



# SMART VILLAGES

New thinking for off-grid communities worldwide

## PRESS RELEASE

April 2016

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### Smart Villages Announces Naturetech Infra as the winner of the 2016 Off-grid Energy Impact Competition for India

On the stage of the Lighting a Billion Lives Convention in Delhi India, Smart Villages has announced Naturetech Infra as the winner of the **Smart Villages Off-grid Energy Impact Competition for India**. Applications from off-grid energy entrepreneurs across the nation were assessed on impact, level of project development, sustainability, innovation and replicability. **Naturetech** was found to be outstanding in both what it has already achieved in rural energy access and in the potential scalability of its approach.

Naturetech Infra ([www.naturetechinfra.com](http://www.naturetechinfra.com)) is a social enterprise that provides sustainable, holistic and integrated Solar Energy Solutions to rural Indian households. In India, there are at least 300 million people living without electricity access (<http://data.worldbank.org/country/india>) and tens of thousands of villages that cannot be economically reached by electricity grid extension. Naturetech has developed proprietary smart solar grid technology to benefit rural villages, where smart meters enable remote monitoring and consistent, hassle-free payment for energy used. A Village Energy Committee ensures revenue generated by electricity sales are used for micro-grid operation and maintenance.

Naturetech micro-grids power street lights, households, schools, water pumps, and productive enterprises in villages that would otherwise be left in the dark. As a part of its Integrated Rural Development Model, Naturetech also builds sanitation complexes and helps improve the education infrastructure in rural schools by installing Digital IT Laboratories and Smart Classrooms. Naturetech has already worked with seven "integrated development model" villages and has electrified 3,500 households, and over 10,000 people are benefitting from its services in rural areas. Naturetech looks forward to continued growth and plans to use the INR 10 lakh Smart Villages award to improve its smart meter technology and help create a model Smart Village.

Smart Villages would also like to recognise **Gram Oorja** (<http://gramoorja.in>) and **LYTYFY** ([www.lytyfy.org](http://www.lytyfy.org)) as runners up in the Off-grid Energy Impact Competition for India. Gram Oorja has been bringing sustainable energy to India's rural populations since 2008. They have designed and installed ten micro-grids across Maharashtra and Karnataka, in addition to solar pv systems, solar pumping systems and biogas based cooking grids as they continue to expand their reach across the country. With a strong network of partners across the globe, Gram Oorja is well positioned to keep growing and to inspire others to work towards universal rural energy access for India.

LYTYFY promotes clean energy access in India through an online platform that connects social investors with profitable rural clean energy projects. LYTYFY currently targets off-grid areas in Bihar that lack access to modern power and can only afford solar products and solar home systems if financing is available. LYTYFY's system allows rural customers to access high quality, door-step service comprising of good quality solar products coupled with end user financing, and delivers both financial and social returns for social investors. LYTYFY have recently completed their first pilot of 50 systems with an average size of 20W.



*Kristin Polman and John Holmes awarding the Smart Villages Off-grid Energy Impact award to Shyam Patra and Rachita Patra of Naturetech Infra at the Lighting a Billion Lives convention*

According Kristin Polman, Director for International Competitions at Smart Villages, innovative approaches being pioneered in India are an inspiration to off-grid energy entrepreneurs around the world. “Through our workshops in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the Smart Villages Initiative regularly encounters the barriers to energy access and the entrepreneurs who are finding ways to overcome them. We are frequently impressed by the innovation and ingenuity of off-grid energy entrepreneurs, and the entrepreneurs who entered this competition for India have surpassed our expectations. Choosing a winner was not easy, and Smart Villages hopes to support Naturetech Infra, along with the runners up and other applicants as they continue to work towards bringing power to India’s rural poor.”

Shyam Patra, Director and Founder of Naturetech Infra commented: “We have been working towards this vision for the past five years and it has never been easy. The new Companies Act, making CSR contributions mandatory for Indian companies, has been a defining moment for Naturetech. Before that we struggled to find the investment for the initial build of microgrids, but after the passing of this act, we can now contact corporates directly and they are loving the opportunity to contribute. They are excited to support our work towards building smart villages where we can see energy access leading directly to development. Our vision and energy are now backed by enabling policy and driven by corporate funding, and without it we couldn’t achieve our dream for smart villages. We have a long way to go, but now the road is becoming more clear.”

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To access the Smart Villages image library please follow this link <http://bit.ly/1GxCuKE>

## Notes for Editors

### Smart Villages

The Smart Villages Initiative is a three year project evaluating ways of providing off-grid energy as a catalyst for development for rural villages and encouraging the transfer of knowledge and experience between different developing regions. Through a series of international workshops and follow-up activities in Africa, Asia and Latin America, our aim is to provide policy makers, donors, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders with new insights into the challenges of supplying village-level energy and how they might be overcome.

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Funding is being provided by CMEDT and the Templeton World Charity Foundation.