



# Benin

Benin, a former French colony, is one of Africa's most stable democracies. It is located in West Africa, neighboring Niger, Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Togo. The majority of its 10 million citizens rely on subsistence farming and agriculture as their primary means of sustenance. Benin is currently one of the poorest countries in the world, despite its increasing stability and economic growth. Many of its citizens struggle to meet basic needs and lack access to necessary resources, education, and social services.

## The challenges.

As climate change threatens their main source of food, many residents struggle with hunger and malnutrition. Government corruption and inadequate social services limit access to health facilities, water, sanitation, and education. As a result, many citizens are vulnerable to HIV/AIDs, malaria, and other diseases. Benin additionally faces low adult literacy rates.

## The opportunity.

It is important that we support community-led initiatives to break the mindset of dependence. This includes using bottom-up strategies for improving nutrition and food availability. We can expand access to health services and education in order to prevent disease. In addition, we can realize the potential of Benin's population, especially women, through increased opportunities for education, leadership roles, and income-generating activities.

## What we do.

We mobilize communities through the Epicenter Strategy. This 4-phase plan is carried out over 8 years with the ultimate goal of reaching self-reliance, where the epicenter runs independently. Each epicenter unites 5,000-15,000 people to reduce poverty and hunger in a holistic, sustainable way.

We have established 18 epicenters since 1997, 8 of which have reached self reliance. Each epicenter draws on the existing abilities of the population while supporting the development of new skills.

Through training and educating communities, these epicenters have worked to reduce the risk of disease, improve health and nutrition, and work with community members to develop better sources of water.

By working with community-led initiatives to develop effective farming practices, the economic and physical health of our partnering villages improve. Epicenters focus especially on maternal and childhood health through specialized workshops and health monitoring in schools.

## At a glance: THP-Benin

- 8 active epicenters
- 8 self-reliant epicenters
- 119 villages
- 99,655 women trained in VCA workshops
- 30,702 community members trained in food security and agriculture

As of 2020.

# Projects in Benin.

## Soil Protection and Rehabilitation (ProSOL)

Overuse and harmful farming practices can lead to soil degradation over time. This can perpetuate hunger and poverty, especially in a country that relies on agriculture for their primary means of income.

Smallholder farmers in this program are working to rehabilitate community spaces. Through training and educating farmers about effective farming practices, Benin hopes to create sustainable progress so that farmers can better support themselves.

## Early Childhood Nutrition and Development Project (PNDPE)

Malnutrition as a result of rising food insecurity and a lack of nutritional knowledge is a major issue in Benin. It can lead to growth delays, anemia, and improper brain development.

This project consists of 4 main components:

- Component 1 targets policies and political means of promoting nutrition, especially in younger children.
- Component 2 implements community-led early childhood interventions.
- Component 3 provides food to children enrolled in schools as a way to encourage parents to send children to school and to reduce short term hunger.
- Component 4 arranges food assistance in emergency situations.

## His Choice

The His Choice project focuses on female empowerment and gender equality. The community-based initiative educates girls about their sexual and reproductive health as well as their rights to equal participation and treatment. This education extends to others in the community as well, in order to break the mindset of gender discrimination.

A specific focus of this project is ending child marriage and increasing the amount of girls in school, both of which are vital to improving women's economic conditions.



## Women Empower Women

Louise Lagni found it difficult to make her voice heard in the face of gender discrimination in her village. Attending The Hunger Project's Vision, Action, and Commitment workshops allowed her to realize how much potential she had to be involved in her community. Lousie and other women have since taken charge of their futures by expanding their businesses. In addition, Lousie leads a women's group in Dotan where women discuss important issues like health, family planning, and education. With the confidence Lousie and her community members have developed, they empower other women and make their voices heard in their community.

“And I was heard. I became more and more involved in our community's decision-making. Since then, this has only gotten better.”

The  
Hunger  
Project.