

IN THE MOUNTAINS of northern Vietnam, I saw how our instructors and students worked side-by-side with villagers to develop trails, safe waste and water handling, sleeping rooms, and food risk-free for Western tourists in this spectacular trekking country covered with emerald green rice paddies. When the five-year project was complete there were some far reaching results that surprised us all.

Villagers cooked on an open fire in the middle of their wooden houses filling the house with thick smoke, spawning disease and injury. On the Internet, Greg, our intrepid instructor, found a “low smoke” stove that still produced enough heat for Vietnamese cooking. A local craftsman copied one for every family and the smoke problem disappeared!

Meanwhile, instructor Rick used some old do-it-yourself skills and with odds and ends of materials, rewired the village, untangling the dangerous knot of electrical wires jammed up in the corner of each doorway; maybe not to Canadian standards but fire-safe.

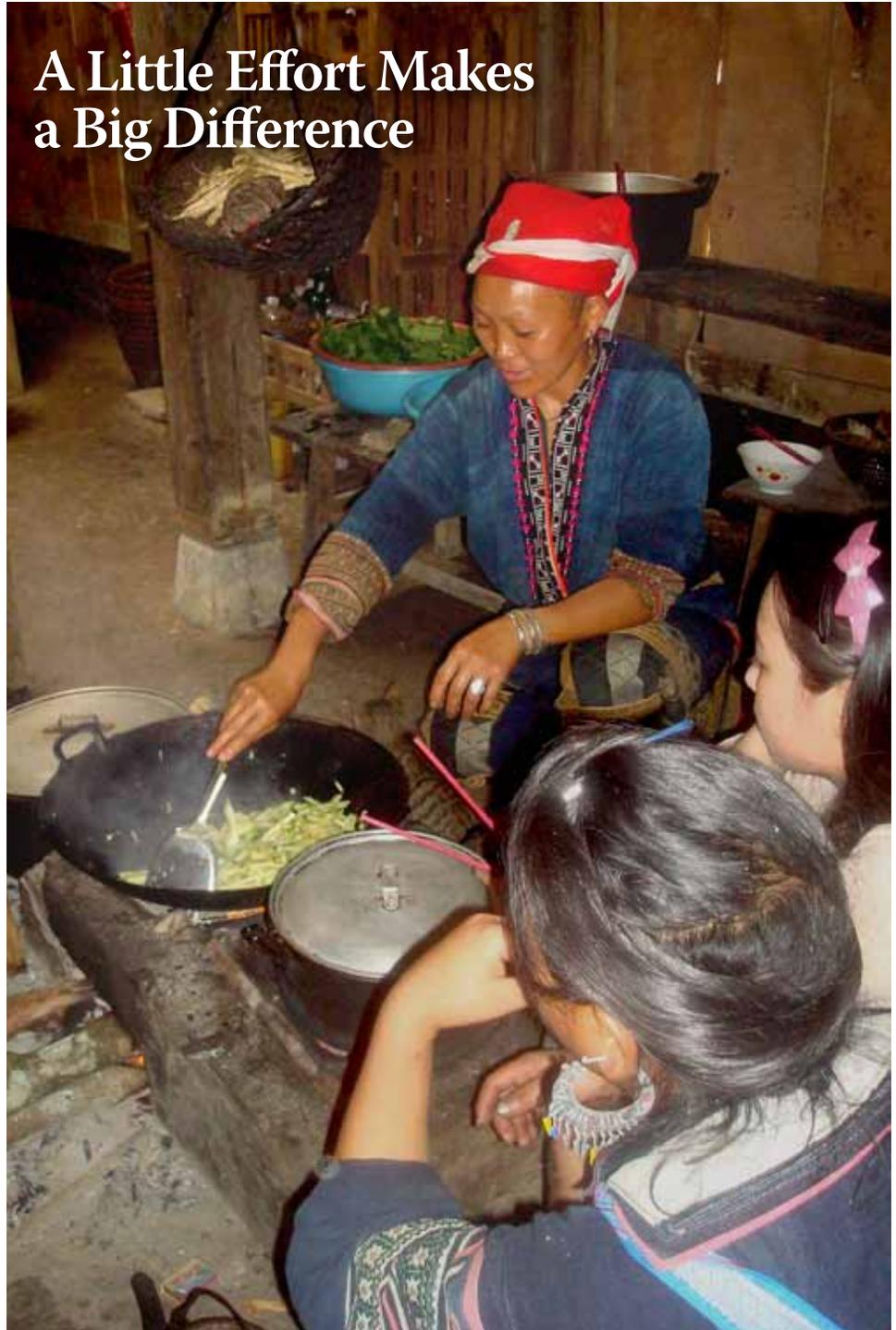
So, as well as making more money, villagers will now escape countless smoke-induced illnesses and those all too common disastrous house fires.

Although often when we speak of “technology transfer,” we imagine sophisticated equipment, Greg and Rick’s actions remind me of how little it takes to make a world of difference.

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A Little Effort Makes a Big Difference



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