

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF FOREST MANAGEMENT

Budding Researcher's Award 2009-10

BREAKING BELIEFS, RAISING HOPES

A report on introduction of biogas plants in the hilly regions of Tarikhet and its impacts on community awareness and development

Author: Ranjane Raman

Summary

It is a universally accepted fact that if the world has to sustain its current pattern of energy consumption and still not have a debilitating impact on the resources of the earth then the current resource guzzling, energy inefficient ways will have to go. A switch has to be made that lays more emphasis on technology that is the best for the local use rather than producing energy at one corner and transporting it for use to another. This calls for bringing innovations, breaking old beliefs and embracing technologies that were earlier not thought to be viable but can actually make a difference.

This report is an attempt to bring it to the wider notice the fact that such changes are now being made in the hilly terrains of India. The major dependence of the hill folk for fuel wood is on the forests. There has been an effort by the locals to try and reduce their dependence on the forests. The dependence cannot be culled entirely but the extent surely can be minimized.

The technology that is now being embraced by the residents of Tarikhet is that of biogas plants. Earlier it was thought that the introduction of biogas plants in the hills would not be a very feasible venture, owing to the temperature demands of the biogas plant working and the cold climatic conditions.

But now, with plants running efficiently in the region for five years the myth of biogas in hills being a ridiculous idea has been busted. The plants in this region do not operated for the entire year but for around 9-10 months.

Apart from reducing the dependence on the forest for fuelwood, this venture has reduced the drudgery on part of the women and has freed them to pursue more profitable investments of time.

The project has also, in an attempt to sustain this operation introduced a dairy in the region. The activity of dairying is providing an umbrella activity under which the promotion of biogas is also taking place and the women are earning and SHGs have also been formed to bind the women together.