

RELEASE IN FULL

NOTE FOR THE SECRETARY

9/21/09

FROM: Mike Fuchs
CC: Cheryl Mills
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SUBJECT: Cookstoves

Per your request, I followed up with the EPA on your conversation with Administrator Lisa Jackson about cookstoves. Below is some brief background information on cookstoves, a sketch of U.S. activity supporting clean cooking practices, as well as a recommendation on next steps.

Background

Cooking practices can have serious impacts on health and the environment, and a particularly acute impact on women and children.

More than half the world's population heat their homes and cook their food using solid fuels (coal, wood, crop residues, etc.). The WHO estimates that 1.5 million people die prematurely each year from exposure to indoor smoke produced by burning solid fuels, and indoor air pollution ranks fourth (after malnutrition, unsafe sex, and unsafe water) in the list of serious health threats in less developing countries.

The environmental concerns are also potentially significant. Inefficient cooking practices can result in deforestation (as in Haiti), erosion, desertification, and the production of greenhouse gases (the reduction of black carbon produced by the open burning of fossil fuels, biofuel, and biomass are of particular interest to those working on climate change).

Women and children are disproportionately affected by inefficient cooking practices, as they are the ones who usually spend time cooking indoors and collecting materials for fuel.

U.S. Activity

Below is a brief sketch of EPA's activity and the varying bureaus and agencies that have an interest or equity in exploring clean cooking solutions.

EPA Activity

EPA has organized an interagency working group to discuss USG efforts regarding clean cooking solutions (including State, USAID, OMB, NIH, USDA, DOE). EPA runs the Partnership for Clean Indoor Air (PCIA), which includes over 300 NGOs, businesses, governments, and international organizations, and supports their efforts to spread clean cooking practices, conduct trainings, and distribute technology to reduce indoor air pollution. The financial involvement is relatively small, with EPA's estimated FY02-09 expenditures on the above activities (including logistical costs) amounting to about \$10 million. EPA believes that the PCIA model has been successful because of its flexibility in supporting best practices and the best available technologies, and they are drafting proposals for a significantly increased U.S. initiative on cookstoves.

State Activity

Interest in cookstoves is sprinkled across State, with its relevance touching policies towards India, Haiti, and the Global Health Initiative, among others. State has encouraged other governments to support the PCIA and encouraged local participation in regional conferences and trainings. EAP is planning a workshop in Bangkok in November to look at improving cookstove technology. Ambassador Roemer has had high-level discussions with the Indians (and Energy Secretary Chu) about including cookstove initiatives in our partnership. There is interest from State's climate change office in what EPA is doing.

Other Agencies

There is also interest and engagement from various other agencies. Energy Secretary Chu is reportedly considering an investment in stove/fuel technology R&D. NIH funded an intervention-based trial looking at the health benefits of using improved stoves, and they are funding another study in Nepal.

Overall, our efforts are comprised of largely ad hoc activities ranging from researching health implications to testing stove technology to trainings.

Recommendation

At this stage, the discussions about moving forward with new initiatives remain at the working level. EPA is keen on taking the lead with State on increasing USG efforts and funding, advancing their own model of the PCIA (or something similar). There are still problems with cookstove initiatives (unproven technologies, not adapting strategies to local environments), but the PCIA strategy has many supporters. There is also interest and select activity in State and other agencies, but there appears to be little if any coordination.

With its crosscutting importance to health, environment, food security, and women's issues, it seems worthwhile to explore options for what role State can play in coordinating efforts. I recommend that U/S Otero's office take the lead for State in working with EPA and the interagency stakeholders to explore the issue and produce options for what we can do to advance clean cooking solutions. You might also want to follow up with Lisa Jackson to tell her that U/S Otero's office will be working with EPA to figure out what we can do.