Whole Planet Foundation (WPF) funds microlending programs through Entrepreneurs du Monde’s program, Assilassimé Solidarité, in Togo where Alaffia sources shea butter, baskets and artisan goods which are sold in Whole Foods Market (WFM) stores. WPF is a WFM non-profit whose mission is to alleviate poverty by funding microlending programs where WFM sources products as a way to alleviate poverty and give back to our global communities.

Through the Whole Foods Market Team Member Volunteer Program, WFM gives Team Members the unique opportunity to travel abroad with WPF to learn about WPF, see where and how WFM products are grown, provide community service, experience and learn from other cultures and challenge themselves by exploring exciting countries around the globe.
The team traveled to Sokodé to learn about the shea butter Alaffia sources for their bodycare products sold in WFM stores. They helped Alaffia with the Djama School Project, building a kindergarten and a latrine in nearby Kambole.

WFM TM Volunteers flew to Lomé to meet with Alaffia staff and they stayed in their compound. The volunteers visited WPF’s local partner Assilassimé Solidarité started by Entrepreneurs du Monde.

TMs traveled to Koutammakou, a UNESCO World Heritage site to learn about Togolese history and culture.
10 WFM Team Member Volunteers traveled to Lomé in Togo to visit Assilassimé Solidarité, Whole Planet Foundation’s microlending partner. They met staff members and microcredit clients whose loans were funded by Whole Planet Foundation in Lomé. The team traveled to Sokodé where they learned about Shea butter production and processing with Alaffia, who use the shea butter in their products sold in WFM stores. The team learned about Alaffia’s many social initiatives, which support their local community, and also helped Alaffia to build a kindergarten in Lama-Tessi, funded by Whole Foods Market with Alaffia. They learned about Togolese culture, food, traditions and dance.

TEAM

Martin Rivera, Southwest Regional Office
Angela Lopes, Global Office
Carla Bornstein, Northern California Region, San Ramon Store
Dayyan Bullock, South Region, North Carolina Bakehouse
Emma Crowley, North Atlantic Regional Office
Emma Rose, North Atlantic Regional Office
Mallory Fisher, Global Office
Michael Myrbeck, Rocky Mountain Region, Pearl Store
Paul Kunaschk, Midwest Region, Wauwatosa Store
SuEllen Brumme, Rocky Mountain Region, SouthGlenn Store

GROUP COORDINATOR
JoAnne Brenner

TOGO GUIDE
JoAnne Brenner

PROJECT COORDINATORS
Olowo-n’die Tchala
JoAnne Brenner

WFM TEAM MEMBER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM MANAGER
Genie Bolduc
2018 TOGO ITINERARY
SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 11

ITINERARY- 2 WEEKS

Day 1 - Saturday, September 29 - Arrived in Lomé and were welcomed to the Alaffia compound.

Day 2 - Sunday, September 30 - The team had a tour of Woode House, a UNESCO Heritage site, the Alaffia Lomé office and the Lomé Artisan Market.

Day 3- Monday, October 1 - Volunteers visited with Whole Planet Foundation microlending partner Assilassimé Solidarité, attended a group meeting and lunched at a restaurant owned by a microcredit client whose loan was funded by WPF. In the afternoon they visited a fabric market and welcomed a visit from a tailor who would make them clothing from the West African batik they bought.

Day 4 -Tuesday, October 2 - The tailor came to visit with the team again to measure the remaining team members for clothing made from the beautiful batik and African wax printed materials that they bought in the market. They then made the long journey to Sokodé.

Day 5 - Wednesday, October 3 - The volunteers visited Alaffia Foundation’s Community Projects, and Queen Alaffia. They had lunch in founder Olowo-n’djo Tchala’s office and did various activities in the afternoon including African wax printing, assisting bike mechanics, or helping gardeners or kitchen staff.

Day 6 - Thursday, October 4 - The volunteers went to visit a school supported by Alaffia and in the afternoon surveyed their volunteer project: building a kindergarten in Lama-Tessi. They were issued personal protective equipment for the community service work.

Day 7 - Friday, October 5 - In the morning and in the afternoon the team worked on their school project, and then they interacted with the students.

Day 8 -Saturday, October 6 - Today’s agenda included a trip to Bassar to visit the Alaffia office there and to see the local medical clinic.

Day 9 - Sunday, October 7 - TMs traveled to Kara to see traditional ironworking and visited Koutammakou, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Day 10 - Monday, October 8 - In the morning and in the afternoon the team worked on their school project, and then interacted with the local students.

Day 11 - Tuesday, October 9 - In the morning and in the afternoon the team worked on their school project, and then said goodbye to the village and the students.

Day 12 - Wednesday, October 10 - The team said goodbye to the team at the Alaffia compound and left for Lomé. The tailor delivered their custom clothing and the team celebrated their last night at the beach with a bonfire and music.

Day 13 - Thursday, October 11 - In the morning and late afternoon the WFM TMs were dropped off at the airport to travel home.
The volunteers learned about the process of receiving and repaying a microloan with the staff of WPF partner Assilassimé Solidarité and Whole Planet Foundation's Regional Director for North and West Africa and the Middle East, Brian Doe.

Whole Planet Foundation has supported Entrepreneurs du Monde's program, Assilassimé Solidarité since 2015, funding $800,000 to support their microlending programs in Togo. Assilassimé Solidarité has a 98% repayment rate and WPF is funding 10,055 new borrowers, helping to grow their basic group loan portfolio (called the ‘fraternité’ loan program) from 4,764 in March 2015 to 17,325 clients in December 2018.*

*As of 12/31/2018
WPF’s Regional Director for North and West Africa and the Middle East, Brian Doe shared “We had a great day today with the TMVP, Assilassimé and Alaffia! This morning we started in the office with a presentation from me on WPF Africa and with Jacques (Exec. Director for Microfinance) on Assilassimé. Then we went to a local market and spoke one-on-one split in two groups to several clients. On the way out from there we were hit by a massive rain storm- so we went to a local branch and talked about how clients are assessed, contracts, trainings and spoke with a Branch Manager. The rain died down and the group meeting we were to visit found a covered location so we headed to the group meeting where we watched a training and group meeting. Lastly headed to a microcredit client’s restaurant for lunch!”

The team visited the market to meet microcredit clients whose loans were funded by WPF through Assilassimé, getting to ask them about their experiences with the Microfinance Institution, and about their businesses, learning about their successes and challenges.
Alaffia has donated $317,145 to alleviate poverty through Whole Planet Foundation

Alaffia pledged $25,000 in 2019 as a supplier partner to Whole Planet Foundation in empowering entrepreneurs through microcredit. Alaffia sources Shea butter, baskets and artisan goods in Togo. As of December 31, 2019, Alaffia has donated $317,145 to fund 5,193 microloans to create 27,964 opportunities. Alaffia shares: “Alaffia’s Social Enterprise Model is a comprehensive approach to providing safe, efficacious hair, face and body care while alleviating poverty in West Africa through the preservation of traditional skills and knowledge in the global market.” To learn more about Alaffia, their products, their empowerment projects and their positive impact visit their website at https://www.alaffia.com.

Learning about Alaffia

Team Member Volunteers were given the most amazing welcome to the Alaffia compounds in both Lomé and Sokodé. The team stayed in the Alaffia compounds and were treated with fabulous meals, beautiful places to stay and of course, the best in body care products. They learned about Alaffia’s products, how they are produced and created and about their many empowerment initiatives.
The WFM Team Member Volunteers learned about shea butter production for Alaffia’s body care products which are sold in Whole Foods Market stores.
These projects are “targeted areas of development (Maternal Care, Education, Environmental Sustainability, Eyeglasses) that safeguard basic needs for sustainable communities.” To learn about Alaffia’s Social Enterprise model, visit: https://www.alaffia.com/pages/social-enterprise-model.

The volunteers visited Alaffia’s bicycle repair shop and learned about Alaffia’s initiative to provide bicycles as transportation, as well as bicycle repair.

The volunteers visited one of Alaffia’s Maternal Care facilities, learning about the healthcare challenges that women face in Togo and Alaffia’s solutions.
EDUCATION

Alaffia has built 12 schools so far, some with the support of Whole Foods Market, including the new kindergarten Whole Foods Market helped to fund and the volunteer team helped to build in Lama-Tessi. On Alaffia’s website they share: “The future of African communities depends on the education and empowerment of young people. If our youth are helped with the dilemmas they face, such as harsh poverty and lack of infrastructure, they will be empowered to lead their communities in the future.” Thank you Alaffia for the opportunity to support this important initiative.
THE VOLUNTEER PROJECT
HELPING TO BUILD A KINDERGARTEN
CARLA

“One of the most amazing experiences of my life! Alaffia is so inspiring and seeing everything they do for the people of Togo was absolutely amazing. As a Whole Body team member I feel like I have a special ownership in every school that Alaffia and Whole Foods Market have built. The impact of Alaffia on the entire country of Togo, especially on women & children, is so far-reaching. I love telling team members & customers stories and showing pictures of the bicycles and schools Alaffia has provided in the community. So glad I read Banker to the Poor before the trip. I learned so much about socially conscious banking. Seeing the entire process, attending the center meeting, and meeting two women at the market whose loans were funded by Whole Planet Foundation were such amazing opportunities. I feel so grateful and blessed because I know that there are so few people who could ever experience something like this.

This was a life-changing, unforgettable experience for me. We got to experience so much of the culture of Togo and learn so much about Alaffia’s programs to alleviate poverty. Few people in our society would ever get the opportunity to do something like this and I am so incredibly grateful and blessed to have been a part of it. It FAR EXCEEDED my expectations!”

EMMA

“The trip was such an amazing experience and everyone from Alaffia took such good care of us. I was and am so blown away by everything that Alaffia does, how true they are to their mission and how much they are doing for Togo. It’s hard to pinpoint my favorite part, but I think my biggest takeaway was how amazing the people and culture is. I think it’s so easy to think that a country like Togo would be downtrodden, but it felt like everyone was really looking towards the future and wanted to do things to improve their life and their country.”

ANGELA

“That experience was very enriching. I had the opportunity to learn about Alaffia as a company and the people it supports in Togo. This experience has definitely made me wake up and understand I can help people in small scale as well. They started small and they are so influential in Togo where they support so many people.”

MALLORY

“What an incredible opportunity and experience to be a part of as a WFM Team Member. I am honestly just so beyond grateful to have shared in this experience with such a wonderful group of fellow TMs. If you’ve ever felt a calling to be a part of something bigger than yourself, the WFM Team Member Volunteer trip will absolutely change your life. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!”

SUELLEN

“Our project was to help build a school for kindergarteners. We helped mix sand, rocks and water to make cement, we got to practice carrying buckets on our heads. We laid a foundation for stairs, put up chalkboards and helped create the floor. Working alongside people in the community to help create such a valuable space that has such a positive impact is not a thing I can accurately put into words. The experience fills you with this humbling mix of gratitude, love and awe at what can be accomplished when people work towards a common goal.

The volunteer program is an incredible opportunity to get outside of yourself. I will never forget the people that I met and connected with; the friendships, sense of community, the acceptance. Knowing about the amount of love and dedication that is happening in the name of alleviating poverty and empowering women provides a feeling of hope that was missing in my life prior to this trip. It is an amazing program.”

MARTIN

“I thoroughly enjoyed watching the microcredit group meet and learn about margin and expenses. It was great to see the training first hand to understand why that level of accountability by the group can have such a high return on loan repayments.”
2019 WFM TM VOLUNTEER PROGRAM IMPACT TOGO

- 10 TEAM MEMBERS TRAVELED TO TOGO
- 11 MICROCREDIT CLIENTS MET
- 1 KINDERGARTEN BUILT
- SCHOOL AND MEDICAL SUPPLIES PROVIDED

WHOLE PLANET FOUNDATION