

The call

The 'Lighting a million lives' campaign, a TERI initiative, invites like-minded corporations and bilateral and multilateral funding organizations to bring light into the lives of a million rural people. TERI, with its commitment towards global sustainable development and creation of innovative solutions for a better tomorrow, plans to take solar lighting devices to rural households that have, until now, depended on traditional resources, like biomass, kerosene, or paraffin.

The biggest sense of achievement for a socially responsible organization is the knowledge of having economically empowered rural households, which have no means of getting light after sunset. In addition, patrons of 'Lighting a million lives' will receive acknowledgement for championing the campaign at key TERI fora.

The cause

While speaking at the CII National Conference and Annual Session 2007, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh said, "Corporate social responsibility must not be defined by tax planning strategies alone. Rather, it should be defined within the framework of a corporate philosophy, which factors the needs of the community and the regions in which a corporate entity functions."

Lighting a million lives

Bringing light to rural India



Business endeavour, hence, must couple with government effort if a nation's goals towards equitable growth and sustained development are to be achieved. In India, there are more than 138 million rural households. Of these, over 56 per cent have no access to electricity. It is widely acknowledged that even small amounts of electricity can improve the standard of living and the rate of socio-economic development. 'Lighting a million lives' seeks to brighten lives in rural India in two ways:

1. It will provide solar lanterns to unelectrified and poorly electrified rural households.
2. It will facilitate local livelihood by creating local entrepreneur-driven delivery channels to ensure repair, maintenance, and other after-sales services.

The course

The 'Lighting a million lives' campaign works through the sale of solar torches, a green product, to sponsors who could use them as corporate gifts. The funds generated from the sale of 50 solar torches can light 50 rural households with solar lanterns.

In order to sustain the campaign and assure the interest of the user of the solar lantern, each household that benefits will contribute up to Rs 1000 to a fund that will be utilized for increasing livelihoods and income-generating activities. This fund will be managed by TERI.

In the first phase, TERI has identified villages in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and West Bengal where there is a dire need for lighting and where TERI has a strong network of local partners. With the valuable support of its patrons, TERI hopes to attain the objectives of this campaign in the next two years.

TERI will also put an effective monitoring process in place. To guarantee transparency, a committee comprising experts and representatives from corporations/sponsors will supervise the progress of the campaign.

