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Offset your flights to IAS 2011 and Support Development Projects in India and South Africa

Posted 15 June 2011, 12:41 P, by Conference Secretariat

In 2008, the International AIDS Society (IAS) introduced a carbon offset donation scheme by offering conference delegates the opportunity to offset the carbon emission of their flights to the conference by ticking a box on the conference registration form.

The initiative was very successful and, thanks to the generous donations of conference delegates and the CSR (corporate social responsibility) working group at the conference secretariat, the IAS has continued this effort and supported many different projects with social, environmental and economical benefits.

The Action Carbone[®] programme of the Good Planet Foundation, a non-profit organization offering companies, institutions and individuals the opportunity to act against climate change by calculating, reducing and offset their greenhouse gas emissions, is one of the beneficiaries of the scheme.

Matthieu Tiberghien, Action Carbone Programme Officer is very appreciative of the carbon offset donations: *"Action Carbone was honored to be chosen by the International AIDS Society back in 2008, when their donations helped us support a household waste recycling project in Madagascar and a compost project in India. Since then, the IAS has donated money to our projects every year, and we are very proud of this ongoing collaboration. The financial support from the carbon offset scheme allows Action Carbone to finance projects in developing countries that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve many beneficiaries' way of life. It is all the more significant for us to work with the IAS, considering that in the global fight against AIDS and HIV, a high percentage of those affected by the epidemic are from developing countries, and are the very same people adversely affected by climate change and who can benefit so much when organizations choose to adopt environmentally friendly practices."*

The Action Carbone projects cover various carbon offset activities, and this year the IAS has decided to support one of its projects in India, related to the construction of biogas digesters and vermicompost units. The use of the biogas for cooking and the compost produced in the digesters help protect forests by reducing the local dependence on firewood, contributing to the fight against climate change. The **environmental benefits** of this initiative include: reduction of pollution related to the poor management of organic waste and the use of chemical fertilizers; the protection of Indian forests; and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (between five and seven tons of CO₂ per reactor per year) by replacing fuel-wood and fossil fuels with the biogas produced and by substituting pesticides and chemical fertilizers with the compost.



A beneficiary of the biogas programme



Construction of a biogas reservoir

The project also provides the following socio-economic benefits: money savings due to less kerosene and chemical fertilizers usage; creation of jobs in the biodigesters' construction; and the improvement of the conditions for women and children in rural India, by substituting wood collection with biogas usage.

The IAS 2011 Carbon Offset programme will also continue to support Township Patterns in Cape Town, South Africa, as it has done the previous years. This social enterprise empowers women by providing them with a place to work and by supporting local entrepreneurial initiatives. You can read more about their story here[®]. Christophe Labesse, the organization's General Manager, says, *"A big thank you to the IAS for the support they have provided to our organization. Their donation has had a huge positive impact on the development of the Saambou co-operative. This independent sewing co-op is fully owned by a group of eight women from previously disadvantaged backgrounds. Thanks to the IAS, they have received further specialized training. The group has shown huge potential in moving on to sewing for the fashion industry. Additional funds will towards offering other co-operatives the same professional training as seamstresses."*



Township Patterns, Cape Town, South Africa

Read the carbon offset reports from AIDS 2010[®], IAS 2009[®], and AIDS 2008[®] for detailed information of the project at each conference.

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This is the official blog of the 6th IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis, Treatment and Prevention (IAS 2011), 17 - 20 July 2011 in Rome, Italy with posts from conference organizers and guest bloggers.

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