



## Finalists announced for Global Environmental Awards

Projects from Bangladesh, Honduras, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Philippines and Rwanda, to share prize money of over £200,000 in world's leading green energy awards programme.

London, 6 June, 2005: The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy today announces the finalists for this prestigious and world renowned prize scheme, drawn from a record number of entries from across the globe.

The Awards reward outstanding and innovative projects which tackle climate change and poverty, and improve quality of life, by providing desperately-needed renewable energy at a local level.

This year's finalists include projects which:

use solar-powered fridges to store vital vaccines and medicines for remote communities in Nigeria

bring micro-hydro electricity to sustain traditional tribal peoples in the mountains of the Philippines

in Rwanda and in Nepal, replace wood fuel for cooking with clean, efficient biogas from cattle and human waste

bring solar-powered lighting and power to poor, remote communities in India and Bangladesh

create cooking stoves for Indian schools that run on chaff from the harvest instead of pricey fossil fuels

spread clean, efficient wood-fuelled cookstoves among Honduras's urban poor.

Sarah Butler-Sloss, the founder and chair of the Awards, commented: "Together, such schemes highlight how simple, affordable and sustainable energy technologies can save lives, create jobs, and help lift whole families out of poverty – while simultaneously curbing climate change and environmental destruction. The Awards are designed to encourage a wider take-up of small-scale, sustainable energy solutions across the developing world - and in the UK."

The finalists will be in London at the end of June for the last stage of the judging process, and the Awards themselves will be presented at a major VIP ceremony and reception at the Royal

Geographical Society, London, on Wednesday June 29, hosted by the BBC's internationally-renowned broadcaster, Jonathan Dimbleby.

The 2004 finalists were personally congratulated by HRH Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales. Commenting on his meeting with them, a palace spokesperson said: "The Prince of Wales was enormously encouraged to meet these remarkable people who are all making a substantial impact in alleviating poverty and helping protect our fragile environment both at the local and global level. They set a marvellous example which the Prince of Wales hopes will encourage others to follow"

This year's programme includes a special African Award to mark the G8 summit, which takes place in the UK just a few days after the awards ceremony, and which is sure to be the focus of massive worldwide media attention. Tony Blair has declared that African development and climate change should be the summit's priorities. This African Award demonstrates how innovative renewable energy projects offer an excellent means of addressing both of these goals simultaneously.

There are a limited number of press seats available for the reception and ceremony – see Media Enquiries, below.

PHOTOS: High-resolution photos of all the finalists' projects are available now for downloading from the Ashden Awards website: [www.ashdenawards.org](http://www.ashdenawards.org)

For details of the Bangladeshi short-listed project and for Notes to Editors see below. For full details of all the finalists projects, see separate document 'Ashden Award Finalists 2005'.

Bangladeshi Short-listed Project Details:

### **Prokaushali Sangsad Limited**

"My husband thought the co-op would be a waste of time, and for the first year he wouldn't let me take part. Then he realised how much money it could bring in, and how that could help with the children's education! So now he's happy for me to come."



To a casual observer, Bangladesh is all too easily written off as a disaster area. From its cricket team to its devastating floods, the country serves as a ready source of bad news stories for the

lazy journalist. Like all received wisdom, that's a travesty of the truth. Twenty-first century Bangladesh could more usefully be tapped by the media as a rich vein of examples of sustainable development in action.

Travel down the river from Patuakhali to the Bay of Bengal, and there's one such running for mile after mile along the banks on either side: a 'green belt' of trees, planted as a natural flood buffer, which, along with a network of new cyclone shelters, has done much to cut dramatically the number of deaths and injuries from flooding.

It's one highly effective home grown response to the threat of climate change; for another, you just have to continue all the way down the river, across the choppy waters of the bay, to the island of Char Montaz. One of a number of remote 'chars', it's home to a farming and fishing community whose homes have, until recently, been lit only by smoky, pricey kerosene lamps: the prospects of such islands being connected to the mains electricity grid are vanishingly slight.

But for Asma Huque of Prokaushali Sangsad Limited (PSL), a small Dhaka-based consultancy which works exclusively for NGOs and development agencies, that's an opportunity for the taking. "We were working on the island on a World Bank project, and some of the local women said to us: 'No-one asks us what we want'. So we talked to them, and together we came up with a scheme in which women would be providers as well as users of energy: they'd have a voice in what they need, and control over what they provide."

That scheme turned into a women's co-op, the CEWDC, in which over 30 local women have been trained to assemble and sell solar electric systems to the island's homes, schools, mosques and traders.

On the flat roof of the long, low building that serves as the CEWDC headquarters, a solar panel pulses power down to the workshops below. Here the co-op members spend their mornings assembling charge controllers, compact fluorescent lights, and all the other technical paraphernalia for the solar home systems and lamps which they sell or rent out to their fellow islanders. They also provide a recharging service for the 12 volt car-style batteries which are the sole source of electric power for many local homes.

Any lingering sense that village women might somehow not be up to the job of electrical assembly is rapidly disproved by a visit to the workshops: the women sit at workbenches, chatting away while expertly wielding soldering irons and pliers, and meticulously charting electrical output. They've already impressed a team from their German suppliers, who put them through their paces to make sure they were qualified to assemble the kit to the requisite technical and safety standards, and declared themselves more than satisfied with the results.

Since CEWDC was formed in 1999, it's grown into quite a business: they've sold around 380 solar home systems, and last year turned over £29,000 worth of sales. For their customers, it means affordable light and power: a typical system has enough juice to run four or five lights, as well as power a DVD or charge a battery. For the island's children, desperate for a decent education to lift them out of relative poverty, reliable electric light is a huge bonus, giving more chance to study through the long evenings.

But it's not just homes which benefit. In the island's market, traders are using CEWDC's solar to light their stalls: everything from grocery stalls to sewing shops to a shrimp 'nursery' is

illuminated by solar. On the lane leading down to the harbour, a row of women crouch sorting the fresh fish catch in bright white pools of solar light.

The market already has its own diesel generator, providing electricity – at a price – to the stallholders. But that price is rising fast as the cost of oil spirals - diesel's rocketed by around 40% in the last year alone. For the first time, that means it's cheaper to recharge a lamp using solar power : the CEWDC charge around 150 taka (about £1.30) per month for enough charge to give five hours' worth of light each night. The relative cost for diesel power is over 200 taka. Small wonder that growing numbers of the traders are defecting to solar.

As oil prices continue to rise, solar's future glows ever brighter.

## QUOTES

(All of these are from the co-op women themselves)

“A lot of our husbands were worried at first: ‘Where are you going? What are you going to get up to?’ Then they saw the money coming in, and now they're all for it. And they no longer complain that we're always spending their money, because now we have some of our own!” - Shahida

“My husband thought the co-op would be a waste of time, and for the first year he wouldn't let me take part. Then he realised how much money it could bring in, and how that could help with the children's education! So now he's happy for me to come.” - Anwara

“Now we can give advice to our husbands about money and business.” - Shahida

“I really enjoy coming to work here. It's much better than staying at home and cooking rice. And it means the children can get a proper education.” - Kalaj

“My husband used to wait to be served at dinner; now he comes over and takes his own food from the pan, because he knows I've been working too.” – Kalaj

“It's really changing things. Now our children's grandparents are saying; ‘We'll look after the kids – you go and work!’ And men are encouraging their wives to apply for work here. We recently advertised for 10 new members, and we had 120 people applying.” – Shahida

“A typical day for me? I get up at 5.30, cook breakfast, walk the children to school, then walk to work here – it takes about an hour. I work from nine until one, then walk home, collect the kids, cook the supper and do the housework.” – Afinoor.

## FUTURE PLANS

Now that the co-op is up and running, PSL is building on its success by spinning-off ‘sister’ co-ops on nearby islands, while Grameen Shakti (the women's branch of the highly successful Grameen family of NGOs), is using it as a model for similar schemes elsewhere.

For the moment, PSL is still very much involved in the successful running of the scheme. Asma Huque and her team keep a helpful advisory eye on the co-op's work, providing technical and management know how, marketing skills, and access to funds. With the Ashden prize money, new government funding in the offing, and solar's success showing no signs of dimming, though, Asma is confident that CEWDC will soon be able to stand on its own two feet.

Meanwhile, the women's confidence and ambition shines from their eyes. "I'm determined that the co-op should keep going", says co-op member Afinoor. "I want my children to work here!"

#### Notes to Editors:

Honourable mentions, accompanied by small grants, have also been made to the following schemes, which, while not meeting the precise criteria for finalists, were nonetheless deemed worthy of merit by the judging panel.

ENT, Mexico: combining community fuelwood plantations with the introduction of affordable improved cookstoves to help conserve threatened rainforest.

Gnibouwa Diassana / Sun for All, Mali: manufacturing and promoting solar cookers to local women, so reducing dependence on firewood in a land hit hard by drought and loss of trees.

Newent Community School, UK: linking 'eco schools' in Kenya and the Forest of Dean through shared projects such as solar power and energy efficiency.

Phaesun Asmara, Eritrea: introducing 'fee for service' solar electricity, bringing affordable light and power to Eritrean villagers via micro-credit.

REECON, Kenya: transforming the waste from coconut plantations into charcoal briquettes for cooking fuel, so helping safeguard local mangrove forests.

SEBA, Galapagos Islands, Ecuador: replacing diesel generators with solar power for community buildings, households, farms and street lighting on the remote island of Floreana.

#### UK Awards

As the main source of greenhouse gases, industrialised countries such as the UK have a particular responsibility to tackle their effect on the global climate. And with oil prices hitting record highs, and climate change forcing its way up the political agenda, there's more focus than ever before on how to meet that responsibility by achieving clean, secure energy supplies. Our UK Awards demonstrate the massive potential which renewable energy, combined with energy efficiency, can play in doing precisely that.

For details of the UK finalists, visit [www.ashdenawards.org/finalist05](http://www.ashdenawards.org/finalist05).

The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy were created in 2001 by the Ashden Trust, one of the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, and were established as an independent charitable trust in 2004.

The 2005 Awards are funded by the 10 Sainsbury Family Charitable Trusts, together with Climate Care, the John Ellerman Foundation and the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust.

The Awards are decided by an expert panel of judges which comprises academics, practitioners, journalists and NGO specialists, all highly experienced in the field of sustainable energy and development.

The Ashden Awards are presented in association with Forum For the Future ([www.forumforthefuture.org.uk](http://www.forumforthefuture.org.uk)), and its flagship publication, Green Futures ([www.greenfutures.org.uk](http://www.greenfutures.org.uk)), the UK's leading magazine on environmental solutions and sustainable development.

Climate Care ([www.climatecare.org](http://www.climatecare.org)), the carbon offset company, is sponsoring two of this year's overseas awards. The prize money given to these projects will be used to extend the winners' programmes and to offset carbon emissions on behalf of businesses and individuals in the UK. (Climate Care helps companies and individuals to address their impact on global warming by funding new projects to reduce carbon emissions. The reductions achieved balance its clients' emissions, making their activities climate neutral.)

#### Media enquiries

If you would like to attend the Award Ceremony, or if you would like more information, to arrange interviews, or source case studies or images, or for any other media enquiries, please contact:

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For full information on the awards, including details of previous winners, visit:  
[www.ashdenawards.org](http://www.ashdenawards.org)