



Annual Report ACED 2023



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Message from our Director

Dear partners, colleagues, and friends of ACED,

The year 2023 has been a year of challenges and significant successes for our organization. I am extremely proud to share with you this annual report, which attests to our ongoing commitment to promoting sustainable and equitable development in West Africa. This year's achievements are not only the result of hard work and unwavering determination, but also the outcome of close collaboration with you, our faithful partners and supporters.

This year, we embarked on ambitious projects that impacted thousands of lives. We made significant progress in the production and use of evidence to inform policy decisions and interventions, effectively connecting producers and users of this data to strengthen evidence-based decision-making.

2023 was also marked by significant advances in our governance and organizational development. We consolidated our internal structures, developed a continental expansion strategy, and renewed key partnerships that ensure the sustainability of our actions. The implementation of our communication strategy enhanced our visibility and impact, enabling better awareness of our successes and initiatives.

In 2024, we plan to broaden our horizons with new interventions focused on human development and social protection. We aim to facilitate the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms, strengthen the political and regulatory ecosystem of e-agriculture, and continue our commitment to the renaturing of cities. The internationalization of ACED remains a priority.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all our financial and technical partners, and to the entire ACED team for their dedication and invaluable contribution. Together, we will continue to innovate, collaborate, and work towards a more equitable and sustainable future.

With my warmest regards,

Frejus Thoto Executive Director, ACED

Our Achievements in 2023

Operations Department

Horti Platform / EKN. In 2023, ACED conducted a series of activities as part of the Horti Platform, funded by the Netherlands Embassy. We began by mapping stakeholders and strategic interventions in the vegetable sector in Benin. This was followed by an in-depth SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of existing consultation frameworks. To promote effective coordination, a dialogue workshop was organized, resulting in the creation of a roadmap for establishing a national platform for vegetable sector stakeholders.

Additionally, several mini-workshops were held to enhance vegetable growers' knowledge on several critical aspects: availability of vegetable inputs (quality seeds, pesticides, fertilizers, packaging), access to climate-smart innovations, and marketing channels for inputs and vegetable products. Finally, a session was organized to establish a data collection system for the sector, ensuring regular monitoring and continuous improvement of practices.

Strengthening the Regulatory Framework of the Seed Sector: Funding, Simplification of Registration and Certification Procedures / SeedNL. As part of the SeedNL initiative, ACED established a public-private dialogue mechanism to address seed regulation issues. A self-financing mechanism for regulatory services was proposed, along with guidelines to simplify current procedures for seed release and certification. These efforts aim to enhance the sustainability and efficiency of the seed sector in Benin.

Establishment and Development of the IG Wagashi Gassirè in Borgou-Alibori / IG Facility. In 2023, ACED conducted a functional analysis of the Wagashi Gassirè cheese value chain. Three information sessions on the concept of Geographical Indications (GI), the challenges, and the benefits of the IG Wagashi Gassirè were organized for identified stakeholders. The Reflection Group (GR-IG) was partially established, and multi-stakeholder sessions were held to define the specificities and characteristics of Wagashi Gassirè. Discussions on certification challenges were conducted, and certification documents (good practice guide, specifications, control system) began to be developed. A market study and commercial prospecting were carried out, leading to the development of a commercial strategy for IG Wagashi Gassirè.

Scaling ACED's Integrated Approach to Strengthening the Capacity of Agricultural Producer Organizations (APOs) to Produce and Market Agroecological Products / AMEA. ACED undertook the identification of support structures for the professionalization of Agricultural Producer Organizations (APOs) in the Sô-Ava and Abomey-Calavi municipalities. The diagnostic tool for the DLRPOPEA was contextualized for the vegetable sector. An assessment of the APOs' functional, organizational, and institutional status was conducted, followed by an analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the APOs and the identification of support and capacity-building needs for members.

Establishment of Livestock Feed Production Units in Benin / ARAA. ACED identified and secured sites for the installation of forage plots around dairy production hubs. Youth were trained in forage production, silage, and management of forage plots. The forage plots were set up to enable their exploitation by young people. Support was provided for the collection and valorization of agricultural residues into livestock feed, and a business framework was facilitated between the supply and demand for forage and livestock feed.

Renaturation of the City of Abomey-Calavi / PPI. As part of the renaturation of the city of Abomey-Calavi, ACED landscaped green spaces and introduced local flora species. Two validation sessions were organized with local authorities and leaders. An information session for citizens and private sector actors on the city's canopy plan is being prepared. Nursery growers were trained on the production of tree species identified in the canopy plan.

Strengthening the Regulatory Framework of the E-agriculture Ecosystem / AGriDI. ACED organized the second multi-stakeholder dialogue on the digital innovation ecosystem of the agricultural sector. The policy instruments to be developed were identified, and their development is underway. Advocacy for the adoption of policy instruments and capacity building for decision-makers on the application of these instruments are planned.

Department of Research and Learning

In 2023, the Department of Research and Learning continued to excel in its initiatives, achieving an annual execution rate of 90%. Here is a narrative overview of our key achievements in this department:

AGriDI: Digital Solutions. The AGriDI project implemented innovative digital solutions to enhance the efficiency and resilience of Benin's agricultural sector. In partnership with various stakeholders, ACED developed digital platforms that provided farmers

with essential information on agricultural practices, weather conditions, and market prices. These solutions were tested and adopted by numerous farmers, significantly improving their decision-making capabilities.

PPI: Nature in the City. Under the "Nature in the City" project, ACED worked to incorporate natural elements into urban areas to enhance the quality of life and climate resilience of Beninese cities. In 2023, we established multiple green spaces in collaboration with local authorities and communities, planted native trees, and educated urban residents on the importance of urban biodiversity. This initiative not only beautified the cities but also contributed to reducing the urban carbon footprint.

AI: Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence. ACED explored the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to address various challenges in the agriculture and sustainable development sectors. In 2023, we developed AI models to analyze agricultural data, predict crop yields, and optimize natural resource utilization. These innovations have enhanced the productivity and sustainability of local agricultural practices.

GCA: Digital Solutions and Climate Change Adaptation. The GCA project focused on developing digital solutions to help communities adapt to climate change effects. In 2023, we launched mobile apps and online platforms that provide real-time climate conditions and adaptive best practices. These tools were widely adopted by farmers and policymakers, enhancing their ability to anticipate and respond to climate impacts.

SeedNL 1 & 2: Seed System in Benin. ACED continued its efforts to strengthen the seed system in Benin. In 2023, we collaborated with local authorities and producer organizations to enhance the quality and availability of certified seeds. Training sessions were held for seed producers on best practices for seed production and management, contributing to improved agricultural productivity and food security in Benin.

GDN: Social Science Research Systems in Benin. The GDN project enhanced the capacities of social science researchers in Benin. We conducted training workshops on advanced research methodologies and supported collaborative research projects. These initiatives led to new knowledge production and improved the quality of social science research in the country.

CRDI: Evidence for Innovation. The "Evidence for Innovation" program continued to generate evidence to support innovations across various sectors. In 2023, we conducted case studies and surveys to assess the impact of innovative interventions

on the ground. The findings were broadly disseminated to inform policies and practices.

JPAL: Impact Evaluation of Agricultural Digital Solutions. ACED collaborated with JPAL to evaluate the impact of agricultural digital solutions. In 2023, we conducted rigorous evaluations to measure the effects of these solutions on farmer productivity and income. The results demonstrated significant improvements, confirming the effectiveness of digital interventions.

Evidence Culture in Benin. In 2023, ACED continued its efforts to promote an evidence culture in Benin with support from the Hewlett Foundation. We organized training workshops for policymakers and development practitioners on accessing and using evidence. These activities strengthened the participants' ability to incorporate evidence into their decision-making processes.

Administration and Finance Department

In 2023, the Administration and Finance Department of ACED played a crucial role in supporting the operational efficiency and financial transparency of the organization. Here is a narrative description of their main activities and achievements for the year:

Update ACED's registration in line with new regulations in Benin for NGOs. The administrative team worked closely with the MISD to provide the necessary documents for the official regularization of ACED. This process strengthened our legal and institutional position, allowing ACED to continue its activities in compliance with local regulations.

Continuous legal monitoring. Legal monitoring was an ongoing activity, ensuring that ACED stays up-to-date with legislative and regulatory changes. This monitoring allowed us to anticipate and adapt to new legal requirements, thereby ensuring the compliance of all our operations.

Development of periodic reports. The department ensured the regular production of monthly, quarterly, and semi-annual reports. These detailed reports provided essential information on ACED's financial and administrative performance, aiding management in making informed decisions.

Securing ACED's assets. Asset security was a priority in 2023. Measures were implemented to protect the organization's physical and digital assets, including enhanced security systems and asset management procedures.

Updating records. The department updated critical records, including the supplier and service provider directory, personnel files, legal documents, payroll book, and the register of employers and donors. This regular update ensured the accuracy and accessibility of information necessary for routine operations.

Updating ACED's manuals. In 2023, ACED's procedure manuals were revised and updated to reflect best practices and new regulations. This included manuals for financial management, human resources, and operations, thus ensuring the consistency and standardization of internal processes.

Managing procurement. The department oversaw procurement, ensuring that all purchasing procedures were conducted transparently and in accordance with ACED's policies. This included the rigorous selection of suppliers and the negotiation of contracts beneficial to the organization.

Supporting audit missions and implementing recommendations from various audit missions. The department played a key role in supporting audit missions, ensuring effective collaboration with auditors and providing all required information. Recommendations from these audits were implemented to improve internal controls and strengthen financial governance.

Executive Director's Office

Governance Management

In 2023, the Executive Director's Office at ACED focused on strengthening the organization's governance bodies and ensuring effective and transparent management. The 2022 general assembly was successfully held, bringing members together to discuss the organization's past achievements and future plans. Although scheduled for 2024, the Board of Directors' charter was prepared to establish clear guidelines and enhance governance.

Plans were also made to improve the effectiveness of the Board of Directors, with the support of ACBF-SALCA, ensuring optimal board operations. Board sessions were held throughout the year to maintain strategic direction and oversee the organization's activities.

ACED obtained Equivalency Determination (ED) with support from the Hewlett Foundation, thus strengthening our international credibility and recognition. Additionally, while the approach was defined, the establishment and operation of the International Advisory Board were planned for the following year. Initial trials were

also conducted for the Non-Resident Fellowship program, aiming to attract international experts to contribute to ACED's work.

Measures were taken to optimize the functioning of the executive leadership, ensuring effective management and swift decision-making. The Office ensured compliance with all regulatory requirements, thereby maintaining ACED's compliance with current laws and regulations.

These efforts have strengthened ACED's governance bodies, ensured transparent management, and positioned the organization for ongoing growth and development.

Strategy and organizational development

In 2023, the Executive Director's Office at ACED made significant progress in enhancing strategy and organizational development. First, ACED's expansion strategy toward becoming a continental organization was developed and successfully implemented, opening new prospects for the organization's influence and impact across Africa.

A major achievement was the development of the strategic plan (refresh), which provided an updated roadmap to guide the organization's activities and initiatives in the coming years. This strategic plan was crafted considering the changing realities and emerging needs, thus ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of ACED's actions.

Additionally, ACED's functional and organizational structure was strengthened. Departments were clarified, positions defined, and synergies created between different organizational units. This structural enhancement facilitated better coordination and increased efficiency in project and program implementation.

In terms of partnership and resource mobilization, efforts were made to structure and strengthen ACED Consulting. A strategy document was developed and integrated into ACED's institutional website, highlighting the organization's consulting capabilities and offerings. Furthermore, a catalog of ACED's experiences, combining achievements of the NGO and the Consulting division, is being developed to showcase the organization's expertise and impact.

Moreover, a resource mobilization and partnership strategy was developed, including a mapping of the donor landscape. Although the mapping is scheduled for 2024, this strategy has already enabled the renewal of the Hewlett Foundation grant, ensuring crucial financial support for the organization's activities.

Finally, efforts were made to support the implementation of this resource mobilization and partnership strategy, with a particular focus on integrating new funding opportunities and strengthening relationships with current and potential partners. These initiatives solidified ACED's organizational foundation, paving the way for increased growth and impact in the coming years.

Partnerships and resources mobilization

In 2023, ACED focused its efforts on strengthening its partnerships and mobilizing resources to support its initiatives and projects. A notable achievement was the structuring and enhancement of ACED Consulting. A strategic document was developed to guide the activities of this division and was integrated into ACED's institutional website, highlighting the organization's consulting capabilities and offerings. This initiative helped clarify the role of ACED Consulting and position it as a key player in providing development consulting services.

Concurrently, a catalog of ACED's experiences, combining the achievements of the NGO and the Consulting division, is being developed. This catalog aims to showcase the organization's expertise and impact in various fields, thereby facilitating the communication of ACED's successes to partners and potential stakeholders.

To further strengthen partnerships and resource mobilization, a resource mobilization and partnership strategy was developed. This strategy includes a mapping of the donor landscape, scheduled for 2024, to identify and strategically target potential funding sources. This proactive approach aims to diversify ACED's funding sources and secure additional resources to support its projects and initiatives.

Another major success of the year was the renewal of the grant from the Hewlett Foundation, ensuring crucial financial support for the organization's activities. This renewal reflects the continued trust of the Hewlett Foundation in ACED's mission and capabilities.

Additionally, ACED undertook to structure and strengthen its relationships with current and potential partners. The organization developed a partnership strategy aimed at establishing mutually beneficial collaborations with various stakeholders, including international organizations, development agencies, and private sector entities. This strategy also includes ongoing support for the implementation of the resource mobilization and partnership strategy, planned for 2024 as part of the ACBF-SALCA initiative.

These combined efforts have solidified ACED's financial and partnership base, paving the way for increased growth and impact in the coming years. Thanks to these initiatives, ACED is better positioned to continue its mission of promoting equitable and sustainable development in Africa.

Communication

In 2023, ACED significantly strengthened its communication efforts to increase its visibility and improve the dissemination of its initiatives and achievements. One of the main accomplishments was the development and implementation of a communication and re-branding strategy. Completed in 2023, this new strategy redefined the organization's brand image, highlighting its values and impact. The communication strategy will be fully implemented in 2024 with support from the ACBF-SALCA initiative.

A highlight of the year was the organization of the EPA 2023 Forum, which was a great success. This event brought together various stakeholders from the public sector, researchers, development partners, international organizations, private sector actors, and producer organizations to discuss the use of evidence in the formulation and implementation of policies and interventions.

In addition to events, ACED worked on enhancing its online presence and internal communication tools. Particular emphasis was placed on developing and implementing the Consultants Roster, a defined approach implemented to facilitate access to experts and strengthen ACED's capacity to meet the needs of projects and initiatives.

Coordination of global operations

In 2023, ACED undertook several initiatives to strengthen the coordination and support of global operations. A key project was the acquisition of a project management software. After a series of tests and comparisons, Zoho Projects was chosen for its ability to enhance the management of the global operations portfolio. This new tool centralized project management, improving the tracking of budget, expenses, and financial indicators.

Efforts were also made to strengthen the monitoring of budget and financial indicators, an initiative that will be intensified in 2024 to ensure rigorous and transparent financial management. Additionally, trials were conducted on the Non-Resident Fellowship, an innovative approach to engage international experts in the

organization's projects. This initiative aims to bring new perspectives and enhance the internal team's capabilities through collaborations with external specialists.

Strengthening the global operations portfolio also included efforts to improve coordination among the different departments of the organization. This was achieved by implementing more effective monitoring and reporting mechanisms, as well as facilitating communication and collaboration among teams. These initiatives enabled ACED to streamline its operations, enhance project management efficiency, and bolster its ability to achieve strategic goals. By implementing these measures, ACED continues to position itself as a leader in the field of equitable and sustainable development in Africa.

Key publications in 2023

In 2023, ACED continued to produce and disseminate essential knowledge to inform and influence policies and practices across various fields. Our publications this year covered a diverse and relevant range of topics, reflecting our commitment to promoting equitable and sustainable development. Here are some of the key publications produced during the year:

- Digital Transformation in Benin: An analysis of the interactions between digital businesses and public administration
- Current State of the Digital Ecosystem and Digital Entrepreneurship in Benin
- Assessment of Capacity Imperatives to Improve the Regulatory System for Vegetable Seeds in Benin
- Digital Agriculture Ecosystem in Benin: An analysis of the institutional environment, digital solutions, and stakeholders
- Research Agenda on Food Security and Nutrition in Benin

These publications have not only enriched public debate but have also provided solid foundations for informed decision-making and the development of effective policies in the addressed areas. They demonstrate our commitment to generating and sharing high-quality knowledge to support sustainable development in Africa.

All our publications are available at this link: <https://acedafrica.org/publications>

Financial Report 2023

For the year 2023, ACED mobilized a total of one billion thirty-seven million nine hundred thousand nine hundred and five (1,037,900,905) CFA Francs to implement various projects and initiatives. The sources of these funds are presented in the following table (Table 1). The main financial partners include the Hewlett Foundation, the International Development Research Centre (CRDI), and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF).

Below you will find tables presenting the resources by origin, the uses by destination, and the main lines of our balance sheet for the year 2022 in accordance with SYSCOHADA.

Table 1 : Revenues (1 USD = 600 XOF)

LIBELLES	Amount (XOF)
Fondation de France / CFSI	12 711 791
Netherlands Food Partnership (NFP)	23 858 074
Comité Français de L'Union Internationale pour la Conservation de la Nature (UICN-CF) / Programme de Petites Initiatives (PPI)	23 509 835
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation	23 898 809
Eleveurs Sans Frontières (ESF)	8 232 250
Global Center On Adaptation	50 145 288
Global Development Network	16 398 925
Netherlands Embassy (AMEA)	8 356 498
European Union / AGRiDI	56 253 350
International Development Research Centre (CRDI)	132 255 635
Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale (IPAR)	7 000 000
African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)	45 410 000
Centre de Coopération Internationale en Recherche Agronomique pour le Développement (CIRAD)/ Agence Française de développement (AFD)	67 198 859

LIBELLES	Amount (XOF)
ENABEL (RCA)	2 032 148
Institut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)	3 673 359
CEDEAO / ARAA	59 265 671
Resilience BV	4 029 531
OTT	6 155 530
Hewlett Foundation	487 515 352
Total	1 037 900 905

Table 2 : Expenses

ACED			
January - December 2023			
Libellés	Total		
	jan. - dec. 2023	jan. - dec. 2022	Variation
Grants			
4000 Grants	1 037 900 905,00	434 948 889,00	
Total	CFA 1 037 900 905,00	434 948 889,00	58%
Expenses			
5000 Personnel			
5010 Technical staff	21 560 301,40	11 477 019,00	47%
5020 Administrative staff	5 018 107,00	2 616 273,00	48%
5030 Interns	2 687 500,00	3 608 066,00	-34%
5040 Payroll Taxes	5 294 836,00	2 372 118,00	55%
5050 Social Contributions	6 616 855,60	3 259 238,00	51%
5090 Radio Tax	5 000,00	5 000,00	0%
5091 Television Tax	15 000,00	15 000,00	0%
Total 5000 Personnel	CFA 41 197 600,00	CFA 23 352 714,00	43%
5100 Études et recherche			

5110 Studies	53 377 642,00	12 830 380,00	76%
5120 Research fees	77 939 659,00	21 425 000,00	73%
Total 5100 Studies and research	CFA 131 317 301,00	CFA 34 255 380,00	74%
5200 Capacity development			
5210 Material capacity building	17 875 509,75	5 059 200,00	72%
5220 Training and advisory support for target groups	2 937 707,00	3 527 160,00	-20%
Total 5200 Capacity development for target groups	CFA 20 813 216,75	CFA 8 586 360,00	59%
5300 Monitoring and evaluation			
5310 Monitoring activities	51 652 846,00	5 292 502,00	90%
5320 Evaluation activities	6 073 890,00	5 360 000,00	12%
Total 5300 Monitoring and evaluation	CFA 57 726 736,00	CFA 10 652 502,00	82%
5400 Communication and knowledge management			
5410 Media coverage	40 077 240,00		100%
5420 Publications	771 096,00		100%
5430 Communication and visibility	14 009 260,25	14 171 308,00	-1%
5440 Participation in workshops and conferences	17 317 526,00	9 213 493,00	47%
5450 Knowledge sharing	29 416 977,00	5 127 009,00	83%
Total 5400 Communication and knowledge management	CFA 101 592 099,25	CFA 28 511 810,00	72%
5600 Overhead costs			
5610 Office and associated expenses	26 617 858,00	14 819 801,00	44%
5620 Regulated professions and third-party services	3 140 000,00	2 300 000,00	27%
5640 Financial expenses	2 051 108,00	944 324,00	54%
Total 5600 Overhead costs	CFA 31 808 966,00	CFA 18 064 125,00	43%
5700 Other expenses			
5710 Grants to third parties	1 000 000,00	2 420 000,00	-142%
5730 Taxes and duties	5 764 229,00	3 702 661,00	36%

Total 5700 Other expenses	CFA 6 764 229,00	CFA 6 122 661,00	9%
Total Expenses	CFA 391 220 148,00	CFA 129 545 552,00	67%

Perspectives for 2024

In 2024, ACED aims to invigorate and expand its activities to better meet the needs of communities and contribute to sustainable development in West Africa. Here are the main outlooks and priorities for the coming year:

- **Human development and social protection:** We plan to launch new initiatives focused on social protection and childcare, aiming to improve living conditions and well-being for the most vulnerable populations.
- **Multi-stakeholder platform in the vegetable sector:** ACED will facilitate the establishment of a multi-stakeholder platform in the vegetable sector. This initiative aims to enhance collaboration and synergies among various stakeholders to improve the production and marketing of vegetable products.
- **Strengthening the political and regulatory ecosystem of e-Agriculture:** We will continue to strengthen the political and regulatory ecosystem of e-agriculture in Benin, while launching new activities focused on the digital economy, including artificial intelligence.
- **Generation and synthesis of evidence:** With our flagship initiative "Africa Learning together to advance Evidence and Equity in Policymaking to achieve the SDGs (LEEPS)", we are committed to generating and synthesizing evidence, and connecting producers and users of these data to improve policy-making.
- **Empowerment of youth and women:** We will enhance our efforts to empower youth and women, including through interventions in the livestock sector in northern Benin, thus contributing to their economic and social development.
- **Renaturing Cities:** ACED will continue its initiative to renature cities by finalizing ongoing activities in Abomey-Calavi and launching new activities to promote greener and more sustainable cities.
- **Internationalization of ACED:** We will continue to expand our international presence with increased implementation in other West African countries, aiming to share our expertise and strengthen regional partnerships.

- **Institutional capacity building:** With the support of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), we will strengthen our institutional capacities to improve our operational efficiency and impact on the ground.

These outlooks reflect our commitment to innovate and collaborate with various partners to achieve our goals of equitable and sustainable development in West Africa.

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