

# WECF Project Sheet:

## Switch to the Sun — Live in Comfort!

### Introduction

'Building Local Capacity for Domestic Solar Heating, Hot Water and Insulation for Rural and Remote Areas of the EEC (Eastern Europe, Caucasus) Region' is an energy project of Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) that aims to improve living conditions in very poor and rural communities through implementation of sustainable energy solutions.

Rural communities in the EEC-countries were specifically chosen for this energy project. In this region, locals have to cope with very poor heating conditions during the cold winters. Moreover, the EEC-region is known for having low energy efficiency, both in production as well as consumption of energy. Ukraine, for example, has the second highest per capita energy consumption in the world. Although sustainable energy solutions are not always seen as an alternative solution for the energy problems of the EEC, WECF and its partner organizations are convinced there is a huge potential for sustainable energy development in this region.

### Objectives

The project is being implemented in 22 rural communities in 6 EEC countries (Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Russia). The project results will be achieved by implementing several sub goals:

- demonstrating domestic solar heating, hot water and insulation measures, based on available local capacities and materials
- creating institutional capacity for "scaling-up" via certified trainers and craftspeople.
- formulating lessons learned to develop effective financial, institutional and legal instruments for follow-up from the grassroots. Local success will be used to formulate and influence decisions on the national level.

### Gender sensitive approach

Solar technologies play a key role in empowering women. Due to women's traditional roles in housekeeping they usually use much more hot water than other members of a family, e.g. women use an average of 83 liters per day vs. men at 34 liters per day.<sup>1</sup>

By making access to hot water easier for women, the labor burden of women decreases.

WECF promotes a simple model of a solar water heater (also called solar collector), which can fully supply the hot water needs of a household. This model doesn't need pumps or other electric devices and can be easily constructed by local people with simple materials available at local markets. The solar collector can be used in winter due to the use of antifreeze.



### Women's role in the project:

Women are encouraged to participate in the trainings throughout the project cycle, and their levels of participation and leadership have been measured through gender-specific indicators in the baseline needs assessment and monitoring. Women make up to 50% of those trained as builders or maintenance specialists. Specific gender roles have been taken into account when designing the trainings and women are trained to be monitors of the installed devices. As a result of these trainings women are themselves be-

coming trainers on solar technologies. They become the biggest supporters of the technologies since they have a positive impact on their labor burden, income and quality of life (women often carry out agricultural work as well as domestic responsibilities, and this includes wood or other fuel gathering). Once a year, women complete a specially designed questionnaire and participate in focus group discussions that collect women's practical suggestions on how to improve the technologies they are using. Integrating gender analysis throughout all stages of technology development helps to improve the products, and ultimately benefits both women and men.

The overwhelming majority of solar collectors and other devices installed in Georgia for instance are owned by the women as they initiated their acquisition for household needs.

### Results achieved and challenges:

The quality of life for family members, especially women, is significantly improved after solar collector installation as families now have hot water for household purposes.

Women owners of solar and other renewable energy technologies are becoming key partners by providing their expertise and experience, thus improving their climate resilience and mitigating their ecological impact.

The most active women in the project organize their own businesses or have leadership positions in the community and also involve men to implement their decisions (see photos).

However, It is sometimes difficult to involve women into public activities, especially projects that are of long duration, due to the demands of their daily labor burden (raising children, doing housekeeping, and agricultural work). This is especially, true during busier periods such as berry picking, mushroom gathering or harvest times.

*\* WECF thanks Nino Gamisonia (RCDA), and Oksana Maiboroda (Ecoclub) for their text contributions and photos.*

<sup>1</sup> Source: training exercise, Ecoclub, Ukraine

## WECF women: different countries, much in common.

**Baira** participated in a community training in EEC region (Ulan-Ude). She is a student and is now working on her degree in renewable energy.



She actively participated in both the theoretical and practical sections of the training. Despite the cultural stereotypes of women's roles that are dominant in this region, she was trying to master all the necessary techniques to construct her own solar collector at home.

**Nadiya** is a teacher in an Agricultural college in the Lviv region of the Ukraine. She is organizing a project entitled "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Technologies Lab" (EE & RE Lab) initiated by her college. She invited our WECF trainers to provide extra solar collector training for a volunteer group at the college. The group of teachers and students organized by Nadiya installed a solar collector after only 4 days of the "hands-on" training.



Nadiya supports idea of rooftop Photo Voltaics (PV) and is preparing for cooperation in developing this idea in the college. Within the work of the EE&RE Lab, models of solar collectors for heating water and air and solar batteries have already been installed.

**Community women** participating in **Kamensk-Uralsk**, Russia were very active during the training. It became obvious during the training that women can easily construct solar collectors. There was no difference between men's and women's tasks undertaken to do this. The only distinction was that the men didn't allow women to carry really heavy things.

The women are also very active in their daily lives. Active participation of women in this region is mostly related to organizing around the problem of radioactive wastes of the Mayak nuclear plant and radioactive contamination in the region.



**Inga** is the head of a kindergarten in Moldova. She actively participated in the training and she also helped to organize venues, equipment, meals and other logistics. She monitors and maintains the solar collector installed in the kindergarten. She also organized a group of builders to help her with the installation of a solar collector in her home.



These four local project examples represent the work of only a small sample of all of the women who are actively participating in WECF's project. These women have now "Switched to the Sun" to live in comfort.

## Do you want to switch to the sun?

If you are interested in getting more information on our technologies or in bringing a training to your community, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Sabine Bock: [Sabine.Bock@wecf.eu](mailto:Sabine.Bock@wecf.eu), and/or Olga Plekhanova: [Olga.Plekhanova@wecf.eu](mailto:Olga.Plekhanova@wecf.eu).

## WECF partners

**Georgia:** The Greens Movement of Georgia, Rural Communities Development Agency, Social Development Center Akhaltsikhe, SEMA  
**Ukraine:** Ecoclub, National Ecological Center of Ukraine, and Vidrozhennia.

**Armenia:** АЙРУДЗИ Aurudzi, Sila Sveta, Lore Eco Club.

**Azerbaijan:** Eko Renaissance.

**Moldova:** Gutta Club, Ormax, Wisdom,

**Russia:** Buryat Regional Association of Baikal, The Planet of Hopes.

**International partners:** GERES (Groupe Energies Renouvelables, Environnement et Solidarités), Solar Partner Süd, Atmosfair Germany.

## About WECF

Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) is an international network of over 100 women's, environmental and health organizations implementing projects in 40 countries and advocating globally for a healthy environment for all.

## Contacts

### WECF Netherlands

Biltstraat 445  
NL - 3572 AW Utrecht  
Phone: +31-30-2310300  
Fax: +31-30-2340878

### WECF Germany

St.-Jakobs-Platz 10  
D - 80331 Munich  
Phone: +49-89-23239380  
Fax: +49-89-232393811

### WECF France

Cité de la Solidarité Internationale  
13 Avenue Emile Zola  
74100 Annemasse  
Phone: +33-450-499738  
Fax: +33-450-499738

## Get Involved

There are many ways to get involved in WECF's work. You can become a WECF member, donor or strategic partner. As an individual you can become a Friend of WECF, volunteer, donate and contribute in many other ways to our work and our network.