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## **Rechargeable light, clean stove schemes win UN environmental prize**



Rwandese mayor pedals on the Nuru POWERCycle.

23 February 2010 – A pair of grassroots initiatives bringing environmentally friendly stoves and rechargeable lighting to remote communities in several countries are the recipients of this year's prestigious Sasakawa Prize, the United Nations Environment Programme (**UNEP**) announced today.

The annual prize, worth \$200,000 between the two projects, is awarded to sustainable schemes that can be replicated at the local level across the world.

This year's winners are Nuru Design, a company providing rechargeable lights to villages in Rwanda, Kenya and India; and Trees, Water and People (TWP), an organization distributing fuel-efficient stoves to people in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Haiti.

**Combating climate change is not just up to governments; it starts at the grassroots level, as communities tap into the power of renewables and sustainable technologies**

"Combating climate change is not just up to governments; it starts at the grassroots level, as communities tap into the power of renewables and sustainable technologies," **said** UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner, who chaired the four-person jury which included Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and UN Messenger of Peace Wangari Maathai.

“Through pioneering green ovens and sustainable lighting, Nuru Design and Trees, Water and People are changing the lives of thousands of schoolchildren, housewives and villagers across Latin America, Africa and India,” added Mr. Steiner.

With the lack of reliable energy and lighting affecting over 2 billion people in the developing world and the equivalent of 260 million tons of carbon dioxide emitted every year from burning kerosene and firewood, Nuru Design has already converted thousands of households to rechargeable lights, and aims to prevent the emission of around 40,000 tons of carbon dioxide from kerosene lighting in 2010.

In Rwanda alone, Nuru – which means ‘light’ in Swahili – is helping 10,000 households every three months switch from kerosene to its lighting system, and the company plans to use the Sasakawa funding to scale up in Rwanda and to replicate their efforts in Burundi, Kenya, Uganda and India, expanding to about 200,000 households.

In addition, through fuel-efficient cooking stoves that burn 50 to 70 per cent less wood, TWP is helping households save money and preventing nearly 250,000 tons of hazardous emissions from traditional smoky open fires, which kill around 1.6 million women and children annually.

To date, TWP has organized the building of 35,000 stoves throughout Central America and Haiti, benefiting more than 175,000 people who save \$1 to \$5 per day on the cost of wood. The initiative also decreases harmful carbon emissions by 1 ton of carbon dioxide equivalent per year per stove for domestic users and 3.5 tons per year for commercial users, like tortilla makers.

The winners are slated to receive the prize at a ceremony during this week’s 11th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council in Bali, Indonesia, which kicks off on Wednesday and is attended by dozens of environment ministers.

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