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INTERNATIONAL DOCUMENTARY REPORT

Artisanal soapmaking and development

NGOs, associations, cooperatives and community initiatives around the world

An international panorama of organizations that support training, livelihoods, hygiene and local enterprise through soapmaking.

Éric Bertrand for APISARA · English edition · 13 November 2026

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Introduction — The people behind the projects

Why this panorama matters

Making soap can be much more than a technical exercise. In many communities it forms part of vocational training, collective savings, access to hygiene products or efforts to diversify income. Behind each initiative are people—trainers, participants, community leaders and partners— making practical choices under very different local conditions.

Different organizations, different roles

International NGOs may provide funding, equipment or coordination. Local associations and cooperatives often bring the knowledge of the community, organize practical sessions and sustain activities over time. Some initiatives work with vegetable oils and alkali; others remelt existing soap or make cleaning products described as liquid soap. These are not interchangeable technologies.

What the evidence can and cannot show

The sources describe training courses, materials distributed, workshops and individual experiences. They rarely establish long-term profitability or independently measured social impact. A funded proposal is not a completed project, and a reported sale is not necessarily a net profit. This report retains these distinctions without losing sight of the people involved.

How to use this report

This directory is intended for associations, NGOs, cooperative leaders, educators, researchers and project teams. Use it to identify organizations, understand examples, consult the source material and develop your own questions. The presence of an organization does not mean that its programme is currently operating or accepting partners.

The APISARA approach

APISARA is an independent, volunteer-run, non-commercial educational initiative. Sharing careful, accessible information can help local teams learn from each other and assess what may be adapted to their own context. The purpose of this report is documentary, not promotional.

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International organizations and UN agencies

01 CARE International (CARE Niger)

Documented activity · Niger · International development and emergency NGO

Fights poverty with a focus on women's economic empowerment; in 1991 in Niger, CARE launched the Mata Masu Dubara (“women on the move”) collective savings model that gave rise to village savings and loan associations.

A PBS NewsHour report (01/19/2018) states that the Mata Masu Dubara program supports collective initiatives, including a soapmaking project in the village of Gidan Dawaye. In 2020, CARE reported that the Kyauta Mata savings group produced soap and ointment distributed to its members during the pandemic. The profile of Fati Tahirou mentions soapmaking among the trainings offered to savings-group members. These sources confirm support for collective activities; they specify neither the trainer nor the volumes sold.

People involved: Women members of savings groups in rural and peri-urban areas

Partners mentioned: Leadership Challenge (local Nigerien NGO cited in 2020)

Sources: PBS NewsHour, 19/01/2018 · CARE, 17/07/2020 (Kyauta Mata group) · CARE International, profile of[source][source][source]

Fati Tahirou[source]

02 BRAC / BRAC International

Documented activity · Liberia, Nepal (headquartered in Bangladesh) · International NGO from the

Global South (development, microfinance, “graduation” approach) Reduces poverty through training, access to financial services, and the empowerment of young women.

In Liberia, BRAC reported on 08/23/2017 a partnership with the Mineke Foundation: a three- month training for young women aged 15 to 25 in soapmaking, baking, and catering, with the foundation providing the trainers. A 2018 article on BRAC Liberia's ELA program lists soapmaking among the skills taught to 198 vulnerable adolescent girls, with LOIC. In Nepal, BRAC International described on 09/08/2021 the path of Sharada, trained to make cleaning products (including liquid soap) in Kathmandu and then supported by NMES to launch her own brand. Overall results from multi-trade trainings should not be attributed to soapmaking alone.

People involved: Adolescent girls and young women; women in informal settlements

Partners mentioned: Mineke Foundation (Netherlands/Liberia); Nepal Mahila Ekata Samaj (NMES); LOIC (Liberia)

Sources: BRAC, 23/08/2017 · BRAC International, 08/09/2021 · FrontPage Africa, BRAC Liberia ELA (2018) ·[source] [source][source]

Chub Magazine, 15/07/2015 (Mineke Foundation)[source]

03 Plan International

Documented activity · Burkina Faso, Mali, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Guinea · International NGO

(children's rights, equality for girls, humanitarian action) Advances children's rights and equality for girls, including in crisis settings.

In Burkina Faso, a 2024 publication describes a liquid-soap workshop in Koupéla for 15 displaced young women aged 18 to 24, led by the partner association Jeunesse sans Frontières; each participant left with a bucket and a spatula. In Kaya, Plan reports supporting the Nabonswende

association, founded by a displaced young woman who trains other girls and women in soapmaking; a regional publication from January 2024 states that more than 200 people were trained. In Mali, the profile of Hamssetou describes a soap business started with a cash transfer from Plan in the Mopti region (2022): economic support, not technical training. Plan also documents a herbal soap business in Malawi, soap and detergent training for youth in Kwekwe, Zimbabwe (2021), training of women in Kumbungu, Ghana, with Songtaba, and mentees trained in soapmaking in Kissidougou, Guinea (FY25 report).

People involved: Young women and adolescent girls, including displaced people; women in crisis situations

Partners mentioned: Jeunesse sans Frontières (Burkina Faso); Nabonswende association (Kaya); Songtaba (Ghana); Plan Børnefonden (funder of the Central Sahel regional project)

Sources: Plan International Burkina Faso (Koupéla) · Plan International Burkina Faso (Kaya, Nabonswe… ·[source] [source]

Plan International, WACAH Heartbeat No. 1 (Janu… · Plan International Mali (Hamssetou)[source][source]

04 Women for Women International

Documented activity · DR Congo, Burkina Faso · International NGO supporting women survivors of conflict One-year program combining vocational training, savings, rights, and support networks; a Conflict Response Fund funds local organizations in conflict zones.

In the DRC, the organization stated in 2020 that many participants learn soapmaking as part of their vocational training and that it supported their production during the pandemic. A 2009 GlobalGiving report profiles a trainer, Viviane, said to have trained more than 1,000 participants since 2005 (organization's statement). In Burkina Faso, the Conflict Response Fund page (accessed 11/13/2026) states that in Ouagadougou (Zongo district), ADEP delivered income-generating training with its support, including soapmaking and sewing, with start-up kits, as well as a six- month program with grants. Testimonials are not an evaluation of margins or business survival.

People involved: Women survivors of conflict; displaced women

Partners mentioned: Association d'Appui et d'Éveil Pugsada (ADEP, Burkina Faso)

Sources: Women for Women International, blog 2020 (COVID… · Women for Women International, 2020[source] [source]

review · GlobalGiving, report of 09/28/2009 (trainer Viv… · Women for Women International, Conflict Respons…[source][source][source][source]

05 Mercy Corps (Mercy Corps Nigeria)

Documented activity · Nigeria (FCT, Kano, Kaduna, Lagos) · International humanitarian and development NGO The ENGINE II program (2017–2020) targeted education and entrepreneurship for more than 18,000 marginalized girls and young women aged 17 to 23.

Mercy Corps Nigeria describes a participant who learned soapmaking in the program's vocational training and then started a business making soap, cream, and insecticide. The program was implemented with Nigerian organizations and evaluated by Oxford Policy Management; that evaluation covers the whole program, not soapmaking. No success rate for soap businesses should be inferred.

People involved: Out-of-school or marginalized adolescent girls and young women

Partners mentioned: SWODEN, Action Health Incorporated, Kindling Hope Across Nations (ENGINE II consortium); Girls' Education Challenge (UK funding)

Sources: Mercy Corps Nigeria, blog ENGINE II · Mercy Corps Nigeria, ENGINE II lessons learned · Oxford[source] [source][source]

Policy Management, ENGINE II endline eva…[source]

06 World Vision

Documented activity · Zambia, Somalia, Ghana, Mali, Zimbabwe · International Christian development and emergency NGO Child well-being, community development, and humanitarian response.

In Zambia (Kapululwe, Chongwe), a group of 40 women makes laundry soap from donated soap residues, linked to a savings model: this is remelting, not saponification. In Isoka (11/17/2022), a “melt and pour” training was held for savings groups. In Somalia (Doolow, April 2019), a workshop used a soap base supplied by Bradford Soap Works. In Ghana (Fanteakwa, 2025), a facilitator trained in soapmaking started a business. In Mali (Diéma), World Vision presents the Saniya cooperative, founded by 25 women and claiming more than 60 members. In Zimbabwe (Kariba), eight women were trained in detergent making with WFP.

People involved: Women in savings groups; community facilitators; vulnerable households

Partners mentioned: Bradford Soap Works (Somalia, 2019); Needs Care Orphanage (Zambia, 2022); WFP and Ministry of Women Affairs (Zimbabwe)

Sources: World Vision Zambia, Kapululwe · World Vision Zambia, Isoka, 17/11/2022 · World Vision /[source][source] [source]

Bradford Soap Works, 25/10/2019 · World Vision Ghana, 10/11/2025[source][source]

07 Village Enterprise

Documented activity · Kenya, Uganda · NGO creating rural microenterprises

Ends extreme poverty through seed grants, training, and mentoring for group businesses.

A post on the organization's blog describes complementary vocational trainings, including soapmaking, and a training video filmed with two soapmaking mentors, Eunice Kiombe and Imelda Midzukani. It presents a liquid soap business described as profitable by its owner in Sitatunga (Kenya); this testimonial is not verified accounting. The “top 10 businesses” and “grant of about $150” figures from earlier files are not repeated.

People involved: Households in extreme poverty, especially women

Partners mentioned: Local mentors Eunice Kiombe and Imelda Midzukani

Sources: Village Enterprise, blog[source]

08 WaterAid

Documented activity · Mali (Bamako) · International NGO specializing in water, sanitation, and hygiene

Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

An article in The New Humanitarian (IRIN) archive reports that JIGI and WaterAid supported the Nfadji Women's Association (AFSAN), about 20 women in a Bamako neighborhood, in setting up a soapmaking business in 2003, and that weekly output reportedly rose from 150 to 225 bars. The article's exact date is not shown in the excerpt consulted; it gives no information on the current situation.

People involved: Women in a disadvantaged Bamako neighborhood

Partners mentioned: JIGI (Malian NGO); Nfadji Women's Association (AFSAN)

Sources: The New Humanitarian (IRIN archive)[source]

09 UNHCR – the UN Refugee Agency

Documented activity · Niger; DR Congo · United Nations refugee agency

Protection and assistance for refugees, displaced people, and stateless people.

In Niger, UNHCR and the local association Forge Arts set up a workshop at the Hamdallaye transit center in 2019. The note of 03/31/2020 reports more than 286 women trained and equipped to produce and sell liquid soap, bleach, and containers; the article of 05/21/2020 describes more than 280 refugee women at work and trainings also in Niamey, Diffa, Tillabéri, and Ouallam. In the DRC, an article of 12/01/2020 describes a soapmaking stand in a reintegration program for survivors of violence. See the case study (Section 11).

People involved: Refugee and asylum-seeking women; survivors of violence

Partners mentioned: Forge Arts (Niger); ADES and APBE (Niger, 2020); WFP and UNDP (Niger, 2020)

Sources: UNHCR, 05/21/2020 · UNHCR, 05/14/2020 (French) · UNHCR Niger, COVID-19 update of 03/31/2020 ·[source][source][source]

UNHCR, DRC, 12/01/2020[source]

10 WFP and FAO (joint project in the DRC)

Documented activity · DR Congo (Tanganyika) · United Nations agencies (food and agriculture)

Joint resilience and social-cohesion project in conflict areas.

A WFP story states that in 2020 the project helped 800 women, graduates of literacy courses, start activities (soapmaking, baking, catering), and that the groups choosing soap received caustic soda, dye, perfume, tables, hydrometers, boilers, and soap cutters. One participant describes her costs and income; that calculation is a testimonial.

People involved: Women and households in conflict areas

Partners mentioned: FAO; WFP

Sources: WFP, field story, DRC[source]

11 FAO – Forest and Farm Facility (FFF)

Documented activity · Ghana (Adansi South) · FAO partnership supporting forest and farm producer organizations Strengthens producer organizations, entrepreneurship, and market access.

An FAO publication of 08/20/2021 describes two young women from Obuobi trained by the Kokoo Pa Farmers Association to make soap from cocoa by-products, in financial management, and in VSLA savings. The account confirms diversification of activity; it provides neither a formulation nor a comparative income assessment.

People involved: Women farmers in cocoa value chains

Partners mentioned: Kokoo Pa Farmers Association (Ghana)

Sources: FAO, 20/08/2021[source]

12 UNFPA Kenya (Tujijenge Tujilinde project)

Documented activity · Kenya (Kibera, Nairobi) · United Nations Population Fund

Sexual and reproductive health; response to the effects of COVID-19 on women.

The Tujijenge Tujilinde project trained women in Kibera to make, label, and sell liquid cleaning products (shampoo, hand wash, dishwashing liquid, detergents) under the FemiNg'arisha brand, with a shop in the neighborhood. These are mainly detergents; saponification is not established.

People involved: Women and girls in informal settlements

Partners mentioned: Meiji Holdings; Embassy of Japan in Kenya

Sources: UNFPA Kenya[source]

13 Water For People

Documented activity · Malawi (Chikwawa) · International water and sanitation NGO

Lasting water and sanitation services.

The organization reports that in Mvula a village soapmaking committee, set up after latrines were built, supplies 160 families and reinvests profits as loan capital. Article undated in the excerpt consulted.

People involved: Families in a rural village

Partners mentioned: Mvula village soapmaking committee

Sources: Water For People[source]

14 FHI 360

Documented activity · Nigeria · International human development organization

Health, education, and economic development.

An FHI 360 article describes a center it runs where women and girls learn income-generating skills, including soapmaking; one participant says she could produce on her own within three weeks and sold a first batch with her group. Individual testimonial.

People involved: Vulnerable women and girls

Sources: FHI 360[source]

15 CAWST (Centre for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology)

Documented activity · Ethiopia (Misha district and two other districts) · Canadian technical-support organization for water and sanitation Training and support for local water, sanitation, and hygiene organizations.

CAWST reports that, with the Ethiopian initiative Community WASH, 64 women in three districts were trained in producing, marketing, and managing liquid soap businesses, and that more than 12,000 liters

were produced; one entrepreneur reportedly produced more than 1,300 liters. Figures reported by the organization.

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: Community WASH (Ethiopian initiative)

Sources: CAWST, blog[source]

16 Crossroads International (Carrefour International)

Documented activity · Senegal (and other African countries) · Canadian volunteer-cooperation NGO

Economic empowerment of women and youth and women's leadership, through volunteering and local partnerships.

Crossroads International describes an exchange between UNFCS and the Canadian company Green Beaver: representatives' visits to Canada in 2016, work on processes, inventory, and raw materials, diversification into liquid soap and lip balm, then leadership training with Papillon MDC. The organization states that 1,300 Senegalese women entrepreneurs developed soapmaking skills. See also the UNFCS profile (Section 6) and the case study (Section 11).

People involved: Women cooperative members

Partners mentioned: National Union of Women Cooperative Members of Senegal (UNFCS); The Green Beaver Company; Papillon MDC

Sources: Crossroads International, UNFCS story · Crossroads International, partners in Senegal ·[source][source] Crossroads International, economic empowerment[source]

17 Winrock International (USAID Farmer-to-Farmer program)

Documented activity · Senegal (Gangel Soulé, Orkadière) · International development NGO, implementer of USAID's Farmer-to-Farmer program Volunteer technical assistance in agricultural value chains.

Winrock describes a soapmaking training given by a U.S. volunteer (recipes based on local oils, molds, drying, packaging) and the path of a soap reseller who became a maker and says she sold more than 100 bars in her first week. The text also mentions a demonstration for a women's group in Orkadière.

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: Orkadière women's group; USAID

Sources: Winrock International[source]

18 Compassion International (Compassion UK, Compassion Canada)

Documented activity · Rwanda; Burkina Faso · Christian child-sponsorship NGO

Child development in partnership with local churches.

In Rwanda, Compassion UK presents a mothers' cooperative that reports producing at least 60 liters of liquid soap per week and 400 jars of petroleum jelly per month during COVID-19, funded by group savings. In Burkina Faso, Compassion Canada describes mothers trained in 2015 who make and sell soap under the “Super Moss” brand. Organization testimonials.

People involved: Mothers of sponsored children

Partners mentioned: Local church partners (not named in the sources)

Sources: Compassion UK, Rwanda · Compassion Canada, Burkina Faso[source][source]

19 World Hope International

Documented activity · Sierra Leone · International Christian development NGO

Community development, health, and protection.

With IFC funding, World Hope International selected 45 adolescent girls from 10 villages for a soap production and sales program; the trainers were trained by UN Women and the NGO's staff. Its Spring 2021

newsletter states that participants make and sell herbal soap and that most have reportedly returned to school.

People involved: Vulnerable adolescent girls

Partners mentioned: IFC (International Finance Corporation); UN Women (training of trainers)

Sources: World Hope International · World Hope International, Spring 2021 newsletter[source][source]

20 Cuso International

Documented activity · Nigeria (Cross River State) · Canadian cooperation and volunteer organization

Economic empowerment of women and youth.

Cuso International describes vocational training (hairdressing, makeup, soapmaking) with start- up kits and mentoring, and the path of a young woman who reports more than 50,000 naira in profit from a soap and disinfectant business.

People involved: Young women

Sources: Cuso International[source]

21 ActionAid Ghana

Documented activity · Ghana (Banda District, Bono Region) · International NGO (social justice, women's rights) Fights poverty and promotes women's rights.

The Daily Graphic reports that seven mothers of sponsored children received tools, equipment, and raw materials after soapmaking training organized by ActionAid Ghana with Italian partners; the district business advisory center was to support them.

People involved: Rural mothers

Partners mentioned: ActionAid's Italian partners (funding); Banda Business Advisory Centre

Sources: Daily Graphic[source]

22 Heifer International (Heifer Ghana)

Documented activity · Ghana · International agricultural development NGO

Farm income and smallholder self-reliance.

A Heifer International blog post profiles a cocoa farmer who diversified her income through soapmaking and works with four distributors. Individual testimonial published by the organization.

People involved: Women farmers

Sources: Heifer International, blog[source]

23 FIDA (IFAD)

Documented activity · Rural Ghana · United Nations international financial institution (agricultural development) Financing rural development.

IFAD profiles a soapmaker with a disability who reports producing bars, tablets, powder, and liquid soap each month and having trained 60 people, 40 of whom reportedly started their own businesses. Self-reported data.

People involved: People with disabilities in rural areas

Sources: IFAD[source]

24 Oxfam (Oxfam Iraq)

Announced project · Iraq · International confederation fighting poverty

Fights poverty and inequality; humanitarian action.

Oxfam Iraq's “YADAWEE” page, presented on the Response Innovation Lab platform, proposes training and equipping women in camps to make soap from used cooking oil. It shows “Not Funded” and a need of

$28,000. The proposal's existence is established; its implementation is not. The countries “South Sudan” and “DRC” cited in earlier files are not confirmed.

People involved: Women living in displacement camps

Partners mentioned: Response Innovation Lab (presentation platform)

Sources: YADAWEE project page, Response Innovation Lab[source]

Africa: associations, cooperatives and local initiatives

25 VIS Ghana and BOK Africa Concern

Documented activity · Ghana (Bono and Bono East regions) · Italian NGO (VIS) and Ghanaian NGO (BOK Africa Concern) Women's economic empowerment and local development, notably to prevent irregular migration.

According to the Ghana News Agency (2021), more than 1,300 women were trained in black soap production, and a coordination center is to serve four cooperatives grouping nearly 50 associations. The Daily Graphic reports the start of a warehouse in Berekum on land provided by the Senase traditional authority. The figures come from the project's promoters.

People involved: Women in cooperatives and associations

Partners mentioned: Senase and Berekum traditional authorities; women's cooperatives of the Bono and Bono East regions

Sources: Ghana News Agency, 2021 · Daily Graphic, Berekum warehouse[source][source]

26 CALID – Centre for Active Learning and Integrated Development

Documented activity · Ghana (Tamale) · Ghanaian NGO

Learning, integrated development, and inclusion of people with disabilities.

The Ghana News Agency reported on 11/06/2026 that CALID trained 48 visually impaired women and their caregivers, mainly in liquid soap making, in partnership with the Ghana Blind Union. The total includes caregivers: it should not be presented as 48 participants who are all visually impaired.

People involved: Visually impaired women and caregivers

Partners mentioned: Ghana Blind Union (Northern branch)

Sources: Ghana News Agency, 06/11/2026[source]

27 Adunyame Foundation

Documented activity · Ghana (Jana, Northern Region) · Ghanaian foundation

Community program for women's empowerment.

According to the Daily Graphic, women in Jana received vocational training in soapmaking, entrepreneurship education, and access to financial services; ten of them received complete start- up kits (chemicals, containers, protective equipment).

People involved: Women in a remote rural community

Sources: Daily Graphic[source]

28 NEWIG – Network of Women in Growth

Documented activity · Ghana (Ashanti, Northern, and other regions) · Ghanaian association network

Economic growth and women's empowerment.

The Ghana News Agency reported in May 2025 a program targeting 300 women in four regions (mushrooms, snails, soap): 76 women, including people with disabilities, trained in soapmaking over three days in Kurofa, and 69 in Tamale. Financial institutions spoke on savings and investment.

People involved: Women, including people with disabilities

Partners mentioned: Afram Rural Bank, SSNIT, Ghana Enterprises Agency (speakers at the training)

Sources: Ghana News Agency, 19/05/2025 (Kurofa) · Ghana News Agency, 26/05/2025 (Tamale)[source][source]

29 International Women's Hope Centre

Documented activity · Ghana (Sirigu, Upper East) · Ghanaian NGO

Vocational training for rural women.

My Ghana Daily (02/13/2024) reports free liquid-soap training for 34 women from the Boglingo and Sapio communities, at the request of a local leader concerned about adolescent mothers.

People involved: Rural women, including adolescent mothers

Sources: My Ghana Daily, 13/02/2024[source]

30 Rebecca Foundation

Ghana · Community organization An initiative in Ghana is documented as offering practical training in liquid-soap making and other income-generating skills. The account describes an educational activity rather than a verified long-term business outcome. Further details and current availability should be confirmed with the organization.

Source: Rebecca Foundation (see the French reference dossier).

31 Global Shea Alliance (GSA)

Documented activity · West Africa (headquartered in Accra) · Non-profit industry association for the

shea sector Quality, sustainability, and promotion of the shea sector; members include women's cooperatives, companies, suppliers, and NGOs.

A document published by the alliance, “Diversifier les produits du karité,” describes training in shea soap and cosmetics production, emphasizing safety (handling caustic soda) and ingredients. The alliance reported 849 members in 36 countries in a press release; this figure is dated and not updated here.

People involved: Women's shea-producing cooperatives

Partners mentioned: Alliance members: cooperatives, companies, NGOs

Sources: GSA, document “Diversifier les produits du kari… · GSA, press release (alliance profile)[source][source]

32 Batonga Foundation (with the Mastercard Foundation)

Documented activity · Senegal (Thidèly, Kolda) · Foundation (education and empowerment of girls and

women) Economic support for women's groups, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

Le Soleil reports (June 2025) that the “Jam wéli” women's circle, 30 members, received 620,000 CFA francs over two years to start making soap and bleach. The women are asking for a “mini- laboratory” to reduce the risks of saponification and report marketing difficulties.

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: “Jam wéli” women's circle of Thidèly; Mastercard Foundation

Sources: Le Soleil (Senegal), June 2025 · AllAfrica, 11/06/2025[source][source]

33 Union nationale des femmes coopératrices du Sénégal (UNFCS – National Union of Women Cooperative Members of Senegal)

Documented activity · Senegal (several regions) · National union of women's cooperatives (founded in

1996) Economic and social development of mainly rural women: cereal processing and soapmaking.

According to Crossroads International, the union's partner, soapmaking is one of its main activities; representatives visited the company Green Beaver in Canada in 2016 (processes, inventory, liquid soap, lip balm). The partner states that UNFCS reaches more than 15,000 women in 10 regions. “Organic” or “medicinal” claims on commercial products are not verified facts.

People involved: Women cooperative members

Partners mentioned: Crossroads International; The Green Beaver Company; Papillon MDC

Sources: Crossroads International, UNFCS story · Crossroads International, partners in Senegal[source][source]

34 IADES Togo (with Deki)

Documented activity · Togo (rural areas) · Togolese NGO, with the British NGO Deki

Community development, water, and hygiene.

Deki presents the Wezoulim project: women in mothers' clubs, who already manage rehabilitated water points, learn to make liquid soap, and handwashing stations are installed in villages, schools, and homes.

People involved: Women in mothers' clubs

Partners mentioned: Deki (UK); village mothers' clubs

Sources: Deki[source]

35 Tegawendé Cooperative and SCS Relwendé No. 1 (Oula)

Documented activity · Burkina Faso (Oula, Yaadga region) · Women's cooperatives

Production and sale of soap and shea butter.

Burkina24 (October 2026) describes the Tegawendé cooperative (Ziga), which produces traditional “kabakourou” soap, liquid soap, and shea butter for about 100 members, and the Société coopérative simplifiée Relwendé No. 1 (Kasalgado, 83 members).

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: “Entreprendre au féminin” initiative (visit reported by the press)

Sources: Burkina24, October 2026[source]

36 Wend-Panga Women's Group (Youga)

Documented activity · Burkina Faso (Youga) · Women's group

Production of shea butter soap.

Burkina24 reports that the group's soaps are on most market stalls in Youga and that the group plans to support the Veneem-tina association to secure its shea butter supply. Article undated in the excerpt consulted.

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: Veneem-tina association (shea butter supply, planned)

Sources: Burkina24[source]

37 ADEP – Association d'Appui et d'Éveil Pugsada

Documented activity · Burkina Faso (Ouagadougou and several regions) · Burkinabe association

promoting the rights of girls and women Rights of girls and women, health, economic empowerment.

With Women for Women International's Conflict Response Fund, ADEP provided displaced women in the Zongo district with food and hygiene kits, income-generating training including soapmaking and sewing with start-up kits, and business training with grants. Sidwaya reports that the association held its 24th general assembly on 04/25/2026 (seven projects in 2025).

People involved: Internally displaced women; survivors of violence

Partners mentioned: Women for Women International (Conflict Response Fund)

Sources: Women for Women International, CRF Burkina Faso · Sidwaya, general assembly of 04/25/2026[source][source]

38 Help For Africa People

Documented activity · Côte d'Ivoire (Abobo, Abidjan) · Ivorian NGO

Empowerment and capacity building for its members.

Fraternité Matin reports that about 20 women were trained in soapmaking, with the aim of organizing them into cooperatives.

People involved: Women members of the NGO

Sources: Fraternité Matin[source]

39 ONG l'Art (Kounahiri)

Documented activity · Côte d'Ivoire (Kounahiri) · Ivorian NGO (arts, culture, and social action)

Local social and cultural action.

AIP reports that on 03/22/2025 about 50 women were trained in liquid and solid soap making, with the departmental directorate of Employment and Social Protection; participants received a certificate.

People involved: Women

Partners mentioned: Departmental Directorate of Employment and Social Protection; RVR entrepreneurs' club

Sources: AIP, 24/03/2025[source]

40 AFSAN – Association des femmes de Nfadji (Nfadji Women's Association)

Documented activity · Mali (Bamako, Nfadji neighborhood) · Women's association

Soap production and better hygiene in the neighborhood.

Set up with support from JIGI and WaterAid in 2003, the association's soapmaking business brought together about 20 women; weekly output reportedly rose from 150 to 225 bars according to the article cited. Current status unknown.

People involved: Women in a disadvantaged neighborhood

Partners mentioned: JIGI; WaterAid

Sources: The New Humanitarian (IRIN archive)[source]

41 Challenging Heights

Announced project · Ghana (Winneba) · Ghanaian NGO fighting child trafficking

Trafficking prevention and reintegration.

A GlobalGiving page presents a project to train 20 women in soapmaking to prevent trafficking. No implementation report was consulted.

People involved: Women in communities at risk of trafficking

Partners mentioned: GlobalGiving (fundraising)

Sources: GlobalGiving, project page[source]

42 ADJAH Cancer Support Ghana

Announced project · Ghana · Ghanaian association

Support for people with cancer and women's empowerment.

A GlobalGiving page presents a project targeting 250 women; no donations were recorded when consulted. This is a goal.

People involved: Vulnerable women

Partners mentioned: GlobalGiving (fundraising)

Sources: GlobalGiving, project page[source]

43 AFA – Autonomisation des femmes africaines

Documented activity · DR Congo (Kinshasa) · Congolese association founded on 09/02/2024

Economic empowerment, education, health, and leadership of women.

The Congolese Press Agency reported on 07/19/2026 the third cohort of a training in artisanal soapmaking with natural products, open to women and men. The association announces a plan for a laboratory or soap workshop; it had not been carried out as of the source date.

People involved: Women and youth

Sources: Congolese Press Agency, 07/19/2026[source]

44 SOFDI – Solidarité des femmes pour le développement intégral

Documented activity · DR Congo (Kazimia) · Congolese women's association

Women's participation in decision-making and local development.

Rockflower, a funding partner, reports that SOFDI trained 15 women in soapmaking, income and expense management, and literacy, and that the trained women are ready to train others despite a reduced margin.

People involved: Rural women

Partners mentioned: Rockflower (funding partner)

Sources: Rockflower, DRC news[source]

45 Association des Leaders Pacificateurs pour le Développement (ALPD)

Announced project · DR Congo (Goma, Kanyaruchinya) · Local association

Peace and community development.

A GlobalGiving page presents a project to train 100 vulnerable women, including displaced women, in liquid and solid soap making over three months, with management and marketing. No implementation report was consulted.

People involved: Vulnerable and displaced women

Partners mentioned: GlobalGiving (fundraising)

Sources: GlobalGiving, project page[source]

46 Darfur Women Network (DWN)

Disrupted activity · Sudan (South Darfur); aid to refugees in Chad · Sudanese diaspora association (based in Indianapolis) Empowerment of displaced and refugee women.

Launched in 2020, the incubator trained women from four South Darfur camps to make bar soap, liquid soap, and detergent, sold in the camps and at health centers according to 2021–2022 reports. In 2023, the organization reported redirecting its aid to refugees in Chad. The October 2025 report mentions the destruction of Nyala and presents a recovery program aiming to reach 300 women and girls: these figures are targets.

People involved: Displaced and refugee women

Partners mentioned: GlobalGiving (fundraising and reports)

Sources: GlobalGiving, project reports · GlobalGiving, October 2025 report[source][source]

47 SWAP – Safe Water and AIDS Project

Documented activity · Kenya (western Kenya, Kisumu) · Kenyan public health NGO (since 2005)

Safe water, hygiene, and community health.

GlobalGiving reports state that SWAP obtained a two-year approval from the Kenya Bureau of Standards, produced 505 liters in the quarter before November 2023 and 400 liters in the quarter before February 2024, and distributes liquid soap through community health workers and to about 50 health facilities.

People involved: Community health workers; health facilities

Partners mentioned: Kenya Bureau of Standards (approval); community health workers

Sources: GlobalGiving, February 2024 report · GlobalGiving, November 2023 report[source][source]

48 Mifuko Trust and Mifuko Women Development CBO

Documented activity · Kenya · Finnish fair-trade trust and partner community organization

Income for women artisans.

Mifuko presents a soapmaking training held during COVID-19 for a women's self-help group. Organization blog post.

People involved: Women artisans

Partners mentioned: Kyeni kya Kyanziu Women Self Help Group

Sources: Mifuko, blog[source]

49 PREFER Women's Soap Association (Rwanda)

Documented activity · Rwanda (Musanze) · Women's association supported by a Rwandan NGO

Soap production and sales.

The Eye reports that widowed and married women took four months of classes, rented a shop, and sell their soap locally and in gift shops and hotel shops in Musanze.

People involved: Women

Partners mentioned: PREFER – Poverty reduction, Education and Family empowerment in Rwanda

Sources: The Eye (Rwanda)[source]

50 Global Health Corps (Malawi)

Documented activity · Malawi (TA Chitseka, Lilongwe) · Health leadership development organization

Leadership for health equity.

Nyasa Times reports a soapmaking training for women.

People involved: Women

Sources: Nyasa Times[source]

51 Helvetas Madagascar

Announced project · Madagascar · Swiss development NGO

Rural and economic development.

Terms of reference published in 2023 seek a service provider to train 12 women from three associations in artisanal soapmaking and to support them in financial management. The document describes a need and a call for providers, not a completed training.

People involved: Women members of associations

Partners mentioned: Three women's associations in the region concerned (named in the terms of reference)

Sources: Helvetas, terms of reference (2023)[source]

Latin America

52 Cooperativa de Trabajo Maleza (Maleza Cosmética Natural)

Documented activity · Argentina (Villa Lugano, Buenos Aires) · Worker cooperative

Production and sale of natural cosmetics and cleaning products.

Founded in 2017 from socio-productive workshops in Villa 20, the cooperative set up a laboratory in a former warehouse. IPS (February 2022) describes 44 young women and two men making soap and shampoo; Tiempo Argentino (2023) mentions 46 workers and four production lines. Historical figures, not current ones.

People involved: Young women from low-income neighborhoods

Partners mentioned: Escuela Técnica Química No. 8 (members' school of origin, according to Tiempo Argentino)

Sources: IPS, February 2022 · Tiempo Argentino, March 2023 · Revista Idelcoop n° 241[source][source][source]

53 Fundación Pachamama (Ikiama Nukuri program)

Documented activity · Ecuador (Morona Santiago, Pastaza) · Ecuadorian foundation (Indigenous rights, bioeconomy) Supports Amazonian Indigenous peoples, community health, and bio-enterprises.

In 2021, with PAHO/WHO, the Ikiama Nukuri program trained 20 Shuar and Achuar women to make a cosmetic soap and a laundry soap from used cooking oil; WHO links these workshops to a broader effort that trained 223 Indigenous health promoters. See the case study (Section 11).

People involved: Shuar and Achuar Indigenous women

Partners mentioned: Pan American Health Organization (PAHO/WHO)

Sources: PAHO, story · WHO, Ecuador country story (2021)[source][source]

54 Associação Sementes do Araguari

Documented activity · Brazil (Amapá) · Riverside women's association (founded in 2020)

Adds value to forest products as an alternative to gold mining.

A Mongabay report (2021) describes about 30 women producing soap, ointments, oils, and candles from andiroba, copaíba, pracaxi, and other resources, including about 1,000 soaps per month. 2021 data.

People involved: Riverside and extractivist women

Sources: Mongabay, republished by eCycle · Pulitzer Center[source][source]

55 Associação das Amélias

Documented activity · Brazil (Tapajós National Forest, Pará) · Women-led family association (founded in 2018) Bio-cosmetics from Amazonian resources and community tourism.

The Sebrae news agency reports that the association, which grew out of the use of andiroba seeds, brings together 16 people and makes soap, candles, repellents, and incense with Sebrae's support.

People involved: Women in a riverside community

Partners mentioned: Sebrae

Sources: Agência Sebrae de Notícias[source]

56 AVIVE – Associação Vida Verde da Amazônia

Documented activity · Brazil (Silves, Amazonas) · Women's association

Sustainable production from Amazonian plant resources.

A UNDP Equator Initiative case study documents the association, which produces soap and candles, among other products, from Amazonian vegetable oils and essential oils. Volumes cited in earlier files were not reconfirmed.

People involved: Women and community producers

Partners mentioned: UNDP Equator Initiative (case study)

Sources: Equator Initiative case study (Land Portal)[source]

Asia and other regions

57 Global Peace Women Nepal (Global Peace Foundation)

Documented activity · Nepal (Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Chitwan, Pokhara, Dhading, Kavre) · Women's branch of an international foundation Women's leadership and peacebuilding.

The Global Peace Foundation reports that between January 2018 and June 2019, Global Peace Women Nepal held trainings in liquid and bar soap making, along with literacy and entrepreneurship, in several districts.

People involved: Women

Partners mentioned: Arpand Shanti Kaski Nepal

Sources: Global Peace Foundation[source]

58 Palam Rural Centre (India)

Documented activity · India · Rural artisan production organization

Rural employment through soap production sold via fair trade.

Ten Thousand Villages reports that the group, which turned to soapmaking about 30 years ago under the leadership of a chemist, can produce 2,000 bars per day. Capacity reported by the distributor.

People involved: Rural workers

Partners mentioned: Ten Thousand Villages (fair-trade distribution)

Sources: Ten Thousand Villages, Mosaic[source]

Microproject supporters and funders

59 FAO – TECA platform

Potential relay or partner · International · FAO platform (technologies and practices for small producers) Lists proven practices in English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese; accepts submissions from organizations through a template.

No soapmaking entry was verified. A potential documentary relay for field-tested practices.

People involved: Field organizations, extension workers

Sources: TECA page · GFAR, TECA overview[source][source]

60 FAO – Global Forum on Food Security and Nutrition (FSN Forum)

Potential relay or partner · International · FAO online forum Multi-stakeholder dialogue and sharing of resources with members.

No soapmaking activity. Potential dissemination relay.

People involved: Practitioners and institutions

Sources: FSN Forum[source]

61 FAO – Dimitra Clubs

Potential relay or partner · Sub-Saharan Africa · FAO community approach Clubs of rural women, men, and youth carrying out collective action.

No verified soapmaking activity. A potentially relevant audience.

People involved: Rural communities

Sources: Dimitra page[source]

62 pS-Eau – Programme Solidarité Eau

Potential relay or partner · France (Paris, Lyon); Global South · Water, sanitation, and hygiene network Coordination and documentation among international solidarity organizations.

Hosts the ATOL soapmaking guide (2006) in its document database. This establishes a documentary role, not current training activity.

People involved: NGOs and local authorities

Sources: pS-Eau, ATOL guide record · pS-Eau, contact page[source][source]

Networks and knowledge-sharing platforms

63 Inter-réseaux Développement rural

Potential relay or partner · France, Burkina Faso, Benin · Rural development network Monitoring, debate, and information sharing on rural development in Africa.

No soapmaking activity. Potential dissemination relay.

People involved: Farmers' organizations, NGOs, researchers

Sources: Inter-réseaux, mission[source]

64 Access Agriculture

Potential relay or partner · International (based in Brussels) · NGO producing agricultural training videos Agroecological videos in local languages and a network of rural entrepreneurs.

No verified soapmaking activity. Potential relay.

People involved: Farmers and rural advisors

Sources: Access Agriculture[source]

65 Practical Action / Practical Answers

Potential relay or partner · International (United Kingdom) · Appropriate-technology NGO Shares simple technologies; Practical Answers technical information service.

Author of a technical brief on soapmaking reused by other organizations (WEDC, Tearfund). Potential documentary relay.

People involved: Development practitioners

Sources: Practical Action, contact page[source]

66 Fairtrade International

Potential relay or partner · International · Fair-trade movement Certification and support for producer organizations.

No confirmed soapmaking activity. A lead for shea or cocoa cooperatives.

People involved: Producer cooperatives

Sources: Fairtrade International[source]

67 Aga Khan Foundation (AKDN)

Potential relay or partner · Africa, Asia · Development network Rural development, health, education.

No confirmed soapmaking activity.

People involved: Rural communities

Sources: AKDN[source]

68 Other thematic NGOs: Solidarités International, Action contre la Faim, GRET, Agrisud International, Geres, TechnoServe

Potential relay or partner · International · Thematic NGOs (water and hygiene, nutrition, value chains, entrepreneurship) Fields related to soapmaking: hygiene, nutrition, artisanal and agricultural value chains, energy, rural entrepreneurship.

No specific soapmaking intervention has been established for these organizations. Do not cite them as soapmaking operators.

People involved: Varies

Sources: Solidarités International · Action contre la Faim · GRET · Agrisud International[source][source][source][source]

69 CorpsAfrica

Documented activity · Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, Ethiopia (11 countries of operation) · African

volunteering and community microproject organization African volunteers live for up to a year in a community in their own country to facilitate a small project chosen by residents.

Documented activities: Buwere (Uganda), bar soap for young mothers; Eburenga (Kenya), 80 women trained and 30 liters of liquid soap produced during the session; Kachindankho (Malawi), improvement of a struggling existing production (see Section 11); Kyeni Women Group (Kenya), nearly 40 members, a first 40-liter batch funded by members followed by further batches; Mutuuma (Kenya), a group of 85 women starting at 50 bars per week; Endao (Kenya), training of more than 14 women from the Namkaa Women Group; Sheymba Kebele (Ethiopia, March–July 2025), soap, detergent, and candle units (budget figures differ on the page). Announced projects (Pitch Day 2026): Dobee Kebele (15 youth, target of 200 liters per month by month six) and Layignaw Humbo (10 participants, 60% women). Volumes and sales are reported by the projects.

People involved: Women's groups, unemployed youth, adolescent mothers

Partners mentioned: Mastercard Foundation (launch of CorpsAfrica/Ethiopia); local communities and

women's groups

Sources: Buwere (Uganda) · Eburenga (Kenya) · Kachindankho (Malawi) · Kyeni Women Group (Kenya)[source] [source][source][source]

70 World Connect (and its national networks Mudzi Connect in Malawi and World Connect Rwanda)

Documented activity · Senegal, Malawi, Rwanda · Microgrant organization for community-led projects

Co-invests in projects chosen and managed locally, with national networks (Mudzi Connect in Malawi, World Connect Rwanda).

Senegal: four women's groups in Saré Hamidou trained in 2016, with handwashing stations; a group in Forou Serere. Malawi: 20 women from the Mgwirizano savings group trained by the Center for Rural Development (grant of $749.32, 2020 reports), then a production-shelter project in 2021 (amounts differ between updates; completion not established); the Lilongwe Youth Organization's SOMAYEEP project in Kauma: 32 youth trained (initial target of 20), two exchange visits, reported output of at least 3,000 bars per week later slowed by rising oil prices (final report of 04/30/2023). Rwanda: the Karama project led by 30 women (training, inputs, equipment,

workspace rental) and a project for 30 teen mothers in Gakenke, both at the launch or fundraising stage; The New Times (05/29/2026) mentions a funded soap business in Gatovu village.

People involved: Savings groups, youth, women, teen mothers

Partners mentioned: Center for Rural Development (CRD) and Mgwirizano savings group (Malawi); Lilongwe

Youth Organization (Malawi); women's groups of Saré Hamidou and Forou Serere (Senegal); USAID Local Works (funding of the Malawi program evaluated in 2020)

Sources: Saré Hamidou (Senegal, 2016) · Forou Serere (Senegal) · Mgwirizano, 2020 reports (Malawi) ·[source] [source][source]

Mgwirizano, 2021 production shelter (Malawi)[source]

71 GlobalGiving

Potential relay or partner · International · Crowdfunding platform for non-profit organizations Connects project leaders with donors; project leaders publish reports.

The platform hosts many soapmaking projects (Darfur Women Network, SWAP, ALPD, Challenging Heights, ADJAH). A fundraising page proves neither full funding, nor implementation, nor effectiveness: cite the actual project leader and the dated report.

People involved: Project-leading organizations

Sources: GlobalGiving[source]

72 Other funders to explore: The Pollination Project, Global Fund for Women, Trickle Up, CAMFED, Fondation de France

Potential relay or partner · International · Foundations and funds Funding for local groups, women, and international solidarity associations.

No soapmaking funding was verified. Eligibility conditions should be checked on their websites.

People involved: Local organizations

Sources: The Pollination Project · Global Fund for Women · Trickle Up · CAMFED[source][source][source][source]

Five cases worth exploring

Niger — UNHCR and Forge Arts

Training and local production of hygiene products at the Hamdallaye transit centre linked practical skills with the emergency public-health response. Figures cited in the source refer to the period described, not necessarily to current activity.

Malawi — World Connect

Small grants helped groups access materials and training, while reported achievements and economic constraints illustrate the difficulty of sustaining an activity over time.

Senegal — UNFCS and Crossroads International

Exchanges with Green Beaver focused on production methods, raw materials and stock management. Testimonies about growth should not be mistaken for independent profit assessments.

Ecuador — Fundación Pachamama

Workshops combined soapmaking, hygiene, local resources and prospects for livelihoods, without establishing all the environmental or financial effects claimed.

Sudan — Darfur Women Network

Conflict disrupted activities intended for displaced women, underlining the limits of assuming that a documented initiative remains operational.

Manuals and technical references

These resources complement the directory. Check their publication dates and reuse conditions before using them in training.

APISARA practical soapmaking manual

FR · EN · PT-BR · ES[source][source][source][source]

ATOL — Soap manufacturing: technical, economic and social aspects

Read source[source]

Practical Action — Soapmaking: Technical Brief

Read source[source]

WEDC — Making soap: Technical Brief No. 8

Read source[source]

Tearfund — Footsteps 97: Soap making

Read source[source]

CTA/ISF — Improved techniques for hand-crafted soaps and detergents

Read source[source]

Further reading

Training Manual for a Village Soap-Making Operation — L. Plesent, S. Lincoln and E. Nkrumah (Vermont Soap).

Vermont Soap Peter Donker — Small-scale Soapmaking: a handbook (Practical Action Publishing, 1993). Paid reference.[source]

About APISARA

APISARA is an independent, volunteer-run, non-commercial educational initiative providing free guides, a practical training manual and a soap formulation calculator in four languages.

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