

Press Release

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Solar Lamps against Climate Change

Fighting climate change and poverty simultaneously is the speciality of „*green energy against poverty*“ (*greenap*), a German NGO based in Bonn. New projects are launched now in poor regions of India on Islands of river Ganga.

Solar lamps are replacing old and harmful kerosene lamps. So poor people in off-grid areas get access to good and bright light. As sunset is early in India, the new lamps are very useful for income generation in the evenings e.g. weaving mats or baskets. This is a very important income factor especially for women who need to feed their families. Special study lamps help children to do their school studies. With good education, children can escape poverty and child labour. The projects have brought back child labourers into school. The projects are so successful that they will be scaled up now.

Sabitri Daas, a 28 years old women, is happy about the new lamps: „Now I can work in the evenings and earn enough money for me and my children. The old kerosene lamps were too dark for mat weaving and too dangerous to work with material that catch fire easily. And kerosene is very expensive, too.“ Also 24 year old Soma Sinha is excited about her new possibilities: „My father is ill and I am the only one in our family of three to earn money. Now I can work with my pedal-powered sewing machine in the evenings. It makes me more flexible, and working conditions have increased. My income is sufficient now for the family.“

These two women live in the village of Manmathanagar, where 55 families got a solar lamp. Their village and the entire Island suffers from a lack of infrastructure: no electricity, no running water, no roads. 75% of the people depend on agriculture, but as climate change leads to more and heavier floods, it is increasingly difficult to make a living from the poor soil. There are also no public schools in the region. Therefore *greenap* cooperates with KMWSC, a well-known education NGO that runs innovative schools. 145 solar study lamps have been given to pupils to help them in their education, to motivate them for school and thereby prevent child labour. Nine year old Bijali Mondal says: „The solar lamps help me a lot to do my studies. We are so happy about the lamps.“

greenap is not focussed on lighting but on development. Therefore the lamps are not simply distributed to people. The partner organisation gives them to

children that come to school regularly, to women in need and to selected poor families. The lamp users form a committee that takes development of the village in their own hands. The mothers form the parents association of the school and take over responsibility for education of their kids.

This shows what can be done: small steps can improve peoples lives and offer concrete and meaningful support. The solar lamps avoid emission of fumes and CO2, so the climate also benefits. This solves the perceived antagonism between development and climate protection. Both is possible at the same time – with smart solutions like solar lamps, deployed for empowering people. Even the cost is minimal - and each single unit is a tremendous help for one family.

Because the results of the projects are so good, the measures will be extended to new phase now. This will intensify development efforts and sustain self help capacities of people. To continue work, the project partner will receive more funds before Christmas. Even small donations can achieve a lot: the cost for one solar lamp is only 50 EUR, and support to one school is 150 EUR per year. This is not a drop on the famous hot stone, but a meaningful support to one concrete family in need. And it really works. As Sabitri Daas says: "It really helps me a lot. I am very grateful for the solar lamp!"

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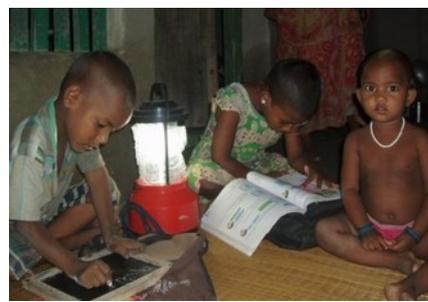
Pictures from the Project:



Sabitri Daas is weaving mats



Soma Sinha and her pedal-powered sewing machine



Bijal Mondal (centre) studying

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Donations: Acc.No 11 29 000, at: Bank für Sozialwirtschaft Köln, BLZ 370 205 00

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