Farm to Market

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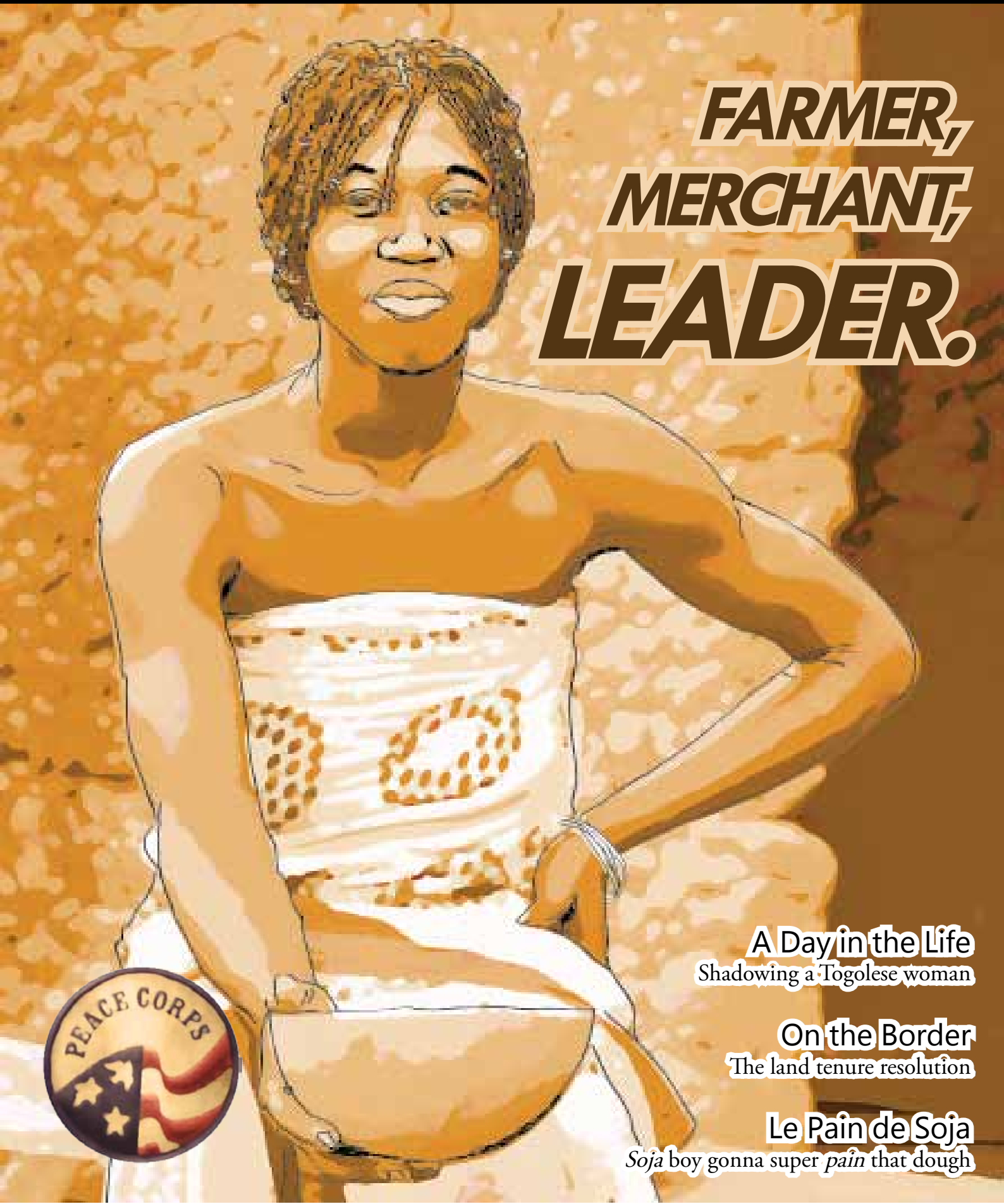

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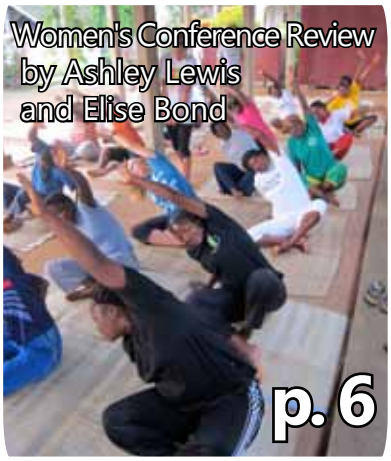

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Mission Statement:
"Farm to Market" is a quarterly newsletter for Togo's Peace Corps community: Volunteers, trainees, counterparts, and staff. It publishes information on EAFS and SED technical resources, best practices, and field experiences. Farm to Market seeks to integrate the EAFS and SED program goals into the rest of the Peace Corps community.

Submit to "Farm to Market":
Anyone may submit to "Farm to Market." Limit your submissions to 1500 words or less and include pictures with photographer credits. Submissions should be sent to the email address: duchampaumarche@gmail.com. Thank you, as always, for your continued support. ■

Editor's Note

The theme of this issue of Farm to Market is "Women in Agriculture and Business." This is an inadequate space to pay sufficient homage to the inspirational women in all of our lives, both in Togo and the United States, but we hope this issue is a start. We want to thank you all for your submissions; we know how hard it can be to write articles in Togo. Our abundance of articles, unfortunately, sometimes requires us, as editors, to make difficult choices as to which pieces to include in a specific issue. We publish everything you submit but, sometimes, thematic concerns dictate which articles appear when. Likewise, we apologize if our editing does not always reflect your vision as the authors. We will make every effort in the future to allow you to approve any substantial edits to your articles, but, due to the nature of communication in Togo, this might not always be feasible. To sum it up, you all are superb writers and we, the editing staff, are extremely grateful of your contributions to our publication. In this vein, since this is our second to last issue, we invite EAFS and SED Volunteers to contact APCDs Paul and Alex if you are interested in being on the next editing team. This being said, submissions for next issue's theme, "Planting Seeds; Starting Projects," are due by April 15th. Last but not least, we need to give a shout-out to Rachel Lihoussou for her speed and diligence editing our French submissions; she is our secret weapon. ■

"A man's work ends with the sun, a woman's work is never done"

A day in the life of a Togolese woman

By Jenn Herseim | PCV GEE

The impending fatigue and exhaustion, which thereafter was my proven exhaustion, loomed over me all week. Last Thursday, when I worked with men in my village, I said I had never worked so hard. On the eve of my workday with the women, I realized my error in scheduling the men's day first. My mind sweated with thoughts of the upcoming labor, and on the day in question, that perspiration paid out in full.

My goal was a two-part project to evaluate a basic argument in the Girls' Education and Empowerment program: women work more than men. We usually say this in more words than those, but, frankly, we debate it in those simple terms. Volunteers hear that Togolese women are the backbones of the family and the workforce. I do not want to argue that because women work harder than Togolese men they should receive equal or more rights than men. All men and women should deserve the same rights regardless of their workloads. Instead, I will argue that the following experience demonstrates gender inequalities that can limit opportunities for women to enjoy their full rights. Therefore, I shadowed one man and one woman from the time they woke up to the hour they fell asleep in order to experience their workloads and to compare their daily lives.

I had learned from my experience the previous week with Kissindi, a 33-year-old male farmer, to pack up my purple fanny-pack with water and rations the night *before*. When I said, "So you start working around…5:30 a.m.?" I expected yes, but I found out the first day that, when you do not have a watch, you start work when you wake up—be that 4 a.m. or 6 a.m. Nevertheless, I was still in bed in the midst of a lucid dream when I heard the faint voice outside my window. It was Kissindi, Adjoua's husband, come to wake me because Adjoua was ready to go. *D'accord, on y va* (ok, let's go). No more time to worry about what is ahead.

In America, Adjoua would have fit in with the multi-tasking and tough ladies from my roller derby team. She is petite, and, as if to compensate, she is all the more sturdy and aggressive around women in village. Adjoua is assertive about what she wants but generally laughs through most conversations. She seems to care for her four children with one hand and get work done with the other. I knew this day was going to be grueling.

We set off before 5 a.m. toward a neighbor's field to collect corn. The neighbor had asked nearby women to help him haul in his harvest and, of course, they had all accepted on the reciprocal rule of Togolese life: "Today it's them, tomorrow it will be me."

Likely due to our delayed departure, we seemed to be the last to arrive at the mountainous heap of corn outlined by the pink horizon. Older women, stronger than they looked, were already plowing the rolling yellow foothills of corn with stretched fingers. They snagged the ears of corn by their pinkies and tossed them into basins tucked under their legs. Collecting the harvest is, I noted, "women's work." Each woman bent down with the careful form of a champion weight lifter, eyes and head lifted, neck stiff and back straight to help lift another woman's load without spilling her own 60 pound hat of corn. By 6 a.m., the column of women started back toward home, silver basins gliding just above the tops of the bushes.

Adjoua has never attended school; neither have any of the women in her family. She farms because it is how she, her husband, and his two other wives have learned to support their family of 11 children. Although her own lack of education and her family's rural poverty influenced her decision to become a farmer, all of Adjoua's children attend school. This gives her hope to give them greater opportunities. Arms opened and leaning on the concrete enclosure of the nearby pump, Adjoua watched as her oldest girl, an uncanny "mini Adjoua" complete with a tough mini-scowl, tucked her book satchel under her arm and passed by the pump on her way to school.

After getting water, feeding the smaller children, putting on a little eyeliner (why not?), sweeping, making bowls of corn mush, and drinking a final bowl of millet beer, Adjoua is ready for her second trip to the field. Adjoua and her husband's two other wives wrap their babies to their backs and head to their soybean fields, a 30-minute walk from village.

At the end of rainy season, head high golden grass lines the zig-zag

path to the soybean fields. The babies have all dozed off when their mothers arrive and lay them on a mat in the shade next to the soybeans. We've encountered two new mountains: first the corn pile and now the soybeans. The scratchy dried soybean stalks were put put into smaller piles and then threshed via repetitive hitting with large wooden sticks. The three women spread out evenly around a smaller pile to strike the soybeans, swinging the stick over their heads and slamming it down on the plants. They go in succession 1-2-3, 1-2-3, maintaining a rhythm and pace for 5 minutes then scooping up scattered stalks, placing them on top, and starting the process again. This continues for 20 minutes or until Adjoua decides this pile of soybeans has been adequately threshed, or "tapped". Then a new shivering pile of dried soybeans replaces the battered stalks.

Both hands firmly gripping the end of her stick, Adjoua swung the baton over her head like the final sword stroke in an epic duel. It slammed down on the pile with finality, then tirelessly whipped around her back, over her head and slammed down again. This action continued for hours. Around 11:30 a.m. I dropped off and joined the babies who woke up and started playing in the dirt.

By this time, my water was long gone, and I wondered when Adjoua would crack open her blue water bottle. If after she finally let up on the soy beans, would she pour the water container over her head and need to be carried back to village, like me? I never found out. Adjoua continued to thresh soybeans until 3 p.m., taking a short break at 12:30 to eat and feed her children.

My day with the men had also been exhausting; we had started early and had finished our row of yam mounds by 11:30 am before heading home to eat and rest for the remainder of the day. But with the women, never in my most hallucinatory moments had I expected to work in the sun from 9 to 3 p.m. And, since Adjoua does not speak French, I had not known about this plan before leaving. My water was long gone before the last soybeans popped out of their pods. My strength and will power resembled the well-beaten beans that still needed to be sifted and carted back to the house.

At 3 p.m. the threshing concluded and the women swept the dirt and yellow soybeans into basins. They lifted them over their heads and slowly poured them into empty basins at their feet, letting the wind carry the dirt and chaff away. Kissindi arrived at the farm with two other men at 4:30 p.m. to pick up bags of cleaned soybeans. When Adjoua finished, she wrapped her child on her back, collected plates, jugs, stick, and a large sack of soybeans into a basin and lifted it onto her head. Was it my delusion or had I signed on for two days of work with the women? This day was never going to end.

Back at the compound, the soybeans were stored in a room and Adjoua went to the pump to get water. She swept the compound, collected the vegetables, washed the children and started a fire for dinner. At 6:30 p.m. sitting by Adjoua mixing corn mash in the cauldron that can feed 11 children, one husband and three wives, I gave her a once over. Her scowl was still set, her arms still in motion, her eyes still looking around for her children and I was incredulous. "*A gi pa?*" "Are you tired?" I asked in Konkomba and my tone said *how are you still moving!?* Instantaneously the reply was, "*Maa gi*." "Not tired." And I thought, not true

The day that I spent observing the men had been bad. Although the men's work, building yam mounds, required more muscular strength, it was carried out and completed in a shorter time span. Following their work they usually recovered during rest hours and relied on women or children to get their water and do household chores. My day observing the women was unimaginably more difficult – because it never seemed to end.

The women's farm work was rigorous and sustained over a longer period of time, and then followed up with household work and family obligations. Adjoua's farm work was monotonous, repetitive, and exhausting. But, while I wanted to leave half the job for the next day, the work needed to be finished. So much of women's work is immediate and pressing. Before, during, and after farm work Adjoua has housework, family work, village work—a relentless and obligatory list of tasks that need to be accomplished every day. The dual duties of farm and household are engendered in women from generation to generation and arise out of the necessity of the tasks – getting water, making food, caring for children. Until men and women share farm and house work equally, women will not have the time and energy to fully advance themselves in society. ■

The New Vision of IDH

Microfinance changes in Togo

By Beau Lore | PCV SED | Siou, Kara

As a Peace Corps Volunteer, no matter what your sector is, you have certainly heard of microfinance. In particular you may have heard of IDH, *Investir dans L'Humain* (Investing in Humanity). Over the past year there has been a lot of information circulating about IDH and what brought about the crisis that recently caused it to close a number of its offices. So what are the facts? What should you tell people in your village who ask about IDH?

IDH was founded as an NGO network with a number of different activities. As of last year these activities are grouped within four programs: training, entrepreneurism, community development, and microfinance. Training encompasses the building of schools, scholarships, and the salaries of teachers. Entrepreneurism involves loans to small businesses, and community development includes subsidies or low-interest loans to farmers. Microfinance involves the financial products of bank accounts, loans and *tontines*, (savings groups). The microfinance program is the one in crisis, while the three other programs played a part in bringing that crisis about.

IDH opened in 2005, and, in the short period of five years, it expanded nationwide involving a great deal of expense. Until now, IDH has not had its own funds, so to speak. Rather it has received funding through the accounts and *tontines* of its members, which is also how IDH paid its employees.

As far as the inner workings of the IDH network, the microfinance program finances the three others. That is, the three other programs borrow money from the microfinance component in order to undertake their respective activities. The four programs had one president, the president of the board of directors, who made decisions on the movement of funds.

Branches in different regions are independent, such that problems in Lomé should not necessarily indicate similar problems throughout Togo. Nonetheless, the way inter-regional transfers were handled is a good example of the poor management practices that led to the crisis. For example, if someone in Lomé wanted to make a withdrawal to send money to his brother in Kara, money would be sent from Lomé to Kara without the underlying funds to support it. The money was available on paper but the corresponding liquidity was not, due to over-reliance on customer deposits.

As time went on, the overabundance of other microfinance options competing with IDH for customers became an issue. One organization was said to have offered customers 75,000 CFA in interest per month if they deposited only 375,000 CFA total to begin with. This resulted in many members expecting to earn interest at an unsustainable rate and taking out loans with IDH to make deposits into the other microfinances. There were many members, besides these, who failed to make payments on their loans.

In addition, there was a lack of planning that came into play. At the end of the year there is a potential for shortfall in funds, due to the fact that there is typically a strong demand for loans and as well as account withdrawals so that people can stock their businesses, buy clothes, food, drink, etc., in preparation for the holidays. Without careful planning and management, it is nearly impossible to satisfy both the customers requesting loans and those withdrawing money from their accounts. In December 2010, IDH had approved too many loans before the arrival of the holiday season.

Thus, the crisis was triggered. On December 31st , 2010, a group of people went to withdraw their funds from a branch of IDH in Lomé that was not able to meet their demands. The members caused a disturbance and branches in Lomé began to close. Normally, deposits ought to outnumber withdrawals, but in Lomé, people began to withdraw all of their funds, even in unnecessary cases, since they had been warned to retrieve their money before the agency closed its doors. These problems spread into northern Togo by the end of January 2011.

IDH is now working to make changes in collaboration with the Togolese government and the BCEAO (Central Bank of West African States). They are undertaking new projects as sources of funding, such as group training sessions and project writing, and are also looking for subsidies from the Togolese government, from the BCEAO, and from private institutions. Inter-regional transfers have been replaced by ChronoCash, a new system for money transfer that is being used by IDH and other similar institutions. The above activities are helping IDH to fund its operations without handling money from members' accounts. Recently, steps have been taken to clarify the autonomy of the various regional branches of IDH. Before the crisis there was not a separate board of directors for each region. Now there is, each with its own board of directors and account, thus centralizing the regional funds. In the Kara region, for example, money stays in Kara rather than going to Lomé as it did before. Furthermore, there are two autonomous branches: F2S and MUCAD (there may be more than one independent branch in a region).

There are now entities in place to supervise loans and other operations. Another change is to limiting the amount of long term loans, being that they restrict the amount of available funds, especially when there are not enough corresponding long-term deposits.

Nationwide, IDH is looking to formalize the status of its workers, and the government has put in place a follow-up entity to smooth the transition. This entity has organized a competitive examination (only for IDH employees at this time) to draw up contracts for various positions and declare them to the National Social Security Fund. In the same vein of improved management, a computer network is being created for all of IDH with specifically adapted software for the organization. As far as IDH branches closing in certain communities, there are a few beginning to reopen. For example, the offices of Vovo, (a branch of IDH in the Maritime Region), are now starting to reopen, with some of the offices combining in order to reduce overhead.

The recent IDH crisis was caused by overexpansion in the number of offices, poor management of funds, nonpayment of loans and lack of proper planning. Yet IDH continues to make improvements in order to better serve its members; much of the misinformation you may hear is likely a cause of a lack of understanding of how financial institutions work. IDH or other local microfinance organizations may get flooded on market day with members who come to withdraw money, at times demanding large sums, who do not understand that it is not possible for everyone to make such large withdrawals at once. A brief explanation on your part could help them see that even though they may need to divide a large withdrawal into several smaller ones, it does not necessarily mean that the institution is out of money.

Also, remember that savings accounts and *tontines* are a great way for people to improve their financial situation. For example, on the suggestion of my homologue and myself, the two high school students who built my fence in village opened *tontines* into which they deposited a portion of their earnings. Many local associations and business owners use accounts and/or *tontines* at the microfinance to save for the purchases that they will need to make. There are several women's groupements in my own village who do so. One of them, a women's groupement that does pig husbandry, has used its joint account in order to save money to buy tools and other supplies. As you can see, through these programs, the microfinance institutions, including IDH, help people to help themselves. ■

Women's Wellness and Empowerment Conference

Changing lives one woman at a time

By Elise Bond & Ashley Lewis | PCVs SED

"Before I thought changing my skin to be like a white woman would make me a beautiful person, but after the conference I learned that I am beautiful how I am, inside and out."

These poignant words were spoken by a 2011 Women's Wellness and Empowerment Conference (WWEC) participant during her post-conference interview. She left the conference realizing her value and believing in herself.

In May of 2011 the first-ever WWEC was held in Kpalimé, Plateaux Region. Our goal was to inspire Togolese women to fulfill their potential as women and as leaders. We selected 27 participants based on their motivation and leadership qualities. The participants were invited to a four-day conference that included a full schedule of team building exercises, information sessions, daily yoga, and plenty of off-the-record "girl talk." The main goal of the conference was to educate and empower these ladies through sessions that highlighted the importance of economic independence, physical and mental health, women's rights, and self-esteem. We instructed them on topics ranging from sanitation to self-confidence, from nutrition to money saving techniques, from simple yoga techniques to how to build a small container garden in their backyard.

Follow-up assessments revealed that every participant found great value in the training and felt empowered by the event. Moreover, 100% of the members passed on the lessons they learned to other women in their village. While we expected women to share the information with others, back-of-the-napkin numbers show that the 27 participants have shared information with nearly 1,000 people via their interactions with women's groups, extended family members, apprentices, associations, and colleagues.

The success of the first conference inspired us take WWEC to the next level; we decided to take our forum nationwide by hosting three separate conferences in Kara, Sokode, and Hiheatro. This time, we have a much bigger team—35 Peace Corps Volunteers supported by 15 Togolese women—and far more attendees—80 motivated women from nearly 50 communities who represent every region of Togo.

As planning for the 2012 Conference got underway, the cost of funding three separate conferences reached $13,000, or approximately $150 per participant. Some may question if this is the best way to invest $13,000 into the development of Togo when this money could have been used in a variety of ways—to construct schoolrooms, to give scholarships to students, to supply library books, or any number of other worthy causes.

Therefore, this year we implemented a full scale monitoring and evaluation campaign geared towards "validating" the importance of this program. Jes Scheinpflug, a Girls' Education and Empowerment Volunteer in Plateaux, took over this role and single handedly visited each of last year's participants to gather feedback from the women about their experience before, during, and after the conference. The results were outstanding. All of the women shared stories of behavioral changes that they have made within their own families, such as saving money, improving eating habits, and starting new enterprises. More importantly, every woman experienced a boost in her self-esteem and felt more confident as a woman and as a community leader.

We believe in this conference and have faith that it will bring change because, if done right, it will 'pay forward;' it will change not only the lives of the participants, it will plant the seeds of growth in the lives of their friends, their neighbors, their daughters, and their daughters' daughters. This is the true power of education, and it becomes even more compelling when females are the target. At times, adult women can be a forgotten asset in international development; they are often overlooked in favor of young girls. However, women's life experiences and their drive to

see their children succeed are motivational factors that young girls often lack. This can hinder these girls from implementing tangible life changes. Women exert substantial influence within the family unit, and, therefore, we need to find ways to exploit them in a positive way. Education alone is not enough. The participant at WWEC must first understand her full potential as a human being *and* as a woman. She must recognize the inherent power in that knowledge and understand how to use it to improve her life.

The importance of mental and physical health was reinforced through daily yoga (Top and Right) while economic independence was developed through business skills exercises. (Left)

To that end, in the 2012 Conference, we will continue the tradition of creating an atmosphere devoid of criticism and judgment so that the attendees will feel free to talk openly about their personal challenges and hardships, as well as their hopes and aspirations. Second, we discovered that supporting and mentoring is essential for long-term growth. We cannot just tell the participants that they have the potential to make a change; we must show them it is possible. For WWEC 2012, we have invited some of last year's star participants to facilitate selected sessions and to act as mentors to this year's participants. Some of these mentors are women who came to the 2011 Conference remarking on how shy and uncomfortable they felt talking in large groups or sharing their ideas. This is their first time taking the role of "leader;" it truly demonstrates the progress they have made in less than a year's time. Through their example, these women will show that, by implementing some of the ideas taught at the conference, they can make a difference in their community.

We are also asking that the sponsoring Volunteers take an active role in the mentoring process after the conference. Last year's participants left feeling empowered but they still needed help taking the next step when they returned to village. This is where Peace Corps Volunteers come into play; by including a participant in their work or visiting her at her home, PCVs can give her the courage to make a change, however small it may be. This year we are increasing the support provided to the PCVs after their participant(s) returns from the conference. We will be giving them resources that explain the content covered at the conference so they may guide the nominee in taking the next steps, while hopefully engaging in rewarding work throughout her community.

We will also encourage the attendees to turn to their fellow participants as mutual resources, to keep in contact with one another, to share their life experiences, and to lift one another up when in need of support. We hope they will create a bond among each other that will live on and act as a lasting network of WWEC women in Togo.

One of the most important changes to WWEC 2012 is the implementation of tools for monitoring and evaluating. Through extensive surveys and follow-up interviews, we will be able to determine the kind of impact the conference is making. The results will allow us to develop sessions based on the participants' needs. It will also improve future conferences by focusing on the ideas that are working, and discarding those that are not.

Each WWEC participant possesses the capacity to accomplish great things; few, if any of them, are aware of this gift. Thirteen thousand dollars is a treasure by Peace Corps standards, but if we can use this money to help these women discover the treasure within themselves, it will be worth every penny. If WWEC is successful in giving even a small measure of dignity and value to a few women's lives, the return on this investment will be immeasurable.■

Please and Thank You

An introduction to fundraising

By Taylor Schaa | PCV SED

I am not farming or marketing anything in this article but, as a former fundraiser, I believe everyone should know the fundamentals or 'best practices' of asking for monetary donations. No, it does not begin with "*yovo, yovo, donne-moi.*" Although requests for various camp projects have already gone out, this article will provide some basic ideas and helpful pointers for Volunteers interested in fundraising in the future.

First and foremost, remember people have short attention spans. If you send out hard copy or email letters, remember that people do not like, and often will not read, an entire letter – especially when they sense it is about money. So, you have to get to the point. One page is the maximum for a letter requesting funds. However, supplemental materials such as photo or testimonial pages are nice additions if you can afford it. For more formal requests (to large corporations–not just your parents) it is important to attach the correct supplemental materials such as an organization's past project synopsis, the mission, the objectives and goals of an organization, a statement explaining your nonprofit status (the ability to make tax deductible donations), a project budget, and a timeline.

Within the letter it is important to grab and retain the attention of your reader. You can do this by beginning your letter with a powerful quote or short testimonial from a past participant or a meaningful statistic. From there you should explain your organization in a concise two to three sentences.

The body of your letter should explain the project and why you are looking for funds. Again, use two to three sentences to recap last year's successes or to explain the importance or need for your project if it is new. Follow that with your plan, goals, and enthusiasm for this year and how the reader can have the opportunity to be a part of it.

The next paragraph should detail more of the what/where/why/how of the funding for your project. Explain what funds it will take to make this opportunity a success. Do this by explaining how much it will cost for each participant/day of the activity, etc. Including the total budget in the simple letter is not advised, but remember to explain how the readers' gifts (a great feel-good word to use) will be used. Two to three sentences should give them a clear idea of the impact their donation will make. *NEVER* say, "whatever you can give." This is unprofessional and leaves the reader confused as to what you want from them.

You will need to include a sentence about the safety of their gift and the tax-deduction process. It is always good to end with giving easy steps about the donation process. Finally, signatures are always advised but this is obviously difficult with email versions and signing thousands of copies is not fun.

Other tips:

- Donor history is incredibly valuable. Knowing and tailoring your letter to people who have given in the past will have a significant impact on how your request is received. No one wants to (or will) read a letter from an organization they already give to and believe in. These readers are more likely to scan, search for last year's successes, look for an acknowledgement of their past gift, and what you need from them this year. Simply, the more personal you can be with each donor the better; again, easier said than done.

- Follow up is essential. The fundraising books say a donor should be thanked or 'touched' seven times between requests for donations. This sounds intimidating, but it is possible. The point is for them not to forget you, the work you are doing, and the opportunity to be involved again. Take the following example of requesting funds for an annual summer camp:

1. June: Camp happens

2. July: Send simple email thanking donors. Include pictures, testimonials, and overwhelm them with praise. No mention of donations, just appreciating their support. *They* were part of the success!

3. October: email/blog post/website update with more concrete results from June's camp and broad ideas/hopes for next year. Again, do not mention money.

4. December: Send holiday well-wishes. No mention of money, just 'happy holidays from Camp!' You could include a formal thank you–if you haven't 'officially' thanked them.

5. February: e-mail about plans for upcoming camp season with details about being a part of this summer's celebration to come soon.

6. April: Formal request goes out.

7. May: Reminder of the great *opportunity* they have to give and be a part of this summer's fun!

8. June: If it is possible to still donate, remind them again (gently) or give 'live' updates from Camp.

This yearly plan is important to have in place *BEFORE* you request for donations because it allows you to plan accordingly at your event (arranging videos, photos to be taken).

A place to access more information like a website, blog, or newsletter is always advised. Lead your readers to this information in your request letter. The more time they give you, the larger their gift (normally).

Lastly, statements are important if worded correctly. Naturally, after readers see who the letter is from, their eyes linger to see how long the letter is and will then see your P.S. statement. Powerful statements include quotes or more praise for the donor. It is not advised to ask/beg for money here–this is not an S.O.S. statement!

Good luck and happy fundraising! ■

On the Border

Solving Land Tenure Problems with Reforestation

By John Barlow | PCV EAFS

A major problem that the Togolese people, and those in developing world in general, face all the time is land tenure or, better put, land ownership. Every year, most farmers in Togo experience some sort of issue with the ownership of their land, no matter how big or small. Sometimes, the problems are as little as minor border disputes with neighboring farms or are as big as a newly elected chief claiming the rights to someone's land because of personal issues, or because he simply feels entitled to do so. The myriad possible issues arising from ill-defined ownership laws to differences in cultural practices can lead to acute problems for individuals and families throughout Togo. This is a problem that touches every community in Togo. It needs to be addressed in order to protect the assets of individuals and families, and to reduce conflicts over a shrinking amount of land for a growing population.

Before we get to a possible solution, let us first discuss the policies that Togo currently holds in regards to land tenure. While the majority of people are unaware of it, Togo actually has legislation that addresses land tenure policy. There was an extensive land tenure policy enacted in 1974 but, despite its policies, the government has neglected to implement this legislation. There are also quite a few problems with the policies that make them difficult to implement and are often detrimental to the long- term future of the country.

A major problem with the legislation is when one goes to officially register one's land with the government. The law says that individuals can be allocated legal ownership if they can prove their customary right to the land. The only problem is that it does not specify what is considered adequate proof of customary ownership. This is a problem because most of Togo's land has never been "officially" registered and has been passed down through families or governed by traditional systems. This omission allows for possible conflicts within communities over people competing for ownership.

Another issue with the legislation is that it states that any land left unproductive for more than five years can be expropriated by the state. In order for a piece of land to be considered "under production", it must be actively employed for agricultural cultivation. This legislation was originally enacted to increase agricultural output. This is all well and good, but the law states that land used for the collection of firewood and other products are not considered "productive" lands. This mandate encourages deforestation because people do not want to lose the rights to their land if they do not cultivate it and leave trees and forests instead. It also prohibits lands from being left fallow for more than five years, thus contributing to the gross degradation of the soil.

Daniel Goshorn-Maroney

The biggest problem with these tenure laws is that the average villager does not know anything about them, nor has enough education to understand them. Most people are basically at the whim of what the few literate community members say is true. These people also hold influence over the police and other government bureaucracy, which makes it difficult for a small farmer to fight for land rights if he is up against one of these local elites. These laws also hurt small farmers because a fee is necessary when registering and many cannot afford to pay or it deters them from making an official claim.

So, how can we fix this problem? There is no way we can completely eliminate this problem, but I have started a project in my village that tries to address these concerns and will hopefully reduce the conflicts that normally arise every year. The idea is simple; plant trees around the borders of people's property. That is it. It does not seem like much, but doing this simple thing immediately eliminates border disputes, which is the most common problem, and asserts someone's claim to the land.

One can plant any type of tree to delineate the border of their farm from another. I personally, have been promoting Neem trees with people for many reasons. First of all, Neem is extremely hardy. It can grow just about anywhere, with any type of soil, amount of sun, and with very little water. Neem is also one of the fastest growing trees available, which is important in order to establish land ownership as soon as possible. It is also great because it is one of the few trees

that do not need to be protected from animals. Reforestation would be so easy if it was not for those pesky goats eating important seedlings! Animals prefer not to eat Neem because of its extremely bitter leaves. Neem is also really great because of the high quantity and quality of building and firewood it produces each year. It is also a very utilitarian tree; Neem leaves and seeds can be used to make natural pesticide. Also, oil can be extracted from its seeds and used for many things.

Dillon Tindall

Neem also eliminates the problem of access to seeds or seedlings, which is often a big problem when planting trees. It is a fairly common tree all throughout Togo and most everyone can identify it and find a few in their communities. The last reason why Neem is ideal is because it allows people the courtesy of not having to plan ahead. People do not have to gather seeds and have a tree nursery for a few months before planting the trees. The benefit of Neem not being desirable to pests allows it to grow uninhibited in natural tree nurseries under large established trees. I have been instructing people go to trees that have previously dropped seeds and remove the seedlings that have spouted underneath them. They then replant them on the borders of their farms, and presto! It is that easy!

Neem is also one of the fastest growing trees available, which is important in order to establish land ownership as soon as possible.

The spacing of the trees is at the discretion of the one planting them. I have been encouraging people to plant a tree every 4-5 meters, but spacing might be dependent on the size of the parcel of land, as well as the amount of trees available for one to plant. Another important thing I have stressed with people is that they should inform the people who share their borders about what they are planning. That way, if there is any dispute over the borders, it is already clear and further issues can be avoided. If it is done in secrecy, then problems will most definitely arise, which defeats the whole purpose of the project.

This all started when I did it with my counterpart on a parcel of his land. We planted 120 Neem trees around his farm. In a few years, when those trees are established, they will be more than a visual/physical indicator of his ownership of the parcel. They should provide enough wood for his family to use in a year. If anything, he might have a surplus, which he could then sell to others as a way of generating disposable income. The leaves that fall on the ground will help put nutrients back into the soil. The steady stream of firewood will allow him to keep his crop residue in the field instead of having to burn them for cooking fuel. The decomposition of these high carbon plants will greatly improve soil structure and quality over time. The trees will help slow wind, which can erode the surface and remove valuable nutrients. The roots will penetrate deep in the soil helping water absorption into the ground and reduce surface erosion due to rain.

The reason I am telling you about this project is not because it is genius or because it can radically change Togo. The reason I wanted to bring it to your attention is because of the amazing success I am having with it. I never intended to turn this into any major project. My counterpart and I had started a tree nursery and had a bunch of Neem trees that we needed to plant before rainy season ended. We executed the plan and I told a few other people about it, but that was it. Literally, within a couple of days, it had spread throughout the village and a bunch of people were coming up to me asking about it. I am now at the point where I will be in the market drinking tchakpa, local millet beer, and see an individual I do not know, who is not from my village, pedaling by with a few hundred Neem seedlings strapped to the back of his bike! When I am in the market, I have had quite a few people come up to me and tell me they have planted Neem around their farms. I never talked to any of them. I never had an educational workshop to promote it. I did not do anything. That is why this project is so great. The people get it. They get why you do it and its benefits. They get it all without having to be told or preached to; the people are the ones taking the initiative. I gave one person the idea, and, from there, it has taken on a life of its own and thus is the best kind of Peace Corps project. ■

Implementing EPAT in *Centrale*

My experience with business skills training

By Christa Register | PCV SED

Education des Patrons pour l'Amélioration de leur Travail (EPAT—Business Skills Training for Improved Practices) was created with the idea of changing things up in Togo. I was tired of listening to people complain about per diems and asking me to give them money, so I thought I would do something totally unheard of; I would ask them to pay me for training.

First of all, what is EPAT? In short, it is a two day training to teach business skills to artisans. We cover basic management – more specifically SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunity, threats) analysis and strategic planning, marketing, accounting, financing options, and computer skills. EPAT was also a chance to form a partnership between the *Chambre de Métier* (Chamber of Commerce) in Pagala and the Peace Corps.

To begin, I had to sell the idea to my counterpart. He did not like the idea of paying for training, but I convinced him to try it out and see what would happen. I attended the *Chambre de Métier* meeting in Pagala to present the general idea and get their feedback. They did not have much feedback, but they were eager to help.

From there, the real work began. I created a manual for each member of the board of the *Chambre de Métier*. The manual outlined what EPAT was, how much it would cost, and how to ask for a scholarship, as well as deadlines, a questionnaire, and outlines of each session. I gave the board members their manuals along with a folder, a notebook, and a pen for collecting responses to the questionnaire. In order to recruit people, they brought the idea to each of their trade meetings (i.e. the masons brought it up at their monthly mason meeting).

The questionnaire was a measurement tool for me. I was able to tailor my sessions based on the board members' responses, and I will be using their questionnaires when doing follow up. For example, if someone said they do not currently do accounting but have an interest in doing so, I will specifically ask them about that in their follow up session. Each question asked about current behaviors based on the sessions I planned to cover in EPAT. Soon after I handed out the organizer's manual, responses started coming in with their 500F CFA.

Each artisan contributed 500F CFA to participate in EPAT. I think it was a good amount. With 22 artisans, it amounted to a contribution of 10.000F CFA (one artisan received a scholarship and another did not pay because he helped translate). Even with this contribution, I ended up spending about 6.800F CFA of my own personal money. There were artisans from almost every trade represented – masons, tailors, barbers, carpenters, mechanics, even a blacksmith and a bread maker.

Each artisan received a *Cahier des Techniques d'Entreprise* (Technical Manual for Enterprises). This book contains handouts corresponding to each session. The handouts include outlines of the sessions along with activities we conducted during the sessions.

At the end of the two days, we had a little closing ceremony where the participants received their certificates and each got a cold juice and hot kebab. They all seemed like they really enjoyed the training and got a lot out of it. Almost everyone said they were very satisfied on the evaluations. They are thinking about starting an association so they can continue to hold trainings like this. In the end, they were really proud of funding the training themselves.

For follow up, I plan to go by each artisan's shop and find out what, if anything, they have changed. I also want to clarify anything that was not well understood. I hope that this will turn into a working relationship between the individual artisans and myself so that we can continue to improve their business as time goes on.

If I were more organized, I would have trained Togolese trainers beforehand, but I ended up doing all of the sessions by myself. I just could not find people in my village with the expertise to teach these sessions and did not have time to train anyone. In the future, this is one thing I would suggest changing.

Overall, EPAT turned out to be a huge success. If anyone is interested in continuing the project by doing it in their village, I have a lot of resources to share! I would be delighted if you contacted me. All of the resources that I have mentioned in this article, including lesson plans, can be obtained electronically through contacting me. I also have several paper copies, so I can send out any information needed. I feel that teaching business skills is an essential part of any Volunteer's service, but especially a SED (Small Enterprise Development) Volunteer. If you really want to change peoples' lives, you can help them improve their business and put some money in their pocket. With economic development comes social development, so do not be too intimidated to jump in there and try teaching skills to some people in your village, even if you feel you lack the training. The skills you will be teaching are so basic that any PCV can do it! ■

Alley-Cropping with Ali

Agroforestry in action

By Ben Conway | PCV EAFS

This past July, four other Volunteers and I visited Monsieur Ali, an agroforestry expert living just north of Niamtougou. I heard about Ali and his farm from a returned Peace Corps Volunteer who had visited him during a field trip. She said that Ali used all sorts of the agroforestry techniques that we had discussed in training but had never actually seen. The farm sounded like a great place to see the end results of long-term agroforestry projects for ourselves.

We bought an enormous loaf of bread, rented a car, and helped direct our lost apprentice chauffeur to Ali's. He met us at the road and led us to his farm. Ali raises crops, trees, and animals in concert with each other; he is a model agrosylvopastoralist, for those fond of long titles. Complicated jargon aside, his farm uses simple interrelations between each of its elements to strengthen the entire system. Trees produce fodder for animals, animals produce manure for crops, crops produce compostable residue for the soil, and so on. In short, it is a closed loop, with wastes becoming inputs, and all parts of the system benefiting one another. Thanks to this sustainable system, Ali and his family are able to produce staple crops, fruits, vegetables, fire wood, and animals year after year without the need for increasingly large amounts of animal feed or chemical fertilizer.

What interested us most about Ali's farm was seeing the implementation and effects of specific agroforestry techniques. The first thing we saw, and in many ways, the purest example of an agroforestry technique, were Ali's tree reserves. By consistently protecting strips of land from fire and not cutting trees, Ali has re-forested much of his land naturally. Over time, local tree species have taken back the denuded hillsides, forming dense thickets. The trees reverse erosion, provide fruits and medicinal products, and maintain a beneficial microclimate throughout the farm by slowing wind, providing shade, and retaining moisture. Ali continued this pattern in miniature throughout the farm. He uses live fences, dense walls of trees and shrubs, to box in small parcels of cultivatable land. Like the tree reserve bordering his land, the fences slow winds, shade crops, hold soil in place, and provide fodder for animals, while, at the same time, keeping them out of his gardens.

Daniel Goshorn-Maroney

In addition to keeping things out of his land, Ali has constructed soil-retention walls to keep his soil from washing beyond his borders. In order to cultivate his sloping terrain, Ali has built knee-high walls of rock, reinforced by the roots of trees or tough grasses. He constructs one retaining wall for every meter of elevation change on a hillside.

Nowhere were the beneficial effects of Ali's techniques more evident than in his alley-cropping fields. Alley-cropping is the practice of planting rows of nitrogen-fixing trees within a field used for farming. The roots of the trees work with symbiotic bacteria to convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form that crops can use. In addition, the leaves of the trees are green manure. The trees can be oriented east-west so that their shadows fall mostly on each other, if the crops require full sunlight. Ali had planted the nitrogen fixing tree Albizia Lebbeck in his field. He was growing sorghum, and the effect of the trees on the sorghum was striking. The plants nearer to the trees were markedly larger than the plants further away.

Maintaining this beautiful system takes hard work and coordination. Around the borders of his land, Ali maintains a several meter wide fire line to stop fires from burning up the organic content of soils that he has worked so hard to improve. He also collaborates with his neighbors to help ensure their collective security. This teamwork between neighbors was one of the most important points I took away from Ali. His neighbors, after seeing the results his methods were producing, imitated him. Now, working together, they all benefit from each other's use of wind breaks, fire lines, and erosion control measures. The beneficial microclimate Ali has created on his land has grown several times over, conveying an advantage to all of the farmers.

When asked how we could best promote agroforestry and other agricultural techniques, Ali emphasized the importance of having a model. It is difficult to convince farmers to adopt a technique by telling them about the potential benefits. You need to show them. He used himself and his neighbors as an example, saying that if you can get one farmer willing to try a technique and model it, you can make a big impact on the lives of many. ■

New Small Enterprise Updates

Policies and prospects for the sector

By Alexis K. Anani | APCD SED

In Togo, about 80 percent of all existing enterprises belong to the Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) sector which now takes center stage for Government of Togo (GOT) economic development policies. Consequently, the government of this country, it is reported, currently relies primarily on SMEs for wealth and job creation. In order for this to happen GOT takes different steps to help propel SMEs as a sector. This article reviews the following: the current state of the private sector, the steps being taken on the part of the government as they are reported, and eventually where the work of the small enterprise advisor (?) would fit.

The government intends to gradually alleviate or remove unnecessary legal and bureaucratic hurdles in order to allow for private sector investment and most particularly for SME growth. Based on indicators established by the World Bank group, Togo ranks 162 over 183 countries according to the new "Doing Business 2012" report (www.doingbusiness.org). Among many other issues at hand are land tenure, heavy taxes on SEMs and corporations, and business registration delays, which the reports said is 87 days. Subsequent to this report, new actions, we were told, are being implemented and old measures are being accelerated in order to ameliorate the overall business climate. Examples of such actions are the creation of an Investment Climate Facility by the Court of Arbitration, the One Stop Shop for business registration, and special programs involving government policies and institutions along with public and private sector partnerships. Ultimately, GOT wants entrepreneurs to be able to register their businesses in two days as opposed to the current 84-day delay.

Other steps are been taken as well, among which is the release of the Small and Medium Enterprise Charter. This 32-page document was released to business owners, entrepreneurs, and the general public in January 2012. This document creates definitions and an overall road map for further development of the SME sector. The new charter is adhered to and signed by all interested parties, i.e., government, formal banking and microfinance professional associations, and trade associations. Individual businesses are invited to promote and join the charter voluntarily. The charter delineates and classifies micro, small, and medium size companies all of which belongs to the general sector of SMEs. Most importantly, the new charter spells out the means and types of support GOT intends to provide to SMEs overall.

To summarize this classification, one would notice that business activities fall into several categories, and are labeled respectively depending on such criteria as the number of permanent paid employees, total revenue, and total balance sheet. For example, in the service sector, a business is marked as a "medium enterprise" if they meet the following criteria: they employ less than 50 people, they boast total yearly revenue of CFA 250 million (or USD 500, 000), and they do not exceed a total balance sheet of CFA 10 million (or USD20, 000). The table below recapitulates and expands on this basic information.

Small and Medium Enterprises Categories Table

	# of employees	Total yearly revenue	Total balance sheet
Medium Enterprise	50	250 Million	250 Million
Small Enterprise	30	100 Million	75 Million
Micro Enterprise	10	30 Million	10 Million

With these different breakdowns in mind, GOT intends to provide the following benefits to the SMEs: easy access to loans, reduced cost for starting new businesses, a much shorter duration for the whole process to register, help formalizing most informal sector companies, alleviate the tax burden, promote training and work force development, and develop infrastructures conducive to a favorable SME climate. On the other hand, SEMs would be expected to create new jobs and conform to legal obligations, including accounting and taxes, and environmental regulations.

The field, as described by the Small and Medium Enterprise Charter, seems wide. Nonetheless, one particular point sticks out, namely, the "migration of informal businesses to the formal economic sector." This migration is welcome and calls for much small business consulting and management advice. Many SED Volunteers, (Small Enterprise Development), in the past and present, have worked toward the general goal of formalizing micro and small businesses. In order to achieve this goal, Volunteers implement small business skills training workshops that may help establish better business management practices; they conduct one-on-one tutoring that may guide a particular entrepreneur to access a micro loan, Further examples of Volunteer work in this sector include: developing market access strategies and tools, product development and quality control techniques, or even value addition measures that may, in the end, establish a new brand in a niche market. All these trainings and advice, whether they come from individual actions by a Volunteer and his or her counterpart, or culminate in s group efforts such as trade shows, eventually contribute greatly to the very idea of local wealth and job creation. ■

Awesome Foods of Togo

The magical powers of the baobab fruit

By Lisa Englander | PCV CHAP

Hot season is here, but have courage, even these cloudless skies have a silver lining. Look up, it is baobab fruit time. Amid the smelly dried fish and endless corn grits, Togo has loads of awesome food treasures. Even among the super food crazes in the western world, rural Togolese food is sneaking into the posh world of upscale health food stores. One of these awesome local 'superfoods' is the baobab fruit; it is packed with vitamins and minerals, and the fruit's pulp contains the following beneficial nutritional elements:

- It is an excellent source of vitamin C: great for preventing and treating harmattan colds. Ascorbic acid also helps in the growth and repair of tissues, promotes healthy gums, and assists in absorbing iron.
- It is rich in calcium, phosphorus, potassium, and iron. Pregnant and lactating women especially benefit from eating baobab fruit for this reason. Calcium helps with growth, reproduction and maintenance in the body, especially regarding healthy bones and teeth.
- Antioxidants help combat free-radicals, streamline the metabolic process, support neuro-transmitters and connective tissues, and aid the body in absorbing calcium and iron.
- Prebiotic properties stimulate intestinal micro-flora— these are important if you add bleach to your water.
- B-complex Vitamins (B1, B2, B3, B6) aid in the metabolic process and in the growth and production of red blood cells and healthy nerve cells.
- Dietary fiber stabilizes blood glucose levels, immune support, and intestinal health.

In short, baobab fruit is a wonderful addition to everyone's diet, but, most importantly, it can be used

as a supplement for pregnant and lactating women, people with intestinal difficulties, people concerned with

monitoring stable blood glucose levels (diabetics), and those in need of a little extra immune support.

Though you might have to overcome a fear of heights to reach them, retrieving the fruits of the baobab is worth the climb. Baobab fruit has the potential to be transformed in a number of ways. In Togo, people use baobab fruit for flavor and tangy sweetness in porridge, juice, or just to enjoy it by itself. The pulp has a dry consistency and high pectin content, which makes it good to use as a thickening agent in jams and other foods and drinks. After cracking open the pod, take out the pieces of white pulp. Remove the seeds and sift it to get a fine powder. If you keep it sealed it will stay good for a couple weeks.

Baobab Juice

1 liter water
2 tbsp. baobab fruit pulp
2 tbsp. sugar (or to taste)
Citron to taste

Mix together until sugar has dissolved, enjoy!

Baobab & Banana Jam

1kg unpeeled bananas
4 cups sugar
30ml lemon juice
1 cup water
1 cup baobab fruit pulp

Peel and mash bananas until smooth.

Mix in sugar and lemon juice.

Place in heavy based saucepan and bring to the boil, stirring continuously.

Mix water and baobab together and add to banana mixture.

Continue to boil, stirring continuously and removing foam, until setting point.

(If you have a thermometer this is at about 100°C. Alternatively test setting point by putting a tsp. of jam on a cold plate, wait till it cools and then check if it has set)

Bottle in sterilized bottles and cap immediately. ■

http://www.ecoproducts.co.za/baobab_fruit_pulp_properties.htm

'Tis the Season...

For collecting seeds!

By Maggie Person | PCV EAFS

Looking for a fun club activity? Something to do? We have the solution! Collect some seeds. It is an easy activity with little skill required – perfect for environmental clubs and the like. Collect them for use in future projects or send them to your friendly seed bank! (Our EMS is Lomé.)

As you can see from the handy seed collection calendar below, *now is the time when many trees' seeds are available for collection*. Take advantage of this opportunity!

	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Albizia lebbeck	x	x	x									
Baobab	x	x										x
Cashew	x	x	x									
Eucalyptus	x	x	x									
Faux Teak	x	x	x									
Flamboyant	x	x	x	x	x	x						
Gliricidia sepium			x	x	x							
Leucaena	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Mahogany	x	x	x	x								x
Mango			x	x	x							
Moringa		x	x	x	x							
Neem	x	x	x									
Néré			x	x	x	x	x					
Senna siamea										x	x	x
Shea				x	x	x	x	x	x			
Teak										x	x	x

As always, when collecting seeds:

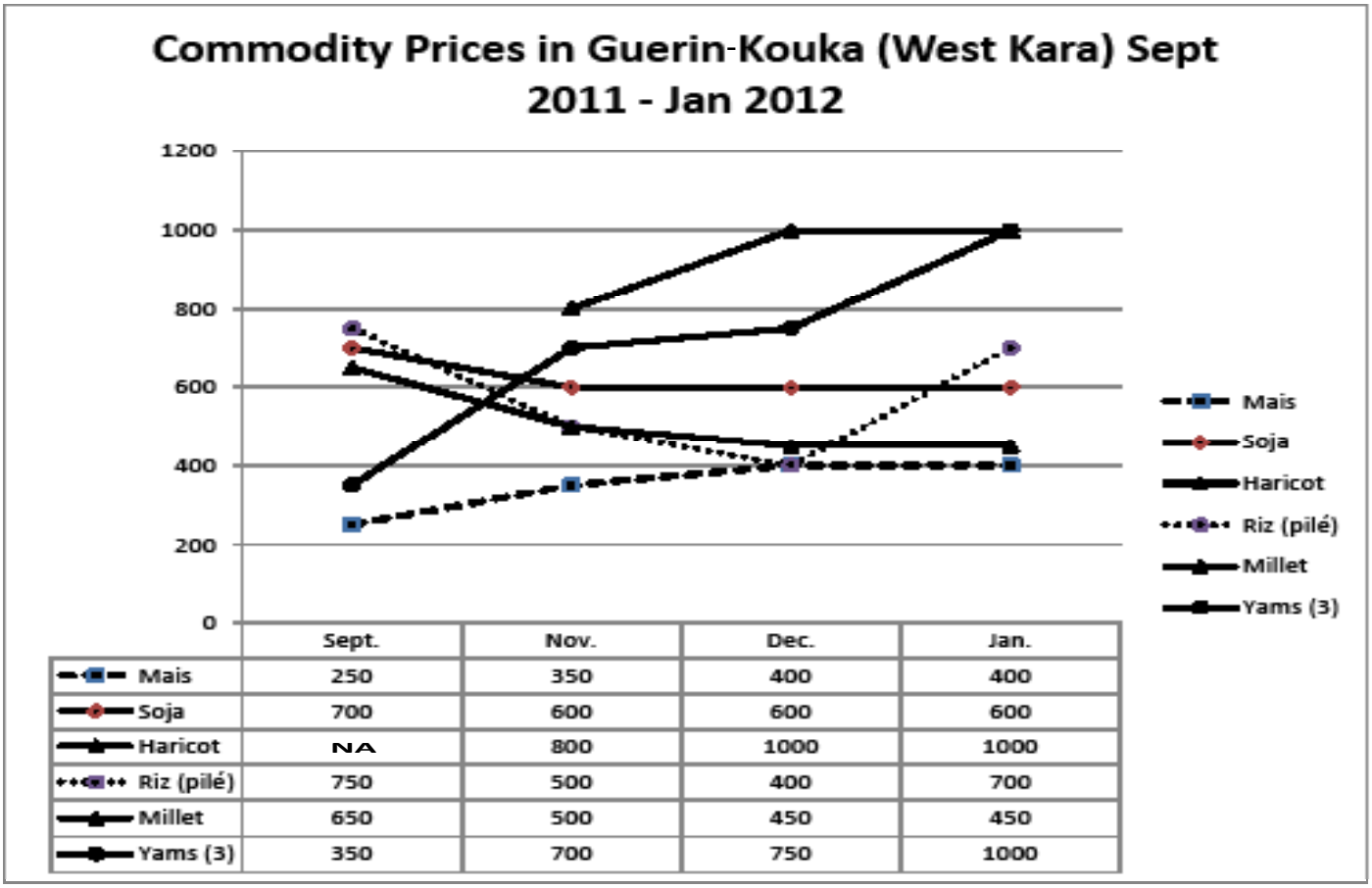
1. Remove seeds from pods/pulp
2. Clean, dry
3. Label with name, date collected, and origin
4. Store in a secure container

Questions about how to identify trees? Ask EAFS APCD (Associate Peace Corps Director of Environmental Action and Food Security) Paul Sinandja or Maggie Person for a copy of the Tree Identification Guide, available electronically.

From the Market...

To the Excel table

Compiled by Laura McNair and Daniel Goshorn-Maroney | PCV GEE and EAFS



	Sept.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
Mais	250	350	400	400
Soja	700	600	600	600
Haricot	NA	800	1000	1000
Riz (pilé)	750	500	400	700
Millet	650	500	450	450
Yams (3)	350	700	750	1000

retrospective

The Many Uses of Discarded Rice Hulls

From Farm to Market, September 2009

By Charles McNally | RPCV

Rice hulls, the tiny brown shells found on each grain of rice, could help you make a positive change in your village with very little financial investment or technical expertise. In the garden and in the kitchen, people can use this inexpensive waste to save fuel, cut down on labor, and improve yields.

Rice hulls accumulate in large quantities outside of mills in many Togolese villages, and their uses are numerous. The most basic and easiest use may be as dry material in a compost pile. Combined and layered with green material or kitchen waste, manure, and given enough aeration and water, that pile of golden rice hulls will turn into rich black humus that will help your vegetables grow strong and healthy. Composting methods are discussed at greater length in the June 2009 issue of Farm to Market. You can also use rice hulls as mulch. Keeping soil covered in tropical climates can moderate temperature extremes, to smother annoying weeds, and to increase the content of the soil's organic matter. They also help the earth to retain water, a major asset in any dry season field or garden. Rice hulls are a flexible, free source of mulch that will meet all of these needs. Beyond the garden, rice hulls can be used in a variety of fuel saving technologies. Many of you might be familiar with a traditional improved cook stove designed to save fuel by retaining more heat to cook food. Imagine a cook stove that doesn't just reduce the need for charcoal or firewood, but eliminates it entirely. A local teacher in Mango has developed a simple stove that can cook using rice hulls, peanut shells, or wood shavings as fuel.

The stove is a basic metal cylinder about 20-30 cm tall, large enough to balance a medium-sized pot on top, with one circular hole about 20 cm in diameter. To use the stove, place two large glass bottles inside, one standing vertically centered in the stove, and the other lying horizontally and extending out of the hole in the side. The bottles should be touching to form an "L" shape inside the stove. Fill the stove with your fuel, tightly packing them around the bottles. You can stand on the fuel to achieve better compression. Carefully remove the bottles, replace the horizontal one with a single piece of fuel wood, and start a small fire in the hole left by the vertical hole with wood shavings or other kindling. The resulting fire will burn the fuel outward in concentric circles and should stay hot for several hours. Cover the pot well, and consider building a traditional improved cook stove around the metal stove to achieve high cooking temperatures. Rice hulls can also be used in the clay mixture in place of hay when constructing a clay improved cook stove.

Another option is to use rice hulls to build a retained heat cooker, otherwise known as a hay box cooker. The principle and construction is straightforward. The goal is to use the rice hulls to insulate the basket or box. Find a gunnysack or two of rice hulls, a large basket or box, a needle, and some raffia thread. The first step is to sew a gunny into the basket to create a lining. (You can skip this step if your basket is finely woven enough to hold rice hulls without leaking.) Then make a mound of rice hulls on the bottom of the basket or box several centimeters high. Cover the mound with another piece of gunny large enough to entirely cover the sides of your basket or box and sew around the bottom. Then take a medium or large sized pot and place it in the middle of your basket, or box over the mound you just created. Next, fill in the space between the side of the basket or box and the pot with rice hulls, creating insulation that will allow you to retain the heat of a pre-heated dish. Once you've created a good insulating layer, you need to sew the gunny around the top of the basket to keep the rice hulls in place. Finally, use an empty gunny to create a pillow of rice hulls to cover the pot once it's in the cooker. The pillow doesn't need to be too tightly packed, just thick enough to keep heat from escaping through the lid.

Once finished, the retained heat cooker is a fuel-saving horse, particularly if you use gas to cook. Boil rice for three minutes and then put in the cooker for twenty. Say you forget to soak beans. Simply boil for four minutes, then put them into the cooker for an hour, and you can cook as normal. Times are even faster for black-eyed peas. You can also cook vegetables, pasta, couscous, reportedly even meat, although I confess I've never tried the latter.

Next time you walk by that discarded pile of rice hulls outside your local mill, consider the possibilities. As compost, mulch, and fuel-saver, rice hulls could catalyze a rice to riches story in your village. ■

Du Champ au Marché

L'Eau Potable Pour Tout Le Togo

Partie II: Le début du projet

Par ALASSANI Abd-el-Kader | Homologue togolais

Un point d'eau doit toujours avoir un bureau de gestion. Ce bureau est composé d'un ou d'une président(e), d'un secrétaire, d'un ou d'une trésorier(e) et des conseillers(ères). Le rôle de ce bureau est de veiller aux problèmes de ce point d'eau pour sa bonne marche et rendre compte à la communauté ou population qui l'utilise.

Les autres personnes importantes :

Technicien-eau est une personne qui étudie les différents types de pompe. Son rôle est d'aider les communautés ou bureau de gestion des points d'eau à établir un devis, à se procurer des pièces de rechange de bonne qualité et à des prix normaux. Il anime des rencontres de sensibilisation sur l'eau potable, l'hygiène et la maintenance des points d'eau.

Faites-vous aider par un Technicien-eau pour le choix et l'achat des pièces de rechange et vous ne regretterez pas sur la qualité et les prix des pièces.

Où et comment trouver un Technicien-eau? L'Etat Togolais a placé un Technicien-eau (Agent de l'hydraulique villageoise) dans chaque préfecture du Togo. Le Technicien-eau est habileté à vous trouver un Artisan-Réparateur expérimenté.

Artisan-Réparateur (Mécanicien des pompes) est une personne qui a suivi une formation complète de la réparation des pompes et qui a un équipement complet des outils adéquats pour ce travail.

Où trouver un Artisan-Réparateur expérimenté? Le Ministère de l'hydraulique organise périodiquement les formations des Artisans-Réparateurs en collaboration avec les O.N.G, et les équipe en outils après leur formation. Dans chaque préfecture, il y a plusieurs Artisans-Réparateurs connus par les Techniciens-eau.

Conseil très important pour les communautés dans le choix d'un Artisan-Réparateur—Faites-vous aider par un Technicien-eau pour choisir votre Artisan-Réparateur si non vous prendrez un mécanicien de vélo en quête de quoi manger et sans formation ni outils adéquats qui viendra faire tomber votre pompe dans le forage.

Mobilisation des fonds nécessaires pour la maintenance d'un point d'eau : La communauté mobilise les fonds en vendant l'eau à chaque membre de la communauté ou en collectant des cotisations par personne ou par famille de la communauté.

Différentes parties d'une pompe

Pompe P.B. ou Pompe INDIA MARK II sont constituées des deux parties qui sont :

1. Partie extérieure appelée Borne extérieure est composée d'une tête, de pompe, un déversoir et un bâti. Dans la tête, on a une chaîne, un axe, un levier et une paire de Roulement.
2. Partie interne. Elle est la partie de la pompe qui est suspendue dans le forage ; elle est composée des tubes, ou tuyaux, des tringles et du cylindre. Il y a toujours les inoxydables qui coûtent chers mais qui ne se rouillent pas et les pièces galvanisées qui coûtent moins chères mais qui se rouillent.

Pompe Vergnet est constituée de deux parties qui sont :

1. Partie extérieure appelée Borne extérieure est composée d'un tube ou l'eau sort terminée en haut par un guidon où les utilisateurs tiennent et une pédale sur laquelle on actionne pour faire monter l'eu avec le pied.
2. Partie interne. Elle est la partie de la pompe qui est suspendue dans le forage ; elle est composée de deux tuyaux en caoutchouc terminées par un corps métallique dans lequel se trouve un tube en caoutchouc qui aspire l'eau appelé Baudruche.

Où peut-on trouver les pièces de rechange pompes?

Les pièces des pompes P.B. et INDIA MARK II sont dans les dépôts de l'Usine UPROMAH dans toutes les préfectures et certains cantons de la partie Nord du Togo. L'usine de fabrication des pièces elle-même se trouve à Kara en face de la station d'Essence Shell 2 sur la route de Dapaong après le camp militaire. On peut trouver aussi ces pièces à Sokodé chez TAMANZ, à Atakpamé et à Lomé. De même pour les pièces de la pompe Vergnet. La société Vergnet a mis à la disposition des communautés les dépôts dans toutes préfectures du Togo. ■

Les Obstacles des Femmes et Comment Les Surmonter

Par SCHEINPFLUG Jes | PCV GEE

J'ai eu l'honneur de présenter une séance sur le thème «Les femmes et leadership» à Lomé pour la Deuxième Foire Annuelle Artisanale. La séance a renforcé beaucoup de mes idées.

Pendant la séance tout le monde a cité beaucoup d'obstacles des femmes, les hommes comme les femmes. Ils ont cité «la peur», «manque de confiance en soi», « mauvaise planification», etc. comme des obstacles. Selon moi, ce n'est pas uniquement les femmes qui rencontrent ces obstacles et ces difficultés, mais les hommes aussi. Mais, pourquoi est-ce qu'ils ont dit que c'est un problème des femmes ? Est-ce que c'est vrai? Je vais dire toujours non, que ces obstacles affectent les hommes aussi. Mais il y a une raison pour que les peuples du Togo affirment le contraire.

Après un petit débat, ils ont cité un autre obstacle «La mentalité et coutumes africaines,» et je voudrais élaborer sur cette idée.

Moi, je ne peux pas changer les habitudes des Togolais mais je peux partager mes connaissances et mes idées en espérant qu'un jour le Togolais les développera.

D'abord, le problème commence pendant la jeunesse. A l'école, j'ai constaté que quand une fille parle, les garçons se moquent d'elle. Quand les filles vont au lycée, souvent elles font la Série A et les garçons font la Série D. Souvent aussi, on dit qu'une fille ne peut pas faire les sciences. Ça veut dire que nous donnons l'idée très tôt dans la vie que les filles ne sont pas capables. Comment est-ce que les filles peuvent avoir la confiance en soi si on leur dit souvent que «ce n'est pas pour les filles, c'est pour les garçons» dans beaucoup de domaines?

Egalement, le travail domestique prend beaucoup de temps. Normalement, c'est les femmes qui vont préparer les repas, faire la lessive, laver les assiettes, etc. Elles manquent du temps pour gérer leurs entreprises ou travaux. Ce n'est pas juste. Bien sûr les hommes vont mieux travailler s'ils ont beaucoup de temps pour réfléchir et planifier. On me dit que les hommes travaillent beaucoup aussi. Je ne le nie pas, mais je crois que les femmes travaillent plus que les hommes. J'ai fait une expérience pour déterminer si j'ai raison: Nous avons créé un emploi du temps pour les hommes et un pour les femmes dans mon village. Nous avons vu que les femmes travaillent, en général, quatre (4) heures plus que les hommes.

Mais, même si nous pouvons abandonner cette mentalité, il y a toujours des problèmes pour les femmes. C'est plus difficile pour les femmes de gagner un prêt parce que les femmes manquent de crédit. Les hommes peuvent commencer un travail plus facilement que les femmes parce que les hommes héritent la terre et les affaires de leurs pères ; cependant, les femmes sont dépendantes des hommes pour la terre et/ou l'argent pour pouvoir commencer un travail. Actuellement il y a des lois qui donnent le droit aux femmes d'hériter et de posséder la terre. Selon moi, je pense qu'il faut surmonter les problèmes culturels (comme la moquerie qui donne le manque de confiance en soi) avant de lutter contre le manque de crédit. J'insiste sur ce sentiment parce que si on donne l'occasion aux femmes de faire tout mais on dit toujours que «les filles ne peuvent pas,» l'occasion ne vaut rien.

Il y a des bénéfices pour tout le monde, les hommes comme les femmes, quand une femme travaille. Elle peut gagner de l'argent pour la famille et ce n'est pas nécessaire de le demander à un homme. De cette manière, on peut éviter les grossesses non désirées pour les femmes et les filles qui pensent qu'elles ne sont pas capables sans les hommes. On peut aussi éviter la pauvreté. Les femmes constituent environ 52% (pour cent) de la population du Togo. Si plus de la moitié ne travaille pas, c'est les minorités, les hommes, qui doivent supporter la majorité. (C'est la pagaille, parce que les femmes sont capables!)

Donc, je vous encourage à changer vos habitudes et vos mentalités pour aider vos familles et votre pays. Vous pouvez : 1. Dire aux enfants que les filles peuvent faire tout ce que les garçons font (équité genre) ; 2. Partager le travail domestique entre les garçons et les filles.

Moi, je pense qu'un vrai homme qui aime sa femme peut l'aider facilement. Les pères qui aiment leurs filles peuvent le faire. Maintenant c'est le moment d'améliorer la vie de tous et ça ne peut pas aller sans inclure 52% (pour cent) du pays. ■

La femme dans l'agriculture et le commerce

Par ABALODO Salome | Homologue togolaise

Au Togo plusieurs organisations financières des ONG et le gouvernement ne ménagent aucun effort pour l'épanouissement de la femme, étant conscients qu'elle est le moteur de la famille. Et comme toujours dans chaque lutte que l'on mène il y a des obstacles à surmonter ce qui est tout naturel.

La femme togolaise dans sa lutte de tous les jours pour rendre heureuse sa famille qui lui a été toujours précieuse et dans sa lutte pour contribuer au développement de son pays a compris que l'on ne peut prétendre au développement sans parler de l'agropastoral et du commerce.

C'est ainsi que la femme togolaise s'est lancée dans l'agropastoral et dans d'autres activités génératrices de revenus comme le commerce. Cependant, nombreuses sont les difficultés auxquelles elle est confrontée que ce soit au sein de sa famille, dans son entourage ou avec les ONG et les organisations financières.

Mis à part les communs problèmes qu'ont les femmes et les hommes dans ces activités, la femme est confrontée au problème d'accès aux terres pour l'exploitation ceci au sein de la famille. C'est là la première difficulté de la femme, l'accès aux terres d'une part. D'autre part l'entourage qui lui fait croire que l'activité qu'elle embrasse n'est pas pour les femmes et que

c'est trop risqué que d'investir dans l'agriculture. L'autre problème que l'on peut soulever est que la femme est appelée à travailler dans le champ de son mari, mais jamais son mari ne l'assiste dans ses champs sous prétexte qu'elle vendra ses produits or cet argent qu'elle se fera à partir de la vente de ses produits sert à entretenir sa petite famille. En ce sens que le mari n'étant pas salarié elle doit acheter des vêtements aux enfants, prendre soins de leur santé, payer le moulin, les condiments pour la sauce, et bien d'autres choses. Par rapport à ce problème je pense que les hommes doivent se réjouir d'avoir des femmes désireuses de se battre pour les aider dans les tâches de la famille, et les assister quand elles ont besoin de leur soutien dans les activités qu'elles mènent pour la bonne harmonie dans les ménages parce que tout compte fait l'argent s'il ne fait pas le bonheur, il contribue sans doute au bonheur d'une famille. Le gouvernement pour sa part, je crois, doit prendre des dispositions pour que les femmes puissent être protégées et que leur droit de propriétaires terriennes leur soit reconnu au sein des familles lorsque celles-ci se présentent à la justice, que les domaines laissés par leurs parents soient repartis de façon équitable entre les filles et les garçons.

La difficulté d'accès aux crédits où la femme doit présenter une garantie pour accéder aux crédits. Ce qui est presque impossible pour la plupart des femmes de trouver de quoi garantir un crédit mis à part la garantie financière de 50% du crédit sollicité pour aussi une courte durée et à la fin on se retrouve avec un capital sans bénéfice pour avoir payer le crédit avec des intérêts. Parfois après remboursement il ne reste plus de quoi refaire ses activités et à chaque fois on tourne sur soi sans trouver de solution. Parfois le crédit te tombe sous la main quand c'est trop tard pour les engraissements des champs et dans l'espoir de sauver quelque chose on le prend quand même le crédit mais le rendement n'est pas le même que si le champ avait été engraissé à temps d'où la femme juge bon de rester dans sa pauvreté plutôt que d'exercer des activités pour enrichir les micro finances en dépensant beaucoup d'énergie sans pour sa part en bénéficier. L'agriculture est restée archaïque que manuellement il est difficile d'exploiter de grandes superficies permettant de produire une quantité importante et pouvoir solliciter le marché à l'extérieur, pour une meilleure vente car la vente sur place non seulement n'est pas évidente mais peut se faire à un prix très bas ne permettant pas de couvrir les charges évaluées. Pour donc remédier à ces deux points crédit et faible productivité il faut que le gouvernement donne plein pouvoir aux agents de l'ICAT et de la DPAEP de suivre et garantir des crédits pour les producteurs ou subventionner les productrices qui sont à leur début afin de les aider à avoir de bonnes bases. Le gouvernement peut également mettre à la disposition de ces productrices des machines comme le tracteur, la batteuse, et la décortiqueuse de riz, l'égraineuse et autres pour encourager ces dernières.

Je suis dans ma quatrième année dans l'agriculture après avoir traversé les premiers obstacles sur les multiples obstacles à traverser mais je tiens bon et espère toujours arriver un jour à atteindre mes objectifs qui sont de me faire un salaire à partir du fruit de cette activité que je mène, et être une modèle pour les femmes de ma région qui hésitent encore pour qu'elles ne se découragent jamais mais qu'elles osent puis y arriveront.

Avec mon expérience personnelle le travail en groupement a beaucoup d'inconvénients et donc il y a lieu de revoir cette forme d'aide adoptée par le gouvernement. Un ou deux individus dans un groupement peuvent se décider faire tomber le groupement et alors refusent de rembourser leur part de crédit et du coup tout le groupement est incrédible et ceci retarde les autres dans leur évolution. Ces promesses d'achat des produits des agriculteurs qui ne sont pas tenues et qui créent des problèmes de non remboursement qui sanctionnent tous les autres producteurs sont à revoir.

Les organisations financières qui appuient les femmes et interviennent aussi dans l'entreprenariat doivent approcher sans exception tous les coins du pays pour que personne ne soit oublié d'autant plus que beaucoup ignorent par quels moyens les atteindre et de quelle manière

Nous avons toujours des promesses qui ne sont jamais tenues et depuis aucune subvention ni crédit du gouvernement pour atténuer ces intérêts élevés des institutions financière ne permettent pas pour un début de réussir. J'ai fais recours à AGAIB Kara sans succès, au développement à la base sans succès, et pour le crédit la difficulté réside au niveau des garanties financières et aux autres formes de garantie avec une durée très courte des échéances. Pourtant j'ai entendu parler des subventions et des appuis dans le domaine agricole de la promotion féminine mais je crois que ce n'est pas vraiment ça sur le terrain car le dévouement, le sacrifice que mènent les femmes, est très grand qu'un soutien du gouvernement dans le même sens l'aidera à réussir dans ses entreprises. Les fonds investis dans la formation en comptabilité et en gestion des femmes analphabètes en une langue qu'elles ne connaissent pas, français, et ceci en trois ou quatre jours ce n'est pas une solution. Je pense qu'il faut engager des animateurs qui leur tiennent leurs documents comptables et des documents administratifs et travaillent avec elles jusqu'à ce que l'alphabétisation passe à 100% pour toutes les régions que de gaspiller, je pense, de l'argent pour des formations qui ennuient les femmes. Soutenir les femmes peu alphabétisées par des formations dans l'organisation du travail dans la gestion du groupement pour qu'elles assistent leur groupement.

Pour le commerce, d'énormes difficultés se font sentir de loin, seulement je ne peux toucher en détails ce côté pour le fait que je n'ai pas assez d'expériences dans cette domaine. Rien qu'à vendre les produits de mes champs, j'ai une idée sur les obstacles que rencontrent les femmes et à écouter les commerçantes qui viennent acheter les produits de nos champs. Le transport leur revient très cher aucun contrôle pour amortir les charges des commerçantes au niveau douane comme au niveau des services transport. Pour les ventes des produits céréaliers, le problème de mesure qui se pose où l'on remplit un sac de quarante (40) bols qui revient à trente bols à la vente agissant ainsi sur le résultat qui était attendu plusieurs autres problèmes. Comme problèmes de magasin pour le stockage des produits, à commercialiser leurs conservations, leurs transports pour le marché sont d'autres frais qui peuvent être amoindris par des constructions des magasins dans les marchés, la réglementation et le contrôle des coûts des taxis bagages.

Je suis à la tête d'une fédération des unions de groupements motivés prêts à relever le défit et, qui nous écoute et peut nous assister qu'il n'hésite pas et peut nous contacter au 91916858 / 99928904.

Pour notre fédération la bataille continue et nos portes sont ouvertes à tous les groupements féminins de la préfecture de la Binah ceci sans exception. A travers cet article je lance un appel au gouvernement, à toutes les autorités, et surtout aux bailleurs de fonds, les femmes qui sont vos mamans, vos épouses, et vos sœurs ont besoin de votre appui pour contribuer au développement et améliorer les conditions de vie dans les ménages. ■

sécurité alimentaire

Le Stockage

Votre assurance de la sécurité alimentation

Par JAMESON Mark | PCV SED

Les femmes alignées au marché
Elles sont restées toute la journée ;
Par terre les grandes cuvettes
Qu'elles ont amenées sur la tête.
Les aliments qu'elles vous proposent,
Forment un chemin menant aux bonnes choses,
Parce que en bien faisant cette matière,
Nous assurons la sécurité alimentaire.

Une scène très commune au Togo: les femmes assises au marché, alignées avec leurs cuvettes pleines de maïs, soja ou haricot posées devant elles. Souvent cette image représente, pour les volontaires, la stagnation et le manque de différentiation de l'économie togolaise. La vente des aliments au marché semble très simple et immuable, quelque chose qui n'a rien à voir avec le développement, mais pouvons-nous trouver des opportunités pour les femmes togolaises ?

On voit plusieurs possibilités avec le stockage :

Le stockage est une activité qui remporte des bénéfices divers. Sur le plan alimentaire, le stockage nous permet d'économiser notre récolte afin qu'elle puisse nourrir la famille pendant plus de temps. On épargne de l'argent à la banque pour éviter le gaspillage et promouvoir la sécurité financière de la famille ; on peut de la même façon promouvoir la sécurité alimentaire en faisant bien le stockage. Si la nourriture de la famille est assurée, on fait face moins souvent aux choix entre les aliments et les autres dépenses nécessaires, tels que l'écolage, les soins médicaux, les cérémonies et ainsi de suite.

Sur le plan financier, le stockage pourrait être une activité génératrice de revenu. Que ce soit une seule personne ou un groupement qui mène l'activité, si vous savez bien les changements des prix tout au long de l'année, vous pouvez gérer vos achats et ventes pour trouver des bénéfices. Ainsi, le stockage vous permet de nourrir la famille et en même temps de gagner de l'argent dont vous avez besoin pour d'autres projets familiaux.

Sur le plan personnel, il y a un aspect du stockage qui est très important. il a le pouvoir de vous libérer des soucis incessants liés à l'alimentation de la famille. Une fois libéré de ces soucis, vous aurez plus de temps, énergie et argent afin de gérer vos AGR, vos foyers et dans le cas des élèves, vos études. Le fait d'avoir assuré vos premiers besoins représente déjà une étape essentielle du processus de développement. Si vous n'êtes plus au gré de ces soucis et problèmes, vous serez plus capable de vous occuper de ce que vous voulez ; bref, vous êtes plus libre.

Comme le Togo est un pays avec plusieurs climats, avant de faire le stockage, bien sûr, vous devez vous renseigner sur les façons spécifiques de protéger chaque aliment et les expériences des autres qui ont fait le stockage dans la zone.

Cet article essaie de vous montrer brièvement trois bénéfices généraux du stockage et, le plus important, le lien fort qui existe entre la sécurité alimentaire et le développement. Une fois qu'on assure la sécurité alimentaire, le reste peut suivre. ■

La Lutte Contre La Malnutrition

Une boulangère introduit le pain de soja

Par MCCULLOUGH Samantha | PCV CHAP

Au Togo, la gravité de la malnutrition se trouve au même niveau que celui du paludisme et la santé reproductive (par exemple le VIH/SIDA). La cadence nationale de la malnutrition est grave parmi les enfants en-dessous de cinq est à 14,4%, selon l'état des enfants du monde. Les togolais et les expatriés jouent un grand rôle dans la lutte contre la malnutrition avec tenacité et innovation créative. Nanimpo DJIBONGUE, une boulangère à Sibortoti—un village au sud de Dapaong—est un bon exemple de cette innovation créative. DJIBONGUE a introduit le pain de soja aux deux groupements des femmes le 27 décembre 2011 à Sibortoti.

Le pain de soja?! Oui, le pain de soja.

Depuis 5000 ans, le soja a été considéré comme un des cinq plantes sacrées—les autres sont le riz, le blé, l'orge et le mil. Aujourd'hui, la plupart des expatriés savent que le soja est riche en valeur nutritive comme source non animale de huit acides aminés essentiels, ce qui en fait la seule protéine végétale complète. Le soja est une protéine de 38%--un grand pourcentage pour un haricot. Encore une fois, 38! Voilà, la raison pour laquelle la fabrication en grande série du pain de soja sera remarquablement utile au Togo.

Imaginez les possibilités!! Imaginez les changements !! Au lieu de deux choix de pain (salé ou sucré), il y a un troisième. Evidement, au cœur du projet, ce n'est pas que le choix d'acheter une autre sorte de pain ; mais surtout le gros effort comme aider les enfants à grandir.

Le pain de soja, comment diffère-t-il du pain salé ou sucré?

À part des bénéfices nutritifs, il est plus profitable d'acheter la farine de soja que la farine de blé. Par exemple, cinq bols de la farine de soja sont comparables à un bol de la farine de blé. C'est-à-dire, c'est le même prix mais la farine de soja est considérablement moins chère.

Les ingrédients pour fabriquer le pain de soja: Le sel, l'huile végétale, la farine de soja, le sucre (On ajoute le sucre pour que les togolais le mangent.), la farine de blé, la levure, le Grand B, l'anis vert, et le Baking Powder.

Chez DJIBONGUE, la formation est bien passée. Plusieurs femmes des groupements ont vu comment fabriquer le pain, mais surtout, elles ont participé à la fabrication elles-mêmes. En regardant les femmes, j'ai imaginé que l'idée de faire le pain de soja est semblable à la fabrication du savon liquide et la pommade de NEEM : un autre moyen de gagner un peu d'argent.

Même si vous n'êtes pas les volontaires du programme CHAP, vous pourriez les aider. Avec votre aide, on peut vaincre la lutte contre les maladies alimentaires. Voyez plus bas.

Les maladies alimentaires :

Comment éviter les maladies qui découlent de la malnutrition ?

- Enseignez la bonne nutrition (une alimentation équilibrée, mais réaliste) à la communauté. Pendant la saison des mangues, par exemple, faites une causerie à propos bénéfices nutritifs des mangues
- Faites une causerie sur le moringa
- Un régime riche en protéine avec les calories adéquates pour que l'enfant puisse bien grandir. Pensez au « changement du comportement, » chaque membre d'une famille a besoin de la protéine
- Animez les séances CPC (pesée des enfants) avec les ASC

- L'identification précoce et le traitement opportun des maladies alimentaires
- La Planification Familiale!

J'espère que cet article vous donne l'inspiration de partager la recette ou bien l'idée avec les autres. Je veux que le pain de soja soit partout au Togo dans (au moins) deux ans. Aidez-moi à le promouvoir, s'il vous plait !

Si vous voulez plus d'information sur le sujet du pain de soja, n'hésitez pas à faire le contact via courrier électronique, EMS, texte ou appel. Je suis disponible à vous aider. Mille fois merci.

Discussion au tour du Moringa

Par SINANDJA Paul | APCD EAFS

Ceci est une interview que j'avais réalisée avec le RPCV Sekou a l'occasion d'un débat qu'il a voulu autour de la plante moringa. Lecteur découvrez ce qu'elle contient d'originale.

1. Comment reconnaître le moringa ?

Il y a plusieurs espèces de moringa mais l'espèce la plus courante et la connue et celle qui est indiquée être utile pour ses différentes vertus au Togo est le moringa oleifera ou Neverdié.

De façon particulière la plante se caractérise par ses petites feuilles tripennées et ses grandes gousses. Toutes les parties de la plante sont utiles. (Feuille, gousses, fleurs, graines, tronc, racines)

Selon l'exploitation on peut maintenir la plante à l'état d'arbuste ou d'arbre. Toutefois le moringa oleifera se caractérise par sa croissance rapide et sa résistance à la sécheresse, aux ravageurs de plantes et aux maladies que connaissent de nombreux arbres en zone tropicale.

2. Pourquoi le moringa est surnommé l'arbre de la vie ?

Certains l'appel l'arbre du miracle ou l'arbre du paradis, la plante mère ou la mère des plantes. Toutes ces appellations témoignent de son importance pour la vie.

C'est parce que depuis les temps mémoriaux toutes les parties de plante ont été reconnu bénéfiques sur le plan nutritionnel, médicinal, alimentaire, commerciale, ornemental, cosmétique,… pour l'humanité que l'on a qualifié le moringa de « Arbre de la vie ». Les populations à travers le monde (en Asie en Afrique et en Amérique) utilisent le moringa oleifera à cause de ces multiples qualités.

3. Comment utiliser le moringa ?

Nous avons toujours et jusqu'alors mis un accent sur l'importance des feuilles mais les autres parties de la plante (en étude) continuent de nous intéresser à cause de leurs utilités reconnues.

Ainsi donc on peut utiliser :

- Les feuilles fraiches comme légume mais également la poudre des feuilles sèches comme complément alimentaire. Les feuilles contiennent de nombreuses vitamines et l'essentiel des acides aminés indispensables a notre santé.
- Les gousses fraiches en début de maturité peuvent être consommé comme des haricots verts et à l'état de maturité avancée comme des petits pois et lorsqu'elles sont sèches on peut consommer les graines débarrassées de leur coque comme des arachides.

Les graines sèches ont surtout une propriété bactéricide et leur pouvoir de floculation permet de les utiliser pour la purification de l'eau.

- Les fleurs sont indispensables pour donner les gousses et les graines pour la multiplication- Elles peuvent par contre être incorporées à des sauces de tomate ou d'arachide.

En infusion et prise sous forme de thé les fleurs peuvent soulager les crises de sinusites.

Pour consommer les fleurs il faut disposer de plusieurs arbres. Ceci est valable pour la consommation des gousses.

- La poudre des racines constitue un puissant analgésique en cataplasme sur les parties douloureuses du corps/ plaie, furoncle, mal de genou, douleurs articulaires… ; attention á utiliser toutefois avec modération a cause des brûlures qui peuvent survenir. En cas de brulures utiliser le beure de karité.
- L'écorce du tronc aurait des propriétés á soulagé les crises d'hypertension et la gomme du tronc peut être utilisée pour épaissir les sauces.

4. Quels conseils donneriez-vous aux jeunes et á la communauté ?

J'exhorte les jeunes à être attentif á ce qui les entoure et á contribuer de divers manière á la protection de l'environnement, á commencer par leur environnement immédiat en plantant des arbres ou en prenant soin de ceux qui existent

Planter un arbre de moringa á partir d'une graine ou á partir d'une bouture est une action importante et un acte responsable.

Encourager au village les parents, les amis á planter des arbres en général et des arbres de moringa en particulier pour protéger les champs et les plantations contre les feux de brousse est une solution durable pour éviter la perte des récoltes. Une ceinture de plantation de moringa peut constituer une barrière efficace contre les feux de brousse parce que le moringa est une plante qui résiste après un certain âge aux feux de par sa constitution et la nature tubéreuse de sa racine. Cette « technique » vous permet de gagner beaucoup et de bénéficier des autres avantages de la plante mentionnés plus haut.

J'encourage les jeunes à se faire des cadeaux symboliques, par exemple offrir une petite plante de moringa à un ami le jour de son anniversaire ou à un enfant le jour de son baptême. Ceci est un grand geste pour celui qui veut réaliser quelque chose avec les autres, pour les autres et pour lui même. Voila comment les jeunes peuvent apprendre à se faire une place ineffaçable dans la société. ■