

# Efficient Stoves Change Women's Life-style: **the Case of Ebinat and Gorogutu Districts of Ethiopia**

Author:  
Dejen Zewdu

Editor:  
Berhanu Tibebe  
Zewolde

**A new technology is helping women in Ethiopia to cut their household chores and have more time for constructive activities like education and even breathing space for leisure.**

**It is a technology of making efficient, cost effective and environmental friendly stoves.**

**It saves energy, reduces deforestation and serves as a source of income for women's groups.**

The technology is more advanced than “traditional stoves”. The stoves are getting more and more popular in the Gorogutu and Ebinat districts where the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) organized women groups to produce efficient stoves with the trade mark of “Mirt” with locally available materials such as cement and sand.



Designed in a way as to reduce smoke, exposure to heat, skin-burn, and eye diseases and add more comfort and facility in handling cooking tasks, the new technology is gaining ground within rural communities.

The efficient stove initiative came in response to the needs of women identified in the two districts by ERCS four years ago. A team from ERCS together with local government representatives embarked upon community risk assessment, which means sorting out the hazards, vulnerabilities, capacities and coping mechanisms of the community. The objectives of the initiative are three:

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1. The initiative can be an alternative source of income for rural women
  2. It can alleviate problems of direct exposure to fire, smoke and dirt, thus reducing incidence of injuries and diseases
  3. It can significantly decrease deforestation

Embodied in this initiative are advantages specifically applicable to women because among other tasks, firewood collection, cooking, child-care, and fetching water are the sole responsibility of women, and together create a heavy workload. Based on this consideration, the dissemination of efficient stove technology was supported by ERCS. Zubeida said...

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*"Thanks to both the Red Cross branch Office and the local government, we started to produce efficient stoves at the beginning of 2012....we started selling efficient stoves in our community, later, the Karemile town community has also showed interest in buying and using the efficient stove which expanded market opportunities for our product"*

She added that the local administration granted them a plot of land and workshop where they carry out efficient stove production, and the Red Cross provided training, initial seed money, and materials like cement, sand and mold (formwork) that we used for efficient stove production.

To this end, women of similar interests, income level and social status within three communities (one in Ebinat and two in Gorogutu districts) were organized into three groups, comprising 96 members. The members were made aware of the benefits of the efficient stoves and acquired skills in manufacturing them through training. In addition, they were provided with initial capital money of 80,000 birr and the necessary inputs like molds (form-work), watering cans, pick-axes, and shovels.

At the beginning of 2012, the group started producing the efficient stoves. The first round of production was employed for their own use, each member taking a unit of the production to set an example for others. From 2012 to 2014, they produced and sold a total of 2,000 efficient stoves for an equal number of households. The unit price ranged from 80 to 100 birr depending on size. According to both sellers and users, the price was affordable on grounds of safety, versatility, firewood utilization, time and labor-saving qualities guaranteeing good standards of end-products. Cost of production is estimated at 45 birr for the small-sized and 70 birr for the large-sized stoves enabling the group to gain a gross profit of 25,000 birr. Their total savings allows them to take credit without interest for both individual use and investment.



The women groups are working closely with the local administration and community-based disaster risk reduction committee (CBDRR). They also understand the added value of working closely with each other. As a result, the efficient stove producer womens group's members have an opportunity to participate in the decision-making processes in their communities.

The local administration supported the women's group in preparing group bylaws and facilitated its registration by the district micro and small enterprises office. The CBDRR committee sees the women's group as an important partner in their community.



The district offices of Women, Youth and Children Affairs played an important role in facilitating legal recognition for the women's groups and linking them with market opportunities in neighboring areas. This partnership with local stakeholders will enhance the continuity and sustainability of the women's group businesses.



The women's group members are able to speak in public promoting their interests to the local administrations. They have better awareness of their environment. The production and distribution of efficient stoves has multiplier effects. The income generating capacity for the women has increased and they received dividends as shareholders in addition to facilitating access to credit and it is also creating an enabling factor in their communities. The 2,000 households who bought the stoves have reduced their fuel-wood consumption by more than 50%, which has a direct implication on forest tree cutting.