

WISER – Regional Workshop on Women, Energy and Enterprise

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen:

SARI/E promotes regional energy security. Being a highly technical program in the energy and power sector, it has been a key challenge of getting women involved in the program. SAWIE/WISER is a best case example how gender has been incorporated in to the program, and because of WISER, dozens of women are present here under one roof, from diverse fields, attending a SARI/E event, which normally is rare in other SARI/E activities. By the way, WISER is only a sub activity under the clean energy component of the overall SARI/E program which has a broader mandate for promoting cross border energy trade, formation of electricity markets, and clean energy development in the 8 South Asian countries – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

This workshop is going to be a significant lead in strategizing WISER's future activities. And a lot of brains and hard work have gone behind conceptualizing and organizing this workshop.

WISER is housed at the EMC compound. And first of all, on behalf of USAID/SARI/Energy, I would like to thank Mr. Dharesan Unnithan, the Director of EMC for his consistent efforts in providing the day to day support to the WISER team. Thank you for being here today and welcoming all the distinguished delegates from the South Asian countries.

Prof. Damodaran, as always, is a key brain behind WISER. Thank you for your excellent speech on the status of rural women in South Asia and other regions, and what could be done for these rural women to develop entrepreneurship for their empowerment.

Jennifer Graetz, in spite of her hectic schedule in USAID, gladly accepted our invitation to be the key note speaker at this important event for SARI/Energy. Thank you for laying out a vision, goal and the road map for WISER to advance women entrepreneurship and empowerment to address the global challenge of climate change in the South Asian context.

Next I would like to thank Anne Stenhammer from UNWOMEN for accepting our invitation and delivering a thought provoking message on gender and UNWOMEN's initiatives in promoting women's leadership thru access to clean energy technologies.

Jayapadma is passionate about WISER. Under her leadership, I am sure, WISER will fly high in accomplishing its objectives and become a real "Center of Excellence". Thank you Jaya, for all your hard work.

Dr. Nandita Mongia, leader of WISER from Tetra Tech, equally passionate about women's development has been untiringly working to see WISER grow. Thank you Nandita for your continued efforts.

I would also like to again thank the rest of the WISER team Deepa, Nirmala, and Aditi; Vinita Kathuria from Tetra Tech; and the rest of the EMC team, for their sustained support for WISER.

Last but not the least, I thank each and every participant who have travelled long routes and hours, overcoming the visas and other logistics hurdles, to be a part of this workshop. Thank you for taking time off from your regular work, and we look forward to your valuable contributions to make it a success.

I cannot forget two important people who are not present here today, Mr. S. Padmanaban (Padu) the Director of SARI/E program, for his technical/intellectual support and advice, and also Michael Hajny, the Chief of Party, Tetra Tech for his overall support for WISER.

Thank you.

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