This report is a snapshot of our achievements in 2018. We thank all our technical and financial partners for the genuine collaboration towards agricultural communities.

May 2019
Benin
https://aced-benin.org/en
ACED has completed the final year of its 2014–2018 Strategic Plan. During the implementation of the strategy, we developed several initiatives aimed at achieving our mission, which is to improve food and nutritional security in Benin while ensuring environmental sustainability. In brief, the last year of implementation of our strategic plan enabled us to set the future direction of our activities. Indeed, our new implementation approach will use the experiences we have accumulated to define a set of services that will enable agricultural households to improve the productivity of their economic activities. ACED’s focus will then be on providing these services to agricultural households.

Furthermore, we will strengthen our links with policymakers. ACED’s implementation approach requires the conduct of research-action activities with and for policies in order to promote evidence-informed decision-making. The workshop we organized on 18 September 2018 is the materialization of this approach. It made it possible to bridge the gap between research-action and policies and it facilitates the use of scientific evidence and endogenous knowledge in the formulation and orientation of policies and strategies for the development of the inland fishery sector.

ACED will strive in 2019 to develop its 2020–2024 Strategic Plan, which will guide the center’s new approach and activities. We invite those reading this report to discover more about our activities and impact by visiting our website.

Frejus Thoto
Executive Director, ACED
**Key achievements in 2018**

**January**
The two allotment gardens in the cities of Porto-Novo and Abomey-Calavi recorded their first sales, improving the income of the urban poor who run them.

**March**
A dialogue with organic gardeners was initiated to develop a strategy on how to increase the marketing of products made from water hyacinth compost.

**May**
“What does the fisherman want?” a publication on the constraints faced by inland fishers was released.

**July**
A dialogue with urban agriculture stakeholders was conducted to better understand the constraints related to urban gardening.

**August**
“Women in inland fisheries” this publication clarifies the important role women play in inland fisheries and gender-sensitive approaches to support them.

ACED, with the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, organized a scientific workshop to discuss methods for integrating socio-economic, biophysical and spatial factors in the design of an empirical model for estimating fish production at the Lake Nokoué-Porto-Novo lagoon complex.
September
Policy engagement in support of the inland fishery sector—the Science & Policy conference brought together all stakeholders in the sector to formulate a common roadmap to support the development of inland fisheries in Benin.

October
ACED conducted a policy dialogue with local authorities of the municipality of So-ava on the importance of supporting local actors such as gardeners producing with water hyacinth compost.

November
14 policy-oriented publications were produced and disseminated.

December
Contribution to the promotion of “local consumption” in Benin

ACED continues to promote “local consumption” in Benin through its initiative on the valorization of water hyacinth in compost and its use in market gardening, as well as through support for the marketing of these agroecological produce. An upscaling strategy is being developed to extend the initiative to other areas that face the problem of water-hyacinth proliferation. The strategy will also improve the sale of healthy compost-based produce. A study carried out for this purpose draws clear conclusions on growing demand for gardening products that can be met by agroecological processes, through the establishment of a mechanism for aggregating supply and demand. In addition, it highlights opportunities in agroecological market-gardening value chains in important market segments such as processing. Opportunities also exist in the vertical integration of value-chain segments for increasing sale of agroecological market-gardening products.

Next step

The development of a business plan for a financial and economic analysis of the sale of these local agroecological products is planned and the evaluation of possibilities of bio (organic) certification of market-gardening products, in order to promote “local consumption” in Benin.
Reducing human pressure on mangroves of Ramsar 1017 and 1018 sites

ACED is working to reduce human pressure on mangroves of Ramsar 1017 and 1018 sites. Thanks to its research-action work on the production of biogas from water hyacinth and household bio-waste, a digester has been built as part of a pilot project. The digester is supplied daily in order to achieve continuous biogas production. The long-term objective is twofold: to reduce pressure on the mangroves of Ramsar 1018 by promoting biogas as a cooking energy source instead of mangrove wood; and to fight against the proliferation of water hyacinth. Similarly, in the mangrove areas of Ramsar 1017 site, ACED initiated beekeeping as a new source of income for 30 pilot beneficiaries in order to reduce pressure on these mangroves. These beneficiaries have been trained in beekeeping techniques and supplied with the necessary equipment to start beekeeping activities. They were also sensitized on the importance of mangroves and their role in the development of the Ramsar 1017 site ecosystem. Initiatives to regenerate degraded mangrove areas at the Ramsar 1017 site have also been launched with the planting of 155 red mangrove propagules.

Next step

Gardeners will be trained in household-waste sorting techniques and the processes of feeding the digester and using biogas bags for the domestic use of biogas. In addition, new beekeepers will be supported in the marketing of honey labelled “mangroves 1017 honey” and 50 women will be trained in the construction of improved stoves. The vegetation cover will also be regenerated with the planting of other mangroves.
Supporting the development of inland fishery in Benin

In 2018, ACED intensified its research and policy engagement activities in the inland fisheries sector. Two main research reports were published, and a national policy engagement conference was held on 18 September 2018. ACED’s work in partnership with the Laboratory of Hydrobiology and Aquaculture and the Amsterdam Center for World Food Studies made it possible to explore the vulnerability of Benin’s inland fisheries sector to the increasing (anthropogenic) pressure on water resources. Water, fish and banks are significantly polluted by heavy metals (including lead and mercury), fermentable materials, cans and plastic waste. In addition, fisher communities are facing organizational difficulties, resurgent conflicts, declining fish catches, food insecurity and illiteracy.

A national knowledge-sharing and policy-engagement conference brought together all stakeholders to identify and discuss solutions to address these constraints. The conference identified the following practical solutions to improve the livelihoods of fishermen and women in the fishing sector: tackling lake pollution by focusing on sources of pollution; effectively implementing legislation on fishing without political interference; investing in the education of the children of fishers communities; and promoting alternative economic activities to fishing such as processing of water hyacinth, aquaculture and market gardening.

Before the research conducted by ACED, evidence on pollution in lakes was lacking. Now the materials produced by the project are of good use to us to engage fishers and policy makers on the challenges posed by the pollution of the lakes and how to overcome them.

David Houngué, Chairman of the National Federation of Fishers
Next step

The solutions identified go beyond individual actions and require the commitment of various actors, including public sector organizations, to sustainably build the capacity of fishing communities over the long term. To this end, discussions have been initiated on the creation of a multi-stakeholder platform to improve the performance of the inland fisheries sector. ACED will continue to engage stakeholders on the effective implementation and facilitation of this platform.

Reducing poverty and food insecurity in cities through allotment gardens

According to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, about five people out of ten in Benin lived in urban areas in 2018. This shows that urbanization is increasing rapidly, resulting in more challenges than cities can cope with. Urbanization threatens food security because the dominance of cash in accessing food in cities links urban food systems to poverty. ACED, in collaboration with the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences of the University of Abomey-Calavi and the Amsterdam Center for World Food Studies of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, conducted research on the urban poor and found that they have a low level of education, lack financial resources, live in poor housing conditions, have limited access to social services such as health, and the majority (76%) suffers from food insecurity. Therefore, ACED is testing whether allotment gardens can provide the urban poor with access to fresh food and income to improve their food situation. It then developed two allotment gardens in the cities of Abomey-Calavi and Porto- Novo that are self-managed by low-income households.
I used to stay at home and regularly got sick. But since I’ve started gardening, I go out of the house and make efforts to cultivate. I’ve noticed since then that I feel better and do not get sick anymore. This additional benefit really makes me happy in the work in addition to the profits that I make on my plot. From now on, not only do I get money, but I no longer spend it to heal myself. My husband is proud of me.

Ms Reine Toboekan

I don’t remember the last time I bought vegetables to cook at home. Indeed, since I’ve start farming and harvesting on my plot, I regularly provide my household with vegetables. This has greatly reduced my food expenses and given me more autonomy at home. My husband looks at me even more positively and allowed me to invest more in the activity.

Ms. Adelaide Kounoukpevi

Preliminary results showed that these gardens can generate about 6 000 euros (4 million FCFA) per year and per hectare. These encouraging results can motivate households to start gardening and illustrate the change in the lives of the urban poor. A publication on how policies can support the development of urban agriculture in Benin has been developed and outlines the related benefits and constraints.

Next step

At the beginning of the initiative, it was very difficult to find suitable sites in these two cities. The main reason is that land-use policies do not clearly allocate space to urban agriculture in urban and peri-urban areas. Our objective is, therefore, to design a site-selection tool that helps decision-makers to optimally allocate land for the development of this activity.
RESEARCH REPORTS


DISSERTATIONS


TECHNICAL AND POLICY NOTES AND COMMUNICATIONS


Our publications are available at the following link: https://www.aced-benin.org/en/publications
They supported us in 2018

- CFSI
- Fondation de France
- FONDATION JM.BRUNEAU
- Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research
- fem
- FONDS POUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT MONDIAL
- PNUD
- REPIC
- Renewable Energy
- Energy - & Resource Efficiency
- Promotion in International Cooperation
- DagriVest
Finances 2018

- **Overhead**: 8.27%
- **Staff**: 20.19%
- **Research**: 26.81%
- **Knowledge sharing**: 36.41%
- **Training**: 8.32%