

**Multi-Track: Final Report**  
**Women's Training Programs**  
**Ghana, West Africa**



<p><b>Location:</b> Hospital Ship <i>Anastasis</i></p>	<p><b>Submitted By:</b> Kate Beck  <b>Reviewed By:</b> Jeff King  <b>Date Submitted:</b> February 22, 2007</p>
<p><b>Goal:</b> To advance the position of women in Ghana by strengthening their capacities, which will expand their opportunities and develop their role in society.</p>	<p><b>Project Dates:</b> June 2006–February 2007  <b>Project Code:</b> AMMTG6</p>

### **Project Introduction**

The Multi-Track project aimed to empower women in Ghana by offering skills training in a micro-agriculture trade, following up with biblically-based business and decision-making teaching. These aims were accomplished. The selected micro-agriculture options offered were mushroom farms, giant African snails (an edible delicacy), and rabbit production.

The Multi-Track project worked in two areas of Tema: the Ashaiman area, located to the north of the city, and the New Town area, a fishing village near the harbor. Both of these slum areas developed as migrant workers came to work in the port. Poverty is evident in these areas, with a lack of basic sanitation, education, and employment opportunities.

Each women group had training in their chosen field of micro-agriculture – both in theory and in practical. Following this initial training, each group met weekly for 6 weeks for further business and decision-making training before being given the materials to begin their micro-enterprise. Following a home visit to confirm construction of housing, stock was delivered (Mercy Ships distributed more than 1000 snails, 55 pairs of rabbits and 1800 mushroom bags) with further follow-up visits. A total of 142 women completed training.

- In Ashaiman, Mercy Ships trained 5 groups of women: 2 groups totaling 36 women learned mushroom growing, 2 groups totaling 36 women learned rabbit breeding, and 1 group of 25 women learned rearing snails. In addition, many of these women attended a series of 5 sessions - attendance average about 30 women per session - on basic health care and hygiene, nutrition lessons on food and food sources and a basic agriculture session including garden plots.
- In New Town Mercy Ships worked in association with a local NGO called DESMAS (Deprived Single Mothers Association) which had partnered with another international NGO, ActionAid to provide services to an established group

of women. Through DESMAS, 26 women in 2 smaller groups were trained: 12 studied snails and 14 rabbits.

- Mercy Ships taught 10 women at an HIV/AIDS care center, in conjunction with the HIV and agriculture teams from the ship. Mercy Ships taught rabbit breeding, provided materials and stock, and followed up, as with previous groups.
- Rabbit breeding was taught to 12 older children at the Bright Futures Children’s Home along with 3 “House Mothers”, in conjunction with the ship’s Deck Department (15 total trainees, 9 female). They were provided with materials and stock for their own venture.

## Project Objectives & Actual Results

Project Objectives from Proposal	Performed Activities and Results	Difference from objectives and actual results
To advance the position of women in Ghana by strengthening their capacities, which will expand their opportunities and develop their role in society.	The training workshops increased the capacities of the women involved to earn additional capital, expanding their opportunities and developing their role in their communities. 17 women also received training as trainers to expand and sustain the program. 1 woman had already gone to a rural community and trained a further 15 women in snail farming before the ship departed port!	Actual number of trainees was 142 (plus six boys at the Children’s Home) compared to an original upper estimation of 400. This was due to diminished capacity described below in “Challenges”.
Improve the meaningful participation in decisions that affect women’s lives, through strengthening their ability to communicate.	Woman trainees have been encouraged to communicate through interactive groups following their workshop training, meeting weekly to receive biblically-based financial and business training.  Decision making and planning skills have been taught, encouraged and developed.	Initial project design included skills in conflict resolution and problem solving aspects - as outlined in the project proposal. Some of these training skills were lost through staff attrition.
To provide families with a secure future by equipping them with solutions to practical problems.	Gifting start-up materials to participants allowed them to establish businesses.  Each woman was provided with start-up stock for her business: a male and female rabbit, or 30 snails, or 50 mushroom bags.	5 sessions in nutrition and agriculture “substituted” for the health and childcare training planned.
Through relationship opportunities teach and reinforce “life skills” taught in the program.	Multiple relationships developed with Multi-Track staff and the women participants.	“Part-time” Mercy Ships staff provided extra mentoring to the women.

Fundraising for the Multi-Track project reached \$29,205; \$25,000 of which came from one foundation. The balance came from over 100 small donors with an interest in helping African women. Although this was substantially short of fundraising goals (\$46,283) for the program, the outcomes were more affected by capacity and staffing issues than funding constraints. A total of 142 women completed Multi-Track training in Ghana (plus 6 boys at the Home), well short of original upper level aims of 400 but, at around \$200/participant, a creditable outcome - given the program challenges (below).

## Challenges



The original Multi-Track proposal had anticipated that the new vessel, the *Africa Mercy* would be launched into active duty for Ghana in 2006. Unfortunately, Mercy Ships has experienced frustrating obstacles in the UK shipyard where refurbishment has been taking place. This has delayed the release of this wonderful tool which has been sitting in the UK rather than Africa due to struggles with the contractor. Although sea trials are now imminent, the delay resulted in the Mercy Ships flagship, *Anastasis*, nearing the end of her productive capacity, taking over the Ghana assignment. With a smaller comparative capacity and staff to the *Africa Mercy*, most programs had to be scaled back considerably. However, as an older vessel, the comparative costs for the *Anastasis* were only slightly less than costs calculated for the *Africa Mercy*.

The project proposal indicated health teaching as part of the syllabus for the program. It was learned that Ghanaians, living one of the more developed countries in Western Africa, have access to a fairly extensive, government-funded public health education scheme. When tested, knowledge levels of the Multi-Track women seemed very high. After assessment, Mercy Ships decided to add/substitute teaching in nutrition and agriculture principles, which appropriately complemented the teaching in different types of farming.

Distributing the micro-agriculture stock was a challenge due to multiple locations and lack of transport for participants, but was managed.

Due to supply problems of mushroom bags required for this micro-agriculture, (being let down by our initial supplier and then failing to find someone who could provide the quantity required in time), the six 'best' students from the mushroom groups were sent to train in mushroom bag production with the Food Research Council. They will now supply the other women trained in mushroom farming, so that they will not need to travel to Accra for supplies - which will increase the long-term sustainability of the program.

## Lessons Learned and Recommendations for the Future

Given the number of women being reached through this project and staffing attrition due to vessel delays, Mercy Ships had to recruit other crewmembers to help lead the groups as a “minor job.” However, this was very successful. The minor-job crew members brought enthusiasm and God-given gifts to the project, improving quality and outcomes. It enabled the program to reach more women than possible with the staffing of 2 facilitators plus the coordinator and was clearly beneficial to both the African women in the groups and the crewmembers given opportunity to interact with the local people. This also facilitated better relational mentoring and is recommended for future programs.

Despite status as a local delicacy, some problems with mushroom production emerged. The difficulty of getting supplies and a quickly perishing commodity creates challenges for some micro-agriculturalists that are difficult to overcome. Only the most diligent will. Future focus on other micro-enterprise tracks, less prone to these risks is recommended.

## Success Stories



1. Priscilla Ahah’s mother, Martha, was thrilled when Priscilla received foot surgery onboard the ship in August but was concerned as to how she would continue to support her child, especially as she will need further surgeries when she has grown more. Winnie Dray, an administrator for the Operations Department onboard, ‘adopted’ Priscilla as her patient during her stay and continued to stay in contact with them, meeting them regularly.

Wanting to help, Winnie suggested rabbit rearing as a way of earning extra money. Winnie arranged for Martha to attend a workshop in New Town, after which Martha left for home with the knowledge and equipment (supplied by the Multi-Track project) she needed to start a small business in breeding and selling rabbits.

2. Africa being a barter economy, a deal was struck with the ship’s Deck department who had established a relationship with a local children’s home – their help in preparing the flat-pack kits of materials for hutch/cage/hut construction in return for the teaching and providing materials for rabbit breeding at the orphanage. Mr. Brown (MS Deck Dept) turned out to be an excellent teacher to the older children at the Bright Futures Children’s Home in Shai Hills area and Mercy Ships provided them with 2 sets of rabbit hutches and 1 male and 3 female rabbits. This photo shows Irene with one of their rabbits. She has been empowered to work while still young!



3. The DESMAS group in Tema New Town changed so much during the time Mercy Ships facilitators, Heather Alderson and Henrietta Heimstra spent with their group. Initially, defensive and cynical of help, it emerged that they had been let down so many times by other organizations and even the government that they were unwilling to believe any real help would be delivered. Persistence and relationship building brought about a change in outlook and attitude and opened doors for mentoring. The ladies are now taking the snail and rabbit training further, bringing more ladies into their group and helping to establish them in small-scale farming also.