

Gaia Energy customers who are using their ethical energy tariff, are supporting Christian Aid to implement their 'Breaking the Barriers' project in 15 sub-districts in Konso. Through this programme women are being supported to create and own Women's Led Sustainable Energy Enterprises in some of the poorest and remote off-grid communities.

Project Overview

Through this project, Women's Led Sustainable Energy Enterprises will receive training in sustainable energy products and technologies, business skills and can access finance through Micro Finance Institutions. In particular this project aims to:

- **Strengthen a solar enterprise group;** This group has been established to supply and install standard solar products (mainly solar technologies for light). This fund will be used for increasing their working capital and to help them establish a shop in the town.
- **Establish and support Improved cookstoves (ICS) producer groups;** in Konso BtB project will establish and support 15 ICS groups both technically and financially to produce ICS appropriate to their living context
- **Establish Marketing and Distribution Groups;** The groups are formed in villages of Konso district to serve as a marketing and distribution channel for both solar products (supplied by the above group) and Improved cookstoves (which will be produced by other project target groups).

The benefits of this project are:

- Increases rural women's jobs and income in the sustainable energy sector
- improves working and living conditions
- Promotes gender equality
- Strengthens women's social status.

Key Project Activities and Results



Training on Solar PV installation taking place in Konso District

While we are currently only six months into this project, our partners and the women they work with already report significant improvements in their lives. This will provide a strong foundation for work going forwards.

The project is organized and legalized into Enterprises by respective government bodies to enable them produce improved cookstoves (ICS) (15 Enterprises), distribute ICS (29 Enterprises) and distribute Solar technologies (1 Enterprise).

Key achievements to date include:

Awareness raising; has taken place across the 15 sub-districts, potential Self-Help Groups/SHGs and with key government staff.

Beneficiary Selection; potential and capable SHGs have been selected with active participation of community representatives, selection committees and government representatives in the presence of complaint handling committees to ensure transparency and accountability. Accordingly, 44 SHGs (10 member each) have been selected for the project. One Solar enterprise of 5 youth members has also been selected.

Legalization: all the 45 SHGs and groups were reorganized and legally registered with respective government bodies.

Business plan Development: All the 45 WLSEEs are capacitated to prepare their respective business plan/BP supported with budget (financial model). Accordingly, as per the project financial model each WLSEE will save 5% of the BP budget while 25% and 70 % will be received in the form of loan and grant respectively. The project has thus transferred the 70% grant to each WLSEE as per their business plan. For the 25% loan, CA has signed an agreement with Omo Micro Finance Institution.

Training: has been provided to 15 producers (75 individuals) on how to produce ICS (Mirt) and to 5 Solar groups on solar technologies. Accordingly, all producer WLSEEs purchased ICS moulds for the production of ICS. In addition, Solar Enterprise Groups have attended training on various solar products by selected product importers. The groups have also signed supply and installation agreement with these importers

Shade Construction: 44 out of 45 WLSEEs are able to construct/ secure production and distribution centers.

Beneficiaries

The project has 445 direct beneficiaries (444 women and 1 male) who are organized in Women Led Sustainable Energy Enterprises/WLSEEs.

Plans for the next 12 months

Activities over the next 12 months will include:

- Supporting groups to complete the construction of workshops and storage facilities
- Facilitating timely disbursement of loans by the Micro Finance Institutions
- Identifying Solar Energy Technology (SET) suppliers and linking SEG for sustainable supply (Exchange visit, signing agreement)
- Providing technical training for Improved cookstoves (ICS) producers