

PRESS RELEASE

Embargo to 19.00 GMT, 11 June 2009

Attn: Features/Environment Editor, News Editor

Contact: Ilana Cravitz, Ashden Awards Press Officer: T +44 (0) 20 8985 3724 or mobile: +44 (0) 782 551 0881; E ilana.cravitz@ashdenawards.org

Global green energy awards: 2009 winners announced

Solar electrification of Ethiopian village wins global green energy Award

London, 20.00 hrs: Tonight, the world's leading green energy prize awarded £20,000 and the Ashden Award for electrification of rural areas to the Solar Energy Foundation (SEF). HRH the Prince of Wales presented the Award to Samson Tsegaye, the Ethiopian country representative of SEF, for setting up the biggest solar energy programme in Ethiopia.

The SEF scheme has installed over 2,000 small solar systems in two villages that are off the electricity grid, bringing electricity to these communities for the first time. A further 8,500 units are due to be installed elsewhere in the country by the end of the year.

The judges commended SEF "For bringing modern solar energy technology to deliver light and power to remote Ethiopian villages."

The villagers pay a low monthly fee (about \$1). This amount covers the maintenance and repairs to keep it running. The village committee manages payments and employs nine local people as fee collectors.

The Foundation was established in 2006 by Dr Harald Schützeichel, who had previously set up and run a solar business in Germany. It has developed high quality solar-home-systems and solar lanterns for the 10,000-plus villagers living in Rema and Rema ena Dire, villages in Ethiopia's northern highlands, five hours' drive from Addis Ababa. The residents previously depended on

smoky kerosene lamps and candles for their lighting and had turned down the offer of free diesel generators in favour of solar power.

Working closely with local government bodies and also the Disaster Preparedness Agency Ethiopia, SEF provides not just technology, but also maintenance and a financial structure that means each household can have its own solar-home-system.

To save villagers walking for two hours to collect water as before, the Foundation has installed a solar-powered water pump in Rema to provide fresh drinking water.

Samson Tsegaye, the Ethiopian country representative of SEF, explained some of the benefits of the project:

“The solar programme has helped develop the community in many ways. The local women’s association has set up a popular night school for uneducated adults to improve literacy. School children can now study in the evenings and one teacher claims her pupils’ grades have improved by 75 percent as a result. Fewer people are suffering from eye and respiratory problems associated with kerosene smoke.”

Dr Harald Schützeichel, Director of SEF (Stiftung Solarenergie in German), looked to the future:

"We now have a special financing system in place that will allow us to establish a network of Solar Centres all over Ethiopia over the coming years. Our aim is to initiate self-supporting solar businesses across Ethiopia – and to make ourselves superfluous as an NGO."

To maintain the systems and enable the programme to grow, the Foundation has set up an International Solar School in Rema for local young people, with rigorous six-month training programmes on technical and business skills. Thirty graduates have completed the course and some are now working in four new solar centres which have been set up in other areas of Ethiopia.

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For further information on the 2009 Ashden Awards international winners (including case studies) and to schedule interviews, contact Ilana Cravitz, International Press Officer:

T + 44 (0) 20 8985 3724; M + 44 (0) 782 551 0881; E ilana.cravitz@ashdenawards.org

Photos online: <http://www.ashdenawards.org/photos>. Film footage of projects available on request.

Notes to editors

1. The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy were founded in 2001 to encourage the greater use of local sustainable energy to address climate change and alleviate poverty. Since then they have rewarded over one hundred winners across the UK and the developing world. The Ashden Awards work to show-case and celebrate best practice, encourage the expansion and replication of winners' work, raise awareness of the potential of local sustainable energy, and advocate on their winners' behalf. For further information, including photos, films, and case studies on past winners, go to www.ashdenawards.org. The Ashden Awards Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales.

2. The winners are available for interview: contact Ilana Cravitz (details as above).

3. Five other international Ashden Awards and an Award for Outstanding Achievement by a previous international winner were also made at the Ceremony on 11 June:

USA/China: Aprovecho Research Center (ARC) based in Oregon, **and Shengzhou Stove Manufacturer (SSM)**, is this year's Energy Champion. The scheme produces portable, cheap and efficient fuel-wood stoves in high volume production for global distribution. 60,000 stoves have been sold since 2008, with production capacity now at 50,000 stoves per month.

International Development Enterprises India (IDEI) wins the 2009 Ashden Outstanding Achievement Award, for a simple treadle pump that has lifted more than 750,000 farmers out of poverty. Since winning an Ashden Award in 2006 they have diversified into drip irrigation systems and are selling their products worldwide.

India: The Ashden Award for improved nutrition goes to French charity **Groupe Energies Renouvelable Environnement et Solidarités (GERES)**, working in the Himalayan region of **Ladakh**. GERES is improving the nutrition of villagers and boosting their income by working with local organisations to help them grow fresh vegetables year-round in simple passive solar greenhouses.

India: Saran Renewable Energy Pvt. Ltd in Bihar, in eastern India, wins the Ashden Renewables for Economic Development Award, supported by DFID, for a gasification system providing 11 hours of power every day (220 MWh a year): a popular, sustainable, and cheap alternative to an unreliable grid supply, saving about 200 tonnes/year of CO₂.

Nicaragua: Empresa de Comunicaciones, SA (ECAMI) wins the Ashden Energy Enterprise Award for installing over 400 kWp of high quality photovoltaic systems in the form of 2,000 solar home systems and 560 larger systems for other services, particularly in rural and off-grid areas.

Uganda: Kampala Jellitone Suppliers Ltd, wins The Ashden International Award for Avoided Deforestation, supported by the Waterloo Foundation, for producing non-char biomass briquettes made from agricultural waste. 130 tonnes of briquettes sold every month reduce deforestation and save about 6.1 tonnes of CO₂ per tonne of briquettes used.

Eight Ashden Awards were also made to UK schemes. See www.ashdenawards.org for more information on all the 2009 winners.

4. The Call for Entries for the 2010 Ashden Awards opens on 1 July 2009. See www.ashdenawards.org for details of how to enter and deadlines.