

The Epicenter Strategy in Africa

The Hunger Project's (THP's) **Epicenter Strategy** unites 10,000 to 15,000 people in a cluster of villages to create an "epicenter," or a **dynamic center where communities are mobilized for action to meet their basic needs**. This holistic strategy takes them on a path to sustainable self-reliance through four distinct phases over a period of about eight years. During this time, individuals build the confidence to become leaders of their own development and communities come together to unlock a local capacity for change.



In **Phase One**, communities are mobilized to participate in Vision, Commitment and Action Workshops (VCAWs) to develop their own vision of a different future. Local volunteers, called "animators," work with their communities to make a firm commitment to achieving their shared vision of the future and create action plans for moving forward. Government officials are apprised of THP's approach to gain their support.

Phase Two begins with the construction of the L-shaped epicenter building. Community members work together to create a food bank, community fields, a meeting hall, a rural bank, a clean water source, public latrines and, where they don't already exist, a health center, food processing units and classrooms. The epicenter quickly becomes a vibrant center of community action and a strong symbol for positive change.

Once the epicenter building is constructed, the community continues working to address its needs (**Phase Three**).

- **Health & Nutrition:** At health centers, children are weighed and immunized; a government-staffed maternity wing provides safe conditions for child birth.
- **Education:** In classrooms, gender-balanced preschool care and Functional Adult Literacy classes are provided.
- **Food Security:** Through community fields and VCAWs, farmers are trained to improve yields through new technologies, alternative farming techniques and increased access to agricultural tools. Food banks safely store harvests to support communities during lean periods throughout the year.
- **Microfinance:** A training, credit and savings program develops women's and men's capacity to become economic decision-makers, entrepreneurs and small business owners.

Epicenter Strategy Quick Facts

- **Countries:** Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Senegal, and Uganda
- About **1.65 million people in 3'221 villages** are gaining the ability to meet all their basic needs on a sustainable basis.
- **122 epicenters** have been mobilized and are led by democratically elected Epicenter Committees.
- **54 of the 122 epicenters have reached Self-Reliance.** These communities have demonstrated the confidence, capacity and skills to act as agents of their own development. The measure of community self-reliance is based on more than 50 indicators.
- **Over 1.35 Million people in Africa** participated in our grassroots-level workshop in 2020.
- **200'000 kg of food** was stocked by our community partners in food banks in 2020 to help provide nourishment during lean times.
- Over **62,000 village partners accessed USD 2.4 million** in microfinance loans in 2020.

About The Hunger Project

The Hunger Project (THP) is a global, non-profit organization committed to the sustainable end of world hunger. In Africa, South Asia, and Latin America, THP empowers people in poor, rural areas to lead lives of self-reliance, meet basic needs and build better futures for their children.

- **Women's Empowerment Program:** Provides education on women's legal, reproductive, and property rights, as well as workshops for women and men to raise community-wide awareness of women's vital and often overlooked contributions to her family and to her community.
- **Advocacy, Awareness and Alliances:** THP builds partnerships with local government and other organizations to ensure that services, such as nurses for health clinics and teachers for schools, are available locally, ensuring each epicenter's self-reliance.
- **Environment:** Each epicenter focuses on maintaining biodiversity, ensuring the sustainable use of resources through soil conservation and water management, and promoting renewable sources of fuel and energy through tree plantings, forest preservation and plastic bag recycling programs.

In **Phase Four**, THP ends its financial and staff support for the epicenter's programs but continues to monitor progress for two additional years. This transition allows time for epicenter leadership to affirm its partnerships, ensure funding streams from revenue-generating activities and begin relying on its leadership structures for future growth.

An epicenter that has reached **sustainable self-reliance** exhibits:

- Effective, gender-balanced and fully trained epicenter leadership, with democratic processes and transparency;
- A strong Women's Empowerment Program;
- Access to basic services, including healthcare, education, clean water, agricultural tools, and microfinance savings and credit opportunities; and
- Epicenter income, with revenues that cover all expenses and a self-reliant rural bank.

The Epicenter Strategy is an integrated approach that was created in Africa, by Africans and, over the last 20 years, has become an effective, affordable, and replicable strategy. To date (2021), 54 Epicenter communities – home to nearly 900'000 people – of 122 Epicenter communities are now self-reliant: 18 in Ghana, 8 in Burkina Faso, 8 in Benin, 5 in Malawi, 4 in Ethiopia, 2 in Zambia, 5 in Senegal and 4 in Uganda.

Meet a Village Partner



Mrs. Bassine Kane has seven children and is the Chair of the Ndiollofen Village Women's Organization in THP's Sam Contor Epicenter in Senegal.

Mrs. Kane became a leader in the community by participating in the organic hibiscus pilot project in partnership with THP. She mobilized the 90 women who belong to her organization to plant two hectares of organic hibiscus. Her sense of organization, her leadership and the results achieved on her farm helped to influence the local authorities to award land to other women, thereby increasing women's access to fertile land and income possibilities.

The Ndiollofen Village Women's Organization has been working on developing income-generating activities for many years in the fields of agriculture, cattle breeding and peanut oil processing. The income generated from these activities allowed the organization to invest nearly CFA 500,000 (over USD 900) at the end of last year in collective equipment (chairs, kitchen utensils and other small materials) to help make household chores easier and contribute to the organization's social events (naming ceremonies, weddings).

In order to build the capacity of the women in her organization, Mrs. Kane leans on a female THP animator in the village, who holds Workshops and literacy sessions for the women.

Thirteen of the women in the organization are already functionally literate. In partnership with THP, Bassine Kane facilitated the opening of a literacy classroom intended for 30 other women. This will help improve the organization's income-generating activities and the women's management skills.

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