Daringa, Kissamey, Ouissi, and Zakpota. These animators were trained on the basics of monitoring and evaluation so that they could support in collecting and monitoring epicenter data. A total of 51 animators (42 men and 9 women) were selected and trained in the 7 epicenters. The plan is also that those animators be progressively equipped and trained to establish reliable data for their epicenter and thus efficiently contribute to epicenter self-reliance.

▪ **Capacity Building for THP-Benin's staff** (*Thematic training*)

From 3 to 4 June, 2013, THP-Benin organized, with the support of a consultant, training for the staff on the topic: "Identification of projects". The objective of that training session was to build program officers' technical capacity so that they could take relevant actions to contribute to developing projects for resource mobilization purposes.

CHALLENGES

The main challenge for this quarter was to meet the requirement of the Dutch Embassy which specifies through the contract signed with them that the funds need to be deposited in an account that could generate interest. To meet that challenge THP-Benin has contacted banks for proposals to that end. The proposals are being analyzed and the best choice of bank will be made.

Another challenge faced by THP-Benin in the previous quarter is the mobilization of a large number of technical and financial partners (university lecturers, ministries, international organizations, the Federation of Producers' Unions, the National Association of Benin's Communes, GUIDIBI Foundation, the national and international press, partner epicenters) around the organization of the 2nd edition of the TMT-Days Campaign.

This has been possible through consistent communication with local NGOs, international NGOs, stakeholders involved in nutrition programs.

Indeed, the stakeholders expected to take part in the second edition of the Three Moringa Tree Days campaign responded positively. Furthermore the event recorded national success because of the awareness raised among the public to make of Moringa an essential plant for the nutrition of the mother and child during the window of opportunities of the first 1,000 days of life.

INNOVATIONS

The initiative to share the Hunger Project's strategy and results/impacts achieved so far with decision-makers at the highest level has continued through audiences which will lead to "Ministerial Conferences". Actions implemented in that regard during this quarter are reported in "Advocacy and Alliances" section. The "Ministerial conferences" Initiative aims at:

- strengthening the undertaken actions that are on their way, in order to enable a better understanding of the epicenters' strategy and arouse its large scale replication
- presenting our integrated development (Epicenters' strategy) to the decision-makers at the highest level of Benin's government representatives
- reinforcing partnership between the Government Institutions and THP-Benin, plus giving further prospect to the foreseen actions with the focal points

B. Lessons Learned

Specific and strategic actions like TMT-Days could sustain the visibility and the adoption of the Hunger Project's intervention more than communication deliver at once on all aspects of our strategy. The media coverage of the TMT-Days campaign gives the proof as many stakeholders are joining Hunger Project –Benin in implementing that initiative and could now be aware of the global frame.

C. Advocacy & Alliances

- THP-Benin took part in the National Consultation on the post 2015 MDGs agenda of the United Nations for Development in Benin. To this end, a discussion paper was prepared and sent to the organizing committee including representatives from the Ministry of Development, Economic Analysis and Prospects and from the UNDP.
- Participation of THP-Benin in the meeting of Technical and Financial Partners (TFP) at UNICEF on May 3rd, 2013. Discussions focused on sharing experiences and prospects in improving nutrition through the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)-Benin movement.
- THP-Benin took part in a workshop organized on 26 and 27 June, 2013 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Agri Hub-Benin to share experiences of local governments in promoting agricultural value chains. Proceedings of the workshop were based on a study conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture. This study aimed to capitalize of the experiences of three local governments in promoting agricultural value chains in the districts of Kouandé (cashew value chain), Péhunco (cheese 'value chain'), and Klouékanmè (tomato value chain). The local governments of these districts succeeded in establishing partnership relations and/or synergies (with technical services, projects and non-state stakeholders) in order to develop agricultural value chains.
This gives an idea of how Hunger Project, through the Entrepreneurship Development Program, Food Security Program, could pioneer the way to regionally promote value chains through our epicenters.
- Prior to the organization of the Ministry Conferences a meeting of THP-Benin's focal points in the Ministries has been held on Friday, 26 April, 2013 at THP-Benin's office in Cotonou. The purpose of the meeting is to share the initiative with them and get them involved in organizing audiences with their respective ministers.
- Two audiences with (i) the Minister of Gender Issues, and (ii) the Minister of Microfinance, Youth and Women Employment took place during this quarter in May, 2013. These audiences which purpose is to set a date for the Ministry Conferences was an opportunity to present a brief overview to the ministries and members of their respective cabinet.
- The letter of intent submitted to the Nestlé Foundation as part of the collaboration project being developed by THP-Benin and the Department of Nutrition of the University of Abomey-Calavi has been approved. A project entitled: "Improving the nutritional status of the mother and child through the use of *Moringa Oleifera* as food supplement in THP-Benin's epicentres" will be finalized shortly.
- THP-Benin initiated, with the support of a selected cabinet REID a prospective study to better understand and to suggest the implementation a mechanism which will bring more commitment from the commune to support agricultural performances and development. This is part of the pioneering path to having communes sustain epicenter self- reliance. This study focuses mainly on communes where THP-Benin has operational epicentres or intends to establish epicentres. These are the communes of: Athiémé (Kpinnou), Klouékanmè

(Soglonouhoué), Zakpota, Dassa (Ouissi and Tré), Tchaourou (Bétérou), N'dali (Gbégourou), Djougou (Daringa), Grand-Popo, Ouinhi and Dangbo. This ongoing study is a prerequisite for the development of a program entitled "Agriculture and Communal Development" in Benin, to be shared and submitted for funding.

- Three (03) Hunger Project – Benin staff members took part in the first Fair of Alliances on Shea, cashew, pineapple, cassava, maize and Borderless organized by “Agence Béninoise pour la Promotion des Echanges Commerciaux” (ABePEC) in Parakou. The fair allowed getting information on promoting products from Shea, cashew, pineapple, cassava, and maize in the epicenters. It also gives an opportunity and to explore partnership paths for strengthening THP-Benin trained primo-entrepreneurs, particularly in terms of access to markets.

- **Working Visit of THP-Malawi's Health Program Officer (Mrs. Mercy Kamwanja)**

From May 6 to May 11, 2013, THP-Malawi's Health Program Officer exchanged with THP-Benin's Health and Nutrition Program to get more insight into the methods and tools of interventions on the following topics: (i) the first 1,000 days of life, (ii) Moringa, and (iii) the youth mobilization initiative.

During her stay in Benin, Mrs. Mercy Kamwanja also actively participated in cooking demonstration sessions on the production of (i) soya flour milk, (ii) cereal flour enriched with soya, (iii) the production of Moringa flour, and (iv) Moringa based recipes.

A visit to Kissamey epicenter also allowed her to attend a weighing session and interact with nurses, animators and the staff of the epicenter's health unit.

At the epicenter Akpadanou, she extensively exchanged with the youth committee and visited a pineapple juice production unit initiated by youngsters with Hunger Project's support.

- **June Sub-Regional Meeting in Cotonou**

A sub - regional meeting has been held at Hôtel du Lac in Cotonou from 24 to 28 June, 2013 to share openly and intensively on challenges to be taken to succeed in the implementation of the epicenter strategy. The Africa Department Vice-president, Dr Dicko, Country Directors of THP-Senegal, THP-Ghana, THP-Burkina Faso, THP-Ethiopia and the Senior Micro finance Program Officer (Global Office) took part in the meeting. The discussion focused mainly on the following topics: (i) partnership with the government and other stakeholders, (ii) program based budget and resource mobilization, (iii) criteria for epicenter self-reliance, (iv) the improvement of the Microfinance Program management and prospects to self-reliance, and (v) the requirement to imperatively meet report deadlines.

The Hunger Project – Benin seized the opportunity to communicate through the National Television on the theme: “**THP's contribution to food and nutrition security in partnership with grassroots communities**”. The Cabinet Director of the Ministry of Agriculture led a delegation of three (03) other government officials participated in this TV show aiming to let people know more about Hunger Project.

D. Human Resources & Travel

<p>Staff Changes</p> <p><i>Please list any arrivals or departures and a brief summary of the reasons.</i></p>	<p>The WEP officer started on June 3, 2013</p>
<p>Extended Absences</p> <p><i>Please list the Senior Management Team's vacation dates, as well as any other staff members' long-term absence, including maternity leave)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
<p>Staff Development</p> <p><i>Please list any staff member trainings or professional development activities.</i></p>	<p>Training of THP-Benin's staff on the topic: « Projects Identification» by an experienced Consultant.</p>
<p>Epicenter Visits</p> <p><i>Please list the epicenters and the number of staff visits in parentheses next to them.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Akpadanou (12) • Avlamè (13) • Bétérou (10) • Daringa (10) • Dékpo (10) • Gbégourou (7) • Guinagourou (4) • Tré (10) • Wawata (9) • Kpinnou (5) • Ouissi (10) • Gohomey (4) • Kissamey (16) • Klouékanmè (4) • Zakpota (16) • Lahoton (2) • Dasso (2)

E. Next Quarter Priorities

- To continue the activities planned for the 2nd edition of the initiative TMT Days Campaign (communication for awareness raising, tree planting etc.)
- To make the Gbé gourou health unit operational
- To help elect and train the health unit management body - COGECS - members in Tré, Ouissi and Klouékanmè epicenters
- To continue training and raising awareness on the Essential Nutrition Action (ENA)
- To support the leadership and the management of the priority epicenters – Kissamey, Avlamè and Bétérou – in their progress to self-reliance ;
- To continue sustaining mobilization process and the entrepreneurship program activities through the pedagogical fund grants.
- To continue with the supply of cashew trees to epicenter partners in the epicenters of the Northern region during the 3rd quarter.