

## **PRESS RELEASE**

For immediate release

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Global green awards' 2008 finalists announced

### **Low-tech energy brings massive carbon savings and cash benefits for millions.**

**Today the world's leading green energy prize announced that pioneering renewable energy projects from Africa, Asia and Latin America will each receive prizes of up to £20,000, with an overall Energy Champion winning up to £40,000. Winners will be revealed at a ceremony in London in June.<sup>(1)</sup>**

World wide two billion people still have no access to modern forms of energy. 1.6 million women and children are dying every year from respiratory diseases because they are cooking over open fires. The finalists' efforts highlight how simple design innovation, commitment, and relatively small financial outlay can bring huge benefits to large numbers of people in terms of health, education, social welfare, and finance. The projects recognised and rewarded this year - which include small and large scale solar, mini hydro power schemes, and fuel-efficient stoves running off waste products - transform lives and reduce poverty in their communities.

Sarah Butler-Sloss, founder and chair of the Ashden Awards said:

"These finalists show how providing communities and individuals with appropriate forms of sustainable energy can transform their lives and lift them out of poverty, while at the same time reducing carbon emissions. These are truly inspirational projects that are leading the way to a sustainable future. "

**The seven international finalists are:**

#### **Brazil, Cooperativa Regional de Eletrificação Rural do Alto Uruguai Ltda (CRERAL)**

##### **Cooperative uses mini hydro to increase electricity supply on local grid**

Tired of regular power cuts, members of CRERAL, a regional electrification co-operative, decided to invest in two small, local hydro-electric plants instead of buying their electricity from large hydro and fossil-fuelled plants elsewhere. CRERAL is a co-operative which supplies electricity via the grid to 6,300 mainly rural customers in the south of Brazil. To increase capacity and improve reliability, it has built and now operates two mini-hydro plants (0.72 and 1.0 MW capacity) which produce about 5.5 GWh/year electricity or 25% of its overall demand. The run-of-the river hydro schemes do not need large reservoirs, and therefore have minimal environmental impact. The loans which CRERAL needed to finance the plants are paid back by electricity sales and carbon credits. CRERAL is planning and developing more mini-hydro plants which will meet all its current electricity demand.

#### **China, Rural Energy Development Project (REDP)**

##### **Bringing affordable, high-quality solar lighting to rural China**

Since 2001, REDP has enabled sales of over 402,000 photovoltaic (PV) solar-home systems to yak and other herding communities in remote areas of western China. Most previously relied on kerosene,

butter lamps and candles for light. Around 1.44 million people who live in tents for at least part of the year and previously had little access to electricity, now have an improved quality of life through better light, communications and entertainment. This has been achieved through support to the industry to improve the quality of PV modules and other components; technical and management assistance to local installation companies; and subsidies to sales. Sales now continue without subsidies, because the benefits of PV are widely known, and the systems are reliable and accessible.

### **Ethiopia, Gaia Association**

#### **Clean, safe ethanol stoves for refugee homes**

17,000 people live in the Kebribeyah refugee camp, having fled conflict in bordering Somalia. Refugees in Ethiopia, as in many countries, rely on fuelwood for cooking. Women who spend long hours collecting fuelwood outside refugee camps are frequently attacked, and there is extensive deforestation. The Gaia Association has provided ethanol-fuelled stoves to 1,780 refugee families, enabling clean, comfortable cooking and preventing wood use. The ethanol is produced from locally-available molasses, a sugar by-product which previously caused pollution. The Gaia Association is starting to supply stoves and ethanol for other refugee camps and also for new housing developments in Addis Ababa, and a local factory is producing the stoves.

### **India, Aryavart Gramin bank**

#### **Bank helps customers to buy solar home systems**

The Aryavart Gramin bank in Uttar Pradesh used solar photovoltaic (PV) systems to back-up the unreliable grid power for some of its branches, and recognised the potential of PV for its many off-grid customers. The bank set up a bulk supply and installation agreement with TATA-BP for PV solar-home-systems, and provides loans for its customers with a good credit record to purchase the systems. To date 10,100 loans have been approved and 8,000 solar-home-systems installed. Local entrepreneurs are paid by the bank to service and maintain systems. The Aryavart Gramin bank has a target of 25,000 solar-home-systems this year, and is promoting the idea of its SHS loan scheme to other rural banks.

### **India, Technology Informatics Design Endeavour (TIDE)**

#### **Wood-saving stoves for small businesses in South India**

South India is buzzing with small industries of every kind, many of them rely on wood and other biomass as their primary source of energy. Sustainable energy pioneer Ms Svati Bhogle has revolutionised life for thousands and improved the environment with her organisation, TIDE, which has developed and adapted energy-efficient woodstoves and kilns for specific industries, including arecanut processing, silk reeling, textile dyeing, ayurvedic medicine production and food preparation. Over 10,500 stoves have been sold by TIDE and the entrepreneurs it has trained: these stoves save about 43,000 tonnes/year biomass, provide a cleaner, cooler environment for users, and often lead to significant time savings. TIDE is developing a range of stoves for large-scale cooking, and working with larger production centres in order to bring the stoves to more customers.

### **Tanzania, Kisangani Smith Group**

#### **Blacksmiths develop wood-saving stoves**

To complement its work in training blacksmiths and in reforestation, the Kisangani Smith Group, run by volunteers, has developed two types of efficient biomass stove which can be hand-made by local smiths. One stove replaces the widespread use of charcoal in towns: it burns sawdust (readily available as a waste in the Njombe region of Tanzania) or agricultural residues. The other stove is an improved wood-burner, targeted at rural areas. Over 3,500 stoves have been sold by the Kisangani Smith Group and its trainees. The group plans to promote the stoves more widely, in Njombe and elsewhere, whilst expanding its training programme.

## **Uganda, Fruits of the Nile**

### **Solar drying business links rural farmers with export markets**

Southern Uganda is the fertile and sun-drenched region with abundant rainfall where Fruits of the Nile, a local company, is helping small farmers harness the power of the sun to dry and export fruit that is surplus to local demand. Fruits of the Nile is a Ugandan business which produced and exports about 120 tonnes/year of high-quality dried banana and pineapple from its factory in Njeru. The fresh fruit is prepared and dried in simple solar driers by 120 producer groups in rural areas: these groups buy fruit from over 800 farmers and employ about 500 labourers. Fruits of the Nile currently operates to FairTrade standards and, through rigorous training, monitoring and quality control, is converting the whole supply chain to organic production. It is hoped that organic certification will expand the export markets for Fruits of the Nile, since all in the supply chain and the business are keen to increase production.

## **ENDS**

**For further information on the 2008 Ashden Awards international finalists (including case studies) and to schedule interviews, contact Ilana Cravitz, International Press Officer:**

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

### **Notes to editors**

1. The Ashden Awards is a UK-based charity that works to increase the use of local sustainable energy worldwide. They find, reward and publicise the work of leading sustainable energy programmes working across the developing world and in the UK. For further information, including details on past winners, funders and supporters go to: [www.ashdenawards.org](http://www.ashdenawards.org)
2. The international winner (Energy Champion) will be announced on Thursday 19 June at an Awards ceremony in London. All international finalists will attend to compete for the overall prize of £40,000, to help project expansion and promote replication. To report/film from the event contact Ilana Cravitz (details above).
3. The finalists will be available for interview in London during the week of 16 June. There will be presentations and films about the finalists' work at a seminar at Imperial College, London, on Wednesday 18 June. To attend, contact Ilana Cravitz (details above).
4. The call for entries for the 2009 Ashden Awards opens on 19 June 2008. Expressions of interest for the international Awards should be received by 21 October 2008. Details and application forms will be online at [www.ashdenawards.org](http://www.ashdenawards.org)