

## SUSTAINABLE ECO VILLAGE DEVELOPMENT

### Uttarakhand, India

Over two-thirds of households in India still rely on traditional biomass for cooking. Open fires and primitive stoves are rather inefficient at converting energy into heat for cooking and emit a significant amount of smoke which can have harmful effects on health as well as on the environment. While women play a major role in family lives, being those who are cooking, collecting firewood, water, and working in agriculture, they are seldom included in decision-making processes. The Eco Village Development (EVD) project started in 2011 as an integrated approach for creating low carbon communities of practice in existing villages. It comprises of a combination of inexpensive renewable energy technology (RET) and capacity-building activities for climate change adaptation and mitigation in villages.

The first step in an EVD project is to create awareness among local communities of climate change and then to introduce them to contextually appropriate small scale adaptation and mitigation innovations and solutions. By taking a collaborative approach it involves women and other community members in both the planning and implementation phase of the development project, by also given them tools to be climate resilient. To broaden participation, community members are organized into support groups and trained on how to make use of the new technologies and on organic agricultural methods. Refresher courses and extra training are also delivered from time to time, to ensure involvement and to create a sense of ownership of the technology, diminishing the chances that they will lose interest and abandon it. In addition, self-help groups are also set up for thrifts and credits, so that women can have easy access to small credits in times of financial needs.

Changing from traditional to improved cookstoves with chimney and biogas has curbed black carbon and greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced fuel-use and helped reduce deforestation in the hillsides. Besides, it has lessened indoor air pollution, contributing to better health conditions for local communities, especially among women. Furthermore, it has left women and young girls in general with more time for other activities, like educational and income generating entrepreneurship ones, as reduced need for solid biomass means less time is spent on collecting wood for fuel. Moreover, training the community members in organic farming and kitchen gardening has been an important step in ensuring food security and improving the quality of the soil. The members of EVD groups have reported being very empowered and most socially connected through their involvement in the project.



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