

PROMOTION OF K14 SOLAR COOKERS THROUGH ECO-CENTER; CASE STUDY OF A UNIQUE NORTH-SOUTH CO-OPERATION

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ABSTRACT

EcoCenter ICNEER is an NGO promoting sustainable development taking both ecology and economy into consideration. It provides a platform for North-South and South-South dialogue.

ICNEER, addresses several target groups including children, youth, adults as well as government and non government organizations (NGOs) from rural and urban areas as well as overseas.

Besides creating awareness on natural farming, natural living and conservation of natural resources, we at ICNEER have also prepared teaching material on solar cooking especially on K14 domestic parabolic cookers.

These K14 Solar Cookers are an eco-friendly solution to fuelwood crises in fragile ecological zones in third world countries.

These K14 cookers also serve as an income generation tool, hence improving women's status in society.

Since they come as "Do-It-Yourself Kits", they are also excellent as part of relief supplies during times of calamities like droughts, flood, earthquakes, tsunamis and the like.

During an overseas lecture, organised by the Austrian NGOs, INTERSOL and PLAGI, school children in Salzburg raised a question about the acceptance and affordability and how widespread is the use of these K14 cookers. On learning of their limited usage due to non-affordability, the children under careful guidance of teachers launched a unique project : "Solar Cookers for

Rural India". On hearing of their children's initiative, the Austrian government decided to give matching funds.

The case study highlights how, with the involvement of Indian and Austrian NGOs, schools in Austria have helped initiate micro-financing of solar cookers for the poor and needy women in rural India, and how the Austrian and Indian Governments helped with matching funds and subsidies.

Such a unique project needs to be multiplied and replicated by one and all who care for Planet Earth.

Keywords: EcoCenter, solar cookers, north-south co-operation, income-generation, micro-financing, women, rural

1. INTRODUCTION

I am a Malaysian of Indian origin now settled in India. I did my B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Malaysia and Ph.D. in Germany in Genetic Engineering. On my return to India realizing that developing countries need appropriate technology for sustainable development, my husband and I formed an NGO, Eco Center ICNEER. To become economically independent we set up a company, Gadhia Solar which manufactures and sells solar cookers to support the environmental awareness and ecological activities of ICNEER.

Eco Center ICNEER is an abbreviation for International Center for Networking, Ecology, Education and Re-integration. It is an NGO set up to promote sustainable development which takes both ecology and economy into

consideration. It provides a platform for North-South and South-South dialogue.

At ICNEER, we address several target groups ranging from children to youth to adults of various professions including housewives and farmers as well as government organizations and NGOs from rural and urban areas as well as overseas.

Besides creating awareness on conservation of natural resources and sustainable organic agriculture we have also prepared posters and teaching material on renewable energies, especially solar cooking and K14 parabolic solar cookers.

2. BACKGROUND

These K14 Solar Cookers are an eco-friendly solution to fuelwood crises in fragile ecological zones of our Planet.

As summarised very nicely by our dear Bev Blum in SCI's Solar Cooker Review, July 2005 issue: Urgent cooking fuel shortages and their related harmful impacts on families and environment in fragile eco-zones of the world are still nearly invisible to many policymakers.

Besides combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, and discrimination against women, solar cookers free women and girls from drudgery and hazards of fuelwood gathering, smoky kitchens fires, diseases and unsafe drinking water.

Solar cookers enable women's participation in community development and opportunities for income generation.

Besides meeting all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), K14 Solar Cookers reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, hence reducing the Green House Effect and Global Warming, leading to overall environmental rejuvenation.

Dr. Dieter Seifert and Mrs. Imma Seifert visited our Eco-Center ICNEER to help in our "Promotion of K14 Solar Cookers" Program. Dr. Seifert showed how K14 cookers are assembled from "Do-It-Yourself Kits", while Imma Seifert demonstrated solar cooking, baking and generation of income through sale of breads, cakes, biscuits and pizzas.

Intensive campaigning and work is going on by Dr. Seifert and several others to make solar cookers eligible for CDM – Clean Development Mechanism programs.

3. THIS PROJECT

As part of our Eco-Center activities, both Deepak and I address various target groups on various environmental topics whenever we are invited out for lectures or when varied target groups visit us. An added attraction of a visit to our Eco-Center is to allow women's groups to prepare their lunch using only a Scheffler Community solar cooker and Seifert Domestic K14 solar cookers. Women are thrilled to experience cooking without fuelwood, kerosene or gas and without lighting a single matchstick.

School children visiting the Eco-Center are encouraged to help in baking bread, cakes and biscuits which they are allowed to enjoy during tea-time !!

During one of our overseas lectures, organised by the Austrian NGO's INTERSOL and PLAGE, we had the opportunity to address school children in Salzburg. They were really thrilled with our narrations about the K14 cookers.

Discussions ensued about the acceptance of domestic solar cookers and how widespread is their usage. On learning of their limited usage due to non-affordability, the children decided to help in their own innovative way.

Under the guidance of Mrs Angelika Muellner Pillwein and some other equally enthusiastic school teachers, the children raised funds to purchase a K14 solar cooker for themselves. Subsequently the school children prepared solar baked cakes, bread, biscuits and soups and sold them on "Market days" in Salzburg. They thus collected the funds for donating solar cookers to India.

When the Austrian government heard about this unique initiation, they decided to give matching funds. Hence the first Project "2 X 50 Solar Cookers for Rural India " came into being.

The money collected was given to INTERSOL. On the recommendation of Eco Center ICNEER the funds were channeled to Barli Development Institute for Rural Women at Indore in Madhya Pradesh State. The Barli Group could in turn start an innovative solar cooker project, whereby these cookers could be distributed to tribal girls who were at their Institute for almost a one – year training program. Due to the Austrian children's help, these K14 Cookers were made available to them at nominal cost. (Details to be narrated by Janak Palthan and Jimmy McGilligan).

Two years later, during similar lectures organised for school children of St. Johann, they too were motivated by the success of the project, to follow suit. Under the guidance of Ms Elizabeth Fuchs, Mr. Richard and other

staff, fund raising was initiated. The funds collected this time by the school children of St Johann were used to initiate K14 project in another state of India, namely Andhra Pradesh.

Here, too the Stadt Gemeinde St. Johann joined in to finance the first smoke-free village at Bycenapally, near Tirupati. This Project was in co-operation with NEDCAP the State Nodal Agency of the State of Andhra Pradesh. (Details to be narrated by Jagadeeshwara Reddy of NEDCAP).

This "Little Village in the Sun" has drawn a lot of attention, too, with several local, national and international visitors coming regularly. The success of this Smoke Free village has had a multiplier effect, with 20 more nearby villages also deciding to become smoke free.

4. CONCLUSION

These K14 Solar Cookers are an eco-friendly solution to fuelwood crises.

Besides meeting all Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), K14 Solar Cookers reduce carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, hence reducing the greenhouse effect and global warming, leading to overall environmental rejuvenation.

We hope many more NGOs, GOs, children, youth and adults also join in and follow suit.

A signature campaign to the President of India, has been started by our Eco-center ICNEER to make parabolic solar cookers available to the poorest of the poor.

In brief, there is a necessity for more Eco-Centers, to motivate the various target groups and co-ordinate more such projects world-wide.

We should all work together "To give Planet Earth a chance".