

# MISSION REPORT



November  
2022

## The Hunger Project Benin

Report about the visit of The Hunger Project Benin by Alexandra Koch

## INTRODUCTION

The Hunger Project is committed to the sustainable end of hunger. The Hunger Project Switzerland (THP-CH), which is part of the worldwide The Hunger Project network, is certified by ZEWO. This means, that THP-CH has to select, monitor and evaluate its own projects in the program countries.

We are writing this report because THP-CH invested 170,000 USD for the last phases of the three Epicenters Klouékanmè, Tré-Dassa, and Gohomey. Thereupon, THP-CH mandated the country director of THP-CH, Alexandra Koch, to carry out a mission in Benin from 14 - 18 November 2022 in order to do an evaluation of the funded programs. Alexandra Koch was accompanied by the Swiss volunteer and investor Doris Ragettli and investors from the UK. The mission was very well prepared by the local THP team in Cotonou, Benin.

The objectives of this mission were:

- interact with THP-Benin staff members to get a broader view of THP-Benin's interventions, achievements, challenges and perspectives in Benin;
- participate in the celebration of the empowerment of the epicenters of Tré-Dassa and Klouékanmè;
- seize the opportunity of the visit and present the actions of THP-Benin to the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) with a view to exploring a potential partnership.

## THP-BENIN

The Hunger Project (THP) has been working in Benin since 1997 where it supports communities for the eradication of hunger and poverty through an integrated development approach called "epicenter strategy". This strategy is implemented through operational programs in line with the Government's policy in the areas of: food security and environmental protection, health and nutrition, women's empowerment and the promotion of entrepreneurship. Thanks to the implementation of these different programs, THP has impacted 18 communities called "epicenters" in Benin, of which twelve 12 have achieved empowerment and 2 from which THP-Benin has withdrawn. The remaining 4 epicenters (Tré-Dassa, Gohomey, Klouékanmè and Offè) have passed all phases of the epicenter strategy, from mobilization to the empowerment phase, and will be self-reliant as of 31 December, 2022.

## VISITED PROGRAMMES

We were welcomed at the airport by the Country Director and the National Program Officer of THP-Benin on November 13, 2022 and then driven to the Hotel du Lac in Cotonou. The next day, the tour started with the visit to the epicenter of Dasso, which has already reached self-reliance at the beginning of 2022. We met with a group of women specialized in the processing of cassava into gari, tapioca and their derivatives (gari and tapioca improved with coconut milk and fruit juice), the bread flour is also used to manufacture bread and other pastry products:





We also attended a cooking demonstration session before interacting with the members of the Board of Directors and the Advisory Council in the meeting room of the epicenter of Dasso. This exchange was followed by a visit to the different activities. The visit of an entrepreneur specializing in vegetable and fish farming was the last stop that concluded the visit to the epicenter of Dasso.



*Cooking demonstration making porridge of Moringa, soja, corn and peanuts.*



*Fish Farming presented by a farmer educated by THP-Benin*

The second day was marked by two flagship activities: the visit of the Rural Community Fund of Benin (CCR-Benin) and the celebration of the empowerment of the epicenter of Klouékanmè.

At CCR-Benin, the delegation of Switzerland was received by the management team of CCR-Benin led by its Executive Director who gave a presentation of the activities and perspectives of the institution. A very interesting debate took place around the prospects of the CCR-Benin, which aspires to open its share capital to anyone wishing to invest and change its legal status by moving from a cooperative to a public limited company (SA).



Regarding the celebration of the empowerment of the epicenter of Klouékanmè, we were very well received by the community. The event was attended by local and communal authorities, as well as authorities from the regional department and NGO partners of THP-Benin. During the ceremony, several speeches were given; such as testimonies on the impact of THP-Benin's work within the community were given. Investors took the floor to express their joy about the achievements of THP-Benin to support lifting Klouékanmè communities out of poverty and hunger. The communal authorities have made a commitment to continue supporting the community to safeguard the achievements of THP-Benin with a view to sustainable empowerment. The celebration of the empowerment of the epicenter of Klouékanmè was closed by the visit of the compartments (the meeting room, the kindergarten and the health unit) of the epicenter and the mini-fair of exhibition of agricultural products of entrepreneurs. We were able to have an interview with Céline Egbo, who is a farmer empowered by THP-Benin. Link to the interview with German subtitles: <https://youtu.be/gvozSkaOvTg>.



*Interview with Céline Egbo (in the middle of the photo)*

After our return from the epicenter in Klouékanmè's, we visited the Abomey Museum. The next day at the epicenter of Tré-Dassa, the celebration of empowerment was the same as in Klouékanmè. We returned to Cotonou the same day after the ceremony.



The map displays the administrative divisions of Benin, with regions labeled: Alibori, Borgou, Dendi, Zou, Plateau, and others. Major cities and towns are marked with orange dots, including Cotonou, Porto Novo, Niamey, and others. Two red circles highlight the Wawato and Zou regions. A legend indicates that black diamonds represent National Offices and orange dots represent Epicenters. An inset map shows Benin's location in West Africa.

## KLOUEKANME



Photo of food security animators trained on Sustainable Land Management measures at Klouékanmè epicenter

## LOCALIZATION

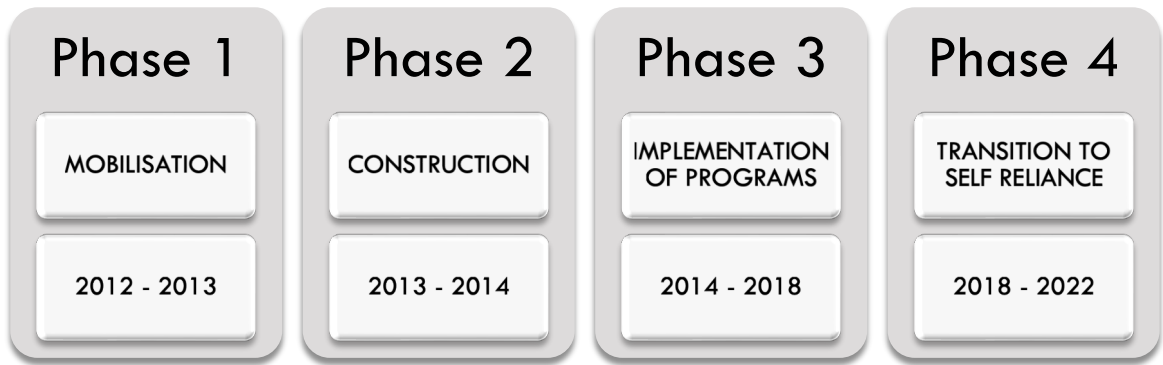
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Department : <b>Couffo</b></li> <li>▪ Commune : <b>Klouékanmè</b></li> <li>▪ District : <b>Hondjin</b></li> <li>▪ Partners villages : <b>Hondjin, Hondjingan, Kobgétouhoué, Komè, Gbébléhoué et Soglonouhoué</b></li> <li>▪ Population / Houndjin district (4th census - 2013): <b>11,690 peoples including 6,256 women</b></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Village where the epicenter is located: <b>Soglonouhoué</b></li> <li>▪ Epicenter compartments :               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Meeting room</b></li> <li>○ <b>Food bank</b></li> <li>○ <b>Health unit</b></li> <li>○ <b>Nursery school</b></li> <li>○ <b>Rural bank</b></li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
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## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

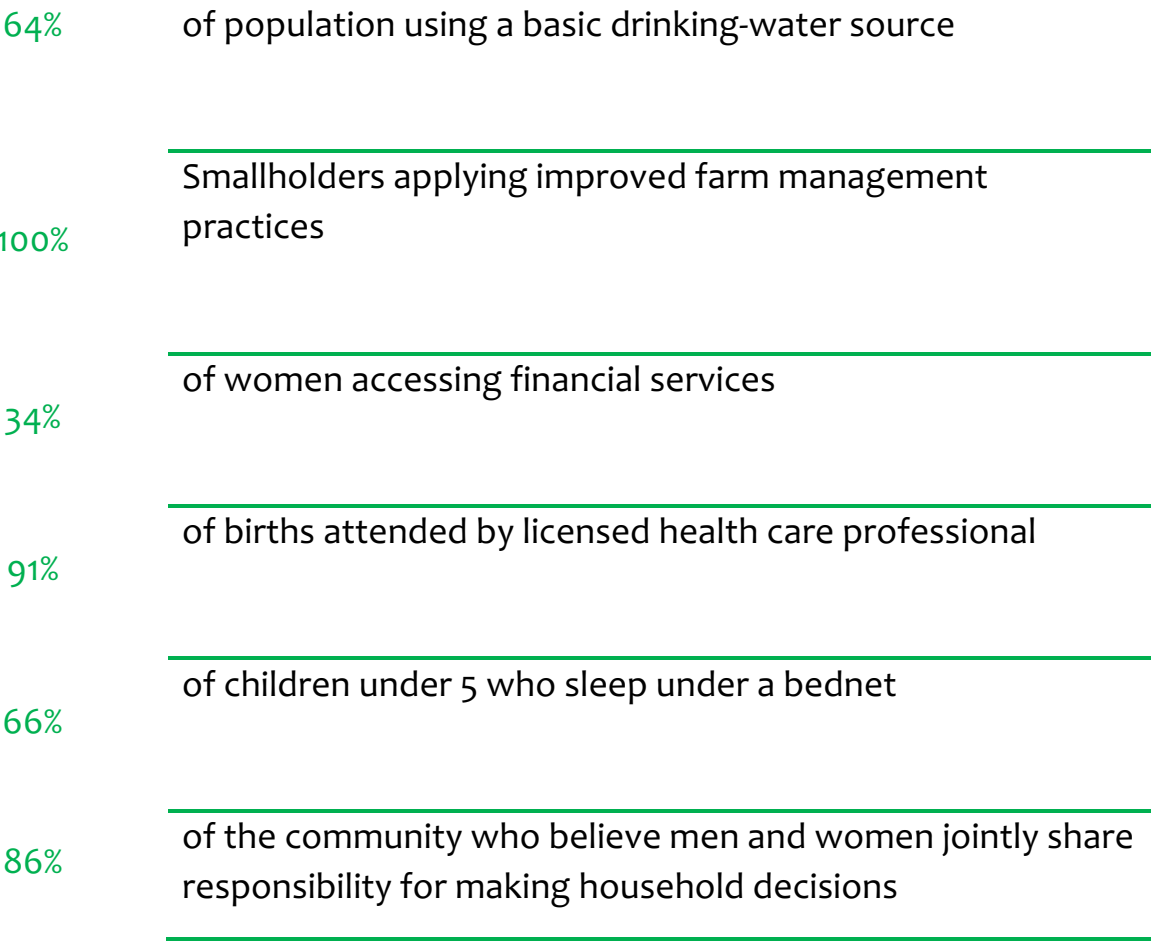
**Food Security & Water, Hygiene & Sanitation**  
**Social Mobilization & Education**  
**Gender & Women's Empowerment**  
**Health & Nutrition**  
**Entrepreneurship Promotion**  
**Financial Inclusion**



## EPICENTER STRATEGY AT KLOUEKANME



Achievements :



## KLOUEKANME EPICENTER SELF-RELIANCE SCORE

SCORE: 88,30%

The Self-reliance score is calculated by taking into account the progress made in the eight areas covered by the epicenter's strategy: food security, social mobilization, gender, water and sanitation, education, nutrition, health and access to income. Beyond 80%, the epicenter is declared self-reliant.

Achievements from Midterm Evaluation in 2017 until Endterm Evaluation in 2022:

- Community mobilization results were strong with a 20% increase in women who perceive leaders to be successful in addressing community concerns
- Women's Empowerment Index score increased but is still below the target of 80. We saw the greatest progress in the time domain with more houses purchasing fuel so women are not burdened with fuel collection. We also saw progress in leadership with both men and women participating more in community meetings.
- WASH results stayed similar to the midterm values.
- Only 2 households reported hunger and severe hunger remains eliminated. We saw another huge jump in households with children enrolled in school meal programs and having home gardens. This helped improve the access to food score.
- Poverty decreased by 39% (note this is the \$1.25/per day measurement)



*Implementation of weight and nutrition monitoring & training of women on the preparation of soybean chips*



## TRE EPICENTER



Field visit during the training of Food Security facilitators on Sustainable Land Management measures

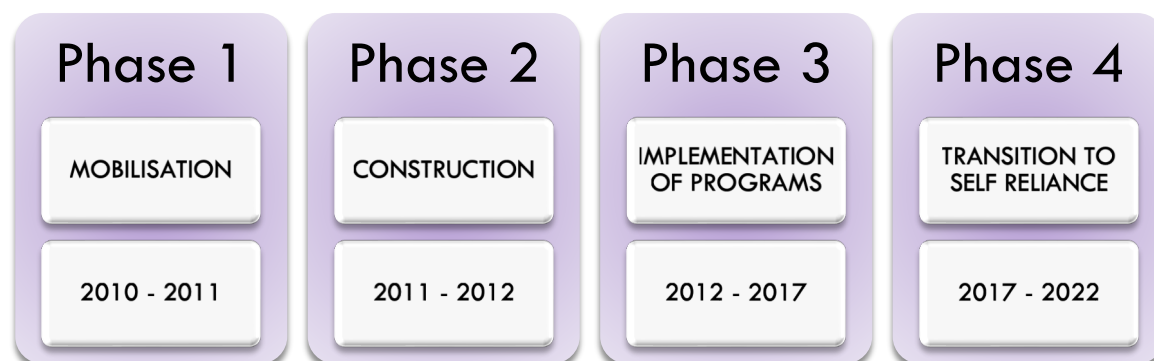
## LOCALISATION

- Department : **Collines**
  - Commune : **Dassa-Zoumè**
  - District : **Tré**
  - Partners villages : **Adjokan, Gankpétin, Itchégou-Tré, Itchogué-Sotré, Kpékpédé, Tchamissi, Adjalè, Léma-Tré et Semè-Tré**
  - Population / Tré district  
(4th census – 2013) : **4,799 peoples including 2,576 women**
- Village where the epicenter is located: **Léma-Tré**
  - Epicenter compartments :
    - **Meeting room**
    - **Food bank**
    - **Nursery school**
    - **Rural bank**

## AREAS OF INTERVENTION

**Food Security & Water, Hygiene & Sanitation**  
**Social Mobilization & Education**  
**Gender & Women's Empowerment**  
**Health & Nutrition**  
**Entrepreneurship Promotion**  
**Financial Inclusion**

## EPICENTER STRATEGY AT TRE



93% of population using a basic drinking-water source

92% Community members who perceive leaders to be successful in addressing community concerns

39% of women accessing financial services

100% of births attended by licensed health care professional

85% of children under 5 who sleep under a bednet

93% of the community who believe men and women jointly share responsibility for making household decisions

## TRE EPICENTER SELF-RELIANCE SCORE

**SCORE : 84,01%**



The Self-reliance score is calculated by taking into account the progress made in the eight areas covered by the epicenter's strategy: food security, social mobilization, gender, water and sanitation, education, nutrition, health and access to income. Beyond 80%, the epicenter is declared self-reliant. For example, Gbégourou epicenter Self-reliance score was 85.05% in 2021.

### **Achievements from Midterm Evaluation in 2016 until Endterm Evaluation in 2022:**

- Community Mobilization all saw positive results with the Proportion of community members who perceive leaders to be successful in addressing community concerns improving 17% for both men and women.
- The Women Empowerment Index score also improved in every domain with the biggest jump in resources with a 60% jump in women's literacy.
- WASH 73% of the community still has access to no toilet whatsoever but there was a small improvement over the 2016 midterm.
- Hunger decreased by 94% with only 2 households reporting hunger.
- Poverty decreased 11%
- 100% of smallholders applying improved farm management practices. 76% of people were using 4 or more improved practices showing a variety of methods are used to ensure crop yields.
- Child marriage was reduced by 33%
- All moringa results were positive.



*International Women's Day & Official handover ceremony of materials to support the implementation of Income Generating Activities Tré Dassa*

## **Q & A AND DEBRIEFING MEETING WITH THP STAFF ON 18 NOV. 2022**

### **Question from Alexandra:**

Will the Caisse Communautaire Rural (CCR) who manage the micro credit banks now, keep the ethics of THP? Will they keep focusing on giving micro credits to the women after they become a Ltd, which is a requirement from the government?

### **Answer from THP-team:**

THP and the CCR will always work in partnership. The government of Benin requires from now on that credit lending facilities be certified Banks. The CCR Benin got the license from the ministry to operate the micro credits from THP epicenters. In that license it is made clear that women and youth in the rural

areas must be the main beneficiaries. They have to write a quarterly report, so they can not sway from the initial mandate. This guarantees that they stay on track. THP's role in this cooperation is to survey their activities. The focus of CCR is to support the activities of THP. THP Benin will have the upper hand to make sure the bank will not sway from the original mission. The principal of turning the CCR into an Ltd. is to garner more capital in order to be able to offer more micro credits to the rural population, of which the focus lies mainly on women and youth in the villages.

**Question from Alexandra:**

The epicenter Dasso seems to have a challenge with the post self-reliance, for example the Bakery or the electricity. What are you planning for that?

**Answer from THP-team:**

We have foreseen a post self-reliance budget. These two problems can be solved if there is electricity, they are planned to be resolved by the end of the year. For electricity, we plan to increase the amount of solar power panels. It could help to find partners for solar panels. The bakery was installed after the installation of only a few solar panels, they discovered afterwards that it was not powerful enough. Electricity would also help for the medical dispensary. Also, the women could continue their activities till dark, so they could sew longer and grow their business. If we can anticipate and install a more powerful electricity system, it would expand the capacity for the community at large.

**Question from Alexandra:**

What are the principal challenges THP Benin encounters currently?

**Answer from THP-team:**

The goal of the strategic plan is to influence the local government officials to devote more energy to help the people out of poverty and hunger. The second objective is to improve the productivity of the communities and their resilience and revenues throughout, for which we involve youth and women. Projects that will enable them to face any challenge that might come their way. Promoting healthy nutrition amongst children under 5 years old is also a focus.

**Question from Alexandra:**

How do you involve the youth?

**Answer from THP-team:**

The first one of the new projects will be implemented in "Les Collins" close to the epicenters Tré-Dasso and Ouissie. It will be implemented in the communities by youth animators who go from house to house. Part of the strategic plan is to focus on 2500 youth aged between (25 - 35 years) and women-entrepreneurs. The focus is to improve their productivity through sustainable farming. They will be trained and registered on a platform and we will support them for credits, marketing, seeds and other support they need. The project also aims at training 200 youth over the next 1 – 5 years in non-agriculture activities, i.e. education and 3 other sectors. The communication support platform also serves to better position these youth on the market.

**Question from Alexandra:**

Is the Vision-Commitment-Action Workshop technic still applied?

**Answer from THP-team:**



Yes, that is still the base of the training for our strategy and mobilization, because that is what prepares the youth to achieve their vision.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The visit of the three epicenters showed us again that the epicenter approach works. Here is a testimonial from a participating investor:

“As investors with THP, we were very fortunate to be invited on this trip to Benin, West Africa, to visit three projects (Tré-Dassa, Klouékanmè and Dasso) and join their celebrations in becoming independent from THP funding. This independence allows THP to move into other areas so that they can mobilize and support other communities on their journey to self-sufficiency. We saw first-hand how the money we have donated has improved the lives of the people. The projects we visited showed how much empowerment and pride it had given to not only women, but the whole community also. There was clean water, medical staff and medicine, food was being grown and the surplus taken to market, adults were being educated in health and nutrition as well as literacy, and kindergartens were provided for the children. The experience definitely re-enforced our commitment to The Hunger Project’s approach in helping local communities help themselves. We found the people of Benin dignified and engaging - so many smiles! The whole experience of travelling around Benin, and seeing the communities thrive, was joyous”.

I can only agree with the opinion of the investor. THP-Benin has proven to be a reliable partner in the implementation of projects. Inquiries about the status of the implementation of measures, requests for materials and photos from the work in the field, as well as questions about finances were always answered immediately. I recommend to support the new presented project from THP-Benin about resilient youth.

We would like to thank the THP-Benin team for their most valuable support and efficient preparation of our mission.

