



FIRST PERSON

Electricity Powers Literacy for Women

Electricity eases chores — and gave one woman enough free time to learn to read



Photo: USAID/Virginia Foley

Santosh is a resident of Mubarakpur, a village outside of New Delhi.

“I am studying for my future so I can do something good for my family.”

Santosh lives with her two sons and two daughters in Mubarakpur, India, a village of about 100 families outside of New Delhi. Like many Indian women, Santosh manages the household chores in addition to working in the fields.

Her life changed in 2003, when Noida Power Company Limited, with support from USAID, began providing a constant supply of electricity — which made many time-consuming household tasks easier and gave Santosh free time that she’d never before had.

Santosh began studying with other Mubarakpur women at the nearby school. Their teacher, Swarupa Chatterjee, focuses on helping her students learn to read and write. Now Santosh and the other women can read bus numbers and destinations, allowing them to travel without their husbands and children. “I’m studying for my future so I can do something good for my family,” she says.

“Electricity also fans away mosquitoes,” she laughed. “And we have television to expand our minds.”