Regional workshop on Women, Energy and Enterprise Building

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Coastal Electrification and Women’s Development Cooperative (UBOMUS)

- Established in 2000
- 33 rural women members
- Registered under the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs

The objective
To bring rural women into the mainstream of energy service delivery.
Activities

- Assembly and sale of DC lamps.
- Operation of Diesel operated battery charging station.
- Assembly of charge controllers.
- Operation of solar powered battery charging station
- Partner to IDCOL for sale of Solar Home Systems
Char Montaz Women’s Cooperative
UBOMUS is a women owned enterprise

16,000 Rural households bought SHS from UBOMUS in 6 years

There are 237 employees operating from 54 unit offices

Total monthly turnover Tk.2,10,00,000~$290,000
Members of UBOMUS were selected by interviews from local women interested in joining the enterprise

Solar technicians are engaged in sales, marketing, and maintenance of SHS

For operation and management of the SHS program, and monthly installments collection
DC Lamp Assembly
Technical considerations matched with institutional and financial sustainability during design phase:

- Planned effort of technology transfer
- Market assessment found battery charging to be in demand in the fishing community.
- Intensive training of the women members
- Link to supply chain to access the retail market.
- Financial sustainability of the enterprise was key issue in designing the cooperative
- With the onset of national solar program (also designed by PSL), the market for DC lamps and battery charging station diminished, and UBOMUS became a PO in 3 years.
Capacity development of beneficiaries:

- “This was a woman only project” so only Rural women members were trained.

- Coordinated development: Technical training, business and management training took place simultaneously with marketing training.

- All 33 members of the co-op took technical training.

- The executive body received business management and operational training.

- How is it sustained: PSL allocated one staff as the project manager of the IDCOL solar program. With the growth of the SHS sales activity, this role became more critical and financially sustainable.
Impact: Success indicators

- Opened up new dimension to the women
- Ones with most entrepreneurial skills very soon developed their individual businesses and diversified
- Negotiating a new business of assembling DC lamps for a large lamp supplier on a contract basis, expecting to earn $180 per person.
Sustainability was planned. However, the present scale because of significant role in the national SHS market was not envisaged. Would not be possible without PSL’s initial support. May not be possible for any rural women’s co-op.
Sustainability
Favorable policy or enabling environment in place at the institutional level?

- Individual enterprises succeed more than institutional operation. People are likely to make better decisions for themselves, than participating in collective decision making, especially for a long period of time (e.g. beyond 10 years for UBOMUS).
- Co-op’s constitutional policies are always followed as needed.
Regular meetings to exchange information with peers.

Collectively they may influence the local authorities to remove some of the obvious barriers, or take support of the local NGOs.

dialogues within the community and possibility of financial return may help.
Barriers

- Government programs consider only micro-level interventions for rural women
- Competition from larger manufacturers
- Difficulty in accessing local facilities like regional govt. offices, local banks, NGOs, etc. unless part of larger organizations
- Lack of management skills
Barriers

- Social discrimination against engagement of women outside the household
- Limited access to credit, equipment, market information, – all these are practical barriers
- Because of limited mobility women often have less exposure to the changes in market.
- Low educational qualifications
Thank You