

ENLIGHTENING SMALL HAMLETS BY PROVIDING LIGHT IN THE FORM OF SOLAR ENERGY, ECO SOLUTIONS IS SPREADING A RAY OF HOPE AMONG THE NEEDY VILLAGERS



SOLAR LIGHT ENTERS ADIVASI HAMLETS



ECOSOLUTIONS NGO BRIGHTENS ADIVASI HAMLETS IN RAIGAD DISTRICT BY PROVIDING SOLAR LIGHTS

● GEORGE MENDONCA

EcoSolutions, a charitable NGO founded three years ago by a Vashi resident Yatendra Agrawal, an IIT alumni of 1984 batch has been striving to bring smile on the faces of the adivasis residing in the remote villages of Raigad district. Agrawal has been contributing his share of moral responsibility for the welfare of the downtrodden and the socio-economically backward people living in the village. Through the medium of the NGO, Agrawal has provided the basic necessity of light in the form of solar energy to nearly 2000 homes across the country, especially in the rural and adivasi hamlets in the Raigad district.

Speaking to My Times, Yatendra Agrawal emphasizes, "The purpose of EcoSolutions NGO is to provide low cost, technologically advanced and highly reliable and eco-friendly products to the poorest, that too free of cost. A typical home system costs Rs 1500 and can light up a home for 6-15 hours depending on the light intensity. The entire expense is borne by the

NGO. Our aim is to make an immediate positive change in the lives of the rural residents. Solar home lighting has been the main focus till date and newer products like solar cookers and fuel efficient *chulas* will be introduced soon. Our NGO follows the principles of Mahatma Gandhi, who had said: Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man you have seen, and ask yourself if this step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him."

Agrawal further informed, "EcoSolutions is primarily funded by myself thereby showing my commitment through self funding. From my personal experience, it has been easier to convince people to join in the social cause. The solar lights are procured after ensuring that the products are of the branded quality. Currently, the lights are being procured from Green Light Planet Pvt Ltd (Sun King solar lamp) and Ecco Electronics Pvt Ltd (Ecco Diva solar lamp). I am of the opinion that renewable energy products should be made available to individual homes to bring them direct relief with provision of basic

necessity. We have observed that people take great care of the product and use it sensibly, unlike the existing non-functioning solar street lamps seen in many villages where poor maintenance and lack of accountability has resulted in their early failure. Till date nearly 2000 homes have been lit up across the country right from Kashmir to Chennai and from Rajasthan to Assam."

Agrawal added, "In the past three months, we have provided solar lights to some of the needy villages in Raigad district. They comprise of Irshalwadi (40 Nos), Peth (10), Tungi (75), Garbut (40), Nigirchipatti (10), Umbernewadi (33), Arcuswadi (10), Pircuswadi (22), Katwang (31), Kalak Rai (45), Malewadi (14), Sonewadi (5), Virachiwadi (4), Tarwadi (1), Rajmachi (20) and Wangnewadi (17). There was report in the print media highlighting the pitiable condition of number of adivasi hamlets in Panvel area who are fighting to get electricity for years. Various bureaucratic hurdles have prevented the adivasis from having access to electricity. The adivasis are

forced to rely on kerosene dipped wicks which gives dim light in their huts during night-time. Inspired and driven by charitable spirit with which EcoSolutions operates, our NGO, sprung into action to provide solar lighting to every single household of the hamlets. Accordingly, we have provided solar lamps, free of cost, to the villages of Yermalwadi (60 Nos), Garmar (22), Karambelawadi (89) and Bhalyachiwadi (55). The solar lamps are already in use and have provided great relief to the residents. The contributions for these lamps have come from our benefactors and well-wishers namely Sushant Gupta (SG Analytics Pvt Ltd, Pune), Alok Agarwal (Dream India foundation), Rajesh Chakraborty (Schlumberger). The logistic support for procuring and distributing the lamps was provided by Sanjay Sharma (Avalon Heights International School, Vashi), R K Sharma (Reservoir Pvt Ltd) and Rajesh Shah (Axis Bank). EcoSolutions is indebted to these individuals and firms for lighting up the lives of the poor families living in these hamlets."

Agrawal added, "Two

years ago, I had visited an agricultural university where I came across a Renewable Energy Park. In that park many devices like solar cookers, dryers and water heaters were kept on display, but most of them had gone kaput. Moreover on asking the question what device was available to a poor villager, there was absolutely no answer. As we look around in Navi Mumbai, we can see number of makeshift huts where migrant workers live in darkness. Similar lifestyle is witnessed in remote villages of Raigad and Thane district. The only solution to their misfortune of being deprived from the basic necessity is that they make utmost use of simple renewable energy devices like solar lighting and solar cooking to improve at least a bit of their standard living. Also, use of firewood for cooking purpose can be curbed with the use of such renewable energy devices thereby contributing to the campaign of conservation of the ecosystem."

Agrawal further said, "The Navi Mumbai Municipal Corporation (NMMC)

has proposed to set up an energy park in the city and has allocated a budget estimate of around Rs 2.7 crores. This budget can light up at least 18,000 homes. However, the number of homes could probably cover all the unlit homes in Konkan region of Maharashtra. We have already made a list of approximately 2000 homes which need solar lights. If every urban household comes forward to donate even one solar lamp, we can cover thousands of unlit homes. We encourage people to participate in distributing solar lights to the needy villagers. Every single rupee contributed is put to good use and you can see it with your own eyes. Let us believe in ourselves and know the fact that our smallest gestures will give a ray of hope to many of the poorest in our country who are in dire need of a helping hand."

EcoSolutions activities are available on the website- www.ecosolutionsngo.org. Contact Yatendra Agrawal, on 9869182356 or email- yatendra.agrawal@ecosolutionsngo.org

