

GreenCoal Movement
Madagascar
Skidmore College
Hilda Weit, Madagascar, Skema Business School & Stella Langat, Kenya, Skidmore College
United World College of Adriatic, Italy.
Blog: <http://greencoalmovement.wordpress.com/>

Section 1.

Our project sought to raise awareness of the consequences of deforestation in various regions of Madagascar. To accomplish this goal, GreenCoal Movement engaged in talks with university students and the community about substitutes and most importantly the skills efficiently produce charcoal from agricultural wastes. We identified a pilot village in Diego town in the Northern part of Madagascar. No other fundraising contributed to our project besides the grant.

Unanticipated Difficulties: Gathering information from the locals about where they get wood charcoal from was a big problem. We found out that it was not comfortable for the sellers to give us all the information we needed and did not want pictures taken. This was because they thought that we were government agencies trying to bring them behind bars since burning wood for charcoal is illegal. We first had to talk to them without phone-cameras and our notebooks, then they could open up a little bit but as soon we took our books out, the adults would go away and let the children answer our questions. And rarely when they accepted to respond to our questionnaires, their first thoughts would have changed and we would get vague answers. This was unexpected since we were in a group whereby most of us were Malagasy.

Budget Constraints: We were not able to purchase a camera hence we used our smartphones. Also we used our own money on the last days for food.

Language/Cultural barriers: The production of green charcoal, using the successful story in Kenya whereby cassava was used did not sound happy to Malagasy. This was because on most of the regions, cassava is the main dish so we had to just share our idea to the university students who solved this problem by promising to use their chemistry knowledge to find an alternative paste. We had translators throughout our project, so the barrier was minimal.

What worked well: Our decision to involve the local government and universities worked excellently. The location of the pilot village which is a town called Diego is great because for our products, solar energy is very important to dry the pellets and Diego is known to have sun all year around. This way our employees will have jobs all year round. The use of PowerPoint presentations and handouts of the procedure to university students worked well whereby after leaving one town, the students would contact us through emails or phone calls for further inquiries or even clarification. Our connections in Madagascar through Hilda's father worked well; through him we met the director and the minister in the ministry of environment. Furthermore, we met the Head of Forestal affairs who proposed the pilot village for GreenCoal Movement and she promised to be in charge of the village after we leave. These great personnel were very important for our project in that the community knew that this was a project to promote peace in their countries and the government was ready to work with us. Also through Hilda's father we had the car and the army driver and places to sleep on the nights we were travelling from one region to another region.

What did not work well: The timing to finish our project was not good. We planned for 6 weeks but we needed more time because we had to travel from one region to another region and we had only one driver, travelling took days from one region to another region. From the airport, because of poor infrastructure it took us 3 days to our pilot village. Finding another alternative was not possible because of the short time to experiment.

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How many people benefited/will benefit: We cannot quantify the number of the people, who benefited, but from our records, we visited 4 universities, we reached the faculty of energy, environment and biodiversity which was an estimate of 180 students in all 4 universities. With our pilot village in Diego town, the community within the village will have the products first and then distribute to the neighboring populations, estimated to be 350,000.

Sustainability Impact: Already the University of Greifswald, Germany will feature GreenCoal Movement in the exchange program for master students. We will be offering internship, field trips to Madagascar to both local and international students. The University of Mahajunga will be our partner, as they can back us up with the right knowledge and previous experiments with GreenCoal.

Future: Our future goal is to register it as an organization that would serve as the link between international organizations and local organizations who are working towards conservation of Malagasy environment. Furthermore, CER Sava organization led by Huchoc Chan, showed interest to collaborate with GreenCoal Movement to produce sustainable stoves that will be used along with green charcoal.

Section II

Peace is a state of collective understanding and tranquility while working together towards a similar goal despite differences. With the instability in many parts of the world, peace is golden and in order to make it a reality we must realize that accepting each other is the key. During our project, we found that people are different and they have different opinions yet with mutual understanding peace prevailed throughout. Our project will be the resource that provides opportunity for the locals to promote peace within their areas and country at large.

This project has changed my perspective of the world that, we not only need to be dreamers but dreamers who are doers in order to achieve our goal to a peaceful world. Women can do everything that men can, this is because during our presentation students would be surprised that two girls thought and implemented this project.

Stella's response: While I have been doubtful of a 100% peaceful world, after watching films about the environmental situations in many islands, GreenCoal Movement gave me the opportunity to see that it's possible to achieve peace through our actions and involving others to strive for the same goal towards peace. And I have stood honoring what the late Prof. Wangari Mathai said, "You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them."

Hilda's Response: This project brought me back to my roots to Madagascar. I was given the chance to get to know and to deal with different needs and views of the world. It made me understand that there is no long-lasting and sustainable capacity building without understanding a country's culture. Feeling the enthusiasm and hope on the listeners after we presented our project showed me, that there is a new generation in Madagascar. A new generation that wants to change conditions to the better, just like we do. Now we will do it together. "No wind favors he who has no destined port." Michel de Montaigne

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