

# PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION: UNDP AND MASHAV TRI-LATERAL COOPERATION IN BENIN

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In June 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between MASHAV, Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, and UNDP Africa (United Nations Development Program). The aim was to address some of UNDP's principal challenges on the African continent, and to take steps toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals. In December 2008, Israel signed on to join UNDP in supporting developing countries, including Senegal and Benin, by providing knowledge of and technological abilities in agriculture, water, food, health and education.

MASHAV's plan of action incorporated a wide range of issues, such as food security, water management, agriculture, technology, sustainable development, and crop production, with the focus on alleviating poverty while working on capacity building.

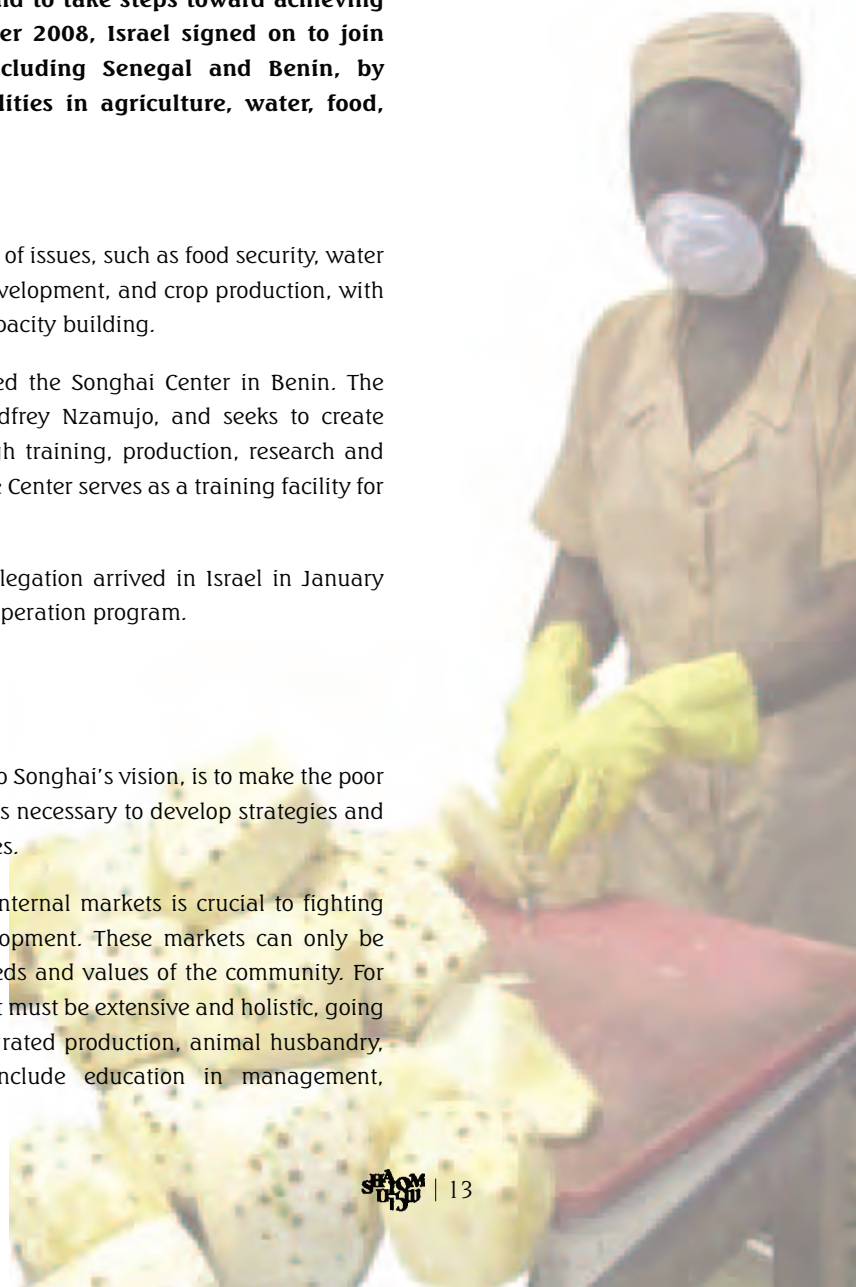
Following the agreement, MASHAV delegates visited the Songhai Center in Benin. The Songhai Center was created in 1980 by Father Godfrey Nzamujo, and seeks to create viable socio-economic environments in Africa through training, production, research and development of sustainable agricultural practices. The Center serves as a training facility for participants from eleven African countries.

Following MASHAV's professional visit, a UNDP delegation arrived in Israel in January 2009, to finalize the details of the MASHAV-UNDP cooperation program.

## THE SONGHAI CENTER VISION

The only way to fight poverty effectively, according to Songhai's vision, is to make the poor person an active and efficient producer. Therefore, it is necessary to develop strategies and environments that engender entrepreneurial capacities.

The Songhai Center believes that building strong internal markets is crucial to fighting poverty effectively and achieving sustainable development. These markets can only be created by recognizing and servicing the diverse needs and values of the community. For agriculture to become a viable force of development, it must be extensive and holistic, going beyond purely agricultural knowledge, such as integrated production, animal husbandry, fish farming, and appropriate technologies to include education in management,



In order to avoid using expensive and environmentally harmful chemical fertilizers, compost is produced with plant waste and animal excrements. The restructuring of impoverished soils is done by organic fertilization.



organization, and planning. In pursuing these goals, Songhai is involved in various activities, highlighting sectors leading up to and resulting from agricultural production.

**F**ather Nzamujo, Director of the Songhai Center, defines the concept of sustainable development as increasing productivity while protecting and enhancing the environment. To achieve that, two crucial factors must be considered: The importance of increasing the community's capacity of production, and the need to re-design production and development systems based on a new understanding of reality.

The appropriate human resource development is a critical factor in African development. For the Songhai Center, development is first and foremost building a local human resource base, which is capable of being in the driver's seat and becoming a catalyst for change.

## **MASHAV'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION PROGRAM**

**T**he State of Israel is in an unparalleled position in the international development arena. It began as a developing country, and continued to be so for many years after its establishment as a state in 1948. The fact that the young nation was able to overcome severe challenges and build a strong society with an advanced economy was the first lesson regarding the importance of sharing this knowledge with other developing and newly independent countries.

**T**he centrality of human resources and institutional capacity enrichment to the development process has attained global consensus. MASHAV's activities are based on a "train the trainers" approach to institutional and human capacity building, with professional training courses conducted in Israel and in the host country. These courses are geared toward educating the leaders of the future, for education leads to empowerment, the surest guarantee of sustainable growth.



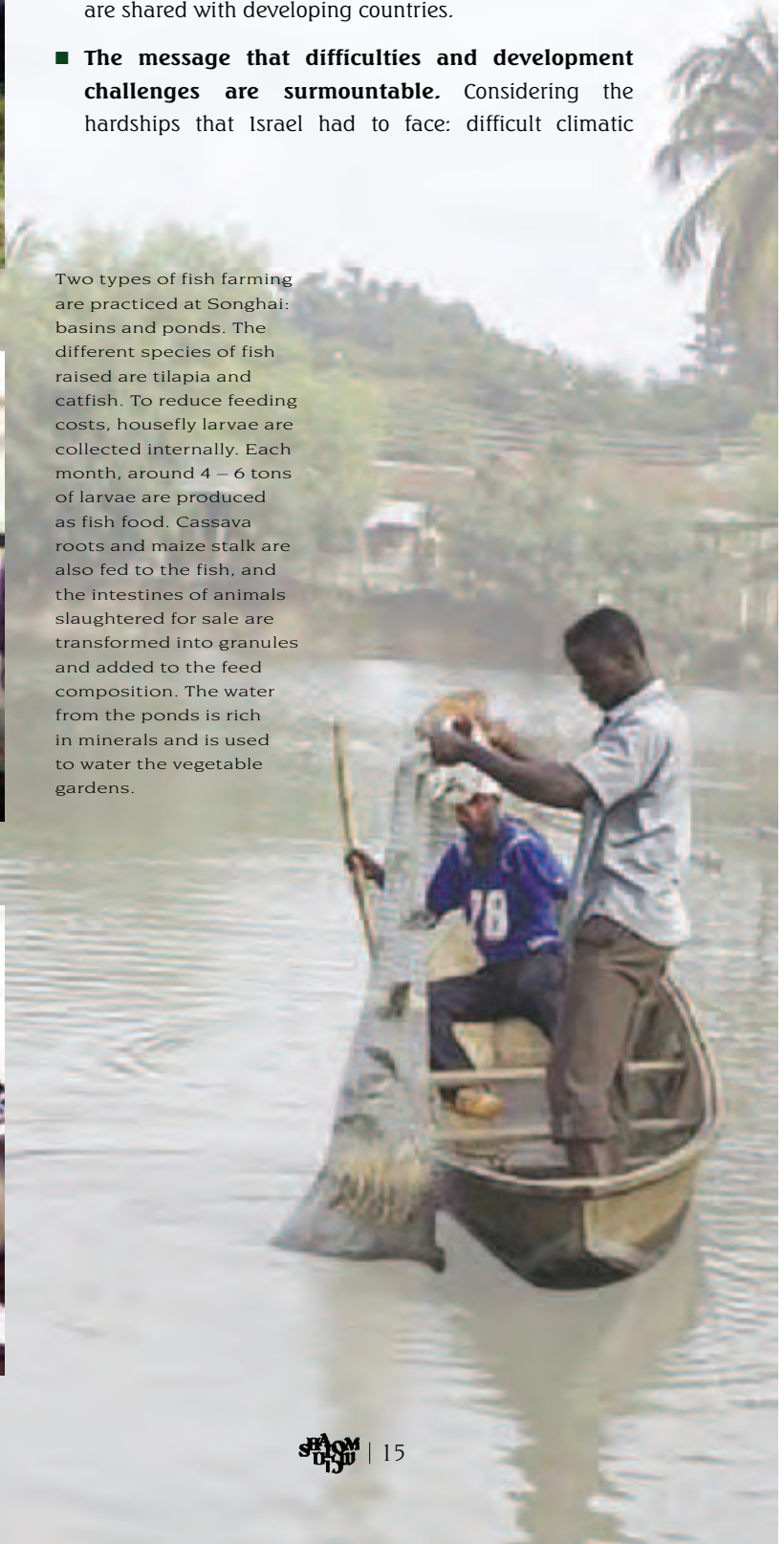


As one of the oldest international development agencies in the world, MASHAV is unique in two very important aspects:

- **Proven solutions to development challenges.** The wealth of knowledge and expertise accumulated in Israel for more than 61 years is harnessed to meet today's development challenges, and these experiences are shared with developing countries.
- **The message that difficulties and development challenges are surmountable.** Considering the hardships that Israel had to face: difficult climatic



Two types of fish farming are practiced at Songhai: basins and ponds. The different species of fish raised are tilapia and catfish. To reduce feeding costs, housefly larvae are collected internally. Each month, around 4 – 6 tons of larvae are produced as fish food. Cassava roots and maize stalk are also fed to the fish, and the intestines of animals slaughtered for sale are transformed into granules and added to the feed composition. The water from the ponds is rich in minerals and is used to water the vegetable gardens.



To put the finishing touches on the practice of integration and bring together all the sectors, a biogas production system was established. Methane is produced from animal excrement, plant waste, and sewage water taken from showers and toilets. This is used as a source of energy. Today, the methane from the system feeds the kitchens of the student farmers' canteen and the center's restaurants



conditions; large waves of new immigrants arriving from different countries and backgrounds; a hostile neighborhood; poor infrastructure; and few natural resources, Israel is a living proof that success is possible for other countries as well.

**M**ASHAV's International Development Cooperation Program encourages professionals throughout the developing world to adapt Israel's field-tested know-how and technologies to their own country's unique development realities and potential. As a small agency, MASHAV has to carefully plan its programming in order to bring about the desired impact and change. Therefore the following guidelines were set:

- Concentrate on fields and disciplines in which Israel has a comparative advantage, know-how and experience.

- Achieve effectiveness through an approach that is result-oriented and demand-driven, rather than supply driven.
- Build horizontal partnerships.
- Invest in human capacity building rather than in infrastructure.

**N**o one country or aid agency can single-handedly tackle the causes leading to extreme poverty. Therefore, the need to combine efforts and resources is essential if the donor community is to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), set by the international community to halve poverty by 2015. This platform of tri-lateral cooperation with the UNDP reflects Israel's spirit of partnership, and its commitment to international development cooperation to ensure sustainable development around the world.