

The Hunger Project Africa: Increasing Food Security for Small Farmers

According to a United Nations report, hunger has affected 265 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa in 2009, an increase of almost 12 percent over 2008. With the highest prevalence of hunger relative to its population size, African food security is an urgent concern that requires a holistic, sustainable approach.

In Africa, The Hunger Project is addressing food security and other critical challenges by establishing 'epicenters': community centers where local people gather to develop programs that meet basic needs. After several phases over a five-year period, an epicenter community becomes self-reliant, meaning it is able to fund its own activities and no longer requires investment from The Hunger Project. The epicenters address a holistic range of issues such as water and sanitation, health, food security, education, nutrition, and family income.

The Hunger Project implements its Epicenter Strategy in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, Senegal and Uganda.

The Hunger Project's food security program includes the following components:

- **Food Banks**, built by local partners at each epicenter, enable people to successfully manage their own food security. People are empowered by building, stocking and managing their own food banks. All of our epicenters have at least three to four months of food reserves in their banks, ensuring access to staple foods year-round and providing stores for the dry season, famine, or droughts. Food banks also stabilize day-to-day food prices in local markets during times of crisis.
- **Agricultural Innovations and New Technologies** are made available to epicenter communities through partnerships with local government and other agencies. THP supplies partners with improved seed and fertilizer as well as innovative and low cost technologies such as drip irrigation, the use of micro-dose fertilizer, and new food storage technologies.
- **Community Farms** enable people to work together as a community that is large enough to be a viable economic unit, thereby contributing to their self-reliance. On the farms, the community learns composting, intercropping, and restoration of soil fertility; farmers also learn other sustainable practices like drip irrigation.
- **Nutrition Training** educates local people on preventive health, and pre- and post-natal nutrition. Other topics include breastfeeding, diet and nutrition, hygiene, family planning and malaria prevention. Additionally, the program provides supplemental sources of nutrition to partners.
- **Agricultural Diversification** in crops and farming techniques improves nutrition, economic stability, and soil health. THP implements innovative diversification strategies including off-season gardening, crop rotation, income source diversification and local organic fertilization.
- **Microfinance Programs** provide women farmers with easy access to credit, which diversifies their income generating activities, pays for family health care and education, and improves their standard of living. Since the inception of THP's Microfinance Program in 1999, loans have been disbursed to about 75,000 partners in Africa.