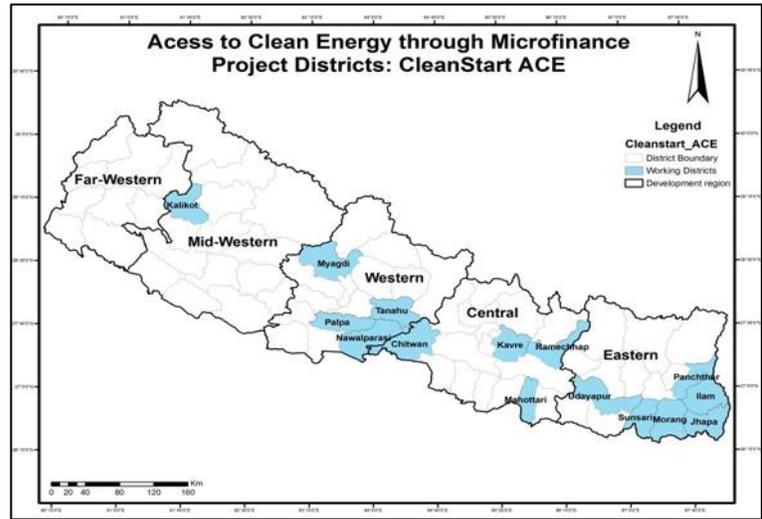


SAINO Sahara Programme: Empowering women with affordable RETs financing for livelihood diversification

Access to clean Energy through Microfinance (Cleanstart) project is funded by United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) and implemented by Ace Development bank in technical collaboration with Winrock International. The project is being implemented in Ilam, Jhapa, Morang, Panchthar, Sunsari, Udayapur, Chitwan, Mahottari, Kabhrepalanchowk, Ramechhap, Myagdi, Nawalparasi, Palpa, Tanahu, Kalikot. The project promotes financial access of Renewable Energy



Technology(RETs) for enhanced livelihood. The wholesale loan relationship between banks and LFIs is established for renewable energy financing and SMEs financing ensuring sustainability and scalability of RETs in rural communities. Ace development bank provides wholesale loans to LFIs and potential MSME entrepreneurs for the installation of RETs and various enterprises. Besides, Winrock International provides technical support in capacitating LFIs and ACE Development Bank to finance RETs as loan product.

As such Ace bank provides wholesale loan to Sahara Nepal Savings & Credit Cooperative Society (SACCOS), a local partner of the project to promote energy financing to rural communities. SACCOS provides interest free loan for installation of SHS, biogas plant, ICs and solar water pumps. Furthermore, SACCOS has established SAINO Sahara programme with a focus to technically and financially empower women living in Dudhe of Jhapa through energy financing. Apart from regular savings and credit facilities, SAINO Sahara has created 24 women group (each group with 20-30 members) with 600 members through innovative access to energy financing promoting diversified livelihood.



In addition, each member is provided with rigorous exercises of capacity need assessment and capacity building strategy organized by SAINO Sahara. Some of the capacity building trainings include group formation, leadership, awareness campaigns, income generating activities(IGA), and behavior change campaigns before loan application. After these trainings, women(member) assess their need and can apply loan. SAINO Sahara provides interest free loan amounting from US\$ 200 to US\$ 500 considering their need of IGAs and type/range of RETs. The model combines livelihood diversification through IGAs consisting of

goat keeping, piggery, bee keeping, vegetable farming and mushroom farming along with efficient and sustainable use of renewable energy for cooking, lighting and irrigation.

Ms. Uma Bhandari of Dudhe is a member of Srijan group with 24 women(members) created by SAINO Sahara. She was compelled to live with compromised economic condition as her husband was the only breadwinner in her family. The income from her only husband with blisters in hands working as a laborer was barely enough to feed the family.

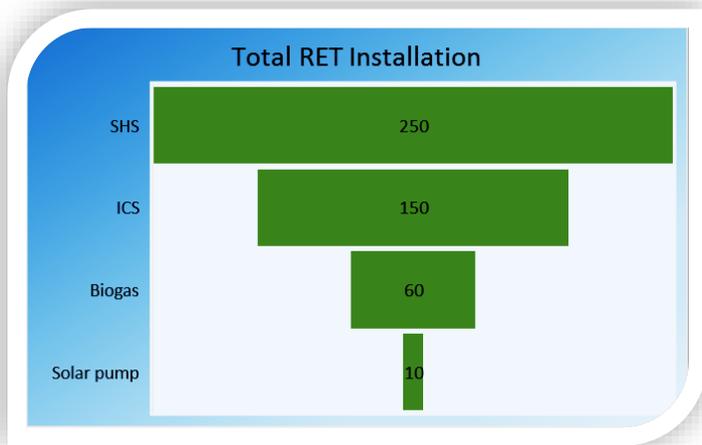


Membership of group opened avenues towards empowerment. She received trainings on leadership, financial literacy, IGA training, entrepreneurial trainings that played significant role in changing her quality of life. In return, she reciprocated openness and eagerness to learn. After series of trainings, she showed enthusiasm in goat keeping and poultry farming. Taking her interest and pro-activeness into consideration, Sahara Nepal SACCOS provided her with interest free loan amount of US\$200 without any collateral. She easily paid her loan amount and could even deposit some savings.

She had heard about RETs installation with technical assistance from Winrock International and financial support from UNCDF, so she applied loan of US\$250 from SAINO Sahara to install a 20 Wp solar home system(SHS), and 6 m³ biogas plant. Before, biogas installation, she had to leave her home at 7am in the morning to collect firewood. It would take two hours to collect a single bundle and she would only be able to collect 2 bundles a day as she had to complete other household chores along with preparing fodder for her livestock. “My drudgery has remarkably reduced as I can easily cook my food in biogas. It has saved time and effort with reduced indoor air pollution; this allows me to participate in programs of SAINO Sahara and other social activities” she smiles.



In addition, SHS lights her home allowing her children study during night. She is overwhelmed as her children are not punished for not submitting their home assignments decreasing their school absenteeism. “My economic and social transformation was possible because of technical support from Winrock International and providence of affordable financing of SHS, biogas and livestock from SAINO Sahara. Interest free loan without collateral offering installment payback system for installation of SHS, biogas and livestock farming has demonstrative effect as women are attracted to apply loan for RETs installation for livelihood enhancement” smiles Ms. Bhandari.



There are similar stories of 600 members of SAINO Sahara in Dudhe. In total, the project has installed 250 SHS that has enabled students to regularly attend school with completed homework and provided night lights, 150 ICS that has been helpful in reducing indoor air pollution, 60 biogas plant replacing firewood for cooking and 10 solar pumps that provides reliable irrigation to farmers increasing their productivity and profitability allowing them to switch from subsistence to commercial farming promoting

efficient and sustainable renewable energy technology benefitting 600 households in Dudhe. The installation of RETs reducing 12,533 tons per year of carbon along with promotion of livestock farming has significantly improved livelihood resulting in 1426 goats worth NPR 3,920,000/-, 665 pigs worth NPR 3,350,000/-, bee keeping of worth NPR 1,400,000/-, vegetable farming with 23 members and mushroom farming with 50 members.

The project aims to provide similar services to women through RETs promotion and livelihood diversification to economically, technically and socially empower women to trigger entrepreneurial spirit ensuring sustainable and productive use of energy.