

Improved stoves empower Ethiopian women

Ethiopian women use the time they save by using improved cooking stoves to do paid work. The extra income means a healthier diet for their families. That's not the only benefit of an improved stove.

These are the findings of Kaleb Jada (Development Economics), who did research on the stoves. The traditional open cooking fires in rural Ethiopian households are inefficient and harmful. They consume a lot of wood and biomass as fuel and cause indoor pollution, leading to health problems such as lower respiratory tract infections. Since they were recommended, many Ethiopians have started using improved stoves. Kaleb Jada (Development Economics) researched whether such stoves can also contribute to food and nutritional security, which is key to reducing malnutrition.



The improved cooking stove.
Photo GIZ Energy Coordination Office

The improved cooking stoves reduce indoor pollution and require less fuel, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and deforestation. At the same time, they also improve nutrition and food security – primarily by saving rural women a lot of time, Jada discovered from data from 4338 households, collected in 2014 and 2018. ‘The new stove shortens cooking

time and is more energy efficient, so women don't have to gather as much firewood. Traditionally, women do the cooking in Ethiopia, so the improved stoves make the biggest difference to their lives.’

Time-saving

‘Women now have some time to spare, and this makes them more inclined to seek paid work and generate income,’ explains Jada, although he adds that his study only covered a small sample. ‘Women spend more of their income on the household than men do, which leads to better nutrition and food security.’ Households with these stoves were found to have a more varied diet and to eat more products containing vitamin A. That improved diet reduces malnutrition and can prevent non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, strokes and cancer. ss