

Saving & Recycling - Women's Groups in Bo

Judith Ellis and JoAnne Fisher visited several women's groups during their recent time in Bo.

Sierra Leone is a country of small traders - everyone exists by buying from others. The Womens' Groups are no exception: they may be a small community of wives and mothers working collectively on soap-making and weaving or a group of women supplementing their jobs with roadside sales.

Dgloma Women's Group

Joanne and I visited Dgloma Womens Group late one afternoon. Mary, the group leader, had come from her work at the Provincial Government Office and set up her cold drinks stand on her property adjoining the school. Rosalie, a local teacher, was thinking of doing the same at her school. Of the other women present, one travels regularly to a dried fish market many miles away and sells on in Bo Central Market, one takes fried fish and plantain around the streets and offices at lunchtime, one sells rice and another prepares and sells cassava.

They have a savings scheme, whereby they each contribute a small weekly amount and in turn take 'the pot', giving them an amount for investment in goods. The Group would like to work more collectively - selling firewood or buying palm oil when the price is low and saving it until the price rises, out of season - but would require more investment. We enjoyed our visit and the unexpected supper of fried fish and banana balls, before being escorted back to the main road for our walk home.



JoAnne with the Dgloma Women's Group

Re-use, Recycle

Other groups who rely on craft products face a more difficult future - it is labour-intensive work and most other 'Saloneans' choose cheaper imported goods.

Recycling is evident, through necessity rather than conviction: wool sweaters are unpicked and reused in weaving country cloth, discarded metal is refashioned into farming tools, computer innards are sold at the roadside for spare parts (though only the businesses have computers, mainly cast-offs). Nothing is wasted if it can be re-used.

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Bortima Women's Group



Bo OWL Women's Group

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Weaving



Tie Dying



Sewing Class



Soap Making