



USAID | INDIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

SUCCESS STORY

USAID Illuminates 100 Villages with Solar Energy

USAID supported community development and provided solar illumination to Indian villages, resulting in new business opportunities and an improved quality of life for many rural Indians.

Archana Sharma is an entrepreneur in a remote village in North India. She is one of the 100 women trained by USAID's Community Development and Solar Energy Illumination program. The program, a partnership with Humana People to People India and the Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), had two specific goals: it supported community development and provided quality solar-based illumination to rural households in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populated state and one of its most under-developed.

The project helped women in villages throughout Uttar Pradesh create self-help groups to promote savings, facilitate lending between group members, and pursue larger loans from local banks. The project formed 300 women's self-help groups, benefiting 4,500 rural women.

Most of the groups opened bank accounts and promoted internal lending to group members. Using the loan she obtained through her self-help group, Archana Sharma now operates a solar charging station in her village. Every night she rents out 60 lanterns for a minimal fee. "Our village has no electricity. With USAID support, I am now able to help my community. Solar lanterns have not only removed the risk of fire from our lives caused by old kerosene lamps, they have also given us a smoke-free indoor environment, facilitating education by allowing children to study at night; and helping shopkeepers and families engaged in home businesses to continue work after dark."

The project trained local villagers at Technical Resource Centers (TRC) in the upkeep and maintenance of solar charging stations and solar lanterns in select locations in Uttar Pradesh. The TRCs are fully functional and have linkage with supply partners to access spare parts as and when needed. In addition, the project provided training on clean energy and energy efficiency to village schools and colleges. More than 18,000 students from 100 local schools and colleges participated in the training. The project also promoted utilization of solar energy devices and services through mass campaigns, conferences, and field visits.



"With my increased income, I am supporting my children's education. My family helps me to distribute the lanterns and collect them back for charging in the morning," says one of the women entrepreneurs. Photo: HPPI/USAID