



Impact Assessment Report



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Acknowledgements

The team responsible for compiling our impact assessment would like to extend their thanks to everyone who worked tirelessly over the past nine months to collect data.

This report is the result of the dedication of our interns and local and international fellows.

It's truly a collaborative effort with our team across India, Nepal, Australia and the United States.



Report tip

When one of the following brand icons appears alongside the Pollinate Group brand icon at the top of the page, it indicates the impact in one, or both, countries:

India:  **asha kiran**

Nepal:  **kalpavriksha**

Past impact assessment reports

[Pollinate Energy 2014](#)

[Empower Generation 2015](#)

[Pollinate Energy 2016](#)



Executive summary

Pollinate Group advances social businesses in India (Asha Kiran) and Nepal (Kalpavriksha) and together the group shares a vision of a world where women are equipped to lead their communities out of poverty.

In 2018 Pollinate Energy, a social business focused on serving neglected communities in India merged with Empower Generation, a social enterprise focusing on serving rural communities in Nepal with clean energy, while empowering women. Following the merger Pollinate Group became the new name for these combined, award-winning organisations.

The product impact assessments for this report were conducted across our Indian operations in urban poor communities.

Following the merger, in future assessments, Nepal customers will also be interviewed to determine impact across all of our operations.

We assess our impact across three key areas

- 1** Impact on marginalised communities in India and Nepal through the sale and distribution of products.
- 2** Impact on community change agents: people, often from underprivileged backgrounds, who we empower to sell products in marginalised communities, also known as Pollinators (employed agents) and Suryamukhis (entrepreneurs).
- 3** Impact on student and professional fellows who participate in our immersive Fellowship Programs.

In our operations, improved quality of life includes

- Opportunities for women to reach their full potential
- Reduced exposure to the health hazards of toxic fumes
- Safer homes due to increased brightness and reduced fire risk
- Reduced discomfort by mitigating excessive heat
- Reduced risk of disease from mosquitoes
- Access to safe drinking water
- Increased time for education, socialising and leisure

Impact of solar in marginalised communities

The 2016 to 2018 assessment shows we continue to deliver significant financial savings and improved quality of life for India's urban poor, and rural Nepal communities, through our distribution of solar lights.

Since the start of 2012 to the end of June 2018, 83,865 solar light products have been sold (29,217 in India and 54,648 in Nepal).



Diversified product mix and impact

We've made a significant effort to expand our product range beyond solar lights to include water filters, mosquito nets, cooking stoves, pressure cookers, solar fans, and a trial of mobile phones.

These diversified products also have significant impact on customers' quality of life. In fact, compared to our other India locations, the teams in Kanpur and Lucknow now experience greater uptake of the expanded product range compared to their solar products.

Since the start of 2012 to the end of June 2018, 10,639 non-light products such as cooking and kitchen products, mosquito nets and water filters have been sold (2,528 in India and 8,111 in Nepal).

We'll continue to actively test and promote a diversified product range in our target communities to promote their benefits and encourage adoption. Diversifying our product suite means we can continue to address the needs of the communities we serve. See page 16 for more information on our diversified product mix.



Impact on community change agents

This report addresses the impact on our community change agents who sell and service quality products to their peers in underserved communities.

We refer to our senior agents, who are men and women, as Pollinators and our in-community entrepreneurs, who are women, as Suryamukhis. In 2019 we will combine these two models across India and Nepal for more women from communities to join our team and progress through a motivating career pathway to become senior leaders or business owners.

In India, Pollinate Group employed a network of Pollinators to distribute products, whilst building their individual sales experience and knowledge. We found that overall, Pollinators felt safe, valued and supported working for Pollinate Group whilst they develop their valuable job skills. To date, we have employed 171 Pollinators. We formed a franchisee company, which helped reduce Pollinator turnover from 100% to 44% (see page 33).

In Nepal, we support a network of active women entrepreneurs (Suryamukhis) who, during July 1 2016 to June 30 2018 sold small portable solar lights, solar lights with mobile chargers, solar homes systems and water filters.

Our report finds the Suryamukhis have significantly increased earnings and access to credit, greater social standing and freedom, and greater confidence in themselves.

Refer to page 33 for further information on the impact on community change agents.



Impact on student and professional fellows

Participants in the Fellowship Program come from around the globe. They typically spend two to four weeks working in the field and learning about global social entrepreneurship through workshops and guest speakers.

The programs have a strong positive impact on both career prospects of participants and personal growth, with 100% of participants stating they would recommend the program to others. Since 2012 to the end of June 2018 we have hosted more than 692 participants in our programs.

As part of the programs we've made significant strides to expand our operations and outreach, with the goal to make social business mainstream. See page 37 for more details.



Looking ahead

We recognise impact assessments need to be part of our everyday approach to improve the lives of neglected communities in India and Nepal.

Together with qualitative stories and feedback from our customers, team and fellows, quantitative assessments will continue to inform our strategies and drive our ambitious goal to reach more than one million people by 2020.



About us

Pollinate Group empowers women as leaders of change to distribute products that improve health, save time and save money for the world's most neglected communities.

Our teams in India and Nepal identify, train and develop change agents in urban and rural communities to serve their peers. Community change agents earn respect and meaningful income, and become role models who raise awareness about better alternatives. Unlike other last-mile distributors, our change agents can earn up to seven times the informal wage.

To make products affordable we offer cash-based payment plans to our customers in transient and overlooked communities. The default rate is a meagre 2%. Our customer service focus, including after sales support, is also a key differentiator to help break the cycle of poverty in the communities we serve.

Our business model is our impact model

Enable

Access to life-improving products



Saved
\$US16.7m

Empower

Skills, confidence and rapid income growth



Earn 7x
informal wage

Equip

Social leaders to tackle global issues



100% commit to
change direction

Our multidimensional approach is designed to address the multidimensional, global challenges we seek to solve in India and Nepal's hardest to reach communities (see page 10 for details on these challenges).

Unlike more traditional charity models, we do not temporarily address issues in the communities by providing free services or products.

Our work in communities is complemented and progressed through immersive programs for students and professionals seeking to have immediate impact and gain advantages from working in a social business (see page 37 for more information).



How Pollinate Group is structured

Pollinate Group is a global organisation with distribution subsidiaries in India (Asha Kiran) and Nepal (Kalpavriksha). We provide the subsidiaries access to products to be sold, technology to process and track orders and credit for customer payment plans. Pollinate Group also operates the Fellowship Programs and raises philanthropic funds.

The subsidiaries recommend products to Pollinate Group, based on the communities in which they operate and with a focus on energy, health, safe water and sanitation. The subsidiaries are also the customer-facing brands, to increase relevance and accuracy in the context of local sales and marketing.

Knowledge, financial management, processes and systems are shared across the group to increase efficiency and opportunities for growth.



Our 2020 goals

As part of our merger in 2018 we set ambitious goals to empower more women, impact more people and reach more families.



Sustainable Development Goals

We directly progress these Sustainable Development Goals and we indirectly enable many more.





Addressing global challenges

Alleviating systemic poverty

Between India and Nepal 288.5 million people still live in poverty (World Bank), living on less than the International Poverty Line of US\$1.90 a day (United Nations, 2018).

In India waves of rural populations, in an estimated 25 to 30 people per minute, are migrating to urban centers in search of better economic opportunities.

These migrant populations form semi-permanent urban communities, where housing takes a form of haphazardly constructed tents, often in cramped conditions, without electricity, safe drinking water, or plumbing.

Many of the people work low wage jobs that are not monitored by the government (known as the informal economy). These jobs include construction or domestic labour and offer little ability to move up the socio-economic ladder.

In Nepal, many citizens have left the country for economic opportunities and 15% of the overall population experience poverty, according to the World Bank Poverty & Equity Data Portal for Nepal.

Many of the poorest people also live in less developed rural communities where the economy is largely agricultural and transportation is difficult or non-existent.



Promoting gender equity

In both India and Nepal, deep-rooted patriarchal social morals lead to gender inequality that exacerbates the impact of poverty on women.

In India, the percentage of women who work has declined from 35% in 2005 to 26% in 2018 (The Economist), a surprising figure given the general rise in economic development. In fact, educated women in India work even less than their illiterate counterparts—illiterate women usually live in agricultural communities where manual labor is required, while educated women are more often in urban centers and are expected to be mothers who tend to their home and children.

Societal norms are such that it's difficult for women to find work even for those who want to work. The diminished status of women also means that families give preference to boys over girls at a young age, further exacerbating gender inequality and even resulting in significant discrepancies in survival rates between girls and boys due to selective abortions and general neglect.

The 2011 census showed that in India, there are 37 million more men than women, with the problem persisting in younger generations. In Nepal, women commonly have less power when it comes to decision-making in the home, are less educated and less likely to own land.

Gender equity is giving everyone what they need to be successful. Equality is treating everyone fairly.

As the starting place for women in the communities we serve is much lower than their male counterparts, we must intentionally create opportunities to engage women and enable them to reach their potential. Equality is the end goal, right now we need to deliver on equity.

The 2016 Demographic and Health survey found 28% of women do not participate in decisions related to their own health care, major household purchases or visits to family and relatives. The survey also found only half of currently married women (52%) with cash earnings decide independently on how their earnings are used.

Across both countries there is striking inequality in financial resources and consequently power distribution between men and women. Studies have shown that working women are more likely to control household finances, and women who own economic resources are far less likely to be victims of domestic abuse.

It is also proven that women who are provided with an opportunity to work invest 90% of their earnings into their families' development.





Providing access to energy

Access to clean and sustainable energy is critical to alleviating poverty.

In rural Nepal, 30% of the country's households still lack access to electricity (World Bank) and nearly 80% still use biomass for household cooking ([Clean Cooking Alliance](#)).

In India, while efforts have been made to electrify all households, most rural village homes are still without power or have unreliable power access, and urban slums are often neglected from the grid due to their semi-permanent structures.

Without reliable access to electricity, productivity is significantly diminished—women take longer to cook and perform house chores, children cannot study at night, and sweltering heat prevents families from sleeping and creates discomfort for newborns and children.

Common traditional alternatives to electricity, such as biomass or kerosene, have significantly negative health side effects when used for prolonged periods of time including pneumonia, stroke and lung cancer ([World Health Organization, 2018](#)).

In India, ~700 million premature deaths occur each year due to household air pollution caused by traditional cooking energy sources ([International Energy Agency, 2017](#)).

The kerosene lamps burned by families we work with are extremely polluting, releasing high proportions of black carbon which has a warming effect 680 times that of CO₂.

The adoption of clean energy also reduces carbon emissions from these toxic fuels.



Key impact statistics

1 July 2016 to 30 June 2018

INDIA

92,306
people reached*

16,629
total products sold

702
communities served**

34
Pollinators active

117
Pollinators recruited

235
fellows hosted

100%
of fellows would
recommend a
fellowship to others



NEPAL

28,620
people reached*

11,456
total products sold

165
communities served**

77
Suryamukhis active

74
Suryamukhis recruited

*Fellowships will
start in Nepal
in 2019*

* How we calculate people reached

Through our in-person impact data collection we have now assessed the average reach of each individual product line. For example, a solar light impacts every family member with an average household size of 5.6, whereas a mosquito net is preferentially used for children and impacts an average of 3.7 people per net. We use these figures per product line to calculate total reach.

** How we calculate communities reached

In India, a community is a unique 'slum' which we geo-tag, survey, and collate data on sales penetration. In Nepal, a community is a 'unique village'. Currently the number of Nepal communities reached is estimated as three per entrepreneur, based on feedback from our entrepreneurs.



Customers in India

In India, our customers live in informal, low-income urban communities. They have migrated there from rural villages in search of better work and economic opportunity.

These people are still connected to their native villages and regularly return to visit family who have remained behind.

Sometimes an immediate family migrates together, sometimes children are left in the village under other relatives' care to stay at school. The family unit in every home is diverse and includes parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and distant relations.

While living in the city, community members typically work in manual labor jobs such as construction, rag picking, and other non-permanent daily labor jobs.

The average income per person per day is 68.74 Indian Rupees (~USD1) per day, and most have no access to savings or credit.

Customers may live in tent communities, also known as shanty or slum communities or concrete constructed homes, also known as pukka communities, or communities with a mix of these.

India customer snapshot

5.6

People per household

2.2

Litres of kerosene used per week

US\$0.95

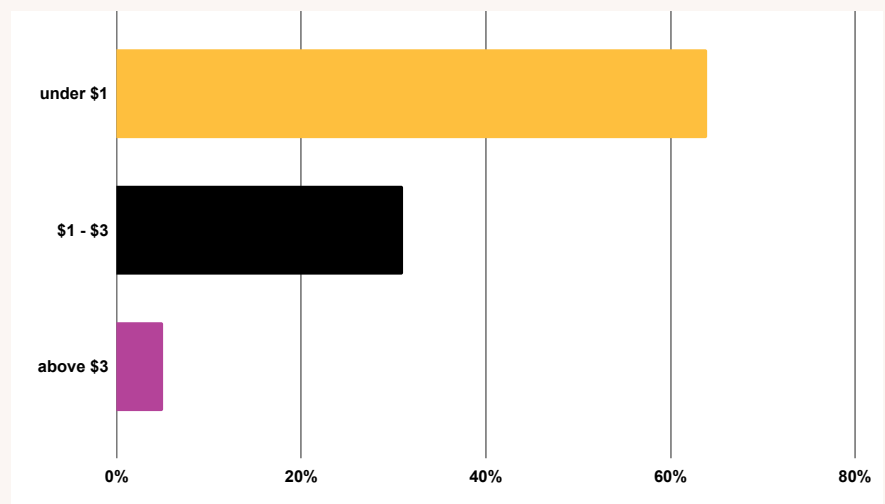
Average income per person per day

The International Poverty Line is 1.90USD per day. In India we serve the ultra poor



Distribution of typical customer income

(per person per day in India)



Customers in Nepal

In Nepal, our customers live in rural areas (we operate in Chitwan and Kailali districts) and are remote where there is little available transport. Families live in small compounds and are mostly working in daily wage agriculture jobs that are highly seasonal.

Due to their remoteness and lack of connection to supply networks they have little to no knowledge of new products and benefits. Our customers tend to live in homes constructed of stone or mud brick.

Migration from rural areas is changing the dynamic of families and economics in

rural areas of Nepal. In 2017 one quarter of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product came from remittances from citizens employed overseas (The Asia Foundation).

The average income per person per day is 230 Nepali Rupees (~USD2) and most people have no access to savings or credit services.

Following our merger, we will be expanding into more remote and underserved communities in Nepal as we continue to reach the poorest and most overlooked communities.



Nepal customer snapshot

5.0

People per household

0.5

Litres of kerosene used per week

US\$2.00

Average income per person per day



Expanded products + impact

Historically our product sales have primarily focused on solar lights. Over the past two years we've focused on expanding our product offering to include mosquito nets, cookstoves, water filters, mobile phones, pressure cookers and solar fans.

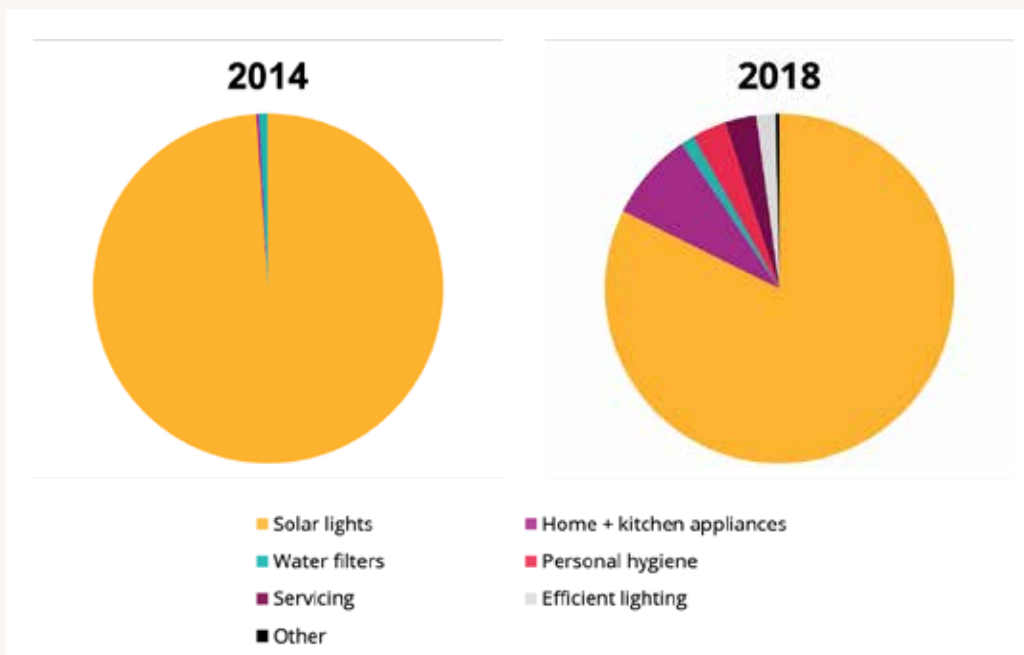
For example, in Nepal from 1 July 2016 to 30 June 2018 the team sold 5,095 personal hygiene products such as sanitary pads.

See page 20 to 30 for information including units sold, lessons and customer stories from a number of products in our expanded range.

Why did we expand our product range?

- Listening to our customers with community requests specifying needs, such as cookstoves.
- Improving our Pollinators' product baskets to increase sales opportunities, which increases morale and improves retention.
- Identifying needs and educating customers on issues such as safe drinking water and water filters.
- A response to changing electrification status in some markets, and the need to remain relevant for our customers in the event of mass electrification - we know the communities we serve need more than basic electricity access.
- Increased involvement from women, who lead a need to offer products for health and comfort, such as sanitary pads.

Percent contribution of product category to sales by total rupee value of sales in calendar year



After sales servicing – product lifecycle assessment

During this impact assessment period we undertook a lifecycle assessment in Bangalore. The assessment was designed to seek feedback on customer experiences with our after sales service and assess customer understanding regarding our product lifecycle process.

We surveyed families who had purchased solar lights from us three to five years ago (62 people interviewed).

Customers could access after sales service through their local Pollinator, contributing to the longevity of the products through replacement under warranty or repair.

As Pollinate enters its seventh year of operation, we are implementing new processes to ensure the batteries from our solar lights are recycled.

We are also working to understand how families who did not get a product serviced are using that product, for instance giving the light to another family or children.

Informally we've observed that the culture in slums is not to throw things away, and our products may have multiple lives even without a battery replacement.

Key takeaways from the product lifecycle assessment

- 69%** of customers would contact a Pollinator if their light stopped working
- 100%** of long-term customers would recommend the solar lights we sell to others
- 38%** of customers thought the product would only last one year, while 17% thought it would last three years or less. This lack of confidence is common in poor communities but is changing through continuous service and demonstrated quality
- 19%** of customers were unaware we provide after sales service for lights and 53% did not know we replace old light batteries. This can be included in sales pitches and as a reminder for existing customers

Since the start of 2012 to the end of June 2018, we have provided after sales servicing for 558 families across India





Solar lights

Customer's main benefit: save money

17,628	units sold
97,260	people impacted
100%	customers would recommend
17%	more study time for children each day
11,800	tons of CO2 saved

The communities we serve are typically not electrified. As a result, families turn to kerosene and candles for lighting.

Not only are these traditional forms of lighting expensive, they are less effective.

Solar lights are far brighter and can be used for longer periods without incurring incremental cost, substantially increasing the average family's quality of life.

Limiting kerosene lamp use reduces exposure to harmful fumes that lead to high risks of respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

Environmentally, solar lights reduce greenhouse gas emissions that negatively impact our environment.

See our [2016 Impact Assessment Report](#) for more details on the positive impacts of solar lights on our target communities.



Solar light customer story: no nights without light

Asshia lives in a community of rag pickers, located on the southern bank of Lucknow's Gomti River. Originally from Assam, she has lived there for over seven years in an informal household with her husband, sister, daughter and two sons.

Over the years Asshia has relied on toxic kerosene fuel as the family's only source of light.

Today, she uses a Sunking Pro2, which she considers very reliable. She is most satisfied by the added mobile charging feature found in a range of solar light products we offer. In addition, she stresses the Pro2 has been instrumental in enabling her children to study longer at night as well as preparing and eating food after dark.

Following Asshia's purchase, she faced one issue with the product not charging phones properly. As a result, the faulty product was promptly replaced and she has not faced any issues since. Asshia is delighted with her purchase and is interested in more products we have to offer.



Solar light lessons

Solar lights are susceptible to becoming dirty and/or damaged due to smoke from cooking in households. Many families counteract this by covering the light with a thin plastic sheet or bag. The ideal solution is to pitch a clean cookstove to our solar light customers, which would remove the cooking smoke and mean less cleaning for women.

Mobile phone chargers, which come as an added feature to some solar light products, are only used by around 30% of households but are often a key part of the sales pitch when opening sales in new communities. The challenge is that customers experience a rapid battery decline with mobile phone charging. We have communicated this to our suppliers, who have released a range of products that have split battery consumption, so mobile phone charging doesn't result in a loss of light.





Solar fans

Customer's main benefits:
cooler, better sleep, fewer mosquitoes

405 units sold

2,268 people impacted

100% customers would recommend



The cities we work in experience long, hot and humid summers, with temperatures soaring to over 45 degrees Celsius regularly. Most communities we serve have no access to any cooling device.

The solar fan presents an affordable and environmentally friendly cooling solution, providing much needed relief to thousands of people.

Solar fan lessons

Of the 98 solar fan customers interviewed, 61% reported no problems with their fan. Cloudy days mean the fan's charge may not always last the night and 14% shared the fan's battery life was too short.

A small number (5%) experienced charging issues and 9% reported their fan occasionally malfunctioned. These are lessons we report back to the manufacturer (GreenLight Planet).

Recently the manufacturer released a higher quality model and we have received training across all locations on fan battery servicing and product functioning, enabling our sales team to better communicate how to use the product to customers.

Solar fan customer story: real relief from the heat



Aimuddin has lived in his small community, located on a vacant plot in East Lucknow, for the last two years with his wife, their son and two daughters. Originally from Assam, where his family is in the process of paying off a plot of land, Aimuddin works daily collecting newspapers and scrap metal to sell so that one day, he and his family may be able to move back to their home.

Aimuddin first purchased a solar fan seven months ago. The fan has provided much needed relief from the incredibly hot, humid summers.

Consequently, his wife and children are able to stay and sleep inside the house. Aimuddin is especially pleased with how well the fan works at keeping mosquitoes away.

At the moment, Aimuddin and his family rely on kerosene lamps for light during the nights. However, he would like to purchase a solar light from us in the future to avoid the costs of purchasing kerosene.



Mosquito nets and repellent

Customer's main benefits:
better sleep with fewer
insect bites

532 nets sold

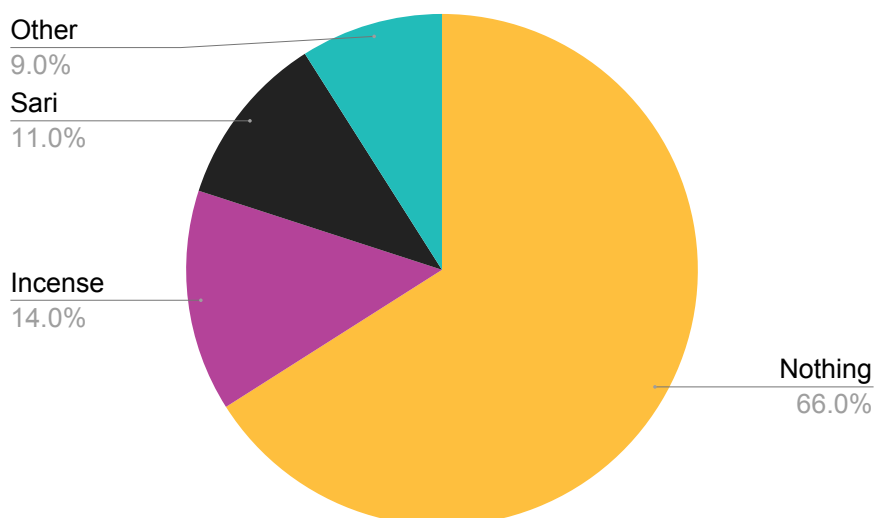
1,968 people protected
from mosquito-borne
diseases at night



Mosquitoes pose serious health threats, including malaria virus and dengue fever. The communities we serve are particularly at risk because a lack of piped water supply requires water storage in drums where the water becomes stagnant.

In 2015, more than 1.5 million cases of mosquito borne illnesses were reported in India. We recognised many of our customer households lacked access to protective mosquito nets and we have since added nets to our product offering. Customers overwhelmingly reported better sleep quality and fewer insect bites as a result of using the mosquito nets.

Types of mosquito protection in use, before using a net



Mosquito net customer story: hello money, goodbye mosquitoes

Originally from Raebareli, Mamta has lived in the Govandhanpurva community in Kanpur, India for the last 16 years.

Working as a housemaid she lives together with her husband (a construction labourer) in an electrified pukka house with her two sons and daughter.

A happy customer, she recently purchased a mosquito net and is highly satisfied with the durability, resistance to tearing and medicated coating.

Previously, Mamta regularly spent money on Mortein, mosquito repellent and other oils.

However, today she is confident that her children are ill less frequently thanks to the net.

Mamta also feels her own sleep has improved as she is much more comfortable at night.



Mosquito net lessons

Of the 77 mosquito net customers interviewed, 62% experienced no problems while 14% stated the net was ineffective. This was mostly due to customer use issues where the net did not reach the ground, or the net was too small for the home.

We also identified customers were washing the net as frequently as every week but it is only necessary to wash three to four times a year. A number of customers (9%) also experienced tears in the net while 6% reported it was too small or too expensive.

In response to this feedback we have identified an alternative supplier who provides a more robust net, and we have produced educational materials to explain how to use the net, both in terms of its placement in the home and washing requirements.



Cookstoves

Customer's main benefits:
save time and money,
faster cooking, reduces
smoke in the home

713

fuel-efficient stoves
sold, as well as 2 LPG
cookstoves

3,725

people protected from
inhaling toxic fumes in
the home



The *chulla* (also known as chulha) is a traditional cookstove used in many households in urban slum communities and rural village homes.

Chullas produce excess levels of black smoke containing hazardous chemicals including carbon monoxide.

Chronic exposure to the black smoke can lead to increased risk of diseases such as pneumonia, cancer, and other respiratory complications.



Cookstove customer story: faster food and fewer fuels

Atowar and Majida Rahmein are a family from Assam who've lived in Lucknow for two years. Atowar is a council worker while his wife works at home.

They like the cookstove because it cooks food faster and uses less wood to cook.



Cookstove lessons

Despite women being the primary users of the cookstove, men are also decision makers for the purchase. The sales pitch should recognise this dynamic in the home and address the opportunity for all members of the family to benefit from a new stove. Also, plastic is still commonly used as a fire starter in cookstoves, creating hazards for families. Many families who purchase cookstoves have either moved on to LPG stoves or continue to use traditional stoves for daily cooking, this is known as stove stacking.

These lessons informed our strategy to work with women entrepreneurs across our India communities; engaging women as advocates raises awareness and education on better products and correct use of those products. We have an opportunity to package cheap, non-toxic, fire starting materials as part of our stove sales channel. In 2018 we also released LPG stoves, which are within reach of some communities who can access a local LPG supply.



Water filters

Customer's main benefits:
better health + less
sickness, fewer particles in
the water, tastes better

195

water filters

973

people with access to
clean drinking water



The communities we serve generally lack access to clean drinking water, exposing the population to contaminants such as lead, arsenic, mercury as well as pathogenic bacteria and parasites.

In the absence of accessible treated water infrastructure communities obtain drinking water from unsafe sources, including local tap water, well water and river water.

Much of the population also lack awareness that drinking unfiltered water will cause long-term health issues.



Water filter customer story: clean water brings happiness

MD Abul Hussein has lived in Lucknow for more than ten years and has owned a JK Stainless water filter for two months.

He's a tailor for his community, specialising in gentlemen's clothing and he's now happy to have clean water every day.



Water filter lessons

Through initial market trials we found customers strongly preferred stainless steel water filters over plastic ones.

The stainless steel is more durable and easier to maintain, it is also a more aspirational aesthetic in Indian and Nepali households. Identifying the aspirational appeal of more difficult 'concept' sale products is an effective way to ensure faster uptake in communities.

Accordingly, we will focus our efforts on stainless steel water filters to achieve greater market adoption. We will also recommend our customers store their water (post-filtration) in a clay pitcher to keep the water cool.



Pressure cookers

Customer's main benefits: save time

98 pressure cookers sold

549 people impacted



Pressure cookers were added to our product suite to help women in slum communities save time on domestic work.

The pressure cookers we provide are safer than most available at the local markets.

The time women save (using a pressure cooker compared to a normal pot with heat) means more time to broaden their daily life. Of the customers surveyed, 100% of respondents cited this as a benefit with impact. Additionally, pressure cookers are energy efficient and save energy costs for cooking.

Aside from saving time, many pressure cooker users reported food stuck less to the bottom of the pressure cooker than other methods, potentially reducing food waste as well as time required to clean the product.

We can consider adding these benefits as part of our pressure cooker sales pitch.



Pressure cooker customer story: cooking up time and liberty

Safikun Nisha lives in the suburb of Mallpur in west Lucknow, but is originally from Mahmudabad Sitapur north of the city. She has purchased a mosquito net, Pro2 solar light and pressure cooker from Pollinate.

Her husband works as a labourer at a construction site, while her two eldest sons are training to be mechanics, working at a shop and helping their father on occasion. Safikun's other two sons and daughter are studying. Safikun herself used to work with her husband as a labourer, but is now unable to work as a result of injuries she obtained from heavy lifting.

She says her mosquito net from Pollinate is superior in quality to the ones she can buy in the market.

Safikun also really appreciates her pressure cooker, saying it helps her prepare food much more quickly. Combined with her solar light, which she uses for cooking later into the evenings, she doesn't burn her chicken dishes anymore!





Mobile phone trial

Customer's main benefits:
connection with friends
and family, find job
opportunities

725

mobile phones sold
before ending trial

The adoption of affordable phones has been a major breakthrough for developing countries around the world and India is no different. As part of introducing new products to improve our customer quality of life we trialled affordable and robust mobile phones, including button phones and smartphones.



Mobile phone lessons

We found significant issues with post-sale servicing of mobile phone products. Due to the wide range of mobile phone providers and rapidly evolving product categories, our team cannot obtain expertise in servicing the technical difficulties faced by customers. Additionally, we found the highest rate of defaults occurred on smartphone product lines, as customers aspired to buy an expensive product then did not complete repayments.

Due to the impact on customers, the inability to guarantee quality in a rapidly evolving product line and servicing challenges, we discontinued the sales of mobile phones in August 2018. We may choose to re-supply mobile phones if this situation changes.

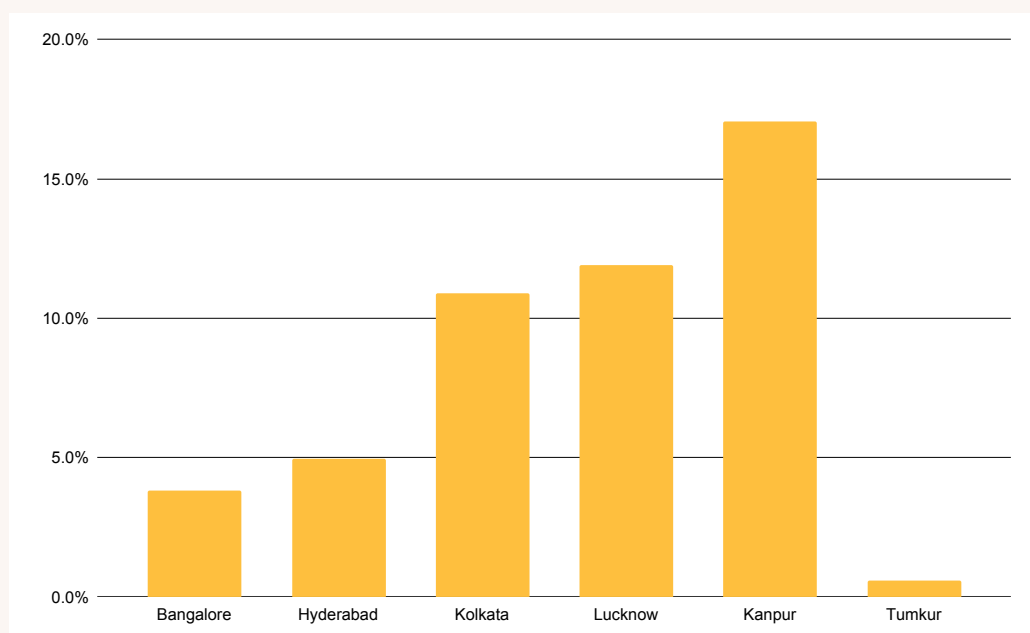
Urban and rural product distribution

As we accumulate experience serving neglected communities we constantly learn more about our customers.

A key trend we've identified through our survey data is that our customers not only buy products for their own use in urban communities, but many of them are taking products back to their native places—the rural villages from which many of our customers emigrated.

Based on sales data more than 5% of all products sold are purchased with the intent to be sent to native places.

In Lucknow and Kanpur more than 10% of product sales are being sent to native places. Additionally, 33% of customers took their solar light with them during visits to their native place. This is evidence of strong ties between urban communities and rural villages.



Percentage of products sold that are sent to native places

Through this connection with their native places, our customers are spreading awareness about the benefits of our products, helping reach families in remote areas that would otherwise be difficult to serve due to transport time and challenging access.

We are actively tailoring our products and after sale customer service to account for the fact some products may be sent to rural areas.

Following the merger with Empower Generation, an organisation focusing on rural areas in Nepal, we look forward to assessing and recognising trends for rural customers that could enhance our customer experience in both India and Nepal.



Urban and rural distribution customer story: a solar light's journey to impact rural India

Ram Sankar (30) is a native of a rural village in Madhya Pradesh. He currently lives in a community in Lucknow and works as a Mistrri (craftsman). He and his wife Susheela have three sons between the ages of three and 12. His wife and children continue to live in their native village and visit their father during school holidays.

Ram purchased and sent a solar light to his family so his children can use evenings to study. He also purchased a solar fan so his family can sleep better at night in the hot summer and a cook stove so they use less wood while cooking.

Ram's dream is to see his children study and prosper. He wants to make sure he can provide them with the best of everything. He is very satisfied with all his Pollinate products.



Our Pollinators

Pollinators are our employed community change agents. They are local people, often from underprivileged backgrounds, who we employ and train to sell products.

Our Pollinators serve as the backbone of our distribution network.

We provide Pollinators with a Business in a Bag, an enabling tool kit including a smartphone, transport allowance and sales management software.

Importantly, Pollinators are continuously supported by their teammate's strategic analysis and training, focused on effectively serving customers with products that are most in need.

For many Pollinators, being a part of our team means access to professional skills and economic empowerment. Less than 20% of our Pollinators have a high school degree and roughly half of our Pollinators come from rural backgrounds.

By working with us the main skills and capabilities Pollinators feel confident in are independence, technical skills, sales, communication and time management.

In 12 months we reduced attrition in our Pollinators from 100% to 44%. We achieved this by forming a franchisee company to employ our Pollinators.

Pollinators can now access stable base salaries and commission, loans for their children's education and whole of family medical insurance. This change means Pollinate Group is the only last-mile distributor that employs their sales team.

Forming the franchisee company was also a central lesson from working in metropolitan India, where people jump between jobs, presenting challenges for employee loyalty. This was a challenge the new change has already started to address. Importantly, the change provides opportunities for Suryamukhis to seek formal employment with us and for Pollinators to graduate to management roles in the business.



Since 2012

171 Pollinators recruited and trained

109 Pollinators trained and supported to make sales

At 30 June 2018

34 Active Pollinators



A job that creates better prospects for a whole family

Raj, 23, is one of our star Pollinators in Lucknow and is known for his infectious smile. He left school at age 12, when he began working full-time in sari and lehenga embroidery. Ten years later, much of the embroidery industry had outsourced labour to rural villages and Raj was looking for a job.

Raj learned about Pollinate when his mother met Chandrapal (now also a Pollinator) in their neighbourhood. Raj says that coming from a similar background to the people he serves made him feel comfortable working in communities straight away.

His favourite aspect about Pollinate is the instalment plans tailored towards disadvantaged communities. He also finds it rewarding to find young children studying in the communities at night due to a sale he has made.

In future, Raj plans to finish his schooling and progress in his career with Pollinate—but only if his team progresses alongside him.

Through his work over the past 16 months, Raj has improved his own life and the lives of his family.

He now rides a scooter rather than a bicycle, provides for his family and is helping put his younger sister through a Bachelor of Arts.



Our Suryamukhis

Following the merger we introduced the term Suryamukhis to describe our women entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurs are women who have been recruited and trained to start their own business, or expand their existing business, to distribute life-improving products in their communities.

Financial independence is a key step to women empowerment and this has been shown to be true in the case of our Suryamukhis.

In fact, 84% of women now say they have the freedom to leave the house of their own accord, for activities like visiting friends or shopping, compared to only 47% prior to joining our team.

100% of the women reported feeling confident or very confident after their experience as an Entrepreneur, compared to just 26% before joining the team.

The impact of women empowerment also goes beyond the household.

Of the women surveyed, 79% said they had taken on additional leadership roles in their communities. Nearly all women said they have gained more respect as a result of operating their own businesses.

Some women expanded their enterprises by opening additional shops and businesses.

Some have joined Kalpavriksha, taking a more active role in recruiting and developing other women.

Four of the women have even gone on to participate in local elections for public office—two of them won and now serve as public officials.

In the second half of 2018 and beyond we look forward to applying the model of using entrepreneurs in India's communities as well, to complement the existing Pollinators.

100% of Suryamukhi's individual incomes increased, with an average rise of 47%

100% of Suryamukhis now contribute to household income, compared to 21% prior to joining

63% of Suryamukhis reported increased access to credit





Starting a business to gain freedom and respect

Mina Kumari Chaudhary (35) lives in Shukhad, Kailali with her husband, daughter and in-laws. She has worked since she was a teenager and finished her Masters degree in Rural Development.

Mina always wanted to be financially independent, however things changed when she got married. She had to give all her time to her family and household activities. When Empower Generation and Kalpavriksha called for applications for Kailali people to join their Nepal network, Mina found her chance for financial independence.

After joining the Nepal network, Mina received financial support and business mentorship to start a clean energy business. She learned all the business related skills through the training programs and ongoing guidance from a Program Coordinator.



Mina gets emotional whenever she thinks how we helped her shape her and her family's future.

She says joining the team has been a boon to her and she has achieved her dream.

With financial support received Mina opened a shop in her own neighborhood, a dream come true. Mina found she could now run any kind of business on her own. She knew she could not focus only on selling solar lights and had to consider diversifying her business. She had saved some money to invest on new products.

Today Mina runs a store offering customers consumer goods as well as solar lights.

With her savings Mina was also able to support her husband in his pursuit to become a radiologist and open a practice in the local community.

Fellowship impact

We run Fellowship Programs that provide participants an opportunity to experience social entrepreneurship and international development first-hand. Fellows typically stay in one of our India locations for two to four weeks and work alongside our Pollinators.

We aim to host fellowships in Nepal in 2019, and will also host our fiftieth program in Bangalore in the first half of 2019.



235 fellows from 18 countries

81 fellows from India

100% recommend the program

90% report program had significant impact on their personal and/or professional lives

Most common impacts reported by participants

- professional experience
- improved teamwork skills
- increased awareness of social and environmental issues
- improved intercultural communication
- stronger understanding of poverty
- stronger understanding of how a social business works



Thoughts from four of our 2016 – 2018 fellows



“The fellowship has been a truly great and life-changing experience for me. It gave me an opportunity to connect directly with underprivileged communities and to understand their most pressing issues, as well as work with a highly motivated team to find strategic solutions that can make a positive impact. Also, it gave me a profound sense of appreciation for what I have in my life and further increased my desire to support such initiatives in the future.”

Venkatesh Vadakkapattu, 2017 Professional Fellow

“This experience has allowed me to realise the power that my knowledge as a town planner can have for the world. Not only have I changed my way of thinking about services (like electricity and water) but I have realised that no matter how big the problem, we all have the power to change situations.”

Laura Small, 2018 Student Fellow



“The fellowship has been everything I imagined it would be and a million more things as well and I have a diary full of memories that will last with me forever. Central to the program was being surrounded by a fantastic group of likeminded people from all around the world, with very different backgrounds, all with brilliant and interesting minds, drawn together with a passion and interest in the social field and need to make a difference.”

Susannah McClymont, 2018 Professional Fellow

“It is truly inspiring to be a part of an organisation that is serving a real and urgent need, and doing it in an innovative and effective way.”

Jacqui Storey, 2017 Public Fellow



Impact assessment methodology

Data collection happens primarily through baseline surveys and impact surveys. For statistics on typical community members, we use responses from community-level baseline surveys. Since 2012, more than 2,900 surveys have been completed in cities across India, in the cities we work in as well as scouted cities.

Baseline surveys are collected by fellows who travel across our cities visiting slum communities and asking questions regarding income and living conditions. For this report, data was collected through the following methods:

Baseline and impact surveys collected qualitative and quantitative information on customers and non-customers across a sample of communities where Pollinate works. Surveys were conducted in person by Pollinate Group student and professional fellows as well as interns.

Spot checks were conducted by Operations Managers and Pollinators to monitor the quality of service delivery and products.

Evaluative stories were collected by fellows and interns. Pollinator surveys were conducted by our Human Resources Manager and team. Fellowship program participant surveys were conducted online and received by our Programs team.



148

communities were surveyed

322

people
(250 men and 72 women)

The product impact assessments for this report were conducted across our Indian operations in urban poor communities.

Following the merger, in future assessments, Nepali customers will also be interviewed to determine impact across our operations.





Data collection continuous improvement

As part of our assessment we recognised strengths and limitations to keep improving our approach to impact reporting.

Strengths

- Visited a breadth of communities across five cities.
- Fellows and interns motivated to collect accurate, representative data.
- Using existing data meant communities were generally located easily, and fellows and interns were easily introduced to community members.
- Trained and prepared fellows and interns to ask questions and communicate in the customer's native language.

Limitations

- Fellows and interns wearing Pollinate uniforms potentially created bias in customer responses.
- Data input sometimes ineffective due to technology issues in the field and a lack of testing in our customer relationship management system used to collect responses.
- Baseline surveys not built into the design of non-light product surveys, leading to a lack of quantitative baseline data on non-light products.
- Translations presented difficulties.
- The methodology chosen (Most Significant Change) and design of questions could be closer aligned.
- Many customers had relocated to native villages and could not be interviewed, this was particularly a challenge the longer the time period between the sale and the impact survey. This however shed a new light on the rate of migration across our communities today
- Sample sizes small due to the transience of customers, or product lines which had less than 100 unit sales at the time of surveying.



Mitigation

- Fellows and interns interview customers while Pollinators are not present.
- Surveyors rely more heavily on open-ended response 'Other' to capture information.
- Continue to re-evaluate our monitoring and evaluation process, especially in light of a diversified product range and new geography following the merger.
- Update existing community-wide baseline surveys with questions regarding non-light products to improve comparison to future impact surveys.
- Test monitoring and evaluation survey questions in communities prior to initial survey question design, leading to more valid data.
- Stipulate higher rates of women product survey respondents, to address the fact men and women respond differently to the various product types.





pollinate group

Registered as Pollinate Energy Ltd
ABN 96161067492
Unit 1, 396 Clarendon Street
South Melbourne
Victoria, 3205
Australia

www.pollinateenergy.org
info@pollinateenergy.org

Designed in collaboration with Darcy & Mouse Studio

