



*Aidemet Ong*

## **Aid to the Development of the Traditional Medicine**

Non-Governmental No-Profit Organization

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## **A Kiosk for the Herbalists of Bamako.**

*Aidemet Ong*, in the frame of his protocol of collaboration with the Association of the Traditional Healers and the Herbalists of the District of Bamako, in acronym ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*, could realize different activities concerning the strengthening of the competences of the actors of the Traditional Medicine.

In January 2004, owing to the formation on "Gender, Medicinal Plants and Biological Diversity", realized by *Aidemet Ong*, 56 participant herbalists, of which 50 women, strengthened their knowledge in the field of harvesting, drying, storage, and good conservation of the medicinal plants. In January 2005, in the context of the evaluation of the Project of Strengthening of the institutional and technical abilities of ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*, *Aidemet Ong* carried out some visits to the herbalists of the zones of Craftsman's House, Rail-Da and Fadjiguila (Bamako), and can appreciate the efforts done after the formation for improving the hygiene in the sale of the medicinal plants, under situations and conditions that were not always easy.

Really, the herbalists had tried to lift the plants by the ground and to use baskets and plastics towels. The sale of powders of plants conditioned in plastic bags for food was spreading. Nevertheless, many things still remained to do.

Owing to this, in February 2005, *Aidemet Ong* conducted on her own funds an investigation in the different markets of Bamako.

The investigation allowed to confirm the interest and the importance of a concrete initiative improving in a lasting way the quality of the medicinal plants sold to the populations and the working conditions of the herbalists. The emergency was linked up to the fact that, in different places of sale of medicinal plants, the herbalists were to be expelled in name of a claimed modernization of the city.



**Photo n° 1: Hawa Diarra, Herbalist in Fadjiguila**

According to these experiences and reflections, *Aidemet Ong*, thanks to her collaboration with the European Association of Traditional Medicines (AEMETRA, Italy), could get a financial support of around 970.000 F CFA, that have been employed to endow some herbalists of the District of Bamako with Kiosks for the sale of the medicinal plants, in partnership with ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*.

This idea has been welcomed with enthusiasm by ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*. The Association has appropriated the initiative, immediately acting with the herbalists for the participate ideation of

a prototype of kiosk for the sale of medicinal plants, that has been manufactured with recovered materials by a local craftsman. This prototype was exposed for a certain time in the hall of ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*; this action allowed to record the observations of the directly interested people. So, some practical changes have been made in the prototype to increase his functionality and adaptability to the available spaces in the different markets. The kiosk allows the hygienic storage and the orderly exposure to the public of the medicinal plants, as so as their safety during the closing time of the markets. The funds remitted by AEMETRA have allowed to realize five kiosks and to cover the different costs for the management of the project.

One of the kiosks was exhibited to the public in the occasion of the V International Week of the African Traditional Medicine (SIMTA), which was carried out in Bamako in 2006, June, from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. The visitors, and the herbalists of the different regions of Mali, expressed above all a very deep interest for the initiative.



**Photo n° 2: Kodie Bagayoko, Herbalist in N'Golonina**

In this first pilot phase, the kiosks were assigned free of charge to five herbalist women, selected by ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton* on the basis of their professionalism and their participation to the association life. Yet only in Bamako there are a big number of herbalists, for the most part women, which are interested to have one of these kiosks.

An evaluation conducted in January 2007 allowed to measure the appreciation of the beneficiaries and the positive incidence on their job, and also the satisfaction of the clients. In the meantime, *Hope Foundation* (Switzerland) provided *Aidemet Ong* with the sum of 4.500 Euros, i.e. around 2.950.000 F CFA, which are allowing, in these first months of the year 2007, to realize other 15 kiosks.

Therefore, we look for some financial contributions to accelerate the process of diffusion of the initiative and to reach a critical mass of herbalists. The goal is to strengthen the perspectives of impact and durability of the action. A reflection is in progress to identify and to experiment some mechanisms of partial self-

financing based on the traditional systems of solidarity and mutual aid. *Aidemet Ong*, in partnership with ATTHDB/*Keneya Yiriwaton*, decided to sustain the initiative with some activities of formation, of accompaniment and of assisted self-evaluation.

***So, Aidemet Ong launched the Campaign "Let us adopt an Herbalist" looking for partners disposed to participate in the funds raising to support this project.***

*Aidemet Ong* is engaged to periodically introduce to the partners participating in the campaign a detailed financial statement of the received funds and to furnish for e-mail or through his site web to the subscribers of at least **320 Euros** or **210.000 F CFA**, the name of the herbalist that profited of the kiosk, the place of installation, and also the photographic documentation, as so as the results of the accompaniment and the evaluation. By request, a plate with the name of the sponsor will be applied to the kiosk.

**Text compiled by Dr Rokia Sanogo and Dr Sergio Giani, *Aidemet Ong***

**Photo: Archive *Aidemet***