



## GEF/UNDP SGP GRANT AND AIRBUS Foundation join hands to reviving lives through renewable energy



One might have heard about Nilgiris, one of the largest tribal areas in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, yet not many are aware how life is a challenge for the populace living here. While we comfort ourselves with most of the facilities available, life becomes a curse for people in Nilgiris, as they have a limited access to the local programmes and the credit facilities benefitting them. These issues in the area have been identified and efforts have been put to address them by a range of stakeholders, including the Government of India (GOI) to mainstream the tribal and marginalised communities and ensure their involvement and benefit from the programmes. Along with GOI and other stakeholders, Centre for Tribal's and Rural Development Trust (CTRD), an NGO, has been working in the tribal areas of Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu for the last 22 years. Not only this, it has taken up the challenge in the Gudalur block and its neighbouring areas in the district. Through its regular interactions and visits and its repeated engagement with the local people, the trust has established trust and rapport with locals, creating kinship based institutions as self help groups (SHGs) at the grassroots. This resulted into local level discussions prioritising small actions benefitting the communities through an inclusive growth.

To enhance and balance the well being, livelihoods capabilities, equity and



sustainable actions in the villages with locals, CTRD has been working with Raleigh India for addressing the grass-root actions through British and other countries' volunteers, including the Indian nationals. The activities in the projects are ensuring delivering quick results, involving communities to take responsibilities, decisions and share costs in cash and in kind. Of late, the more complex long duration actions for livelihood promotion in agriculture, livestock and animal husbandry have also been addressed.

The NGO approached the Global Environment Facility (GEF), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) - Small Grant Programme (SGP), and several discussions, informal meetings led to develop a common understanding on the ideas between the stakeholders. As a result, the need to integrate SHGs into employment for sustained incomes was greatly felt. Organic links need to be established

between labour intensive works and rural SHGs workers in case we have to attack poverty. Centre for Environment Education (CEE) through the SGP encouraged the skills building approach as a growth strategy. As progress took place, AIRBUS Corporate Foundation too joined hands as a partner for the programme.

With more practical approach and steps between all partners, a project was developed addressing the challenges of working together in a carefully chosen poverty focused area.

The aim of the project (April 2010 to April 2013) was to enhance incomes, quality of life of the tribal and marginalised communities by promoting a range of renewable energy options: bio-gas units, smokeless chulahs, local biodiversity through community participation, enhancing local skills, management practices and build capacities sustainably.

Titled "Promoting the adaptation of renewable energy by installation of Bio-Gas units in tribal and other deprived villages of Gudalur Block of Nilgiri District", the project saw partners like MoEF, GOI, GEF, UNDP, Raleigh, CTRD, AIRBUS, SGP, Local Communities through small women self help groups (SHG's) and CTRD AND CEE joining hands and sharing and synergising in terms of roles and responsibilities and sharing costs and decisions. Simple and easy to understand methods to implement the project had been mutually agreed between the partners.

## PROJECT STRATEGY

The project strategy had been developed with guidance from GEF/SGP by CTRD Trust in discussions with locals to develop sustainable actions, which had a three phased community approach.

**Phase I:** Mobilise communities through the use of 'participatory micro planning' (PMP) methods to identify, analyse and prioritise the needs of the community.

**Phase II:** Facilitate and promote informal kinship based common interest women self help groups (SHGs) for increasing self-help, collective bargaining, community negotiations and for implementation of the programme. This was supported through regular meetings, and record keeping at the local levels, linked to the local banks.

**Phase III:** Enhance the skills and capacities in a range of activities through community volunteers and local grass-root persons (both men and women), to plan, implement, manage and monitor resources and activities.

## PROGRESSIVE PHASE OF THE PROJECT AS ON 2014

- 126 Officials from the AIRBUS Corporate Foundation (ACF) and Raleigh paid 8 visits and had already facilitated with the local communities the construction of 20 Biogas units at Kudimery tribal village with 20 poor tribal families. It had generated nearly 2518 days of work by the employees of ACF and leading to a kind contribution of 25,000 USD at the minimum.
- 20 pairs of buffaloes have been provided to 20 poor families. More than sixteen trainings, village meetings have been undertaken for building the local capacities of the poor tribals in livestock management, and husbandry practices. Continual trainings and awareness had happened in the introduction of nutritional fodder plots and promoting the fodder availability through the year.
- The NGO has created more access to quality livestock and livestock management practices through community pay and use systems. Three locals have been trained in handling the biogas units and as local-paravets.
- Selling almost 6/7 ltrs of milk everyday for nearly 300 days, many families

had been generating nearly Rs 90,000 as revenues with nearly 40 % savings and the story continues further. CTRD/SGP-CEE, ensure that an income and expenditure records are maintained for selling milk in the cooperative society at the household levels.

- CTRD created a new lease of life in the communities, as they visited the milk cooperative society at regular intervals to ensure smooth operations. Ensure women SHGs meetings, opening of bank accounts and getting new seed varieties to poor Paniya, Kurumbas, Kattunayaka tribals. This process of inclusive growth has helped impart a new life in the region.

- Trainings had been imparted to use the slurry by the communities for their crops and also to encourage them to start kitchen gardens. Cultivation of crops like turmeric, ginger, cabbage and egg plant and green leaf vegetables had also been encouraged.

Any project is validated by the impact it has created and the benefits and impact the project has created is as under:

- As per an estimate, each beneficiary has reduced 1320 kgs of fire wood usage which in turn has restricted 2600 kgs or nearly 2.6 metric ton of carbon emission per household (HH).
- On an average, 6 to 7 liters of milk is sold by the families on day to day basis. This is bringing additional income of more than Rs. 100 per day per family.
- The slurry having greater nitrogen is enriching the soils and nearly 8 to 10 kgs of slurry is being produced every day in every biogas HH. This is an additional income of Rs 30 in terms of nutrients value.
- The social and environmental impacts of no smoke in the households, reduced drudgery for women from fuel wood collection; no watering of eyes.
- Smoke and soot are minimised from their homes. This would improve the health of the local women. Kitchen and utensils would be cleaner.
- Cooking and vessel cleaning time is saved. The housewives can use this spare time gainfully for the family and enterprise management.
- Women freed from the drudgery of fetching fuel wood from the forests as now the biogas units work for more than 4 hours.
- Bio-gas plant affluent as manure, rich in nitrogen and humus helps improve



the soil structure and crop yield.

- Check Mosquito and fly breeding as these do not breed in this manure. It has been scientifically ascertained that biogas manure is free of mosquitos and flies.
- Helps in minimising deforestation thus improving the ecological balance of the areas. Large scale implementation of biogas programme opens up self employment avenues in rural areas.
- Introduce pressure cooker as an additional benefit, as it reduces cooking time substantially thus using less of the gas for cooking. Pressure cooked food has better nutrition values than in open pans.
- Plantation along the margins of land holdings and around their houses in their homestead land improves local biodiversity and access to long term gains and also act as carbon sinks.

## CONCLUSION

The project benefitted around 50 Biogas units in 50 HHs directly and more than 500 household in 30 tribal villages Gudalur Block of Nilgiris District in Tamil Nadu. The projected brought it Rs 23,00,000 through SGP Grant (Co-financed), Rs 17,85,000 through community, Rs 42,85,000 through Airbus Foundation and Rs 30,00,000 through others to do more than 50 biogas units till now. In a nutshell, the programme led the tribal community to explore sustainable and independent means on one hand, while on the other hand reducing the carbon emission, minimising deforestation and protecting the villagers from health hazards.

This example proves how imperative it is to think about inclusive growth while we talk about elevating certain classes of society. It proves that other associated aspects also need to be considered and addressed through such projects. ■

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