

Central American Micro-Enterprise Stove Program

Organization

Trees, Water & People (TWP) is an audited 501(c)3 non-profit organization located in Colorado, USA. Since 1998 TWP has worked across Central America developing appropriate technology, micro-enterprise, reforestation, and watershed protection programs that help communities improve their economic livelihoods and protect their natural resources. In that time we have built 13,000 fuel-efficient, healthy cookstoves and planted 1,000,000 trees in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala and Mexico. TWP's newest initiative is our Central American Micro-Enterprise Stove Program focused in the urban centers of Managua, Nicaragua and Tegucigalpa, Honduras.

Stove Program

The goal of our Central American Micro-Enterprise Stove Program is to train entrepreneurs how to profitably build, market and sell fuel-efficient, healthy cookstoves in urban centers in both Nicaragua and Honduras. TWP first began commercializing improved stoves in Nicaragua in 2000 after two years of introducing a subsidized, mud-and-brick version of the stove, or the Justa stove, into rural and peri-urban areas in Honduras. We quickly realized, however, that we could not meet the demand for the stove through such a dissemination model. When we began to introduce the stove into Nicaragua we began mass-producing a metal version of the stove in a factory and selling them.

Our partner organization in Nicaragua, PROLENA, has had great success commercializing our improved stoves. With help from the Aprovecho Research Center we trained PROLENA staff how to properly build, market and sell the EcoStove, a metal version of the Justa stove. Since then, TWP and PROLENA have continued to research and design various models of improved stoves to meet the variety of cooking needs in Nicaragua. We now have five different stove models. In total we have sold 6,500 stoves, including 2,200 last year alone. We are on track to build and sell another 2,000 stoves this year as well.

Based in part on our success in Nicaragua, last year we teamed up with Aprovecho and TWP's Honduran counterpart, the Honduran Association for Development, to begin another stove commercialization project in Tegucigalpa, Honduras. With funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency, Rotary International, The Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation and the Ashden Award for Sustainable Energy we have finished training four stove producers and are currently training 26 vendors to help market and sell the stoves. In less than a month we have already sold 40 stoves in Tegucigalpa and have orders for another 150. During this transition period we have continued our successful Justa stove program to fill immediate demand for stoves. In total we have built more than 3,500 Justa stove in Honduras.

Market

One of the reasons we chose to start this initiative in Nicaragua and Honduras is that the urban centers of both countries provided the largest market for improved stoves. Approximately 50% of urban families in both these countries still use fuelwood in traditional, open-fire cookstoves. In Honduras, this translates into 100,000 households in the capital city, Tegucigalpa, alone. Many of the early orders we have received for stoves in Honduras have come from San Pedro Sula, Honduras' second largest city, which includes 50,000 families who still use fuelwood. The market is similar in Nicaragua where over 100,000 families in the seven largest urban centers still use traditional stoves, including 50,000 in the capital, Managua.