

Pilot phase of cookstove project successfully completed

Thanks to the support of the French "Agence de Microprojets", Microsfere implemented between October 2015 and November 2016 a 1-year project for the introduction of gas cookstoves in 3 communities in Kakum National Park.

The introduction of gas cookstoves responded to two issues: pressure on forest resources and negative impacts on women's health due to the emission of toxic substances from wood combustion. A study conducted in the communities prior to the project had shown that approximately 95% of the households were using the traditional "three stone" system, in which a pot is simply placed on top of three stones and fire is fueled by firewood. This

system is not only highly inefficient in terms of fuelwood but also has devastating effects on health: 1 person dies every 16 minutes in developing countries from smoke inhalation related to the traditional cooking systems.

A Project Steering Committee was created in order to select the most appropriate cookstove model, taking into account technical and financial features as well as market availability. Though initial discussions had pointed to charcoal burners, the communities decided to opt for gas cookstoves which are more efficient and gas cylinders are now easily available in neighboring towns.

A total of 70 people participated to the project; each provided a financial contribution to the cost of the cookstove (20%), and Microsfere contributed the rest. Prior to the registration of

the 70 participants and also after the delivery of the cookstoves, Microsfere in collaboration with its local partner, the Wildlife Division of the Forestry Commission, conducted awareness raising and training on the benefits of gas cookstoves, their use and maintenance.

All of our beneficiaries expressed their great satisfaction with the cookstoves: cooking is now faster and safe, there are no toxic emissions and demand for firewood has been reduced to almost zero.



Traditional cooking system

Feedback from cookstove owners

Esi lives in the village of Abeka Nkwantaa, near the Kakum National Park. She decided to join the cookstove project because she was informed that it makes cooking easier, helps save money is good for her health and the environment.



Gas cookstoves

She got this information during the awareness raising session that Microsfere, in collaboration with the Wildlife Division, conducted toward the end of 2015. Esi received her cookstove in April 2016 and also participated in the various training sessions conducted by Microsfere the purpose of which was to explain to cookstove owners the use and maintenance of their cookstoves, and also to highlight once again their benefits. When asked what benefits she had gained from its use, she says that cooking is now easy and fast; also, she no longer has to worry and spend time looking for firewood. Most importantly though she says that she no longer gets smoke in her eyes and lungs, and this makes her very happy. As for the environment, Esi tells us that the smoke "used to disturb the environment" and now that she no longer uses firewood the environment is safe.

Agnes who also lives in Abeka Nkwantaa tells us that she is very satisfied with her cookstove.

She no longer gets smoke in the eyes, and

whether it is raining or not, night or day, she can cook without any problems. Previously, making the fire and cooking were very tedious tasks especially during the rainy season, due to the fact that firewood was wet or humid. Now she can easily and quickly cook three meals per day for the entire family. During the training provided by Microsfere, Agnes learned among else various safety features, such as to keep the gas cylinder away from the cookstove, and to turn off the gas in the cylinder each time after she is done cooking.

Akua from the community of Afiaso found out about the benefits of the cookstoves during the awareness raising campaign of Microsfere.

Her husband also encouraged her to join the project, arguing that the price of the product was very good (beneficiaries were asked to contribute 50 ghc out of a total cost of 220 ghc per cookstove). Akua told us that now she spends less money on cooking fuel compared to the cost of the firewood on monthly basis, because the gas in the cylinder lasts for many months. In terms of her health, she has noted that some eye problems that she used to experience before (itchiness, blurriness, infections, etc.) have completely disappeared since she started using the cookstoves. Cooking is now easy and fast, and Akua tells us that thanks to the cookstoves "I am simply happy." What else can we ask for?



Esi, one of the 70 cookstoves owners

Success story: Adua, winner of District Award



Adua with her award certificate

Adua has already featured in a previous Newsletter, thanks to her multi-tasking capacities. She is a petty trader and since joining the Microsfere project she is also involved in local

soap making and grasscutter rearing. Adua built a 9-cage unit for grasscutters (whose meat is highly sought after in Ghana), and received a microcredit from Microsfere to further support this activity.

We are very proud to announce that on Farmers' Day (an important celebration in rural areas in Ghana) she received an award as the best grasscutter rearer in the Twifo-Heman-Lower Denkyira District of the Central Region of Ghana. The award came from the government agency – the District Assembly and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Her prize consisted of various pieces of equipment that can be further used for her activities. Microsfere congratulates her on her hard work!

Adua, who is planning on further expanding her grasscutter business, is actively supporting Pauline, another lady from the same community who is about to go into grasscutter rearing.