

Leading the way with clean cookstoves

When it comes to development and progress, the role of women and Self Help Groups can never go unnoticed. Their consistent efforts have always brought a progressive change on the ground level. The story of Rupa Sadashiv is no different and is equally inspiring. Rupa lives in the Chitradurga district of Karnataka. She had been associated with various local NGOs working for the community upliftment in the region and has been passionate about bringing a change in the society, at least in her village. So, when Greenway Grameen, clean cookstoves enterprise, reached out to one of its local partner NGOs to connect with community it didn't come as a surprise that Rupa became the ardent pillar of clean cooking in her village.

But that was 2013, since then she has been creating awareness in her community in her village about clean cooking and its various health and environmental benefits. Rural areas have a huge dependency on LPG cylinder refills, which are not only costly but also at times inaccessible due to the remote location of the villages. Rupa, herself first decided to try the cookstoves and also became their first beneficiary. She found them to be incredibly user friendly, reliable and safe. After which her belief that her community could really benefit from it, intensified. Houses in the Chitradurga district are small and do not have the access to electricity neither have a room for proper ventilation while cooking. Most of the families relied on traditional cooking methods such as mud-Chula and open cooking, which not only emitted smoke and harmed the environment but also caused health problems, particularly for the women folk. The cookstoves by Greenway Grameen are built using air regulation technology which minimizes noxious CO, PM and GHG emissions and cuts down the fuel consumption by 65% and smoke emissions by 70%.

It was important that the way to clean cooking was shown to the village by someone they trusted. Hence, Rupa took the responsibility. Every month, she surges the SHG of her village to invest, so that more and more households have access to Greenway stoves and move away from traditional cooking methods that are highly polluting and are dependent on inefficient fuel. Greenway takes a co-creation approach to develop its products and work with communities to remove existing barriers to own a cookstove. In all of its market interventions, the aim is to mainstream gender and engage entire communities. By actively leading / taking part in the community benefit initiatives, Rupa's entrepreneurial side took a boost. Soon enough she became the face of Greenway Grameen and supported herself with the incentives she made by selling cookstoves every month.

"I have worked as a Seva Pratinidhi and raised awareness among the women in my village regarding the importance of clean cooking. I have been using Greenway stoves myself and I find it extremely useful and simple to use. I would want everyone in my village and district to understand its benefits and use it in their daily life." - says Rupa.

Rupa with her consistent efforts was able to help the community see the green benefits of the cookstoves and as the word spread in the community the demand for Greenway Grameen cookstoves increased. The efforts to raise awareness for clean cooking were not limited to her own village; she worked with members of SHGs outside of her community and implement similar initiatives in their own communities. Not only did it help her make clean cooking solutions available for the communities but many of the SHG members also earned

a livelihood like her. She is today one of the best performing Seva Pratinidhis, and supervises 36 SHGs with a total of over 360 members. The benefits of using Greenway stoves on the health of the women which were so far huddled up in dark unventilated smoky kitchens, are now visible.