

General information

- *Seaport:* Port Autonome de Cotonou
- *Country:* Benin
- *Project title:* Relocation of vendors on Boulevard de la Marina
- *WPSP theme:*
 - Health, safety and security
 - Community building

Introduction: *The Sustainable Transformation of Vendor Livelihoods at the Port of Cotonou*

For many years, vendors had set up shop along the boulevard, offering meals to dockers and other workers in the port area. However, this practice posed several problems. Firstly, because of their proximity to road traffic, the vendors were exposed to safety risks; also the lack of sidewalk space made pedestrians vulnerable to traffic hazards. Secondly, hygiene conditions along the boulevard were often precarious, which could compromise their health. *This concerns the WPSP theme Health, safety and security.*

To solve these problems, the Port Authority of the Port of Cotonou in Benin started with a community engagement programme (including meetings and sensibilisation campaigns) together with the vendors along the boulevard. In this way all parties could had a better understanding of eachothers needs and expectations. *This concerns the WPSP theme Community building.*

Description of the project

Through the community engagement programme, it was decided that the vendors along the boulevard would be relocated to a new designated site, close to the port. On this site, a dedicated sales and catering building was constructed, comprising two 250-seat halls, 36 stores, 24 sales kiosks, a 12-seat secondary hall for small vendors and a retail space. The site opened in February 2024. The site is equipped with covered sales stands and hygienic kitchens, providing a safe and clean environment for vendors and customers alike. In addition, the site has toilets for men, women and people with reduced mobility, as well as running water and electricity. A daily waste removal service is also provided, helping to keep the site clean and tidy. Each sales area is between 3.4 square meters and 12 square meters in size, and some are equipped with kitchens. The size depends on the type of service offered, whether it's a kitchen and meal service or a simple consumables and telecommunications store.



Results

The vendors' relocation has brought significant benefits to the local community. These women have been established for 20 to 30 years, developing a loyal customer base over the years. Thanks to the new location, they now have access to an increased number of customers, which has considerably improved their financial situation. What's more, the diversity of people frequenting the premises is remarkable. Senior executives and dockworkers alike can be found here, creating an inclusive and dynamic environment. This social mix encourages exchanges and strengthens the social fabric of the local community.

Moreover, this initiative meets a number of sustainable development objectives, including health promotion, the creation of decent jobs and economic growth, and the building of sustainable towns and communities.

Our project has led to a commendable sales increase of about 20%, which represents a promising start. Given it is still in its early stages, we do not yet have further data in reduction of incidents and waste, but we are committed to collecting data and monitoring progress, and look forward to future milestones.



Vision and leadership deployed by the port's management

Numerous sustainability initiatives and projects are currently in progress at the Port of Cotonou, including endeavors such as the EcoPorts certification and the Port's environmental monitoring platform for invasive species, which was submitted for consideration in last year's World Ports Sustainability Program (WSPS) contest¹. These initiatives serve as tangible demonstrations of the port's steadfast commitment to sustainability.

At the onset of 2024, the port management of Port Autonome de Cotonou (PAC) made the strategic decision to revitalize their sustainability strategy, aligning it with the ISO 26000 standard on Social Responsibility. To facilitate the development of this strategy, both a dedicated work group and steering committee have been established. The work group, comprising representatives from each department, is entrusted with the task of formulating the strategy, while the steering committee, comprised of all members from the Board of Directors, is responsible for approving each phase of its development. This unequivocally underscores the prioritization of sustainability within the Port of Cotonou and attests to the management's resolute commitment to renewing their sustainability strategy.

The vision of the PAC's general management for this project is to enhance the living and working conditions of women vendors, while simultaneously promoting the economic and social development of the local community.

¹ <https://sustainableworldports.org/project/port-autonome-de-cotonou-port-environmental-laboratory-for-invasive-species/>



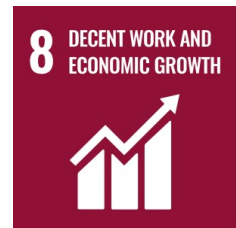
Contribution to sustainability and the UN SDG's

The described project aligns closely with several United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their respective Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), fostering progress towards a more sustainable and equitable future in Benin.



Firstly, in line with SDG 3: Good health and well-being, the project contributes to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by road traffic accidents (KPI 3.6), by relocating vendors from hazardous roadside locations to a designated site. The designated site also contains highly improved hygienic conditions by providing amenities such as clean kitchens, toilets, and waste removal services. The new location is also protected from the busy roadside. And thus, reducing the number of illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination (KPI 3.9).

Moreover, the project addresses SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth, by creating opportunities for decent employment and entrepreneurship (KPI8.3). The establishment of a dedicated sales and catering building provides a conducive environment for vendors to conduct their businesses, contributing to economic growth and the integration of small-sized enterprises into the formal sector (KPI8.5). Furthermore, the project fosters workplace safety and defends workers' rights by ensuring a safe and hygienic working environment for vendors at the new site. By providing amenities such as clean kitchens, toilets, and waste removal services, the project promotes the well-being of workers and safeguards their rights to a safe workplace (KPI8.8).



Additionally, the project contributes to SDG 10: Reduced inequalities, by improving access to economic opportunities and essential services for marginalized communities (KPI10.1).

In alignment with SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities, the project contributes to enhancing inclusive and sustainable urbanization (KPI 11.3). The project also aligns with KPI 11.4, through stakeholder meetings and community engagement the importance of serving traditional meals at the new location became clear, this stipulates the rich gastronomic traditions of the region, contributing to the safeguarding of cultural heritage. Furthermore, the project addresses KPI 11.6 by striving to reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of urban areas. By relocating vendors to a designated site with improved infrastructure and waste management systems, the project aims to enhance air quality and municipal waste management practices, thereby mitigating the environmental footprint of urban activities in Cotonou and promoting a more sustainable urban environment.



Engagement of societal and commercial stakeholders

Before the site was created, stakeholder consultation meetings were organized to gather the view of the vendors themselves. Sessions were held on the organization of the site and the specialization of the meals to allow each vendor to stand out and differentiate themselves. Now that the site is up and running and the vendors have moved in, further meetings are organized to assess constraints and identify improvements needed.





Awareness campaigns are organized with the vendors on health, safety, hygiene and fire safety. The session on fire safety was held by the port's fire brigade, who gave practical advice on how to use fire extinguishers in the event of a fire. In another session, information was provided on reducing the use of plastic and waste management to promote more sustainable practices. Clean-up campaigns are organized every Sunday with all the vendors involved, which helps to promote social cohesion and integration between the members.

Relevant information

- Video : <https://youtu.be/vITBXQ4VRJ8>
- Website Port Autonome de Cotonou describing the project (FR)
[RELOGEMENT DES REVENDEUSES DU BOULEVARD DE LA MARINA – Bienvenue au Port Autonome de Cotonou \(portdecotonou.bj\)](https://www.portcotonou.com/fr/RELOGEMENT-DES-REVENDEUSES-DU-BOULEVARD-DE-LA-MARINA-Bienvenue-au-Port-Autonome-de-Cotonou-portdecotonou.bj)

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