

SARI/E PROGRAM OVERVIEW –HIGHLIGHTS ON WOMEN IN ENERGY

*Delivered by Mr. S. Padmanaban
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At the Inaugural Ceremony of the
Women in Energy: Second Application Workshop on Efficient Energy
Management and Renewable Energy
Hotel Sheraton, Dhaka, Bangladesh
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Dr. M. Tamim, Sp; Assistant; Dr. M. Fouzal Kabir Khan, Secretary,
Ministry of Power, Energy & Minerals; Ms. Shireen Kamad Sayeed, Asst.
Country Director, UNDP, Ms. Denise Rollins, Mission Director, USAID;
Ambassador Muhammad Zamir, Chairman, Bangladesh Renewable Energy
Assn, and my colleague, Sher Khan, SARI/E Country Coordinator for
B'desh , friends, ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to take this opportunity to join Ambassador Muhammad Zamir
and welcome all of you to Dhaka and to the second application workshop
that we in SARI/Energy are happy and proud to sponsor in association with
the BREA. It is indeed most appropriate that we begin this workshop by
honoring the memory of the late Mr. Quamrul Islam Siddique, a visionary
and a friend whose contribution to the cause of energy cooperation in the SA

region was most commendable. He was an ardent supporter of the SAWIE initiative and quick to offer his government's support for this workshop. We shall indeed miss his sage counsel and advise.

It was barely six months back, in Trivandrum, Kerala when we at SARI took our first tentative steps and organized the first SAWIE workshop on Efficient EM & RE. Until then SARI/E had not expressly focused on this issue although there was a growing recognition that there is a strong relationship between energy access to populations and empowerment of woman. The Kerala workshop was based on the awareness that empowering women in the efficient use of energy leads to improvement of quality of life, empowerment of the family and eventually leading to a sustainable socio economic order.

A key outcome of that workshop was the Kerala Declaration. The declaration made a fervent plea for SAWIE to address three key thrust areas:

a. Create networks , b. Advocate best policies and c., advance energy conservation measures.

Indeed following the Kerala Declaration, SAWIE has facilitated the formation of four working groups whose network is growing by the month. We shall have the opportunity to discuss the program plan and outputs of each of these groups over the next few days.

I would like to step back and take a broad look at the vision we at SARI/E have in advancing SAWIE. Before I do so, a few words on SARI/Energy. The South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy or the SARI/Energy program as it is usually referred to, encourages and facilitates cooperation among the 8 countries in South Asia to trade in energy resources, develop indigenous and regional energy markets and share ideas on the efficient use of energy as well as popularize the use of renewable energy among the population of South Asia. The SARI/Energy program recognizes the strong nexus between poverty alleviation and energy access to the poor. The greater is the access the bigger is our impact in reducing poverty. Woman who constitute half the population of South Asia need to be aware of the central role that they could play in advancing energy access and energy efficiency. We at USAID have long recognized the linkage between gender issues and greater economic development. And interrelated to economic development is energy security which in turn defines the availability, affordability and accessibility of

energy. The three A's as it is often referred to. Household energy use is not a triviality - it accounts for over 25-35% of total energy use in our countries.

The role of woman in promoting availability through rational decision making, ensuring affordability by managing the household budget and advancing energy access through technology choices and efficiency is a theme that has not been discussed or understood sufficiently in this region.

This is the second time that the SARI/E program has ventured to bring together experts from the region to discuss among themselves the myriad of issues that surround and impact the theme of women in energy.

Earlier this month we at SARI/E participated in UN-ESCAP sponsored High Level Regional Policy Meeting on Networking towards Gender and Poverty Sensitive Policies, November 3-4, 2008 at Bangkok, Thailand. Culminating the program was a formal signing of the Memorandum between ENERGIA, and SARI/Energy intended to provide the Parties with a general framework and a guiding tool in identifying and carrying out specific collaborative projects and activities. ENERGIA brings an established regional network of women professionals and, complimented by the resources of SARI/Energy, will significantly enhance the ability of each organization to reach out to Women in the region.

We would be discussing over the next three days, themes such as gender issues and awareness in the context of the SA energy sector, making a difference in the lives of women through the scale up of RE and EE applications and programs, women, environment and health issues, rural energy case studies, women and energy enterprises, micro-finance, and income generation. These and other related issues would be discussed while reporting upon the progress of the four working groups established following the Kerala event in April this year. I would also like to announce the establishment of a SARI/Energy small grants program to support studies, analysis and surveys, pilot commercial demonstration projects in member countries on any of the thematic women in energy areas. We hope the SARI/E small grants programs, whose details will be discussed during the workshop, will help leverage programs of host governments, public and private corporates, NGOs and others and foster sustained partnerships and advance the SAWIE network.

Constraints in SA are several and one of them is the inability of programs such as SAWIE to reach out to women. It is here that we need to be innovative and think of ways that involve social intermediation to build capacities among women on sustainable ee and re programs. This would

have to be taken as a priority activity with training/education, financing , pilot demonstration and commercialization as key components. The key appears to be decentralized planning and implementation of successful models as a right step in empowering women in energy. A good example is the work by Grameen Shakti in B'desh on the financing, development and demonstration of RE and EE appliances for women that can be replicated in several countries.

This is an application oriented workshop – not just a talk shop - which means that the participants will have the opportunity to see and experience practical projects that demonstrate the themes that are discussed in the classroom. For this we are fortunate to be collaborating with the Bangladesh Renewable Energy Association which has several years of experience in woman energy programs in the country. The BREA has long recognized woman as their principal target audience since they are the managers of energy, water and sanitation. In SA , domestic energy conservation makes sense since 85% of households use firewood for cooking and domestic electric use is growing in urban areas. I understand that BREA and its members have facilitated renewable energy use and energy efficiency in homes through several woman oriented programs in Bangladesh. Over the next few days we will all learn more about these programs as well as learn

what the rest of South Asian woman and governments are doing in their respective countries. This coming together and sharing of experience could further strengthen and expand the SAWIE network of “women in energy” practitioners in South Asia. This is our hope and goal.

This important workshop has become a reality through the efforts of many persons working together, in different parts of South Asia.

As you can imagine, an event of this magnitude cannot happen without the support and endorsement of key dignitaries and officials of the govt. of Bangladesh. Their presence individually and collectively is testimony to the level of importance accorded to this event.

I must express my gratitude to the governments of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal , Pakistan, and Sri Lanka for agreeing to participate by nominating key officials from their respective countries. I wish to thank the participants for being here today. Some of you traveled long distances to get here. I am sure that once you arrived, you realized it was worth the effort. Still, a workshop without participants is no workshop at all and so, I thank you for attending and making this workshop an historical one.

I wish to thank the faculty and speakers at this workshop, some of whom are here today with us. I would particularly would like to acknowledge the intellectual support and leadership provided by Ms. Reba Paul, an enthusiastic SAWIE promoter from BREA who has been the moving spirit behind this workshop.

In closing, I must recognize a team of people who worked really long and hard at this end in order that everything might come together. Distinguished guests and friends, I wish to salute the officials of PA Consulting Group who are the Institutional Contractors of USAID's SARI/Energy program, who worked assiduously for several weeks, and were the glue, so to speak, of this operation. Mr. Michael Ellis, Ms. Vinita Kathuria and Ms. Bhakti Narang and my colleagues from the SARI/Energy program, Mr. Sher Khan, SARI/E Country Coordinator in B'desh and Ms. Mercy Thomas from the SARI/E Regional office, need special commendation. In fact, I now invite these hard-working persons to stand up and be recognized.

Ladies and Gentlemen, my task is done. Thank you.