



SOIL PROTECTION AND REHABILITATION PROJECT REPORT



ORGANIZATION NAME:

OJA Sarl

FINANCIAL PARTNER:

ARA-SOUTH SOUTH NORTH

YEAR:

2021 - 2022

PROJECT LOCATION:

Benin

This report details the activities, achievements, challenges, and results of the Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project undertaken by OJA Sarl in partnership with ARA during the period 2021-2022.

1. Introduction

The **Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project** was successfully implemented to address the critical issue of soil degradation among smallholder farmers in Benin. Soils in the region have been severely impacted by unsustainable farming practices, climate change, and excessive chemical use, leading to reduced agricultural productivity and food insecurity. Over time, the project's focus on soil rehabilitation through the use of legumes and compost has significantly improved soil health, thereby enhancing agricultural yields and food security.

The project aimed to train smallholder farmers on effective soil restoration techniques using legumes, while also providing them with the necessary resources (such as legume seeds) to begin their rehabilitation efforts. By focusing on sustainable farming methods, the project not only improved soil fertility but also supported the long-term economic viability of farming communities. Additionally, the initiative emphasized gender equity by prioritizing the inclusion of women and youth in the training programs, ensuring that these groups benefited directly from the project's outcomes.

2. Partners and Local Stakeholders

The successful implementation of the Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project was made possible through the collaboration of several key partners and local stakeholders.

- **Lead Organization: OJA Sarl**
OJA Sarl, the lead organization, played a pivotal role in project management, coordination, and execution of activities. The team, including Mr. ALAMOU A. Herman Emmanuel (Project Manager) and other staff members, ensured that the project adhered to its objectives and timelines.
- **Co-Financing Organization: ARA**
The project was co-financed by ARA, which contributed significant funding to support the project's implementation. Their financial support helped ensure the successful execution of activities, including the organization of training sessions, the distribution of seeds, and the monitoring of farm activities. ARA's involvement was critical in achieving the project's goals and ensuring its sustainability.
- **Partner Organization: ONG WELLS-CO**
ONG WELLS-CO provided crucial support in connecting with local farmer cooperatives and facilitating community engagement. Key staff such as Mr. AHONOUKOUN Friedrich (NGO Manager) and Mr. Aimé Valéry WANDJI (Farmer Representative) were actively involved in coordinating training sessions and monitoring the progress of the project.
- **Local Stakeholders**
Local stakeholders such as the **Nikki Territorial Agricultural Development Agency (ATDA)** were engaged to ensure the project aligned with local agricultural development strategies. The involvement of smallholder farmers was central to the project's success, as they were both the target beneficiaries and active participants in training and soil rehabilitation activities.

Through close collaboration and joint efforts, the project engaged local communities, government bodies, NGOs, and financial partners, ensuring its sustainability and relevance in addressing local agricultural challenges.

3. Project Description

This section will describe the issue the project aimed to address, the solution provided, and how the project was implemented.

3. Project Description

The **Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project** was developed to address the urgent issue of soil degradation affecting smallholder farmers in Benin. Unsustainable farming practices, climate change, and overuse of chemicals have led to the depletion of soil fertility, which directly impacts agricultural productivity and food security in the region. Each year, millions of hectares of land suffer from erosion, nutrient loss, and other forms of degradation, creating a significant challenge for local farmers who depend on the land for their livelihoods.

To address this, the project focused on soil rehabilitation through the use of **legumes** and **compost**. Research has shown that legumes play a crucial role in restoring soil fertility by fixing nitrogen in the soil, while compost enriches the soil with essential organic matter. These two methods are sustainable, cost-effective, and highly beneficial for improving agricultural productivity.

The project involved several key activities:

1. **Training sessions** for smallholder farmers on the use of legumes and compost for soil rehabilitation.
2. **Distribution of seeds** (including legumes like beans and moringa) to farmer cooperatives.
3. **Establishment of farmer cooperatives** to improve monitoring and collective action.
4. **Ongoing farm monitoring** and advisory services to support farmers in applying these techniques effectively.

The project aimed to improve soil quality, increase crop yields, and enhance food security while promoting sustainable farming practices.

4. Activities Undertaken

The implementation of the Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project involved a series of carefully planned and executed activities aimed at improving soil health and agricultural productivity for smallholder farmers in Benin. These activities included:

a. **Organization of Farmer Cooperatives**

One of the first steps was the creation of five farmer cooperatives, each consisting of 20 smallholder farmers. These cooperatives served as a platform for collective action, enabling better coordination, monitoring, and sharing of knowledge among the farmers. The establishment of these cooperatives was essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the project.



Soya Bean Distribution to one of the women's cooperative

b. Training and Capacity Building

Several training sessions were organized to educate farmers on sustainable agricultural practices, specifically focusing on soil rehabilitation using legumes and compost. Topics covered included agroecology, soil management techniques, and technical production routes. The training was conducted by experts and agricultural technicians who provided hands-on demonstrations to ensure that farmers could effectively apply the knowledge gained.

c. Distribution of Legume Seeds and Moringa Plants

As part of the project, legume seeds (including beans, soybeans, and peanuts) and moringa plants were distributed to the cooperatives. These plants were chosen for their proven ability to restore soil fertility and improve agricultural productivity. Farmers were provided with the necessary resources to start implementing soil rehabilitation techniques on their farms.



Moringa Distribution to one of the cooperative

d. Ongoing Farm Monitoring and Support

Continuous monitoring of the farms was conducted to track the progress of soil restoration and ensure that the techniques were being properly applied. Farmers received ongoing technical advice and support, helping them to troubleshoot any challenges and optimize their agricultural practices.



OJA's Team on a monitoring activity tour

e. Discussion Sessions and Networking

Regular discussion sessions were held with the farmer cooperatives and local agricultural organizations to exchange knowledge and experiences. These sessions also provided an opportunity to address any issues faced by the farmers and to share success stories from the project.



Group picture with the cooperatives members

5. Results Achieved

The Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project has had a significant positive impact on the soil health, agricultural productivity, and food security of smallholder farmers in Benin. The key results achieved include:

a. Improved Soil Fertility

Through the use of legumes and compost, the project successfully restored soil fertility across the farms involved. Farmers reported healthier soils with increased organic matter, better water retention, and reduced erosion. The use of nitrogen-fixing legumes, such as beans and peanuts, helped to replenish the soil's nutrient levels, leading to improved soil quality.

b. Increased Agricultural Productivity

The application of sustainable soil rehabilitation techniques led to higher crop yields. Farmers observed a noticeable improvement in the productivity of their land, particularly with crops like beans, maize, and vegetables. This increase in yield contributed directly to improved food security for the farmers and their communities.

c. Enhanced Food Security

With restored soils and increased productivity, farmers were able to produce more food for both local consumption and sale. This has contributed to better access to nutritious food and improved the overall food security situation in the project's target areas.

d. Economic Empowerment of Smallholder Farmers

The increased agricultural output enabled farmers to earn higher incomes. Many farmers were able to sell surplus produce at local markets, boosting their financial stability. Additionally, the formation of cooperatives created an environment for better resource sharing and collective action, which further strengthened farmers' economic position.

e. Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

The training provided during the project has empowered farmers with valuable knowledge on sustainable farming practices. The skills learned during the training sessions will continue to benefit farmers long after the project's completion. Moreover, the farmer cooperatives have become self-sustaining networks for the exchange of knowledge and resources.

6. Challenges and Solutions

While the **Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project** achieved significant success, several challenges were encountered during its implementation. These challenges were addressed with adaptive strategies and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders.

a. Challenge: Limited Awareness and Resistance to New Practices

Many farmers were initially skeptical about adopting new agricultural practices, especially since they were accustomed to traditional farming methods. There was a reluctance to shift away from practices that had been in place for generations.

Solution:

To overcome this, the project conducted multiple **awareness campaigns** and **field demonstrations** to show the immediate benefits of soil rehabilitation techniques. Farmers

were able to see firsthand the positive impact of legumes and compost on their soil and crop yields, which gradually increased their willingness to adopt these practices.

7. Conclusion and Future Perspectives

The **Soil Protection and Rehabilitation Project** has successfully addressed the critical issue of soil degradation in Benin, benefiting smallholder farmers by improving soil health, agricultural productivity, and food security. The project's use of sustainable farming practices, including the application of legumes and compost, has demonstrated clear and measurable improvements in both soil fertility and crop yields.

By empowering farmers through training and providing them with the necessary resources, the project has not only improved the livelihoods of participants but also contributed to the long-term sustainability of agricultural practices in the region. The establishment of farmer cooperatives has further strengthened local networks and created a foundation for continued collaboration and knowledge-sharing.

Looking to the future, the project's success lays the groundwork for expansion into other regions of Benin and potentially other countries facing similar agricultural challenges. Continued support from local governments, NGOs, and financial partners will be critical in sustaining the project's impact. Additionally, the incorporation of climate-resilient practices will ensure that smallholder farmers are better prepared for the impacts of climate change, safeguarding their livelihoods and food security.

The lessons learned from this project provide valuable insights that can inform future agricultural initiatives, particularly in addressing soil degradation and improving food systems in rural communities.