

Good Afternoon, I am Mercy Thomas, from USAID/India, based in New Delhi, working on South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/E).

- Since morning you had been hearing about women in energy, SAWIE, WISER and so on. Before we start the course, it's important that you know a little more about SAWIE and WISER, and some background and evolution of these two initiatives.
- You have heard it from several speakers, still I would like to repeat the contributions that women make to the economic, social, and political lives of their countries, communities, and families make them key actors in effective development.
- Yet, All over the world be it in the energy sector, health, education, and economics, statistics for women are truly grim, illustrating the need for interventions that emphasize women. Some statistics from a World Bank Report.
  - Women represent up to 70% of the rural poor; (world bank report)
  - They earn only 10% of the world's income;
  - They own only 1% of the world's property
  - They account for 2/3 of the total number of illiterate people.
- Now, talking about South Asia, compared to men, women have significantly less access to and control over productive assets, land and other properties, education, employment, training opportunities, basic social services, information and decision-making at their home, and in their communities
- Over 30% of the rural women in South Asia do not have access to energy.
- Women are worst affected by energy scarcities. They rely heavily on energy inputs to undertake subsistence tasks (such as water collection, cooking) and their livelihood activities (such as education, small enterprises etc.)
- USAID believes that progress requires the participation of all citizens, and have, therefore, special interest in the advancement of women worldwide and is working to improve women's equality and empowerment. It is, of course justice, and necessary for successful development. Our programs have specific activity components that focus on gender mainstreaming, which goes thru rigorous scrutiny.
  - SARI/Energy has taken a lead to integrate gender into the work we do in the regional energy sector. And recently we have concluded a gender assessment for SARI/E program.
  -
- As Women make significant contributions to family subsistence, earnings, and family resource allocation, especially in poor households, increasing their access to efficient, affordable and reliable energy services, will help them “make a difference in their lives”.

- This concept led to the design of this unique women specific activity “South Asia Women in Energy” (SAWIE) under SARI/Energy Program, to promote energy efficiency/energy conservation and application of renewable energy technologies, targeting the rural household women in South Asia. The key objective of SAWIE is the empowerment of rural women in SA both socially and economically, thru access to clean energy.
- As you heard in the morning, SAWIE was launched in TVM in 2008 followed by two highly successful regional application workshops in the region, on Efficient Energy Management, and one executive exchange to the US to expose the SA women to the RE technologies applied in the US.
- I would like to highlight a few the accomplishments of SAWIE: First of all a Network was formed with women (and some men) from the SARI/E countries (which are the same as the SAARC countries) who interacts consistently and exchange information on women’s energy issues, and challenges. Currently, we have around 100 members in the Network who are professionals from different sectors belonging to public and private organizations, NGOs, academicians, and entrepreneurs. Several of these Network members had been instrumental in spearheading gender and energy activities in their own countries, as a result of their participation in our trainings and workshops. You will hear more about it from the teams, shortly.
- Four working groups were set up to pursue specific activities on various thematic issues like Capacity Building and Best Practices led by Sen. Rukshana Zuberi from Pakistan, Micro Finance and Income Generation led by Tara Shrestha from Nepal, Gender main Streamlining, led by Soma Dutta from India, and, Renewable Energy Technologies led by Reba Paul from Bangladesh.
- Pakistan has set up its own “Pakistan Women in Energy” program, inspired by their involvement in SAWIE. You will hear more about it from Rukshana, thru a video hook up with Pakistan.
- A small grants program was set up by SARI/Energy whereby eligible organizations from South Asia get an opportunity to implement projects which complement SARI/E objectives. The level of interest and engagement among the SAWIE members is reflected in the high number of proposals that have been received from the SAWIE Network. Several of these proposals with innovative ideas, involving grassroots women, have been selected for support.
- Some of the best practices in efficient cooking technologies were transferred to other regions thru SAWIE network (thermal cooker)

- SAWIE was represented and made presentations at various international forums, as part of its outreach activities: To mention a few:
  - (In December 2008), a Conference on “Beyond Firewood: Exploring Alternative Fuels and Energy Technologies” organized in New by the US Women’s Council.
  - (In March 2009), The SAARC Women's Conference on “Partners in Development”, organized by Jamia Milia University in New Delhi
  - (Recently, In January 2010), SAWIE was represented at a Conference on Women in Energy & Finance held in Singapore.
  - In February 2009, SAWIE contributed to a survey conducted by Students of, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University (Atlanta) on Community Needs Assessment of organizations working in fuel efficient Cook Stove Programs.
  - Even though a third of the total energy consumed in South Asia is managed or administered by women, there is no institutional arrangement either at country level or regional level to prepare women for this task. We do hope that with the launch of **WISER, the regional CoE for SA Women in Energy** would fulfill this need through the development of application oriented energy management program, and their dissemination to the women, in South Asia.

Some of the proposed key functions of WISER would be:

- It will work in close partnership with SAWIE network.
  - It would serve as the training hub for SA women
  - Will showcase clean energy technologies and incubate energy efficiency and renewable energy system for women entrepreneurs in South Asia.
  - A lab for testing and certification, and maintenance of RE appliances.
  - Will organize CBPs, lectures by eminent academicians, and technical experts.
  - It will act as a full fledged resource center, documenting SAWIE activities; maintain a list serve of stakeholders in SA, a library of outreach materials, and other relevant knowledge sharing materials.
  - Will use modern technologies like webinars, video conf etc. for its activities.
- A Director for WISER will be on board very soon who will steer all these activities I just mentioned. She will work with international donors and other organizations to raise resources and building partnerships, for keeping WISER sustainable.
  - This training is the maiden activity under WISER. I am proud, to be part of USAID/SARI/E team to be closely involved in this initiative, from the very beginning. I am sure, you will be delighted, to be the first group of recipients, of this course from WISER
  - I take this opportunity to thank Liz to be here with Meeta, for this important event, and Padu for his consistent support and guidance.
  - Our partners EMC, NREL and PA, thank you for making this happen.
  - Once again, hearty welcome to, the whole delegation. -Thank you.