



Mahama Ouango sells Aquatabs after a product demonstration.

Photo: TerresEauVie, August 2020.

Mahama Ouango, a self-reliant entrepreneur in the Sahel, promoting clean water within his community

TerresEauVie Burkina Faso

Follow the journey to self-reliance of an entrepreneur taking charge of his own development through income-generating activities, all while looking out for his community's wellbeing. Mahama Ouango promotes pre-consumption water treatment, which helps fight against many waterborne diseases.

In Burkina Faso, almost half the country lives without clean water, causing a significant public health issue: dysentery, typhoid, and cholera are among the diseases that still kill many people in the Sahel and especially young children [[Burkina Faso's under-five child mortality rate in 2019 was 87.5](#) for every 1,000 live births] and weaken communities, preventing them from working and contributing to their individual and communal economic development. According to the CDC, 88%

of diarrhea-related deaths are due to unsafe water, bad sanitation and lack of good hygiene. It is even harder for the growing number of internally displaced persons (more than 1 million in the country) and their hosts. Sometimes, when people gain access to water, they take it from contaminated sources like surface water and contaminated wells. Even water from supposedly improved water points can sometimes be unsuitable for consumption, due to a lack of proper hygiene at the time of collecting, transporting, and storing water at home. Pre-consumption treatment and proper storage practices can effectively reduce incidences of waterborne diseases and improve the health of vulnerable people in the Sahel.

As one part of its objective to strengthen local ownership of home water treatment practices, TerresEauVie is supporting the development of a sustainable supply-and-delivery chain for a proven product, Aquatabs®¹. This supply chain stretches from Ouagadougou to the village through a network of 18² private promoters in communes in the Center-North, East, and Sahel regions.

¹ Aquatabs® are effervescent chlorine tablets for point-of-use water treatment.

² As of February 2021

Aquatabs are not the only way to treat water but it is a safe and quick way. It is bound to be part of a long-term solution because there are no immediate plans for home drinking water distribution network installations in many towns and villages. People will still have to treat water to ensure its quality and safe storage.

TerresEauVie is also carrying out an awareness campaign covering all methods of water treatment at home, promoting knowledge acquired from these private service providers. Thus, local Aquatabs suppliers do not promote only this product but also deliver knowledge on the importance of water quality for family health and on treating drinking water (filtration, disinfection and assisted sedimentation) to remove, kill or inactivate microbial pathogens.

Local communities reinforce home water treatment practices

Mahama Ouango lives in Bouroum, in the Center-North region of Burkina Faso. Now 32, he is a cattle breeder by profession, but he is an entrepreneur at heart. He was trained in 2016 by the USAID Resilience and Economic Growth in the Sahel – Enhanced Resilience activity to become an extension service provider agent. Since then, he has provided training and on-the-job technical support to farmers on agricultural technologies such as composting, field delimitations, and the creation of stone barriers, as well as *zai*, or half-moon water harvesting systems. Ouango also sells agricultural inputs (e.g. seeds and fertilizers) and storage bags. He does some trading, selling phone charging units and fuel, and helps the Social Action Service department register and distribute food to Displaced Persons.

With TerresEauVie, he has participated in raising producer awareness on climate change and assisted in demonstrating farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) practices. Through supporting the regeneration of trees and their sustainable management on degraded lands, the farmers he trained improved vegetation, land and soil quality

and fertility, and reduced land degradation and soil erosion.

In addition to his many other jobs and responsibilities, he has decided to become an Aquatabs promoter in his commune and strengthen water treatment in the homes of his neighbors. TerresEauVie facilitated Ouango's training with PROMACO, one of the active Aquatabs suppliers in Burkina Faso, based in the capital. PROMACO coached him to become a successful sales representative and enabled him to follow up and replenish his stock on time. Now, he organizes product marketing meetings in his commune and conducts public demonstrations for borehole water treatment, using his own Facebook page to promote the product and gain visibility.

Local private entrepreneurs are the key to encourage coverage and uptake of home water treatment among those who are able to pay for Aquatabs, and they also spread basic health messages and information on basic home water treatment techniques throughout the community. TerresEauVie supported their efforts with a radio and poster campaign (in particular as a preventive measure against the impact of flooding on drinking water). Thanks to these posters, Aquatabs promoters have been able to pictorially demonstrate the use of Aquatabs and other home water treatment methods to prevent diarrheal diseases.

“I know that this activity will be sustainable. My clients tell me that as long as the Office of Water and Sanitation does not provide drinking water in the locality, they will continue to use the product. The Center for Health and Social Advancement (CSPS) now considers me a true partner for the health of our communities. [...] As a promoter, we bring a real benefit to the community and clients express their satisfaction.”

Excerpt from Mahama Ouango's testimony, entrepreneur and Aquatabs promoter from Bouroum, Burkina Faso (November 2020)



Poster on home water treatment promotion produced by TerresEauVie in collaboration with ViMPlus and Innofaso.

Ouango says: “Once back from the training, I was able to explain that contaminated water is a source of disease, and Aquatabs, when used properly, can benefit consumers. I presented my activity to the head of my village, the City Hall water and sanitation focal point, the chief nurse, and several members of village development committees. I also asked their permission to organize talks in the villages to sell the product.

Since July, I have been able to convince more than a dozen customers about the benefits of using the product. Demonstrating and handing out a few samples has helped a lot. Customers have ordered several boxes worth of supplies and returned for more. Now they cannot do without them! In addition to my other activities, I manage and schedule one meeting per week with my clients. I provide information to clients on dosage and preservation.

This activity is a success for me because I was able to increase orders and save a little. I even sold some tabs in the neighboring commune. In all, I have already ordered boxes for more than 260,000 FCFA (\$470 USD) and I sold everything. For my

demonstrations and meetings with customers I have invested nearly 15,000 FCFA (\$27) in transportation. In the end, I was able to make a total profit of 73,000 FCFA (\$130) in four months. I am thinking of starting a shop to sell Aquatabs in the commune. To tell the truth, this is not the type of commercial endeavor to make a large financial profit, but as a promoter, you bring a real benefit to the community and the customers express satisfaction – and this is the most important thing for me as a promoter.”

Following coaching and training by TerresEauVie, from July to September 2020, the first 10 Aquatabs promoters ordered more than 4,400 boxes (each box contains 20 cases of 10 tablets) and sold more than 3,400, or more than 77 percent of their stock. 8 new promoters joined the network since then.

Testimonial from Nematou (restaurant owner), a satisfied customer:

We have been healthy ever since my family and I started using treated water. We no longer suffer from stomachaches or urinary problems. I have even treated the drinking water in my restaurant and the customers have appreciated it.”

USAID’s Resilience in the Sahel Enhanced (RISE) project has been implemented in Niger and Burkina Faso since 2012. The second phase, RISE II, continues the same efforts with the overall goal that chronically vulnerable populations in Burkina Faso and Niger, supported by resilient systems, effectively manage shocks and stresses and pursue sustainable pathways out of poverty. Within RISE II and led by Winrock’s Sustainable Water Partnership, the USAID “TerresEauVie” Activity enhances communes’ self-reliance by making social and ecological systems resilient through three components: (1) Improved water security; (2) Enhanced sustainable productive land use; and (3) Improved management of shocks, risks and stresses.

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