

BENIN ACTIVITY REPORT

Q1, 2014

A. Overview

ACCOMPLISHMENTS.

- Inauguration of the epicenter of Gohomey on March 18, 2014 in the presence of Investors from the Netherlands, THP-Netherlands' team, THP- Benin's team, local authorities of Djakotomey and Gohomey community members. About 800 partners took part in this event.
- Celebration of the International Women's Day (IWD) on March 8, 2014 at the epicenter of Wawata. In preparation for this event, THP- Benin organized a workshop on the theme «**Women's access to land for better food security.** » on Friday, March 7, 2014 at Wawata epicenter. This workshop, led by an expert in rural land issues was attended by 150 partners (including 95 women) from all epicenters. The main recommendations from this workshop are:
 - To increase awareness campaigns through various media (radio, television, newspapers, and public meetings) especially in the direction of men to facilitate their acceptance of the laws on land in the Republic of Benin.
 - To contribute to the popularization of the laws on land in Benin through griots, theaters, sketches, radio and television programs, newspapers, etc.
 - To organize awareness sessions for populations on the provisions of the laws on land through town criers in the villages, especially for village chiefs, local councilors and illiterate in general;
 - To organize awareness sessions for men, emphasizing the targeted goal through sustainable access of women to land namely «family interest and food security» to motivate them to facilitate access to and acquisition of land by women.

Moreover, in order to effectively make these recommendations operational, representatives of the epicenters were invited to organize an information session in their epicenters to share those conclusions. An assessment of the implementation of the above recommendations will be made during the celebration of the 2015 International Women's Day (IWD) and three (03) epicenters that will have achieved better progress could be awarded prizes.

- Official inauguration of Wawata rural bank on March 8, 2014 as part of the celebration of the International Women's Day. This inauguration is to give more visibility to microfinance activities in this epicenter.
- Beginning of kindergartens' activities at the epicenters of Klouékanmè and Gbégourou with respectively (i) 63 children enrolled, including 41 girls in Klouékanmè and (ii) 38 children enrolled, including 22 girls in Gbégourou.
- Acquisition by THP- Benin of 143 tons of food fertilizer from the Center for Purchasing Agricultural Inputs (CAIA) for the ongoing crop year. This provision of inputs that will improve productivity on 930 acres of farms in 15 epicenters will be made available and given to partners on conditions that will facilitate access during the 2nd quarter of 2014.
- A total of 141 primary contractors including 51 women from the epicenters of Kpinnou , Dékpo , Kissamey , Gohomey and Klouékanmey were sensitized on the production and marketing of edible

fungus . This action aims at promoting the diversification of activities and improving livelihoods in turn.

- A total of 792 people including 449 women were impacted by the VCA messages in 7 epicenters (Klouékanmè , Akpadanou , Gbé gourou , Bétérou , Avlamè , Zakpota and Kissamey) . The purpose of these messages is to help each member of the various committees to ensure his/her responsibilities and legal obligations for the proper functioning of operational and management bodies of these epicenters.
- A total of 537 partners including 250 women were trained on leadership in the epicenters of Wawata , Ouissi , Daringa , Dékpo , Tré, and Guinagourou.
- The health unit of Klouékanmè epicenter has received a donation of a flipchart to raise awareness on family planning from the team of the sanitary zone of Klouékanmè - Toviklin - Lalo. This image box will be used to facilitate awareness sessions on family planning in Klouékanmè epicenter's partner villages.
- 1,800 bed nets were provided to the health unit of Kissamey by the team of the sanitary zone of Aplahoué - Djakotomey - Dogbo. These bed nets will be distributed to pregnant women free of charge during their second pre-natal consultation and children who completed the vaccination cycle at 9.

PRIORITY OF THE FIRST 1000 DAYS OF LIFE

▪ Development of the Moringa Oleifera

The promotion activities of Moringa Oleifera continued with the production of Moringa leaf powder at the epicenter of Wawata. Thus, 87,350g of powder were produced and made available in all epicenters with health units and approved structures to ensure the packaging and distribution. In addition, a manual for managing a Moringa leaf powder production unit has been developed and made available.

▪ Awareness raising sessions on the first 1000 days of life, the Essential Nutrition Actions (ENA) and the Promotion of Moringa : The objective of these sessions is to raise partners' awareness on the concept of the "window of opportunity of the first 1000 days of life " and the importance of good nutrition during this period:

- A total of 480 partners (including 327 women) were impacted through sensitization on nutrition and health care for children under 5; and 10 facilitators (including 4 women) were selected and trained at the epicenter of Gohomey.
- A total of 471 partners (including 302 women) were impacted through sensitization and 11 partners (including 6 women) were trained as nutritional monitoring facilitators at the epicenter of Dékpo,
- A total of 21 partners (including 19 mothers of children under 2) were impacted by sensitizations at Klouékanmè,

▪ Awareness raising session on family planning for the adoption of a method of contraception

A total of 55 women were impacted by sensitizations at the epicenter of Kissamey and 16 have adopted a method of contraception.

CHALLENGES

- Organizing a workshop with THP- Benin's epicenter partners on women's access to land, in a socio-cultural context where women do not have the right to inherit, in particular land, was a real challenge. It was not clear whether, at the end of that meeting, men would agree to work for facilitating women's access to land in accordance with the laws in force in the Republic of Benin. As it is true that ignorance of the law on the land is a real obstacle to food security in our communities, we were happy to realize that THP- Benin's men partners have understood this. They therefore rightly recommended jointly with women that the laws on land in Benin get more popularized and that THP- Benin organizes awareness campaigns (through various media and other means) targeting men , especially local officials, elders, influential groups to facilitate women's access to land for hunger and poverty alleviation in their communities.

INNOVATIONS

- Testing the new method of selection of facilitators for nutritional monitoring at the epicenter of Gohomey. This method involves using a data collection form to assess the technical quality of people able to actually do the work and to identify, at the same time, those who do the same work for other NGOs in the area so as to avoid selecting the same facilitators (duplicates) who, in this case, often merely share the same results with several structures. This selection model of facilitators will also be used in other epicenters.
- Increasing the operational products of the rural bank of Dassa with a view to improving its operational self-reliance through partnerships with SNV and AFOKANTAN factory. Indeed, during the cashew nuts campaign, AFOKANTAN factory (a factory that works in the cashew sector in Benin) made cash advances available to women's groups through the rural bank of Dassa. The bank collects bank charges amounting to 1 % of the transaction amount and this allows increasing the operational products and improving its operational self-reliance of the bank. Fourteen (14) million CFA francs are involved this transaction for the first quarter of 2014 and this is part of the implementation of "contract farming" (a partnership between SNV and THP- Benin).
- Introduction of a new approach to organizing the celebration of the International Women's Day. Indeed, the 2014 edition, which took place at the epicenter of Wawata, far from being a simple festive event, was used as an opportunity to organize a workshop on the topic: « **Women's access to land for better food security**» with partners from all the epicenters of THP- Benin. At the end of the workshop, recommendations and resolutions were adopted and approved by all participants. Each epicenter will be evaluated on the progress made in the implementation of these recommendations during the upcoming edition.

B. Lessons Learned

- The partnership with SNV in the context of the implementation of "contract farming¹" has made great contributions to the rural bank of Dassa. Through this partnership, the bank recorded an increase in the range of its activities, its customers and in its turnover. These glowing results show that if the Micro Finance Program emphasizes and develops partnerships of this nature, it will significantly increase its revenues and THP – Benin's visibility in the perspective of rural banks' self-reliance and it will position itself as a major stakeholder in funding agriculture in Benin.
- Access to vegetable markets for producers remains compelling and difficult. Given this constraint, individual primary entrepreneurs from the epicenters, supported and trained by THP- Benin, spontaneously pulled together to form an association in order to better manage their relationships with customers including pricing, quality and distribution. The setting up of this organization allowed them to be well positioned and easily ensure the sales of their products.

¹ A partnership between SNV and THP-Benin through which the rural bank of Dassa give fund advances at the disposal of women's groups involved in the cashew nut value chain and gets reimbursed by the AFOKANTAN factory to which those women's groups sell their cashew nuts.

Advocacy & Alliances

THP- Benin and the epicenters received working visits

- Visit of Investors from the Netherlands and THP Netherlands from 14 to 21 March 2014. On this occasion, investors took part in the inauguration ceremony of Gohomey epicenter. They also visited the epicenter of Klouékanmè where they interacted with the rural community on the progress made since their last visit in 2013.

This visit also served as an opportunity for discussions and work sessions between THP Netherlands' team and THP- Benin's staff, including discussions on the tipping point with an emphasis on communication as a tool for THP's visibility and behavior change towards achieving the ultimate goal of THP- Benin which is to « eradicate hunger and poverty by a change of mentality and behavior. »

- Working visit of Margaux Yost, Africa Program Associate at Global Office, from 10 to 14 February 2014. On this occasion she held working sessions with the staff of THP- Benin including (i) the priorities of the various programs, (ii) initiatives for implementing the priority on the first 1000 days of life, (iii) Moringa, (iv) the use of the "Google Calendar" tool, and (vi) photography and making a short coverage, etc.

Visiting the epicenters with external partners

- A joint THP- Benin & CARDER² Mono -Couffo Mission visited the epicenter of Kpinnou on February 20, 2014 for an inventory of agricultural projects initiated in the epicenter and for an assessment of technical arrangements needed for the completion of the projects. The visitors from CARDER included three(03) Technicians from the Municipal Sector for the Agricultural Development of Athiémé (the Manager, a technician specializing in livestock, and a consultant in crop production) and two (02) focal points of THP- Benin within CARD Mono -Couffo. With three partners directly involved in the projects , the diagnosis was made and the following provisions have been considered:
 - For cuniculture : acquisition of additional equipment (feeders, drinkers) , reproducers, and improving the level of development of the site
 - For gardening: strengthening the monitoring of cabbage pests and organic amendment of the patches.
- A team from FNPEEJ (National Funds for Youth Entrepreneurship Development) comprising 11 members including the Director General and a team from CARDER Athiémé including the manager and two of his colleagues (the technician specializing in Animal Production (TSPA) and Consultant in Crop Production (CPV)) visited the entrepreneurs of Kpinnou epicenter on February 19, 2014. This mission aimed to interact with Kpinnou epicenter entrepreneurs to better understand the challenges they face in the implementation of their activities to look for an effective and lasting solution.

² Regional center of rural development: a government institution in charge of rural development.

Audience and working sessions with external partners

- Working session between THP - Benin and CARD Mono - Couffo on February 5, 2014 in the meeting room of the Country Office. This exchange meeting followed two (02) other meetings held previously in Lokossa and the epicenter of Kpinnou. The session recorded the actual presence of the Director General of CARDER and the Country Director of THP- Benin who reaffirmed their full commitment to continuing the partnership. The following objectives were set :
 - To share with the focal points of THP- Benin in CARDER Mono -Couffo the objectives, operational priorities, and some results of the various THP- Benin programs in the epicenters of the Mono -Couffo region;
 - To exchange with the focal points on possible areas of collaboration and to clarify THP- Benin's expectations from this partnership.

At the end of the meeting, both parties expressed their agreement for materializing of the partnership through a collaborative framework document and an operational planning. Furthermore, it was agreed that CARDER Mono –Couffo, in the short term , gets technically involved in achieving agricultural projects initiated at the epicenter of Kpinnou which are: rabbit farming, gardening, mushroom production and fish ponds.

- Working Session on January 24, 2014 between a team from the Netherlands Embassy (the Unilever Foundation) and THP- Benin's staff on Moringa at the Country Office of THP- Benin ;

Participation in workshops, fora and others

- Participation of THP- Benin a capacity building seminar on women's entrepreneurship. The seminar was organized by the Women Business Promotion Center (WBPC) in collaboration with the ABePEC and financially supported by UNDP and took place on 25 to 28 March in Cotonou. The seminar which was held as part of the organization of the International Women's Day aims to build the technical and managerial capacity of women managers and leaders. 8 topics were discussed. These are :
 - Equity for women is progress for all, men and women included
 - Incoterms and export requirements
 - The woman manager and her business
 - Team management
 - Financial planning
 - The Charter of Small and Average Companies(SAC)/Small and Average Industries(SAI)
 - Funding opportunities for SAC/SAI by FNM
 - ICTs and the development of SAC/SAI
- Participation of THP- Benin in a workshop organized by the Cabinet Okapi in collaboration with the ABePEC on March 28, 2014 at Benin Marina Hotel. The topic of the workshop is «limited funding for agriculture by banks and alternative solutions designed to finance the company's working capital needs. » This workshop aims at taking stock of agriculture funding in Benin and to offer innovative solutions and alternatives to the funding of working capital needs of agricultural enterprises in the epicenters.

- Participation of Hunger Project- Benin in 03 preparatory meetings organized by the Ministry of Family, Social Affairs, National Solidarity, Disabled Persons and Pensioners (MFASSNHPTA) as part of the celebration of the 2014 International Women’s Day (IWD). The objective of the MFASSNHPTA is to contribute to sustainable improvements in women’s condition in Benin by implementing in March 2014 a joint program with other institutions/stakeholders. Several stakeholders took part in these meetings, including officials and executives of the MFASSNHPTA, representatives of international and national Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other actors in the field of gender.
- Participation of THP-Benin, on 21 January 2014, in a workshop on «how to turn one’s problems into opportunities » at the American Cultural Center. The meeting was moderated by Ms Sara Idohou, President of the NGO ‘Young Leaders Corporation’. The objective of the workshop was to encourage participants to adopt a proactive attitude in solving long-term problems. Approximately 150 people attended the workshop.
- Participation of the Micro Finance Program on 25 and 26 March, 2014 in a workshop on «identification of advocacy for access to agriculture funding » organized in Bohicon by the NGOs DEDRAS and Agri Hub . This workshop, attended by about forty five (45) participants representing farmers' organizations and NGOs to support the agricultural world, was to write an advocacy project to facilitate access to agricultural credit. Participation in this workshop increases the visibility of THP Benin’s actions for food security and the funding of promising sectors.
- Participation the Micro Finance Program, on March 13, 2014, in a working session at the headquarters of NGO CRADIB in Glazoué . The aim of the meeting was to take stock of repayments of loans granted under the "contract farming ". At the deadline, AFOKANTAN factory paid the full amount of loans granted to women’s groups into the account of the rural bank of Dassa.

Prior to the start of the activities of the Health and Nutrition Program in the epicenter of Gohomey, sessions were held to get familiar with organizations involved in the field of health and nutrition (CSW, NGOs, etc.) in Gohomey. These organizations include the NGO Actions Pour l’Humanité (APH) of Gohomey and the Center for Social Welfare (CSW) of Djakotomey. At APH, the meeting was held with the Resident Representative of the NGO, Ms. Hélène Bassale, the deputy Resident Representative, Mr. Dieudonné BOUBA and the Social Worker in charge of the Social Service, Ms. TOSSA Emanuela. The session focused on the areas of intervention of each of the organization but more specifically on what happens in the field of nutrition of the mother and child. The two parties agreed on opportunities for collaboration between them on issues such as:

- ✓ Training partners of the NGO “APH” on the first 1000 days of life and the processing of Moringa leaf into powder
- ✓ Raising the nursery women's awareness on various topics during immunization sessions

The meeting with the manager of CPS Djakotomey allowed securing his support for leadership training and involvement in the development and monitoring of nutrition monitoring activities Gohomey.

C. 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>- None</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>	<p>- Administrative leave of the Micro Finance Program officer from 2 to 20 January 2014</p>																
<p>Staff Development</p> <p><i>Please list any staff member trainings or professional development activities.</i></p>	<p>- Capacity building for 18 Staff members of THP- Benin on gender and development</p> <p>- Training of the Food Security Program Officer on communication and knowledge sharing techniques for food security, from January 30 to February 7 (online) and from February 24 to March 7 (in presence in Niamey, Niger).</p>																
<p>Epicenter Visits</p> <p><i>Please list the epicenters and the number of staff visits in parentheses next to them.</i></p>	<table> <tr> <td>Akpadanou (5)</td> <td>Gohomey (13)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Avlamè (5)</td> <td>Kissamey (13)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bétérou (6)</td> <td>Klouékanmè (8)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Daringa (5)</td> <td>Kpinnou (9)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Dékpo (5)</td> <td>Ouissi (5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gbégourou (3)</td> <td>Tré (8)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Guinagourou (3)</td> <td>Wawata (12)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Zakpota (5)</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Akpadanou (5)	Gohomey (13)	Avlamè (5)	Kissamey (13)	Bétérou (6)	Klouékanmè (8)	Daringa (5)	Kpinnou (9)	Dékpo (5)	Ouissi (5)	Gbégourou (3)	Tré (8)	Guinagourou (3)	Wawata (12)	Zakpota (5)	
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D. Next Quarter Priorities

- To organize and to implement the 3rd edition of the Three Moringa Tree (TMT) Days Campaign
- To equip and make operational the nutrition unit of Gohomey epicenter
- To start the Micro Finance Program's activities in the epicenters of Guinagourou, Gbégourou, Klouékanmè
- To organize training on the production of edible mushroom
- To organize (interactive) radio programs on land ownership in Benin on a local channel in each priority epicenter of THP- Benin
- To continue the monitoring of warrantage operation and remove products from storage in the epicenters located at the center of the country and to facilitate farmers' access to inputs (seeds and fertilizers)
- To carry out the assessment of « outcomes» in the epicenters of Kissamey and Avlamè.