The High Price of Cooking

Cooking has become one of the most dangerous daily activities for women in the developing world, according to the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. Exposure to smoke and pollution from inefficient traditional cookstoves and open fires kills 4 million people annually and causes cancer, pneumonia, heart and lung disease, burns, and blindness. Women and young children are especially vulnerable given the time spent near the stoves, but the whole family is affected. Even when fuel is freely available, women using traditional methods pay too high a price for cooking.

The Benefits of an Improved Stove

Improved cookstoves save fuel and produce far less smoke—better for the environment, better for all those breathing the air around the cookstove. More efficient stoves reduce exposure to illness-inducing smoke and to physical and sexual risks that women and girls can face when collecting fuel. The time savings can also free up women and girls to focus on income generation, schooling, recreation, and other productive opportunities. As is often the case with other health issues, too often the actual users, is not consulted when products such as cookstoves are developed. Instead planners develop the “ideal” product or program from a health and energy point of view. Consequently, the stoves are not appealing to consumers, who end up not using them, negating all potential benefits.

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What Do Cooks Want? What Will They Pay?

In Bangladesh, WASHplus has teamed up with key stakeholders to open the market to new improved cookstoves by conducting a Consumer Preference and Willingness to Pay study of five types of new stoves, to better reflect the needs and wants of Bangladeshi cooks and families. Simply stated, when stoves deliver what people want, they are more likely to buy and use the new, improved cookstoves.

WASHplus worked with local NGOs to conduct a mixed-method study that uses a modified TIPS or Trials of Improved Practices method—a process of engaging audiences as consultants to identify feasible solutions and try options over time—that is familiar to many CORE Group members. Researchers added the “elicitation questions” of the BEHAVE framework to better understand what motivates cooks to use—or not use—the new stoves.

Consumer Preference Trials

In-home testing over time

- 5 stove types, 3 homes for each, in 2 regions (south and northwest)
- 4 villages each=120 households
- Representative of market—wood as primary fuel
- Semi-structured questionnaires—qualitative and quantitative
  - Installation and baseline
  - 3-day initial assessment/problem solving visit
  - 21-day final survey
- Willingness to pay assessment, 2 methods
- Kitchen performance tests to measure actual fuel use, and reported stove use
- Stove use monitoring systems to measure actual stove use
- Indoor air pollution monitoring

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What Did People Like About the Stoves?

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