

THE « BRO » PROJECT

1995-2002

Ivory Coast - Burkina Faso – Benin - Togo

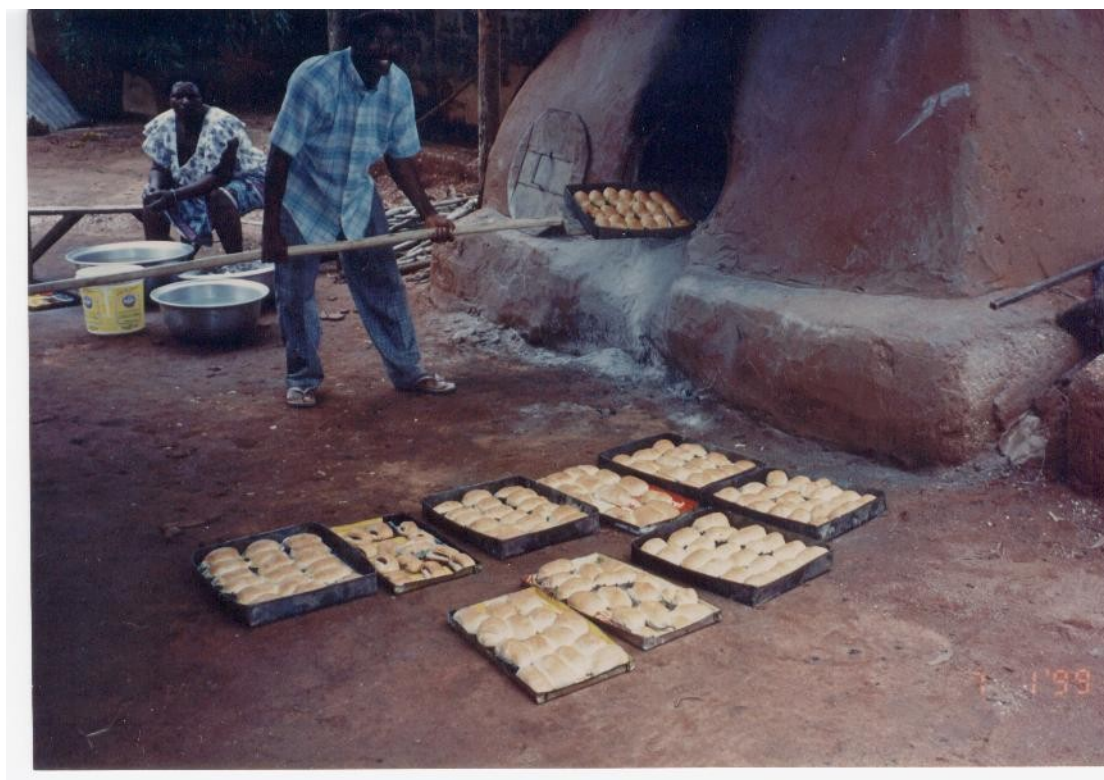


TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Background of the project
- II. Ivory Coast : birth and first stage of Bro's distribution
- III. Burkina Faso : how we introduced bro production in cooperatives
- IV. Benin/Togo : a dynamism mainly based on active women's units but little effort to promote the bro products
- V. Conclusions

I. Background of the project

Our institution can count on a 30 years experience, regarding social entrepreneurship projects in developing countries (Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ecuador, India, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Vietnam), as well as a strong network of local partners. Our global aim is to promote local resources that we consider as the best way to satisfy the needs of the most marginalized groups. That's why, in each project, we strive to foster local employment, thanks to vocational training and a help to the creation of micro businesses. Moreover, we deeply think that the communities need to organize themselves in Self-Help Groups, in order to ensure self-sufficiency.

Thus, the idea of promoting the growing and processing of local grains clearly corresponds to our vision and mission : job creation, with local resources and for local communities. However, we can date back this idea to the sixties. Indeed, the first experiences of "mixed flour breads" were launched by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in 1964. Such a bread making project had a high ambition: to reduce African countries dependence to European wheat producers and to boost production outlets for farmers which were producing local grains. Despite the huge means that were used (various research institutes, ministries and intergovernmental institutions were associated to the action), the results remained below what was expected. There was no significant impact in terms of distribution, except the success of « Pamiblé » in Senegal. Moreover, the fact that the local bakers wanted the product to be really similar to the traditional « French baguette » clearly limited the possibilities of incorporating more than 15 % of local grains in the different breads.

Thanks to the activism, amongst our voluntary workers, of famous agro economist researchers working on international trade system, SOLIDARITÉ has been sensitized for a long time to the topics of dependence and disparities between North and South regarding agricultural products. Since 1999, through SOLIDARITÉ, Jacques Berthelot (French economist, associate professor at the National School of Agronomy, who wrote "Agriculture, the Achilles heel of globalization") has been deeply involved in analyzing and denouncing the EU and US biased agricultural policies at the WTO, in bilateral agreements and their dumping effects on DCs farmers.

That's why we decided to restart the FAO's project in the mid-nineties, since the negative outcomes of wheat importation in western Africa were even more acute than thirty years before. A first pilot project was tried out in Ivory Coast between 1995 and 1997. Called BROCI (for "**BRO** Côte d'Ivoire"), such process moved away from official channels, basing its success on the dynamism of women coming from the "informal" sector.

We will now enter into details of this project and the way it has been extended to Burkina Faso and Benin.

II. Ivory Coast : birth and first stage of Bro's distribution

Duration : 3 years, from 1995 to 1998

Partners : CARITAS (Ivory Coast mission)

Budget : 1 670 000 FF (around 255 000 €)

Donors : European Commission, INP- ENSAT (National School of Agronomy), Conseil Régional Midi-Pyrénées ("Midi-Pyrénées" Regional Council), Caisse française de développement de Côte d'Ivoire and SOLIDARITÉ.

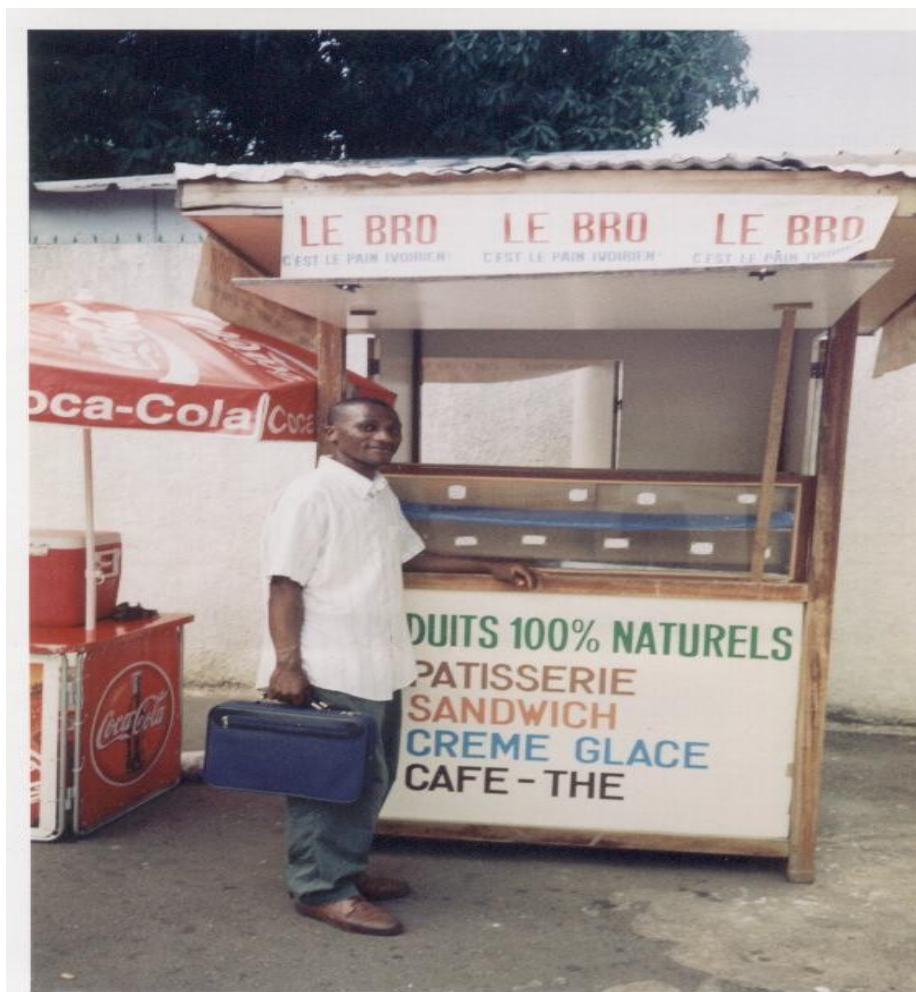
Location : Abidjan, Korhogo

Main results and lessons :

The objectives of the project were to develop a large range of « bros », produced with local grains ; to promote such products ; to define an experimental unit of « research-training-production » ; and to foster the creation of micro enterprises, managed by women from the informal sector.

On average, once the production stage was launched, between 800 and 1000 bros were sold per day. A wide range of breads were available : sweet millet, sweet corn, salt corn, sweet potato, banana, millet with tuna, "pizza" bro... Among these ones, the best sales were: sweet millet (a third of the production) and banana (around 27 % of the sales).

Regarding marketing and distribution, various channels were used. The project gave priority to sales in small "stands" (see picture number 1 below) and traditional bakeries. However, the products were also offered for sale in school canteens and street trading.



In order to boost the sales, one of the main activities of the project consisted in a massive communication campaign. The tools declined around the French slogan “C’est plus malin, c’est très ivoirien, c’est Bro” ; that means “It is smarter, it is from Ivory Coast, it is Bro”. The campaign was supported by both government and the European Commission, and really benefited from a substantial involvement of the media :

- TV (morning and evening news, as well as a special program devoted to bro)
- radio (local channels and RFI-Radio France International-)
- local press (more than a dozen of reports in various newspapers-see articles attached to this document).

Such broadcasting on radio and TV reached out to bordering countries (Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Cameroun, Benin, Togo), which let introducing bro products in such countries, that also produce corn and millet but still remain dependant on wheat importations from western countries. Around 350 requests for information were sent to BROCI by local organizations, farmers’ cooperatives, universities, research institutes, bakers...

Thus, the results of this first bro experience have been pretty much promising, and let foresee a conceivable replication of the project in other places.



III. Burkina Faso : how we introduced bro production in cooperatives

Duration : 4 years, from 1999 to 2002

Partners : CARITAS Burkina Faso, FAARF (Fonds d'Appui aux Activités Rémunératrices des Femmes) and PAG-LA-YIRI

Budget : 265 995 FF (around 40 550 €)

Donors : MP Regional Council (105 600 FF), SOLIDARITÉ.

Location : Ougadougou , Province of Sourou and Bobo-Dioulasso

Main results and lessons :

Besides sales in stands and private houses, this project implemented a new kind of production in cooperatives. Among them, the women's cooperative of Bobo-Dioulasso emerged from the conversion of a former vocational high-school. Nowadays, the cooperative is managed by a congregation that caters for young unemployed women. It offers them vocational training and help them to create or develop a generating- incomes activity. The project had an agreement with the cooperative, which led to the training of various women regarding production and marketing of bro products. A few months after the beginning of such activities, the production had really increased, and sales were successful.

Meanwhile, we initiated the "one thousand women" project in two vocational training centers that are located in the province of Sourou. These centers, which receive 500 students each year, have the same goal than the Bobo-Dioulasso cooperative : to ensure an appropriate training in accordance with labor market needs, and to help the trainees to create micro businesses in their villages. Among the different fields of training, the centers introduced a "bro" section. The products were massively sold during ceremonies (graduation, religious ceremonies...) and every Sunday, in Bobo-Dioulasso and surrounding villages. The involvement of these centers was really advantageous for a larger distribution of bro products, since the women came from different areas. Further more, the fact that the centers already had different production and marketing units help them to be self sufficient ; that was fundamental for the viability of our project.



IV. Benin/Togo : a dynamism mainly based on active women's units but little efforts to promote the bro products.

Duration : 4 years, from 1999 to 2002.

Partners : APRETECTRA (Association des Personnes Rénovatrices des Technologies Traditionnelles)

Budget : 4 212 500 FCFA (around 42 125 €)

Bailleurs : MP Regional Council (132 000 FF) and SOLIDARITÉ.

Location : communities of Azové, Comé, Cocotomey, Fidjrossè-Cotonou, Ouidah and Bohicon.

Main results and lessons :

Direct beneficiaries : 6 groups of women bakers (7 members in each one) and the bakers' families, which is a total of 210 people.

Indirect beneficiaries : 1 180 000 « bro customers ».

The project aimed at creating 6 traditional bakeries and developing a marketing campaign to promote the production, which was expected to reach approximately 2 millions of bros after 4 years.

In Benin, Bro was introduced in 1999. Indeed, about sixty people coming from 5 countries of French-speaking Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Togo, Senegal) met in Comé (department of Mono), to attend a training that was coordinated by Victor Moreira (international expert in bread-making process) and Jacques Berthelot, both members of SOLIDARITÉ. Such training targeted at teaching the assembly how to produce and distribute bro products in their respective countries. At the end of the session, about sixty women bakers began a production in Benin and Togo. Besides, an experimental production unit was settled in Comé.

Actually, the production in those two countries was in majority the fact of small women's groups, and of the women's centre of Berembéké.

At the end of the activities, an appraisal was carried out to assess the diffusion of bro products in Benin. The results regarding customers (on a random sample of 328 people living in Cotonou, Porto Novo and Barako) pointed out that 82,3 % of people did prefer the bro rather than traditional wheat bread. We can explain this high positive rate by :

- the fact that bro production fosters local agriculture and home consumption (the "home-made" product dimension seems to be really appreciated by the interviewees)
- the facility to replicate the products (training sessions are short, techniques easily teachable and can be adapted to local contexts)
- the nutritive qualities of the products (because of their content in traditional grains, such as millet or sorghum; bros are quite nourishing)

Although the customers who were sounded out seemed to be clearly infatuated with the products, it was not the case with the distributors. Firstly because only a minority did really know what the products were (the very ones who heard about Bro thanks to reports on TV or even the debate which was organized by APRETECTRA and SOLIDARITÉ). Nevertheless, once the product was presented in details, 67 % of the interviewees showed interest in including bro products in their offer, while 29 % were reluctant. Thus, contrary to BROCI that had really invested in the activities of communication, promotion and marketing, our project focused in Benin on boosting the production and the creation of small bakeries. That's why bro products, even if they are culturally welcomed, are still little-known.

For the three projects, SOLIDARITÉ has systematically promoted the dimension of « applied research ». That is why links, or partnerships, have been formalized with various

research institutes in agronomy, which actually work on flours and bread-making techniques with local grains. Among these institutes, we can quote the most relevant ones:

- ITRA (Institut Togolais de Recherche Agronomique- Agronomical National Research Institute of Togo), which was carrying out 3 bread-making research projects (on manioc, sorghum, and yam) when Bro was introduced in Benin and Togo.
- CERN (Centre Régional de Nutrition et d'Alimentation Appliquées- Applied Feeding and Nutrition Regional Center); institute which belongs to the National University of Benin.



V. Conclusions

The reduction of the dependence to wheat importation in West Africa and the promotion of food sovereignty are vital in this area. That is why the activities which aim at growing, processing and distributing local grains have to be fostered.

As showed above, despite some significant efforts to spread bread-making activities with local grains in four countries, the difficulties we met (crisis in Ivory Coast, lack of suitable material for the bakers to make the flours by themselves...) prevent our institution and partners to generalize bro products.

The recent surveys and market researches made by Jacques Berthelot (learning lessons from previous experiences) as well as the socioeconomic conjuncture in Mali, confirm that a new attempt to develop a large-scale Bro project is fully feasible and promising.