

BAREFOOT COLLEGE'S INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS ON SOLAR ELECTRIFICATION

One of the most impacting programs of the [Barefoot College](#) is working with rural people on electrification through solar power. The program involves students from the villages, primarily women, and teaches them to skills such as install build and repair solar lamps and water pumps. For the solar electrification of villages, Barefoot College also annually trains about 100 grandmothers from India and 80 grandmothers from rural villages of other countries.

Barefoot College has been providing basic services and solutions to problems in rural communities for more than 40 years, with the objective of making them self-sufficient and sustainable. In particular the College adopted innovative solutions for [Solar electrification](#) and [Access to fresh water](#).

Local communities in the Himalayas often lack the funds needed to buy kerosene for lighting and heating and the College encourages the communities to take responsibility for their energy needs. The participating villages create a *Village Energy and Environment Committee* which is responsible for deciding how much each family must pay for the system and for administering the system once it is up. The Committee also identifies which of the residents of the town will go to the college for training. The students receive 6 month training program learning about solar panels and storage batteries before returning home where they maintain and repair the systems. By 2009, 472 had qualified.

The College describes the approach as de-mystifying high technology to rural villages to show that with the right training, everybody can operate and manage items like solar panels and water pumps. Success can be measured by numbers: 20,000 solar lighting systems and 65 heating systems in 753 villages by 2009, not only in India but in other parts of Asia and Africa. However, success can be measured as much by improved lives

The Barefoot College, founded by Bunker Roy in 1972, is a non-governmental organization based in Tilonia in Rajasthan's province of India. In 2012, the Barefoot College became the first NGO partner with UNESCO's Global Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education. A UNDP funded program of India's Ministry of External Affairs brings women from villages in rural Africa to the school for training, after which they return with new skills to install solar electricity in their villages. In 2012 the College were expanding hits programs for students from Fiji.

The documentary film [Solar Mamas](#), funded by the Skoll Foundation and the Sundance Institute, follows a Jordanian woman as she joins with other women from around the world to participate in the solar engineering training at Barefoot College. An



exhibition of photographs taken by the students of the Barefoot College was presented at the [School of Oriental and African Studies in London](#).

The College has adopted the Gandhian ideas that knowledge, skills and wisdom found in villages should be used for its development before getting skills from outside. The Barefoot College has demystified technologies and decentralized their uses by transferring the access, control, management and ownership of sophisticated technologies to rural men and women, who can barely read and write.

The College has also applied rural traditional knowledge and skills to build homes for the homeless, collect rain water in rural schools and community where potable water sources are scarce, as well as to spread socio-economic messages at the grass root level. Only technologies that can be understood and controlled by rural community have been introduced to improve the quality of life.

Many initiatives are ongoing to transfer the Barefoot College innovative methodologies in other interested countries. Information about contacts is available in the [Barefoot College web site](#).

To know more

[Article in UNESCO website](#)

[Bunker Roy article in UNESCO website](#)

[Barefoot College in Africa](#)

[Barefoot College in Haiti](#)

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