

# Epicenters for Self-Reliance

A sustainable strategy for gender-focused, community-led development in rural Africa. Created in Africa, by Africans, for Africa.



Start with Women



Mobilize Everyone



Forge Effective Partnerships

## IT TAKES MORE THAN A VILLAGE

Epicenters unite an average of 15,000 people from a cluster of villages, creating the conditions in which communities build the confidence to become leaders of their own development, unlock local capacity for change, and achieve progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.



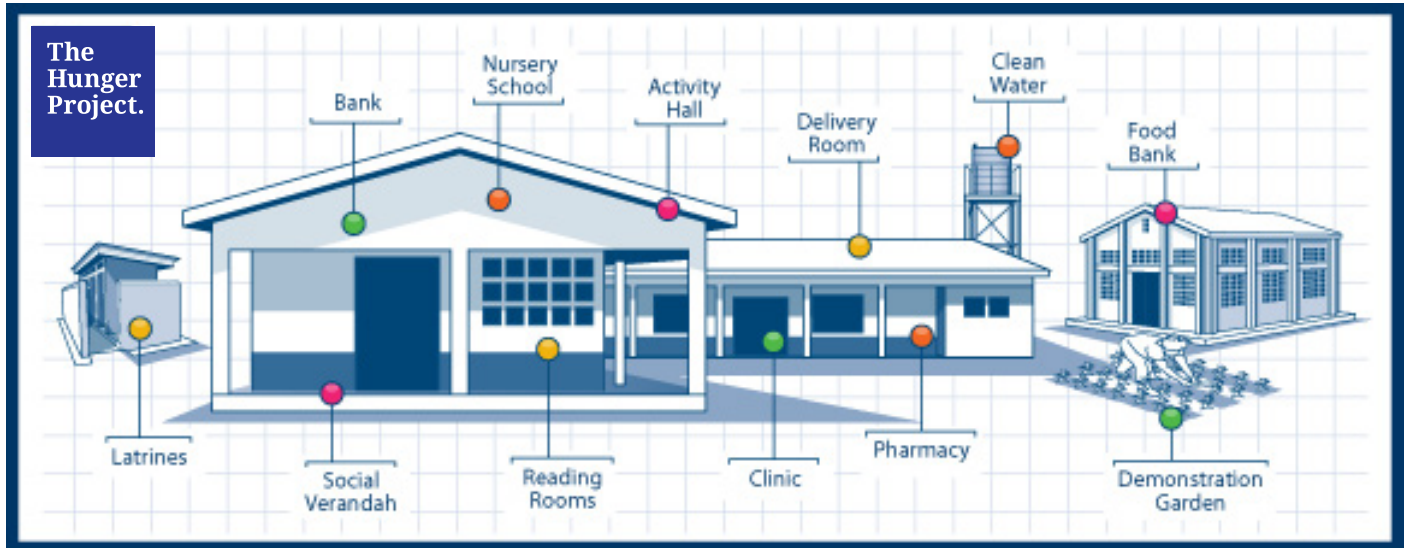
Alem from Ethiopia, 2022  
Photo for The Hunger Project

## AN EPICENTER'S JOURNEY TO SELF-RELIANCE

- 1) PHASE I: MOBILIZATION**  
Communities are mobilized to create a new vision, shifting mindsets away from patriarchy and clientelism. Trained volunteers, or 'animators', work with their communities to achieve this shared vision, with women sharing equally in leadership positions.
- 2) PHASE II: CONSTRUCTION**  
Community members mobilize construction materials and labor to build the epicenter building. This quickly becomes a vibrant center of community action and a symbol of positive change.
- 3) PHASE III: PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**  
The community begins making progress in sectors such as health and education with training courses and program activities. This includes training sector-specific animators, who will lead most of the trainings at the epicenter.
- 4) PHASE IV: TRANSITION TO SELF-RELIANCE**  
The Hunger Project ends its financial and staff support for the epicenter's programs once the epicenter meets its data-driven targets for self-reliance.

# Epicenters for Self-Reliance

The Epicenter Strategy leverages key sectoral programs for the community to address its needs.



- Women's Empowerment**  
Women's leadership is key to every aspect of the Epicenter Strategy. Animators are trained to conduct workshops with women and men to promote gender equality, access to micro-finance, legal rights education, reproductive health rights and leadership skills.
- Reducing Poverty**  
The Microfinance Program is a savings and credit program to promote women-owned businesses, non-farm business household income, the establishment of Savings and Loans Associations and training in business.
- Climate Resilience**  
Each epicenter focuses on maintaining biodiversity, ensuring the sustainable use of resources, and promoting renewable sources of fuel and energy.
- Education & Literacy**  
Epicenters run both pre-school and adult education programs to improve all aspects of life in the epicenter communities. Instructors are identified by the community and trained by the government.
- Food Security & Reducing Hunger**  
Farmers are trained to improve land productivity and resilience of smallholder farmers through new technologies, techniques and increased access to agricultural tools. Food banks safely store harvests to support communities during lean periods throughout the year.
- Health & Nutrition**  
The epicenter health center localizes primary health services and provides a place where women can safely give birth, families receive nutrition counseling, children are immunized and community members have access to medicines, including family planning and antiretroviral therapy.
- Water, Sanitation & Hygiene**  
Trained animators increase community awareness of hygienic practices. THP works with the community to build improved sanitation facilities, drill new boreholes, and improve school water and sanitary services access.



Naila from Maculuve Epicenter, Mozambique, 2022  
Photo for The Hunger Project

In 2022, our programs reached nearly 12 million people globally.

## CONSORTIA FOR SCALE

No single organization — not even government alone — can end hunger and poverty. Our goal is to build a consortium of organizations that co-create a shared methodology based on the epicenter model, and then mobilize resources to replicate it. This consortium can then advocate for the specific decentralization policy changes needed at the national level to take this method to scale across the country.

Countries that have brought community-led development to scale have done so through consortia of NGOs working in partnership with government, bilateral and multilateral donors.

## VISION, COMMITMENT AND ACTION WORKSHOPS

The Hunger Project leverages Vision, Commitment and Action (VCA) Workshops to mobilize epicenter communities. The training emphasizes leadership, creates a vision of the future, and generates commitment and action at the individual and community levels to achieve the sustainable end of hunger and poverty. Change of mindset, stimulated by the VCA Workshops, is the first and most important step to successfully mobilizing the community to take charge of their own development.

## DATA FOR THE PEOPLE, BY THE PEOPLE.

The Epicenter Strategy uses a participatory approach to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that empowers participants in our programs as both collectors and consumers of data. Participatory M&E requires including community voices in monitoring and evaluation and building the capacity of community members to become active partners in this process. Regular data is collected by trained M&E animators and is shared with communities, which promotes transparency and accountability between staff, communities, and investors.

This community-led, informed analysis allows community members to identify their needs, set their own development priorities, and participate in tracking their progress on these goals over time.



Cocoa farmer Rachel from Ghana, 2022  
Photo for The Hunger Project by Richard Twumasi



Thomas from Uganda, 2021  
Photo for The Hunger Project by Martin Kharumwa

## OUR IMPACT IN AFRICA

As of May 2023, 75 epicenters have declared self-reliance. That is nearly 1.2 million (1,186,436) people, of which 567,892 are women, in 2,730 communities in Africa who now live their lives with dignity and agency. The impact of the Epicenter Strategy is demonstrated by our mid- to end-line survey data of these epicenters, which shows:

- 31% decrease in the proportion of households with moderate to severe hunger (32% decrease in severe hunger).
- 25% increase in the proportion of female small business owners.
- 27% decrease in the proportion of households living below the poverty line.
- 26% decrease in child marriage.

In 2022...

### UNLOCKING LOCAL CAPACITY

- 28,473 trained in our Women's Empowerment Program in 1,025 workshops.
- 12,051 participants in income generating and skills workshops
- 16,023 participants trained in climate adaptation workshops
- 28,824 participants in Food Security Workshops.

### EDUCATION FOR ALL

- 478 animators trained in literacy and education.
- 25 epicenters with internet connectivity.
- 295 individuals enrolled in functional adult literacy classes.

### BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

- 44,254 partners accessed health services at epicenter health clinics.
- 18,705 children were weighed and monitored at epicenter health clinics.
- 24,582 women accessed antenatal services close to home, at epicenter clinics.
- 354 people accessed HIV services at epicenter health clinics.
- 255 bed nets were distributed to prevent malaria.



Lizeta from Burkina Faso, 2022  
Photo for The Hunger Project by What Took You So Long

Faridah from Mpigi Epicenter, Uganda, 2022  
Photo for The Hunger Project

