

BENIN ACTIVITY REPORT

Q2, 2016

A. OVERVIEW

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

❖ Health & Nutrition Program

■ Working sessions with health districts

- A working session was held with the managing team of the health district of Tchaourou about our advocacy for the appointment of a civil servant nurse to the Bétérou health unit,
- A second working session was organized with the managing team of the health district of Dassa and involved, at the epicenter of Tré, the managing team, the staff of THP-Benin's Health and Nutrition Program, COGEC committee members from Ouissi and Tré, and the presidents of Tré and Ouissi epicenter committees,
- Three (03) working sessions were held with the managing team of the health district of Aplahoué in order to solve the numerous malfunctioning issues that hamper the progress of the health unit of Kissamey,
- In order to solve the numerous problems that disrupt the functioning of the health unit of Lahotan, much thinking has been had and a number of decisions were jointly taken with the managing team of the health district of Savalou,
- Several working sessions were held with the managing team of the health district of Zagnanado – Ouinhi to give a boost to the Dasso health unit whose statistics are not encouraging,
- A working session was held with the managing team of the health district of Klouékanmey,
- A working session at the health district of Nikki allowed specifying afresh the controlling plan of the health unit of Guinagourou in order to reduce frauds and to take repressive actions against the faulty staff.

■ Awareness raising sessions in the epicenters

An awareness raising session was held on these themes: the importance of moringa, the new guidelines on breastfeeding and the importance of the first 1,000 days of life. In total 276 partners were sensitized in Dasso including 198 women; 240 in Kissamey including 182 women; 233 in Klouékanmey including 181 women; 299 in Tré including 207 women; 228 in Ouissi including 180 women; 266 in Lahotan including 210 women;; 246 in Gbégourou including 201 women; 252 in Guinagourou including 215 women; 350 in Bétérou including 300 women and 300 in Daringa including 250 women.

■ **Training of animators in Kissamey on monitoring children’s growth based on the use of local food as well as hygien and sanitation**

Two (02) refresher training sessions were organized for the animators of Kissamey. As part of those sessions, fourteen (14) women animators were trained on the positive deviance approach to ensure malnutrition control, the feeding of children between 0 and 6 months, the feeding of children between 6 and 24 months, the good health care and early development practices, the taking of anthropometric measures, the interpretation of the growth curve, on the one hand, and the advice to give mothers on hygien and cleanliness, on the other hand.

■ **Launching Gohomey nutrition unit activities**

The Gohomey epicenter nutrition unit started its activities by the moringa leaves processing to powder. For this, the animators who are in charge of this nutrition unit have been trained in May. The moringa processing activities are underway in this nutrition unit.



Figure 1 nutrition unit of Gohomey

❖ **Micro FinanceProgram**

■ **Building the capacity of partners who receive credits from the rural banks and the holding of VCA workshops**

A total of 913 partners including 352 men receiving credits from the 14 rural banks were trained and sensitized on the efficient management of credits and a good monitoring of their activities. Those awareness raising sessions allowed reminding partners that the strict respect of credit reimbursement deadlines ensures the sustainability of the banks’ activities. These trainings sessions are run by the rural bank’s managers and managing committee members and aims to build the capacity of partners to enable them to manage the credits received well and thus make their businesses profitable so as to have more substantial income and honor their reimbursement commitment. VCA workshops were held in the

epicenters of Dasso and Lahotan to mobilize partners to start activities up and Klouékanmey epicenter to widely inform partners about the rural bank's activities and involve local officials for the massive support of partners.

■ **Recovery of overdue and unpaid loans**

During the quarter, the MFP team supported by bank managers and committee members, and with the involvement of gendarmerie and police stations undertook to recover overdue and unpaid loans remaining with certain unscrupulous partners. These recovery activities took place particularly in the epicenters of Akpadanou, Bétérou, Daringa, Dékpo, Kissamey and Zakpota. The loans recovered for these entire rural banks amount to 4,885,690 out of an expected total amount of 7763 825. Recovery actions continue in these epicenters and will be further strengthened in the third quarter to clean up the credit portfolios of these banks.

❖ **Social Mobilization and Education Program**

■ **Organizing Constitutive General Assemblies**

As part of the paperwork for the recognition of priority epicenters as independent entities, it was organized Constitutive General Assemblies of Epicentres Associations of Bétérou, Avlamè and Kissamey. During the General Assemblies, (i) legal documents (Constitution and Rules of Procedure) that must govern the operations of these associations have been read out and translated into local languages; and they were then validated; (ii) Statutory Bodies have been set up. This is participation figures:

- Avlamè : 305 people including 167 women ;
- Bétérou : 350 people including 192 women ;
- Kissamey : 467 people 252 women.

Before the Constitutive General Assemblies, sensitization sessions were organized with partner populations in all the villages of those epicenters on the constraints relative to self-reliance and the required and even indispensable preparatory measures at the local level. In total 640 people including 352 women took part in those sessions in Avlamè, 630 including 346 women in Bétérou, and 840 including 462 women in Kissamey.

■ **Formalization/recycling for VCA animators**

During the 2nd quarter of 2016, VCA animators were trained in Offè, Dasso, and Lahotan. The point of participation is: Offè (49 animators including 21 women), Lahotan (21 animators including 09 women), Dasso (28 animators including 12 women), Avlamè (21 animators including 09 women), Bétérou (28 animators including 12 women) & Kissamey (35 animators including 15 women). At Offè, the training consisted in a reminder on level 1 of VCA including knowing THP-Benin through its vision, principles,

methodology and strategy for a successful fight against hunger and poverty. During that session held in all the villages, Offè epicenter partners had a deeper knowledge of The Hunger Project and the VCA tool.

At Lahotan and Dasso, the training was on level 2 of VCA, including: a mastery of concepts such as Change of mindset, Leadership, Vision, Commitment, and Action; and their implications in everyday as well as professional and associative life for personal and community development in a context of hunger and poverty eradication. At Avlamè, Kissamey and Bétérou, animators received refresher training allowing them to ensure various sensitizations as part of awareness raising activities related to full details of the constitutive General Assembly, the demands of self-reliance and the needed and indispensable preparatory measures at the local level.

■ **Establishing moringa farms at the epicenter of Offè**

The VCA sessions held in Offè epicenter villages induced a competitive test for establishing village community moringa farms. This initiative aims to assess the epicenter partner population's commitment to implement willingly, consciously, and in a motivated manner the lessons received from the VCA sessions and on the other hand, to appreciate their capacity to take development actions for their locality in a spirit of defence of collective and community interest. In total, 36 hectares of farm are prepared to receive 54 kg of moringa seeds in the 07 villages that Offè epicenter includes.

❖ **WEP Program**

■ **Establishing WEP community relays in their role in the epicenters (Zakpota, Dékpo, Ouissi, and Akpadanou) and training them on leadership and animation techniques (including refresher training of WEP relays in Dasso and Lahotan epicenters)**

Community relays who were established in their roles and who attended the training were divided by epicenter as follows: Zakpota 25 including 13 women, Dékpo 25 including 11 women, Ouissi 18 of which 09 women, Akpadanou 20 including 10 women, Dasso 15 including 7 women, and Lahotan 14 including 09 women.

The main objective of this training is to build the capacity of the people in charge of Women and Men Mobilization from the various targeted epicenter village committees on leadership, communication skills and group facilitation. Specifically, the objective includes:

- to better define the concept of leadership;
- to know and develop the qualities of a good leader;
- to master group management principles;

- to know how to prepare and conduct meetings for epicenter self-reliance decision making.

Training workshops in each epicenter were provided by trainers from the Women Business Promotion Center (WBPC).

■ **Training of WEP relays in priority epicenters on the implementation of entrepreneurship development activities, partnership and resources mobilization**

This training took place in Bohicon. The people in charge of gender and women empowerment in the priority epicenters were trained on the development of entrepreneurship activities, partnership and resource mobilization. This training aims to arouse in them the entrepreneurial spirit for the pursuit of Information, Education, and Communication activities after self-reliance. It also aims to equip them with the necessary skills to support the sensitization of partner populations on the benefits for women / girls to engage in economic activities.

Thirty eight (38) people took part in the training. The workshop, which was run by a team WBPC, has mainly focused on the following aspects:

- entrepreneurial abilities: business opportunities and existing skills, economic activities taking place in each area and sales markets;
- the business plan and its importance: clarification of the concept, its usefulness and presentation of the outline of a business plan;
- Partnership and resources mobilization: identifying technical and financial partners, actions to be taken before making contact with a partner, attitudes to adopt as part of a partnership.



WEP relays in Bohicon

■ **Training of the WEP community relays of the priority epicenters on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), the use of specific animation tools and chatting/discussions on reception and confidence-building strategies for girls/women in SHR matters**

The WEP, in order to contribute to (i) improving the well being of partner populations, and (ii) reducing the rates of girls' school dropout and early marriage due to unintended pregnancy and poverty, listed in priority line, the capacity reinforcement of the people in charge of gender and women empowerment in the priority epicenters on Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). This training was attended by thirty nine (39) participants including sixteen (16) from Kissamey epicenter (02 men and 14 women), twelve (12) from Avlamè epicenter (01 man and 10 women) and eleven (11) from Bétérou epicenter (02 men and 09 women). The objectives targeted through this training are:

- to enhance the knowledge of people in charge of the gender and women empowerment (WEP relays) of the priority epicenters on SRH;
- to improve their ability to organize and educate people on SRH related topics; and on the long term,
- to improve access for partner populations (mainly women and girls) to information and services related to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH).

The training was conducted by two qualified officers from the Beninese Association of Family Planning (ABPF) Bohicon and Cotonou. It allowed participants to experience the 03 communication skills of a relay in connection with (i) contraceptive methods; (li) STIs and (iii) family planning. This training was completed by the delivery of materials and job aids for community relays.

■ **Establishment of peer educators in the Secondary School (CEG) of priority epicenters**

In this context, ten (10) peer educators were identified in each priority epicenter on the basis of defined criteria. A capacity building was organized for them to enable them to better play their roles. The training focused on SRH.

The objectives targeted through this training are:

- to enhance the knowledge of the new peer educators established in their roles in the priority epicenters on SRH;

- to improve their ability to organize and educate their peers on SRH related topics; and on the long term;
- to improve access for girls and boys to information and services related to Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH).

The training was attended by thirty four (34) persons of which 11 are from the epicenter of Kissamey (06 girls and 05 boys), 12 from the epicenter of Avlamè (06 girls and 06 boys) and 11 from the epicenter of Bétérou (06 girls and 05garçons). These are students from the junior and senior secondary schools of the priority epicenter accompanied by 01 Board member from their epicenter.

The sessions were run by two staff member from ABPF (Bohicon and Lokossa branches). At the end of the workshop, appropriate equipments were given to each epicenter representative by ABPF representatives.



Peer educators training

❖ Food Security and Environment Program

▪ Provision of fertilizers and distribution of seedlings

The main activity carried out during Q2 is the provision of fertilizers and plants to the epicenters. Thus, 88 tons of fertilizers were made available to partners of THP epicenters for the first farming season.

As for the promotion of agricultural plantations for the development of a real economy that is beneficial to households in THP-Benin's intervention zones, we have made available to farmers nearly 12,000 palm seedlings selected for 94 hectares of plantation, 5000 orange seedlings for 20 hectares of plantation, 3000

teak seedlings and 8000 seedlings of Eucalytus and Caïlcédrats. More than 300 farmers of THP epicenters received those supports.

Installation of a cooperative for common use of agricultural equipment (CUMAC) in the epicenter of GBEGOUROU

In an effort to support the mechanization of agricultural production in the epicenter of GBEGOUROU and for proper use of the agricultural equipment that THP-Benin has made available to them, an agricultural equipment management committee has been set up in the epicenter. This committee is composed of eight (8) members including 6 representatives from each epicenter village, a representative from THP-Benin and the President of the epicenter. This committee is administered by a board of three (03) members (President, Secretary and Treasurer). The objective in establishing this committee is to help define the organization, operation of the cooperative and the management of the material for all the villages to take advantage of it.

■ Distribution of moringa seedlings in the villages of Bétérou epicenter as part of the preparation of the TMT-Days campaign

Prior to the 2016 edition of the Moringa promotion campaign and on the initiative of the Northern Regional Office, some epicenter young partners were coached for the production nursery of moringa seedlings to be distributed free in the epicenters. In the epicenter of Beterou, 1,100 seedlings were thus produced by two (02) young partners and are being distributed to ten (10) villages to epicenter partners. At the end of Q2 2016, 500 plants were already distributed in the villages of TEOU-KPARA, PASSATONA, Amadou-KPARA and GBETEBOU. The recipients are mainly women and the youth. Before giving them the seedlings, partners are briefed on how to take care of and protect the plants. Furthermore, an awareness session on the nutritional values of Moringa preceded the distribution of plants.

❖ Entrepreneurship Development Program

■ Supporting women in the priority epicenters in the development of their economic activities

This activity was carried out together with the WEP program. The main objective of this workshop is to provide women with the knowledge and tools necessary for good management and development of their economic activities. Specifically upgrade their knowledge on: (i) mastering optimal time management, (ii) mastering the main management tools, (iii) mastering the techniques of expenditure planning and inventory management.

In the epicenters of Bétérou and Avlamè, forty (40) women in difficult situations (widows, abandoned by their husbands, who take care of kids, etc.) and doing an income generating activity for a living, and

forty-one (41) in Kissamey attended the meeting. The methodology used essentially included brainstorming and group work involving participants to the heart of the workshop. The themes developed during these two days of training are:

- The concept of the entrepreneur and his business;
- Business marketing;
- Planning and time management;
- Cash flow management;
- The development of a cash flow budget;
- The knowledge of the sensitivities of cash flows.

- **Training on capacity building of micro entrepreneurs on access to the market, the packaging for each product, packaging and product presentation and communication tools.**

This training was attended by fourteen (14) micro-entrepreneurs from seven epicenters including Lahotan, Ouissi, Tré, Wawata, Dékpo, Akpadanou and Kpinnou.

The objective training is to provide micro-entrepreneurs with knowledge on marketing and the launch of products on the market. Specifically, it aims to allow the targeted partner micro-entrepreneurs:

- To master the concept of marketing;
- To have notions on packaging and the packaging adapted to each product;
- To design simple tools of communication and master their use.

- **Coaching for the preparation of open house on the entrepreneurship experience of the young entrepreneurs of Mono-Couffo epicenters**

This coaching mission aimed to prepare the micro-entrepreneurs of the epicenters Kpinnou, Gohomey, Kissamey, Dékpo and Klouékanmey for the open house planned for the end of the year. This mission allowed partners to design a device for preparing and implementing the open house (OH). This coaching section was attended by twenty-one (21) micro-entrepreneurs.

❖ **Monitoring and Evaluation Program**

- **Carrying out the data collection phase as part of the evaluation of outcomes in the epicenters of Gbégourou, Sonon-Guinagourou, Daringa & Tré and the initial evaluation / reference for the epicenter of Offe**

Annually and according to an established schedule, the program carry out evaluations (baseline, mid-term or final) in order to better support programs by reflecting back to them the effects and impacts of their actions in the epicenters of THP -Benin.

For this quarter, several data collections have been carried out. This is the collection of mid-term data (outcome evaluation) in the epicenters of Gbégourou, Sonon - Guinagourou, Daringa & Tré and baseline data collection (baseline study) for the epicenter of Offè. Note, however, that this time, the data collection has impacted all partner villages and hamlets of each targeted epicenter. In total, the data collection phase allowed to collect data from 287 Gbégourou households, 284 Sonon-Guinagourou households, 384 Daringa households, 224 Tré households and 305 Offè households.

Furthermore group discussions (focus group) - qualitative part / phase of data collection - were conducted to support the quantitative phase (administration of the questionnaire) and have allowed collecting a wealth of information that will support figures resulting from the analysis of data collected with the questionnaire. Thus, 15 focus groups were organized both at Gbégourou (with the involvement of nearly 300 people) and Sonon-Guinagourou (with the involvement of over 250 participants). At Daringa, 09 focus groups were organized and involved nearly 200 people (men, women and youth). At Tré, 16 focus groups were organized for the epicenter and involved more than 360 people (men, women and youth) and finally at Offè, 10 focus groups were organized for the epicenter and involved more than 200 people (men, women and youth).

The tools used are among others (i) the survey questionnaire available on iPods with iFormbuilder software, (ii) thematic interview guidelines, iPods to record and facilitate the process of transcription of the group discussions. As a prelude to the collection and in view of ensuring quality collection, interviewers were trained / given refresher on the questionnaire and the work tool.

❖ **Others : Investors' visits and inauguration of Dasso epicenter**

- Organisation and reception of the visit of Dutch investors and a team from THP-Netherlands from June 5 to 9. Participants visited the epicenters of Akpadanou, Lahotan and Avlamè and this allowed them to have a lot of interactions with partner communities.

- The epicenter of Dasso was inaugurated on Sunday, June 26 by the donor and his family in presence of a strong delegation of THP-Benin staff led by the Country Director, the Mayor of Ouinhi and members of the Municipal council, notables and traditional leaders of Dasso and a strong mobilization of the epicenter partners.

INNOVATIONS

■ The initiative taken by the Micro Finance Program during the quarter regarding awarding the best partners to incite them to do better, also helps stimulate the mobilization of savings which strengthens the financial capacity of the rural banks. In addition, it allows other partners to behave

appropriately with regard to meeting deadlines to avoid unpaid loans and also it motivates other partners to open savings accounts to make savings that further strengthen the financial capacity of the rural banks.



Awarding the best partners

■ The main innovation implemented by the Social Mobilization Program is the procedure of identification of villages that host the infrastructure of Offè epicenter. Indeed, the test campaign to get Offè partners to create Moringa community fields constitutes an innovation in the process of testing the commitment of villages in order to choose those who are more deserving for the establishment of the decentralized infrastructure. Here, the process is not simply to identify a more enterprising and dynamic village to host or deserve the epicenter in all its components. Rather, it aims to identify several poles or active villages where to establish epicenter components in a decentralized way. This epicenter infrastructure establishment approach has a lot more guarantees to raise the effective involvement of epicenter villages. Infrastructure will therefore be made where the real need is felt with the necessary and consequent commitment of the partner communities.

A. LESSONS LEARNED

An observation from the Mobilization Program is that epicenter components are often concentrated in the village with the largest number of partner populations or geographically lying at the center of all the epicenter villages. But it turned out that the configuration of Offè epicenter presents particular features

so that building the epicenter according to standard would undermine the chances of success of THP-Benin actions in that epicenter. An alternative approach was then necessary. Hence, the initiative of commitment tests as a competition among them to identify villages that merit support for hosting community infrastructures. Again, the VCA worked. Indeed, according to the VCA tool prescriptions, "Faced with a difficulty or an obstacle, don't turn back; either get round it or overcome it or otherwise remove it outright." This means transforming the problem into a solution.

B. ADVOCACY & ALLIANCES

■ Workshop for sharing the baseline studies report and developing major guidelines of the plan for strengthening breastfeeding in Benin held at Grand Popo (Conference Room of Bel Azur Hotel)

The workshop for sharing the baseline studies report and developing major guidelines of the plan for strengthening breastfeeding in Benin was organized by the Ministry of Health. Indeed, in order to strengthen the promotion of breastfeeding, the World Health Organization commissioned a base line study on breastfeeding in Benin. The results of that study were presented at the workshop by the consultants appointed for this purpose. The objective of the workshop was to validate the baseline situation beforehand and on this basis to develop the major guidelines of the strategic plan to boost the promotion of breastfeeding.

■ Participation of the Northern regional office in the workshop for the official activities planning and launch of the FOOD SECURITY AND RESILIENCE STRENGTHENING PROJECT (ProSar) of GIZ held in Natitingou (Meeting Room of Evêché)

The workshop aims to make to undertake a proofreading of the project (Prosar), the operational strategic plan and to collect contributions from participants in the light of their experiences in the field of Food and Nutrition Security.

■ Participation of the WEP Program in the workshop on the integration of gender equality and women's rights in the programs funded by the Netherlands Embassy (NE)

The workshop was held in the premises of the Netherlands Embassy and gathered fifteen participants. Apart from THP-Benin, were present at the meeting, 10 members of the NE staff, 02 ABPF representatives, 01 UNICEF Representative, 01 executive from the Directorate of Water and 01 executive from the National Directorate of Public Health. The workshop was part of the support mission of "Gender Resource Facility" of the Netherlands' Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Mrs. Lina Zuidberg and

AkofaAsare-Kokou. The objective targeted through this workshop is to strengthen the dialog between the Embassy team and its strategic/implementation partners on the inclusion of gender in interventions considering the Netherlands' national guidelines and policy.

▪ **Participation of the WEP Program in a working session with the Mayor of Dassa, Mr. Nicaise FAGNON**

The meeting was held in the meeting room of the Country Office of THP-Benin in Cotonou and chaired by the Country Director. The objective of this working session was to engage with the Mayor on the idea of establishing an institutional framework for Reproductive Health for the Youth and Adolescents (SRAJ) in the commune.

▪ **Participation of the WEP Program in the 3rd coordination meeting on the establishment of the institutional framework SRAJ at the Netherlands Embassy in Benin**

Three (03) institutions were represented at the meeting namely: ABPF, CeRADIS and THP-Benin. Five items were on the agenda namely:

- Progress report of the initiatives taken;
- Identification of the bottlenecks;
- Finding solutions to overcome difficulties met
- Next steps ;
- Others.

▪ **Participation of the WEP Program in a workshop to define the AgriProFocus strategy for the four (04) years to come at SNV Benin in Cotonou.**

The objective of this workshop is to share with all stakeholders, the proposals submitted to that effect at various levels and to think about new network development strategies in the light of its objectives and for its expansion. Apart from the team of AgriProFocus's Country Office, the various groups that partake in this meeting are as follows:

- Partners (IFDC/ACMA, BorneFonden, PASMIF and Hunger Project-Bénin);
- NGOs and research institutions;
- Coaching and Consulting institutions;
- Companies/Agricultural Entrepreneurs.

C. PARTNER STORY

Lahotan epicenter: Geneviève BRUN has changed her mindset



Her name is Geneviève BRUN, a partner at Lahotan epicenter. She comes from the village Agbomadin. Aged 25, she is married and has 4 children including 1 boy. Her main activity remained hitherto agriculture. However, she was having difficulties making ends meet in lean seasons. The various thematic VCA sessions held in Lahotan community opened her mind to a different reality of life. Indeed, she became aware that she could engage in other income-generating activities additionally to farming activities so as to diversify her income sources. She therefore took a peculiar interest in epicenter activities, especially the youth entrepreneurship training sessions organized by the Youth Program. She received further training from the Entrepreneurship Development Program on income-generating activities. This series of training allowed her to start up a small business producing and marketing pineapple syrup and body cream. Her ambition is to prosper in that activity that could lead to the creation of a small agri-food processing company in her village to cater for needs in the area.

D. HUMAN RESOURCES & TRAVEL

Staff Changes <i>Please list any arrivals or departures and a brief summary of the reasons.</i>	-
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>	-
Staff Development <i>Please list any staff member trainings or professional development activities.</i>	The participation of WEP Program in the workshop on the integration of gender equality and women's rights in the programs funded by the Netherlands Embassy on Tuesday, April 26 th , 2016
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 (3)• Avlamè (8)• Bétérou (8)• Daringa (3)• Dasso (7)• Dékpo (2)• Gbégourou (3)• Gohomey (1)• Guinagourou (3)• Kissamey (9)• Klouékanmè (2)• Kpinnou (1)• Lahotan (6)• Offè (4)• Ouissi (3)• Tré (4)• Wawata (2)• Zakpota (2)

E. Next Quarter Priorities

- Validate the partnership agreement between the Ministry of Health and THP-Benin
- Organize an exchange meeting on the self-reliance of the rural banks of priority epicenters with the relevant staff, elected local officials, members of the Coordination Committee and partners of the rural banks to discuss various strategies to put in place in order to carry on with/repositioning the rural banks, with the involvement of local authorities.
- Write and publish an article summarizing THP-Benin's experiences in financing value chains and its innovating approach to financing agriculture in Benin.
- Develop Memoranda of Agreement between THP-Benin and the municipalities of communes where the epicenters achieving self-reliance are based;
- Host an external final evaluation to be supported by the Netherlands Embassy in Benin;
- Collect data for the final evaluation in Avlamè, Bétérou and Kissamey epicenters;
- Carry out the baseline study for the start of the Project " His choice "and the start of activities related to this project.