

Aid to Development of Traditional Medicine

Non-Governmental No-Profit Organization

BP 9279 Bamako – Mali

Telephone: 00223.20232903 – Mobile: 76131273 ; 66756534

E-mail : aidemet@afrionemali.net ; Site web: www.aidemet.org

Aidemet Ong

Final workshop of the Project “Women and Plants”.



Photo 2 : The Workshop Presidium

Prof. Rokia Sanogo, President of *Aidemet* Ngo. Many women herbalists of Bamako and Segou, and some representatives of regional and local federations of Therapists and Traditional Herbalists, of the Order of Pharmacists and Midwives, of APEJ, and more than twenty journalists participated in the workshop. At conclusion of the opening ceremony, some green coats were given to the women herbalist project' beneficiaries.

Then, the *Aidemet* Ngo team presented the project, which was implemented in partnership with the FEMATH, with funding of 39,340,000 F CFA from the Italian Cooperation, through UNOPS. The purpose of the workshop was to capitalize and disseminate project results and to better prepare the next steps of activities of support to women herbalists. The Project, which was within continuity of support to herbalists' activities that *Aidemet* Ngo leads since 2004, proposed to participate in the empowerment and economic autonomy of women, through the promotion of local knowledge on plants.

The project was held in Bamako and Ségou from March 2011 to June 2012. The driving activities were providing 20 kiosks, training on the techniques of harvesting, storage and processing of medicinal plants, on the accounting and simplified financial management and on a self-managed microcredit fund system. To start this fund, the Project has provided 2.5 million of F CFA for each area in two savings accounts opened on behalf of women herbalists at BNDA in Bamako and Ségou. The principle is that this amount, although put in safety in the Bank, remains property of women herbalists, who have organized themselves to manage it. The interest rate charged will be 7%, to support the management fees (3% for FEMATH and FERATH in Bamako and Ségou, and 4% for the group of women).

The final workshop of the action-research Project: “Economic autonomy and empowerment of women through the promotion of local knowledge about plants: the case of Bamako District and Ségou Region”, abbreviated in “Women and Plants” took place on Saturday, July 14, 2012, in the Conference Room of the INRSP. At the opening ceremony, chaired by Prof. Drissa Diallo, Head of Traditional Medicine Department, attended Mr. Mohamed Fall, President of the Malian Federation of Traditional Healers and Herbalists (FEMATH), Mr. Sekou Traore, representative of the National Direction for the Promotion of Women, Mrs. Oumou Dembélé, representative of the Ministry of Employment, and



Photo 3 : The kiosk prototype

An internal assessment survey at the end of the project showed that the 20 women beneficiaries were satisfied with kiosks and their quality. The motivation most often cited was the quality of the plants, due to proper drying and storage. To point out also the increase in customers and improved sales activity, due to a better perception of the herbalist work. All clients surveyed liked positively kiosks. The majority of them said to prefer the herbalists with kiosk versus without kiosks ones, and to have not encountered any price difference between each other. They think that the kiosks have improved the image of herbalists. So, the project has achieved its stated objectives.

Prof. Rokia Sanogo in conclusion said: "The project has demonstrated that women herbalists were able to adapt better than men for the challenges of urbanization: they showed the intelligence and flexibility necessary to transform their collective traditional knowledge, accumulated over time and transmitted by generations of women, in a commercial activity, at same time social and economic, present in all markets of towns. They meet the social demand for medicinal plants and provide to people a local service at affordable prices, while generating incomes that are invested to support the family economy, in order to meet daily expenses for health, nutrition and children's education".

After a series of questions and answers, the prospects for supporting herbalists have been widely discussed. In this context, the most important recommendations of the workshop were: (i) for herbalists, to be involved in the protection, culture and sustainable use of medicinal plants and to transmit the love for medicinal plants to younger generations; (ii) for the local authorities, to reserve adequate space for herbalists in the city markets, (iii) for the national authorities, to engage in the implementation of the

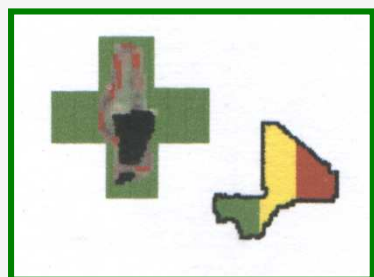


Photo 4 : The herbalist women of Bamako and Ségou beneficiaries of kiosks

National Policy on Traditional Medicine and its action plan, and to put in place a National Fund for support of Traditional Medicine, (iv) for the technical and financial partners, to resume cooperation with Mali and to agree to provide lasting technical and financial support for actions promoting medicinal plants. A request by herbalists was the supply of mills for medicinal plants, and technical equipment, with materials for packaging.

A new project to ensure the support of 200 women herbalists' activities in Bamako and Ségou should begin in the coming months. It will be funded by the Italian Cooperation and the Umbria Region (Italy). However, its start is actually blocked, because of the current crisis in Mali.

Project Partners:



FEMATH



Aidemet Ong, Bamako, July 2012

Photo: Archive Aidemet Ngo