

Constituency Member Contributions Technical Solutions

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Economic empowerment of rural women with solar energy and micro-entrepreneurship

Description of the project: This green energy project aims to demonstrate the economic sustainability and gender impact of selling solar dried fruits, vegetables, and condiments. The micro-enterprise, created and managed by 5 women, uses 2 solar dryers (capacity of 50 kg each) to process and transform local seasonal fruits and vegetables into packaged food products with strong value added. They work with 43 women suppliers, who receive important additional revenues and reduce product wasting. The organization trains women's groups in solar drying processes and marketing skills.



Climate Impact: Using solar dryers reduces the dependence on fossil fuel and saves 1.2 t. firewood /year. 3,6 t. raw fruits, vegetables and spices are dehydrated annually to produce fruit bars, pepper, arrow root powder, tamarind, chips and wafers. Reducing the rotting of raw fruits (about 3 t. jackfruit, guava, mango) also minimizes CH₄ emissions. About 5-6 t. of compost used for kitchen gardens, sequestering 1 t. CO₂. Climate change awareness and knowledge has been increased among households and women's groups.

Gender Impact: Women are empowered through local production and selling of high value-add food products. Revenue increase for women employees and suppliers (from 10\$ to 30\$ / month depending on the season and product). Reduced labour burden (2 hrs/day), creating time for other income generating activities. Participation in purchasing and processing decisions, marketing, and profits sharing. The micro-enterprise participates in fairs and festivals to share knowledge, offer training support.

Scalability /replicability: Started with 1 solar dryer in 2005. Has since expanded to a micro-enterprise in 2009 with one more dryer, more equipment and technical training. Today more than 400 women have been trained in solar drying process and entrepreneurship skills. The micro-enterprise format can be replicated, as well as the distribution structure: retail outlets, schools, local markets.

**Priyadarshini Mahila Samajam /
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