



Community orchard - Sustainable development project *Cameroon, Yaoundé*

The project consists in creating and maintaining a nursery of 2,000 fruit trees (avocado, plum, orange and mandarin). When they are ready to be transplanted, seedlings are sold to parishioners who wish to take part in the project. By setting up a community orchard, AIC volunteers help to improve the living conditions of vulnerable elderly people, people living in poverty or with disabilities. The idea is to produce fruit tree seedlings that are distributed to parishioners who have a plot of land they can plant the seedlings on. It is up to each parishioner to make these trees bear fruit. At the same time, the surplus fruit and seedlings are sold to raise funds for beneficiaries. The fruit trees, which absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, contribute to reducing global warming.

Context



In Cameroon, as in other African countries, elderly, vulnerable and disinherited people are 80% dependent on the generosity of others and occasional and minimal aid from the State. This is the case of the Christian community of the Oyom-Abang neighbourhood in Yaoundé.

Context (continued)

The idea of creating a community orchard for AIC volunteers and parishioners stems from the experience of one of the AIC volunteers, who owned an avocado tree that produced a lot of fruit. She decided to share some of the fruit with other volunteers and people living in poverty in her neighbourhood, and to sell part of the produce. The experience was a success and gave her an idea: "If one avocado tree can produce this much, how much could we earn with ten or twenty trees?" The idea of increasing the number of avocado trees by creating a nursery was born, not only as a way of raising funds for AIC activities, but also of helping parishioners diversify their diet.

This idea was well received and volunteers wanted to extend the project by creating a large community orchard with different fruit trees. They were able to do so thanks to the AIC Dominique Prize for Sustainable Development, awarded to the project in 2022.



Key figures

- 500 avocado, 500 plum, 500 orange and 500 mandarin trees
- 15 volunteers
- 120,000 indirect beneficiaries (residents of the Yaoundé VII district), especially the members of the Oyom-Abang parish

Local partners

- Volunteer agricultural engineers and technicians



Project theme and activities

The overall objective of the project is to improve the living conditions of vulnerable elderly people and people living in poverty or with disabilities in the Nnom Nnam parish of Oyom-Abang, Archdiocese of Yaoundé.

The specific objectives are to:

- Produce fruit tree seedlings;
- Distribute seedlings to people who will be responsible for making them bear fruit;
- Create, in a second phase, a 3-hectare parish orchard with 2,000 fruit trees: 500 avocado, 500 plum, 500 orange and 500 mandarin. The income from the sale of surplus seedlings and fruits will finance activities to support elderly people.

Originally, an AIC volunteer had offered her land to create the community orchard, but her husband passed away and she was unable to inherit the land, forcing volunteers to look for new land much further away from the original location. This situation illustrates the issue of access to inheritance for women in certain countries.

Once a new plot of land had been found, it was cleared and improved with a natural fertilizer (chicken droppings) before the seedlings were transplanted in September 2023. AIC volunteers and technicians will visit the site regularly to maintain the plants and follow their development.

At the same time, AIC volunteers will regularly run training workshops to make liquid soaps and vegetable oils (avocado), the sale of which will help raise funds.



Impact

The seedlings will become trees with large leaves that absorb CO₂ from the atmosphere, thus contributing to reducing global warming. In addition, seeds will be collected rather than purchased, which will reduce the carbon footprint linked to transportation. In this way, the project helps to protect the environment and the health of elderly people, while diversifying their diets.