

Press Release

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Solar Power and Education against poverty

Solar study lights for slum children in Calcutta

Project for Indian school children by *green energy against poverty*, Bonn
Co-Financing with Consulate-General of Germany, Calcutta

450 Children of four needy Village Schools near Calcutta receive solar reading lights in the next few days. These small devices with white LEDs provide significantly more light than the kerosene lamps used before. Children in off-grid villages need such lamps to do their homework, because sunset is early in the day and the night is dark. With better light, they can study more, and education is the key to a better future. For this project, the donor organisation *green energy against poverty* from Bonn / Germany could win the German Consulate-General in Calcutta as a Co-Financing partner.

The lamps are charged with solar panels centrally in the schools. A trained village technician takes care of charging and maintenance; the team was trained by the manufacturer of the lamps in Hyderabad / South India. Tapas Dolui, 24 years old, says: "I feel like an engineer when I repair the lamps!" Purposely, the training also strengthens self respect and self-help capacities. The five-member Solar Team (two of them women) will also offer some larger lamps on rent. These can be used by families for home industries to earn extra money after sunset; the rent goes to the school fund. The mothers association takes decision on the use of these funds for the school, and has also selected the technicians for training.

This approach showed good results in a pilot phase: pupils attended school more regular, and more children enrolled in the school. Research shows that children can study at least two more hours per day if they don't have to inhale the smells and toxic fumes of kerosene lamps; their exams results and marks increase significantly. The impact on the village community was so positive that the German Consulate General was impressed at its field visit and decided to fund four more schools – and thereby also approved the quality of the work done by Loreto Day School / Sampurna and *green energy against poverty*.

What matters for the children is better light, and their parents save the cost for kerosene that they couldn't really afford. Pupils use approx. ¼ litre Kerosene per day for their studies. Accordingly, this project saves the environment and climate about 65 tons of CO₂ per year. Since the project benefits the full village community, the development impact is huge. "Everybody wins – the children, the environment, and our donors that can fight poverty and climate change simultaneously," says Georg Amshoff, Chairman of *green energy against poverty*. "By this we show what renewable energy can achieve: even for the marginalized, they are the key towards a better future!"

Project cost of 2,900 Euros are needed for training the solar technicians and their salaries in the first year, until charging fees can pay for salaries. *green energy against poverty* requests donations for this project.

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Pictures from the Project site:





Pictures available as files; more pictures upon request

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