



Improved firesides

The introduction of improved cooking stoves has been an important step in lifting people out of poverty in many countries on different continents - including Saharan, East and Southern Africa, Asia, Caribbean and South America.

- in urban areas they reduce a major household expense - the purchase of cooking fuel, by up to half,
- in rural households they reduce workload, collecting, carrying and storing firewood,
- they reduce the quantity of smoke and heat women and children are exposed to during cooking,
- they reduce time spent in food preparation.

Tests were made comparing cooking time and fuel consumption of five different models of stove:

- a traditional open fireplace,
- a homemade enclosed mud stove,
- two different kinds of metal stove,
- a ceramic stove.

The same traditional meal was prepared on each stove, each using exactly the same quantity of food. The weight of fuel was measured at the start and the end of cooking.

STOVE	WOOD CONSUMPTION	COOKING TIME
3 stone traditional	4.75 kg	3 hours 32 min
Improved 3 stone (with mud filling the space between the three stones)	2.5 kg	3 hr
Metal model 1	2.5 kg	2 hr 30 min
Metal model 2	1.75 kg	2 hr 20 min
Clay	1.5 kg	2 hr 15 min

The cheapest, most efficient, easy-to-use domestic, improved firesides are locally made from clay.



There are models suitable for small cooking pots, for large cooking pots, for occasions, for preparing gari, turning fufu, and commercial use.



Advantages

- they are stable when turning fufu,
- because the fire is enclosed the wood burns more intensely, less flame but more heat,
- less wood is used (half the quantity of a three-stone fireside),
- the heat from the fire is focused on the cooking pot, which makes cooking much quicker,
- the clay stove absorbs the heat, so that the scalding heat that comes out from a three stone or iron fireside simply doesn't exist,
- the stove holds enough heat to heat water or cook sauce even after you have removed the fire,
- they produce much less smoke,
- during cooking you don't have to fix or blow the fire frequently – using hard wood you can place your pot, and the fire takes care of itself, allowing you to get busy with other things for 15-20 minutes,
- one stove can take different sizes of pots,
- some models take the largest sizes of pots, and frying pans,
- they are tough,
- they look nice.