

Opening of third library for children

Following the opening of two children's libraries in 2013, Microsfere opened its third library in 2014, thus bringing the joy of reading to even more children.

After the success of our two first libraries for children, there was a high demand in other villages for such initiatives.

As a reminder, the first library was opened in March 2013 in Brahabebome, a small village in the northwestern part of Kakum, while the second one was opened in September 2013 in the village of Ekabaku, in the Amanzuri wetland.

Microsfere decided to open its third library in the village of Abeka Nwantaa in Kakum National Park. Abeka Nkwantaa is one of our most active communities, with projects such as microfinance, soap-making and grasscutter rearing being implemented there.

A total of more than 100 books, puzzles and other children's games were presented to the community in May 2014. Those books were donated by Microsfere supporters from the United States, France and Greece.

The community actually built a new building to host the library. The works were funded partially by the local District Assembly, Microsfere and contributions by the villagers themselves.

The library started its operation in September 2014 and it is already a local attraction. Microsfere's coming plans for the library are to provide training to the librarian, and to regularly enrich the library's book collection.



A new pilot microenterprise: Soap making in Kakum Conservation Area

The production of local soap, called «Alata samina» on the basis of cocoa pod residues is an economic activity with high potential, due to the abundant presence of raw materials, the non perishability of the product, and its high demand. Soap making is an excellent means for women to secure alternative sources of income.

Alata Samina, also called "African Black soap" (though it is dark brown, and not black) can be derived from cocoa pod residues mixed with other ingredients such as coconut or palm oil and potash of dried tree barks, which are believed to have medicinal properties. This type of soap has been used for generations in Ghana, and there is a high demand, since it is a natural, multipurpose soap of high quality (when prepared appropriately).



Despite its wide use in Ghana, production skills in Kakum area were limited prior to our NGO's involvement.

Microsfere introduced Alata samina soap making techniques in 2010; in 2013 and 2014 we had renewed demand for training, and we provided technical support to groups of 15 ladies in the village of Abeka Nkwantaa and 21 ladies in the remote village of Brahabebome.

The ladies were first taught how to make black soap, with the input of Adua, a trainer that had initially been trained by Microsfere a few years ago (see interview in the box on the right). Then, the ladies in Brahabebome also received training in white soap making, which is a bit more refined, with the input of a female trainer that had many years of experience in this activity.

The training was mainly practical and involved participatory hands-on techniques in order for the trainees to learn quickly and efficiently how to make themselves the soap.

The ladies are now ready to «hit» the markets! Microsfere plans to provide support to the ladies in order for them to better market their soap.

Interview :

Adua, a multi-tasking entrepreneur



Adua, is a prolific micro-entrepreneur, involved in a number of economic activities, and we are proud to say that Microsfere is her partner!

Back in 2008 she started like most other participants with her involvement in the Microsfere microfinance project as a petty trader for general goods. In 2010 she was among those that took part in the first training for soap making, and she further improved upon her skills by learning additional soap making techniques during a visit to a distant community.

In fact, her soap making skills have allowed her to not only develop this business, but also to work occasionally as a trainer for other women who want to learn how to make soap.

In addition to soap making, she learned some basic skills for snail rearing through the radio and set up a small unit. In 2013 she also participated in Microsfere's training sessions for grasscutter rearing. She has now built a 9-cage pen for grasscutters and has applied for a loan in order to buy the breeding stock.

When asked what is the main challenge she encounters in her business, she told us that many clients buy soap on credit; she thus has to spend quite some time going back to them to collect her money.

Adua told us that the soap making business has brought her many benefits, the main ones being that she can cover her children's secondary education expenses and that she now has enough resources to build a shed to host her business. We wish her all the best in her future ventures!