

The chorkor oven : a fuel-efficient tool for smoking fish

Fish smoking is a very frequent practice in artisanal fishery in West Africa. It enables a better and longer preservation of the fish, and facilitates its transport and sale in regions further away from the coast. It also enhances the fish's flavour and increases its use in soups and sauces. A well-smoked fish can be preserved for at least a few months, and constitutes a highly-appreciated protein-source in many rural areas. Fish smoking is an economic activity undertaken mainly by women.

The traditional methods of fish smoking involve the use of ovens with large openings at the base and ability to hold just one or two layers of fish. Such techniques consume significant amounts

of fuelwood, lead to energy losses, and produce excessive heat and smoke; they thus make working conditions difficult, have a negative impact on attendants' health, and also have devastating effects on forest resources.

The chorkor smoker is an improved oven and set of trays that was invented in the late 1970s as a response to inefficient fuelwood use of traditional ovens for



smoking fish. It hails its name from the village of Chorkor in the Greater Accra

metropolitan area, where the smoker was first tested. The advantages of the Chorkor smoker are many: Decrease of 80% in fuelwood consumption, Lower smoke emissions, Low construction costs, Durability, Large capacity, and Lower requirements in time and effort. Since then it has been successfully introduced in various parts of Africa, but despite its numerous advantages its use remains still limited. *

In the Amanzuri wetland, where Microsfere operates, fish mongering constitutes a key economic activity for many women. For information on the measures implemented by Microsfere on the promotion of the chorkor smoker, see the article below.

*Source: www.greenlight2015.org

The measures proposed by Microsfere for the reduction of fuelwood dependence

With only 1,2 million hectares of forest remaining and a 2% deforestation rate, Ghana's forest resources are still being depleted at considerable rate, despite the existence of protected areas and tougher logging regulations. There are 4 main drivers of deforestation: logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, bushfires and fuelwood harvesting.

It is estimated that 60% of the wood removed from forested areas is burned either directly or by converting it to charcoal. Demand for fuelwood has been exacerbated in the last years due to increasing oil prices, and currently fuelwood caters for 71% of Ghana's household and small enterprise energy demands.*

The majority of inhabitants in the two project areas of Microsfere (Kakum and Amanzuri) depend on fuelwood for domestic cooking and for smoking fish. Realizing the extent and impact of this practice, Microsfere has decided to tackle the issue of fuelwood dependence in its project areas. It has already started the implementation of two measures, and aims at



promoting a third one: First of all, Microsfere provided in 2011 training to participants in Amanzuri on silviculture. The aim of the training was to show interested participants how to set up income-generating plantations that provide sustainable fuelwood sources.

The second measure was to provide training and to support through microfinance the use of the chorkor smoker. The training focuses on fishmongers in Beyin and Kengen communities, and the Kengen fishmonger group received a loan in August 2011 in order to create chorkor smokers and also to continue with their fishmongering activities. The average loan given, 660 GHC (about 330 euro), is the highest that Microsfere has given so far, but was deemed necessary due to the manufacturing costs of the chorkor smoker. It is Microsfere's aim to further extend the use of the chorkor smoker to other participants as well.

The third measure that Microsfere wishes to implement is the provision of improved cooking stoves in both project sites. Open stoves, such as the ones currently used by the majority of the women, make inefficient use of fuelwood; as such, they have negative effects not only on forest resources, but also on human health, since the burning process releases significant amounts of carbon monoxide. Microsfere's aim is to secure funding in 2012 in order to increase awareness about the negative effects of the open stoves and the advantages of improved stoves, and to supply improved cooking stoves to interested participants both in Kakum and Amanzuri.

*Source: www.katoombagroup.org

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Interview :

Fabrika, Microsfere sponsor



Fabrika is a Paris-based enterprise focusing on communication, and is Microsfere's sponsor. We took the opportunity of this

Newsletter to ask its managers about their collaboration with Microsfere.

What attracted you to Microsfere? We were intrigued by Microsfere's president's convictions about conserving nature and supporting people to develop their economic activities and to improve their livelihoods. Her personality and determination made us very confident and gave us the desire to support Microsfere. This NGO has put into practice microcredit projects (loans between 75 to 150 euro) and the beneficiaries benefit from training and technical support, thus having all chances of success. **How exactly do you support Microsfere?** Given that Microsfere is a non profit organisation, it has few means to invest in communication. We wanted to support it the best way we know: we are a small company dealing with communication through promotional objects and we thus decided to provide Microsfere with notebooks and bags with its logo made of recycled materials, in order for it to improve its image and communication to the broad public. **What are the advantages of this collaboration for Fabrika ?** It is very motivating for us, being women entrepreneurs, to support the initiative of another woman with which we share common values. It is for us a very concrete form of social responsibility.

www.fabrika.fr