



ROTARY NEWS

From Smoky to Smoke-free Gamcha

By: [Kiran Zehra](#) Dec 03, 2014



Home in Megere, cooking over open fire.



Same home, after installing clean Cook Stove.

More than three billion people around the world cook on open fires and stoves, burning biomass fuel such as wood, dung and crop waste. This method causes several deaths due to household air pollution (HAP), apart from causing environmental harm through deforestation and carbon emission.

In 2010, adventurer/entrepreneur Rtn George Basch's desire to give back to the people of the Himalayas, an area he loves and has visited often, led to his founding the Himalayan Stove Project (a US based, not for profit project) to end HAP due to rudimentary cooking methods. The project involves donating clean burning, fuel efficient stoves to impoverished communities in Nepal. More recently, 'George, the Chief Cook,' through his club, RC Taos Milagro, RI District 5520, USA, established global collaborative partnership with Rotary clubs worldwide, to promote this initiative.



Village band playing welcome tunes.

Since 2010, when the project was piloted, 3,000 stoves have been installed in Nepal. A survey done by the - Himalayan Stove Project reported that indoor air pollution has been reduced by 90 percent; fuel use has been reduced by 75 percent and food is cooked faster. Nepal's healthcare nurses introduced the stoves through their health education programmes to mothers and youth groups.

These stoves are manufactured by Envirofit, a social enterprise producing efficient and affordable cook stoves that create environmental, health and social impact for homes and institutions in developing nations. Talking about the quality of the stoves Basch says, "We wanted to be assured that we had the best available product so that we could concentrate on fulfilling our mission without any product worries, and working with Envirofit has been an excellent choice."

In February 2014, 90 smokeless stoves were installed in Gamcha village, on the outskirts of Kathmandu with the help of RC Tripureswor, RI District 3292. "The distribution of the new stoves was an exciting community wide event, with a small community band, and lots of speeches and applause and many 'thank yous' — it was very gratifying to see and feel the positive response from the community," says Basch.

In order to develop a sense of ownership, each household that receives the stove contributes Nepalese. Rs 500. The amount thus collected will be spent for other development projects as needed by the community. Poor families were identified and their traditional rudimentary stoves were replaced with improved smokeless stoves.

Rajendra Shakya, the then President of RC Tripureswor, and Basch visited Gamcha in March 2014 to follow up on the project. "One of the questions we asked was: 'Would you sell your stove, and if so, how much would you want?' NO ONE was willing to sell their stoves, because they uniformly liked them, and didn't even quote a price ..." he said.



Rtn George Basch distributing the Himalayan stove to villagers.

Did you know?

Household Air Pollution (HAP) is the single most important global environmental risk factor, and particularly in poor regions. It affects over 3 billion people worldwide, almost one half of the world population.

- There are 4 million deaths annually attributable to HAP cooking fuel. That's larger than deaths from outdoor air pollution and smoking.
- Most of the impact is on adults, but 5,00,000 deaths occur annually in children from ALRI (Acute Lower Respiratory Infection) diseases, like pneumonia.
- This makes HAP the fourth largest cause of death in the world.

Source: <http://www.himalayanstoveproject.org>.

On his title ‘Chief Cook’ his take: “The title ‘Chief Cook’ has turned out to be one of the best and most engaging marketing moves we’ve made — most titles are so stuffy and boring — President, Managing Director, Chief Information Officer etc. We wanted to be distinctive, so I am ‘Chief Cook,’ our outreach volunteer is ‘Chief Ambassador,’ our videographer is ‘Chief Documentarian’ (we have a few of those now, but they are not jealous). Whenever I give someone my card they start smiling and engage in a conversation when they get to the ‘Chief Cook’ part.”



Laxmi Bhandari, a local social worker from Gamcha says, “There is no smoke inside the house, kitchen utensils do not get stained and the new stove takes lesser time to cook food, thus saving time for us to engage in other work. This stove has now become a status symbol.”

Using her new stove.

Shop at <http://smile.amazon.com> to help the Himalayan Stove Project, which will get a part of your money.



Demonstration by volunteers.

- See more at: <http://rotarynewsonline.org/articles/FromSmokytoSmoke-freeGamcha#sthash.N7UCChi0.dpuf>

<http://www.himalayanstoveproject.org>