

Strengthening community partnerships

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Introduction

ITDG-East Africa recently completed a successful biomass energy project on commercial production and marketing of fuel efficient stoves. The lessons learnt have been shared with various partners sharing a common interest, including the GTZ-funded ProBEC (Programme for Biomass Energy Conservation in Southern Africa). This paper describes two key findings that came out of the study;

- The need for ongoing support to local promoters (Figure 1)
- The impact of sharing information through an exchange visit between ITDG-East Africa and the GTZ-funded organization ProBEC.

Ongoing support to local promoters

One key lesson is that local stove promoters should be identified and supported if they are to sustain the promotion and dissemination of stoves in their communities after the projects ended. If this is happens:

- Communities are able to build their own linkages with the promoters for longer-term commercial promotion and dissemination of technologies and services that are having a positive impact on their own lives.
- With well-communicated participatory training, communities are

able to raise their own capacities and train other people on those technologies.

Impacts of information sharing

In July 2003, ProBEC facilitated the visit of 13 stove promoters from Malawi and Zimbabwe to West Kenya to join with the stove promoters in West Kenya to exchange ideas. The key objectives for this visit comprised:

- Building linkages at grassroots level to initiate partnerships
- Sharing knowledge and skills on stove production and marketing
- Initiating promoter-to-promoter training

Achievements of the visit

- There was promoter-to-promoter training on quality control of ceramic stove products, clay preparation, moulding, and firing.
- The Malawi team learnt about many aspects of the kitchen improvement activities promoted by ITDG
- The teams shared the idea of setting up a promoters' network in Kenya.
- The visit to the Provincial Commissioner was aired on television and thus the stove promoters had the opportunity to promote their activities on the Kenyan media.

Impact of the exchange visit

- Based on this visit, together with previous input from ITDG-East Africa, the promoters from Malawi have constructed six 'better bonfire kilns' thus improving their firing technologies (1).
- One stove promoter has improved her production and marketing skills and has since increased her income as a direct result. She is now providing training in other areas on production and

marketing of the improved ceramic stoves

- Fireless cookers (hayboxes) were promoted and have received significant attention from the communities from which the promoters came (2). These cookers conserve fuel and reduce the time spent with the fire alight, thus reducing the amount of smoke generated as well.
- The IFSP (Integrated Food Security Programme) in Mulanje has built linkages between their food security work, and their work on household energy and health, thus broadening the impact of stoves.

As a result of the impact of this meeting, further meetings have been arranged in Malawi for promoters from Mozambique, Zambia, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Kenya. They are exchanging new ideas, and receiving follow-up training on production and marketing of improved stoves.

Conclusion

Sharing lessons learnt is very important for both sustaining development activities and for scaling up of activities.

References

1. Agumba, M. & Abbott, V. (1996) How to Build, Use and Maintain a Better Bonfire Kiln, IT Kenya
2. Still, D. (1999) The Haybox for energy conservation: *Boiling Point* 43, ITDG, UK

[More details on the work done by ProBEC can be found in the GTZ pages]



Figure 1 Stove promoters in West Kenya (photo: Vincent Okello/ITDG)