

Project Update: November 2010

Activities Accomplished

From July through October, 2010, the following activities of the project were realised:

1. Reforestation: 1000 tree seedlings were planted at three sites: quartier Tangama, Dalaba; Dinkandin; and Sebhory.
2. Rural community education: 95 agriculturalists, carpenters and charcoal-makers were taught during a period of three weeks (between August 8th and September 2nd) by the members of Environnement Action.
3. Education of students and teachers: At least 250 students and teachers from elementary school through university were taught the importance of protecting the environment and how to do so through the course of a 3-week long football tournament (September 15th – October 3rd) which involved over 50 players in 10 teams and drew crowds of 100-200 people at each of the 23 matches. The tournament was held in the name of the protection of the environment and sponsored by the partners Rufford Small Grants and Environnement Action. During each half-time and before the prizes were awarded to the winning teams after the final game, speeches were given on the topic. Fliers were distributed as well.

Environnement Action decided that a football tournament would be a better place and method of teaching than in the schools because team members and fans would voluntarily listen, because the cause of environmental protection would be associated in people's minds with football (which is very popular here), and because the tournament would give the cause a high public profile in Dalaba. Another factor in this decision was that the opening date of the school year was always uncertain and was postponed on account of Guinea's presidential election run-off date being uncertain and postponed several times. The election was finally held on November 7th but schools are closed for 2 weeks on this account. It would have been next to impossible to persuade teachers to allow us time for this teaching (taking time away from the material they are required to cover) because of the already abbreviated and interrupted school year.

Difficulties Encountered

1. Reforestation: We were refused access to the entire area of the hillside lining Quartier Tangama in Dalaba that we had envisaged, so we were obliged to choose two additional sites, Dinkandin and Sebhory, both outlying villages. Also because of inflation due to the socio-political situation in Guinea, we were prevented from securing the reforestation sites.
2. Rural Community Education: We found misunderstanding and disagreement among the three segments of the rural population that we targeted (peasants, woodcutters and charcoal-makers). Each attributed the destruction of the forests to the others. It's now a question of what can be done to slow the cutting and burning of forests to a rate that trees can be replaced and the soil enriched at a rate faster than the current rate of destruction and depletion.
3. General: Another problem was that there were not enough funds in the budget for all the members of Environnement Action to travel to the various intervention sites.

Looking Ahead

Looking ahead, the Jardin Miriam Makeba is nearly completed and we hope to have a grand opening soon. Also right now is the change from the rainy season to the dry season and it is at the beginning of the dry season that a lot of burning is done. Environnement Action plans to monitor the situation in Dalaba, continues to speak out against burning, and does what it can to prevent and to put out fires that are started before they spread.

