

My Identity changed

Sarita Wade is the Jyoti (entrepreneur) of AUSA village since August 2007. She had sold 134 biomass appliances in last four months. She is the member of SHG.

Sarita's husband was working as a tailor for 20 years. Over the last three years, her husband has not been well and the doctor advised him to take rest. Now, she has to take care of the house and children. The income earned from the business was not sufficient. At this time, her group learnt about the home energy products business and about selection of Jyoti. Sarita Tai and her husband decided to take up the Jyoti business because they felt it would be easy for her to sell the products as their relationship with the community is good. .

Sarita attended a series of trainings in which she was taught the functionality of the biomass stove so that she could demonstrate its features herself to prospective customers. She began her business with great spirit and enthusiasm. The customers of her old business used to visit her house and she would take advantage of such opportunities to give information on the biomass appliances. In addition, her husband helped her with the marketing and publicity of the product.

She used the income of this business to develop her old tailoring business and she opened a grocery shop. She became confident in her ability and skills. She says, "I was very scared to visit the customer's house. But due to the great support of SSP I did that job very well." Her regular attendance in training sessions on the biomass appliances, she learned to repair the biomass appliances in case of any minor problem.

Learning to do Business

Maya Shrivastava has been a Jyoti in her village, Ter, for one year. At age 30, she is married and has two children and seeking out ways to bring additional income to her family aside from farming, the family's main source of income. Before becoming a Jyoti, the 12th standard pass Maya was an active SHG member but had very little business experience.

When she found out from SSP about the Jyoti program, Maya was eager to see if she too could start her own business. During the interview process, she illustrated her basic reading, writing and accounting skills. Maya has attended more than 10 trainings since joining the Jyoti program but over time her role evolved from trainee to trainer. Maya now trains other women on how to use the Oorja stoves, how to sell and market them, and conducts refresher workshops where women meet to discuss challenges and successes they have encountered.

Knowing her Customers - *Maya is strategic about her marketing techniques. While she conducts demonstrations at monthly SHG meetings, her favorite tactic is to visit potential customers while they are cooking dinner. She visits them in their homes and asks if they have any health concerns that could be related to smoke inhalation such as eye or lung problems. Maya shares her personal experiences on how she improved her health by switching to a smokeless stove and other benefits such as more free time and less money spent on fuel. For her, selling is not enough; unless she imparts knowledge that can help other women improve their lifestyles. Because of her effective marketing and genuine interest, she has sold over 230 stoves and has more than 100 regular customers with a steady monthly income of over Rs. 2000. She works about 4 hours per day as a Jyoti and spends the rest of her day cooking, cleaning her house, and attending meetings.*

Upward Mobility - Maya's main priority is to be a good mother and wife by supporting her family in every way she can. She is now socially recognized in her village as someone who is taking action to increase health standards for women. She attends regular local government (Gram Panchayat) meetings and is part of a new Clean Village Campaign to reduce open defecation. Maya's commitment to health is reflected in her personal decision to attend health camp checkups for cancer and polio vaccinations. Within her family Maya has more freedom to spend the money she earns and she regularly places extra earnings back into her family farm or her individual savings account for her children's future. She prides herself in having equal decision making power as her husband in family affair. With the support of SSP and her family, Maya continues to reach out to women and effect change.