The Osprey Foundation supports market-based approaches that advance the wide-scale use of cleaner cookstoves in poor communities, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Osprey’s cleaner cooking program focuses on two main approaches: 1) Backing research to deepen understanding of customers’ desires and needs in order to drive stronger uptake of cleaner cookstoves; and 2) Funding user-focused enterprises that make products and services more affordable, convenient, beneficial, and attractive to low-income customers.

GLOBALLY, three billion people rely on solid fuels—such as wood, charcoal, crop and animal waste, and coal—for cooking. This practice contributes to deforestation, air pollution, and climate change, and it causes serious health harm to the families who are cooking. According to the World Health Organization, household air pollution kills more than four million people every year and sickens millions more, with women and children disproportionately affected.

Yet, safer, more affordable, and more efficient cooking solutions exist: cleaner cookstoves designed to efficiently use biomass or liquefied petroleum gas. Sales of cleaner cookstoves have grown significantly since 2010, but in absolute terms, market penetration is still very low. There is also evidence that many households do not use their cleaner stoves consistently, and the more popular stoves often are not the most efficient or cleanest devices, factors...
that limit the benefits to households and their communities. Most fundamentally, available products and services are often not sufficiently attractive, affordable, or convenient to generate wide-scale customer demand and loyalty for cleaner cookstoves. This reality is among the factors inhibiting large amounts of commercial capital from flowing into the sector.

The Osprey Foundation serves as a flexible supporter of high-risk but potentially high-reward approaches to advance cleaner cookstoves. The foundation values innovative, market-based solutions across a range of segments, as it believes the market is the only way to deliver sustainable cookstoves solutions at a large scale. To succeed, these solutions must be responsive to household and community needs and appropriate to local cultures. The foundation focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, where the vast majority of the population still uses traditional cooking methods.

Osprey’s Approach

Supporting research to deepen understanding of customers’ desires and needs: A better understanding of customers’ behaviors and preferences is central to increasing the adoption and continued use of cleaner cookstoves. To this end, Osprey supports applied research on decision making by current and potential users to gain an increased understanding of what customers think and feel about cleaner cookstoves and what is holding them back from broader adoption. The research that Osprey supports is intended to yield findings that can be widely applicable across multiple ventures and approaches.

Funding user-focused enterprises: Osprey supports innovative ventures developing cleaner cookstoves products and services that users enjoy and consistently use, that benefit health and the environment, and that are affordable to lower-income customers. Osprey supports business model innovations across a range of market segments, from startups to international market leaders, and a range of approaches, from fuel-based models to improved consumer financing. It prioritizes opportunities that show the greatest potential for scale and impact, while realizing that tradeoffs may be needed between objectives, such as rapid innovation and longer-term scalability.

In implementing the above strategic approaches, Osprey prefers to invest in pooled-funding vehicles that aggregate grants and/or capital from multiple sources to fund a portfolio of cleaner cooking opportunities. Given Osprey’s relatively small size, pooled funds represent an efficient way to maximize and leverage its impact. For activities directly supported by Osprey, it will actively seek out co-funders.

Measuring Impact

Osprey recognizes that its strategy will primarily have a longer-term impact and that it will be difficult to directly attribute improvements in the field to the foundation’s activities. Still, Osprey values impact measurement and will monitor progress in several areas:

- Deepened understanding of users’ behaviors and preferences
- Advancement of more sustainable business models, such as fuel-based approaches
- Increased availability of consumer financing options, such as pay-as-you-go
- Improvements in stove design that reduce costs and boost fuel efficiency, ease of use, and local adaptability
- Enhanced knowledge that can benefit multiple ventures across the sector

Tracking the above indicators and the sector at large enables Osprey to learn from its partners, periodically adjust its strategies and activities, and ultimately advance its impact over time.

THE OSPREY FOUNDATION DOES NOT ACCEPT UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS.