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Report on the Census on the Living Conditions of the Households of the District of Adogbe

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INTRODUCTION

The international community, in general, and Benin in particular undertook to reduce by half from now to 2015, the general incidence of absolute poverty. The ultimate objective that the Beninese authorities aim through the SCRP (2007-2009) is the lasting and effective improvement of the living conditions of the populations by tackling the principal causes of poverty. For this purpose, the government intends to put in place a policy of strong economic growth and reduction of poverty compatible with the OMD to which it adheres. This decision requires considerable efforts in the rural environment because according to the preliminary and partial results of the Integrated Modular Survey on the Living conditions of the households (EMICOV), the phenomenon of poverty still remains as a problem most felt in rural environment. In 2002, the incidence of monetary poverty was 31.6 % against 40.6 % in 2006 in the rural environment. This upward trend of monetary poverty is also noticed in the urban environment and in the entire country (28.5 % in 2002 against 36.8 % in 2006).

The major challenge which confronts African countries today, in which Benin is included, is the fight against poverty, and more particularly the improvement of the living conditions of the poor living in rural environments. To define development strategies intended to reduce rural misery, it is necessary to first find out the scope, the nature and the causes of rural poverty. However, this could not be done without precise and reliable statistical data.

This is why, SSCP/Benin (Community Follow-Up System of Poverty/Benin) proposes, in a context of decentralization, to observe the living conditions of the populations in relatively limited groups (like the communes and/or the municipalities of the country). This methodology of monitoring the living conditions of the households on the local level allows for a better monitoring of the impact of the various strategies of the fight against poverty used in the local and national levels.

Established in Benin in 2005, the SSCP carried out its pilot phase in the 13th district of Cotonou. After this phase, the extension of the system was made in the commune of Covè, which is a rural district.

In Cotonou, the survey took place in the district of Covè including the district of Adogbé¹. As in the urban environment, the data collected in this district relate to the socio-demographic characteristics of the households (age, level of education, matrimonial statute, etc), the characteristics of the dwelling (construction materials, etc.) and to the conditions of existence (mode of lighting, water supply, etc).

The principal objective of this mechanism is to provide to the local authorities with information on all the households of the locality so as to monitor their living conditions, define better local strategies of combatting poverty and to make judicious choices between the establishment of projects of general interest such as construction of schools, cultural and sporting facilities and the establishment projects of companies (description of manpower available in place) or businesses and services (potential market offered by the inhabitants, etc). This census could be also used in the development of the master development plans for the territory.

This report showcases the results of the census carried out in Adogbé on the lifestyle of the populations of this district, their conditions of existence and their perception of poverty with an aim of providing the local authorities with reliable indicators for an understanding of the living conditions of the populations. Mastery of these indicators will facilitate a better definition of the strategies of combatting poverty at the local level.

Strategic recommendations

The local authorities must define the strategies for:

- Facilitating access to electricity among the populations of the 3 areas: less than a third of the population of the district of Adogbé uses electricity,
- the construction of a stand-pipe fountain for the households that use water from unprotected wells (24.4 % for the entire district): the 3 areas in particular are Voli (39.6 %) and those which use water from the river: Azéhounholi (17.1 %),

¹ Adogbé includes the areas of Azéhounholi, Domé and Voli.

- the installation garbage dumps for recycling household waste on the level of the district: 82.6 % of the households still dispose of their wastes in nature without the possibility of recycling.
- the access to an improved hearth for all the households of the Adogbé district where the majority use firewood (71.3 %) in order to reduce consumption and to slow down desertification,
- the installation of public latrines to reduce defecation in nature: the three districts in particular are Azéhounholi (44.3 %) and Voli (40.4 %);
- the construction of the school infrastructures of primary and secondary education level: Azéhounholi;
- the putting in place of a public transport system to serve the district of Adogbé,
- the construction of a public health center in Azéhounholi where the population must travel 60 minutes to reach a health center;

Awareness Operations

- on the management of household waste: the entire district is concerned but very particular attention must be made in Azéhounholi and Voli;
- the stopping of the use of the lampion in the households: the three areas in particular are Voli and Azéhounholi considering fire hazards and inhalation of fumes;
- the stopping of the use of the water from rivers, lakes or ponds as a source of water supply : Azéhounholi

CONCLUSION

The census on the conditions of existence of the households made it possible to determine the individual and community difficulties in which the households of the district of Adogbé live. . All in all, the majority of the heads of household lack financial resources to provide for the needs of their family, the populations are confronted with problems of cleansing, insalubrity, health, etc. The children are at high risk of malnutrition and consequently of anemia. This is the consequence of the difficult living conditions of the households.

Pro-poor strategies can easily be defined based on the collected data because they provide real indicators of the living conditions of the households in the district as well as their perception of poverty. Poverty being multidimensional, the collected data show that the population is aware that poverty has several facets. To define strategies that directly affect them is commendable. The SSCP process consists in involving the population in data-gathering as a means of becoming conscious on poverty as well as the district's level of poverty.

The indicators calculated in this manner constitute a base reference for the definition of local development strategies for the local authorities, NGOs and development associations. These indicators of conditions of existence must be monitored through periodic censuses. This monitoring will especially make it possible for the local authorities i.) to be better informed on the evolution of the level, the tendencies and characteristics of people in situations of poverty and precariousness, ii.) to better orient and target the actions which they must carry out in their localities. In this way, they will be able to easily note the improvements of the living conditions of the households and the effects, positive as well as negative, of the actions as that they would have undertaken in favor of the poor.

Lastly, it is essential that the local authorities adapt this system of Community monitoring of poverty, that they generalize it in all the districts because it is a powerful tool of advocacy and mobilization of funds at the national as well as the international level.