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Envirofit India Combats Indoor Air Pollution and Climate Change Through Innovative Cooking Technology - Winning WWF Climate Award from Indian Minister

According to the World Health Organization, cooking over an open fire inside the home is the equivalent to the smoke exposure of inhaling two packs of cigarettes a day. Nearly half the world's population – 2.6 billion people -- cook over inefficient wood- or dung-burning open fires inside their homes, which contributes to 4.3 million deaths a year; more than HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis combined. In addition, emissions from open fires contribute to as much as 2% of global warming.

In an attempt to tackle this global challenge, Envirofit India has developed an innovative solution which has earned them the WWF Climate Solver, awarded by the Minister of Environment in New Delhi on August 1. The Climate Savers Award was established to highlight excellent achievements in reducing energy and CO₂ emissions.

A subset of Envirofit International, Envirofit India is a social enterprise based in Pune that develops and distributes clean technology solutions that improve health, livelihoods, and the environment while enhancing energy efficiency across Asia. Throughout their lifespan, these stoves on a global scale have impacted more than 4 million people, created more than 2,000 jobs, and saved more than 13 million tons of CO₂. At the household level the stoves have reduced fuel costs by more than US\$110 million and saved consumers 7.2 million working weeks of firewood collection.

Using a market-based model, the team developed and commercialized high performing biomass cookstoves that are efficient, durable, affordable, and appeal to consumers. In addition to the aesthetic qualities, Envirofit's stoves are designed to offer economic, health and environmental benefits by retaining the heat and redirecting most the fuel's energy towards the pot. This design reduces smoke and toxic emissions by up to 80% and reduces fuel use, fuel cost, and cooking time by up to 60%. The stoves also reduce emissions of carbon dioxide by up to 60%, black carbon by up to 40%. They retail for between ₹1000-2,500, and have a nominal life of five years.

In the 8 years since its inception, Envirofit India has sold more than 400,000 cookstoves across India- no easy feat given the consumers at the base of the economic pyramid face difficulties affording the new technology. However, Envirofit developed a solution by using a carbon credit program to reduce the up front cost to customers.

“Our carbon program not only benefits our customers, but also corporates' CSR programs, giving them a return on their investment in the form of carbon credits from the environmental savings of the stoves,” said Harish Anchan. This creates a win-win solution for everyone involved.”

Corporate CSR programs have an opportunity to not only get involved with carbon programs but also with cookstove distribution. Corporates and microfinance programs such as Fullerton, IVDP, and Ambuja Cement have helped to distribute more than 100,000 stoves in India. Expanding their partnerships each year Envirofit India aims to impact 5 million people in India by 2020.

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