

Smoke and health in Nepal

Healthier home heating

In the harsh winter, the people of Gatlang, in the high hills of the Rasuwa district of Nepal, are dependent on their kitchen stove for heating as well as cooking. However these stoves, fuelled mostly by pine wood, emit much dangerous smoke leading to health and respiratory problems, especially among women and children. Across the world smoke from kitchen fires kills 1.5 million people every year.

The Gatlang community's houses are of thick, well constructed dry-stone walls, mainly comprising an open ground floor, for cattle and fuel storage, a living area on the first floor, and a storage area above. Food is predominantly cooked using a three-stone fire (wood fuel) and a tripod on which the cooking pot is placed. Respiratory infections have been identified as the major source of ill-health in the village.



Practical Action has been working along with the community monitoring and developing appropriate methods to reduce the levels of smoke. These include improvements in home insulation - using plaster made from mud and straw - and stove design to reduce fuel use, as well as indoor carbon monoxide and pollutant monitoring, and education on the health dangers of indoor air pollution.



Young mother Lemma Tamang took part in the smoke monitoring trials by wearing a personal monitor around her neck. Lemma told a community meeting, "I have worn the monitor and had a look at the computer. There is so much smoke - I am amazed - too much to describe." Lemma continued, "I am very happy as I now know smoke is harmful and

that Practical Action is helping us get rid of it."

An appropriate metal smoke hood which vents to the outside of the house (rather than into the roof space) has been designed by an outside consultant. Existing designs have been modified to allow the hoods to be made out of thin sheet metal by local blacksmiths.

http://practicalaction.org/?id=smoke_nepal

