



## SWITCH ASIA II

*Evolving a women-centred model of extension of Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) for sustained adoption at scale*



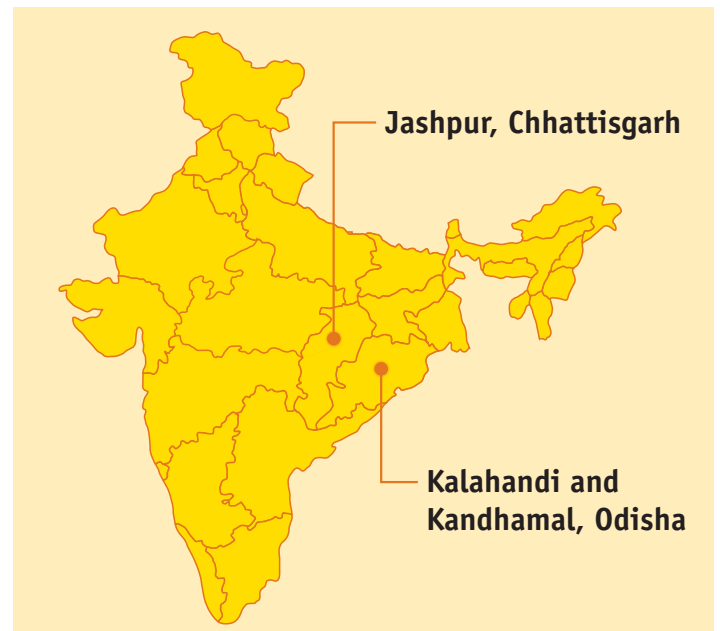
**19 million** people depend on forest wood for cooking fuel



**1681 households** already acquired ICS

**850 households** transitioning from Chulha to ICS

**1527 households** influenced to switch to ICS



### Overview

Around 500,000 women in India lose their lives every year due to the pollution caused by traditional cookstoves or *chulhas* which require wood from the forests as fuel. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), 145 million Indian households are still dependent on *chulhas* for their daily cooking needs.

Women who cook on *chulhas* are completely oblivious of the ill effects of these stoves. The smoke emitted from them do not bother the women in most cases; they believe that the ill effects will subside over time. Most of them have also grown up seeing their mothers live through this kind of smoke inhalation every day.

Household air pollution caused by *chulhas* is a serious hazard, primarily affecting the women who cook and the children who stay indoors. Access to clean and sustainable sources of energy is a long-term dream for many Indians, especially women.

### Approach

In order to promote the adoption of ICS among forest-dependent households, CARE India is working

towards creating awareness, affordability, access and availability of ICS among the project participants. The ICS emits less smoke and the stove is attached with a chimney that takes the smoke out of the kitchen, thereby not letting it spread indoors. This brings relief to the suffering women and children and saves them from the daily intake of smoke. The project participants not only include women and children, but also the men of the project communities.

The project has adopted an incremental approach to:

- Increase women’s awareness about clean energy options for household use
- Facilitate acquisition of ICS
- Provide financial and technical support
- Influence men and other stakeholders in the ICS ecosystem to be supportive of women’s endeavours for transitioning to less polluting cookstoves

Addressing the challenge of ensuring the sustainability of the outcomes of this project, women leaders from existing

Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are engaged as Sustainable Household Energy Champions (SHE Champions). These Champions encourage their peers to adopt ICS and its associated cooking system, such as appropriate utensils, stove cleaning methods, etc. They also promote sustainable consumption and production habits within the community.

## Implementation

CARE India is addressing the four key constraints that hamper sustained ICS adoption by:

- Building women users' capabilities and capacities
- Working with men and other actors who influence the adoption of ICS at the household level
- Strengthening the ICS value chain

A technical core group, comprising Technology Informatics Design Endeavour (TIDE), CTRAN Consulting Ltd., Indian Institute of Technology-Delhi, and CARE India has been constituted, which is providing guidance and technical supervision over the implementation of the project.

**Capacity Building:** CARE's project team is providing intensive training and on-field support to the SHE Champions and SHGs to prepare them to run the SHE Schools. These are special schools set up for the women from the community to expose them to the benefits of switching to ICS. Sessions on problems faced by project participants due to using chulhas are highlighted through pictorial posters put up in the SHE Schools.

**Encouraging Adoption:** Women participants are encouraged to test the various ICS options available in their markets against parameters like device functionality, affordability, 'smokelessness', ease of use, etc. so that they can take an informed decision. Buyer-Seller Meets are organised which facilitates interaction between the women from forest-dependent households and the ICS value chain actors like manufacturers, distributors and suppliers. This also provides a platform to the ICS value chain actors to demonstrate their models and enables the project participants to select an ICS of their choice.

**Market and Ecosystem:** The project also aims to engage and influence around 100 ICS value chain actors such as financiers, ICS manufacturers and suppliers, distributors, retailers and SHE technicians for strengthening the value chain and making it inclusive through the participation of women entrepreneurs. Women keeping interest in ICS enterprising activity are trained and capacitated on setting up ICS business and the related technical aspects.

**200 SHE Schools over SHG platforms have been promoted in 107 project villages spread over in the two states and each SHE School is led by a SHE Champion selected from the participating SHGs.**



### Sarita's Story

For years, we have been cooking on a chulha since there were no other options available and LPG connections are too expensive. What we didn't realise was the harm caused by the pollution caused by a *chulha*, making my child very ill. Walking for 4-5 hours, to collect firewood from the forest was part of my regular chores. Sometimes I was forced to leave my child at home alone when

I would go to collect firewood. How else was I supposed to cook food for my family?

When CARE India introduced their project on Improved Cook Stoves (ICS), I decided to join a SHE School, and was soon declared a SHE Champion. At the SHE School, women from various villages were informed about the advantages of using clean and less polluting fuels, like biomass for cooking. I realised that an ICS could be a beneficial technology without the financial constraints of LPG and health concerns due to pollution.

Now, I had to convince my husband and convert him. When he heard the benefits of using an ICS—be it health, firewood saving, time saving, etc.—he understood my reasons for adopting an ICS. Next, I took these messages to the rest of the community, speaking to them about the dangers of indoor pollution caused by *chulhas* and the benefits of adopting ICS, at various public platforms.

*"The community is realising the benefits of using ICS; their behaviour and thinking are changing, and they are showing interest in adopting ICS due to benefits like better health, time saving, and forest preservation."*



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