

Launch of South Asia
Women's Institute for Sustainable Energy Research (WISER)
EMC & USAID, 22 March 2010

Capacity Development Program for Afghan Women
For Clean Energy Access

Welcome Address

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Good Morning Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of Energy Management Centre, Kerala, and the People of Kerala, let me welcome you all to God's Own Country! – That is, where you are now, the green carpeted Kerala! Especially to the Afghan Women and the Several US AID and PA Consulting Group Experts who are present here today.

On behalf of USAID, EMC and PA Consulting Group, let me welcome all other invitees and the media to this launch function of WISER.

I said welcome to 'God's Own Country' because visitors to Kerala, call this land that way, for several reasons other than the any time green look it presents. This narrow strip of land between the Arabian Sea and the Western Ghats is of course, green throughout, full of mountains, valleys, gentle sea shores, dotted with lakes and rivers – 44 rivers in a length of 600 km with a maximum width of 120 km. Every cent of land has a coconut tree in it. You cannot travel 5 km without crossing a water body in this State. And we have a sea coast of 600 km, which you do not have in Afghanistan!

Then, Kerala has a rich cultural history, and history of tolerance to all cultures. It has been through centuries, the Gateway for all foreigners who came to India to see, to have trade and even to rule.

This is probably the only noted State in India, where women are comparatively more secure and empowered. Highest literacy rates as well as educational and positional achievements of Kerala women are noteworthy. Health Indices are comparable to the developed world – thanks to the women of Kerala, who stands tall in education and social awareness. So, we have today the Minister for Social Welfare and Health, Smt. P. K. Sreemathy Teacher – to inaugurate this great event! On behalf of all present, let me welcome Hon.'ble Smt. Sreemathy teacher for launching the WISER and the first training program for women from South Asian countries.

Principal Secretary (Power) Mr. L. Radhakrishnan is chairing this session. He has been the most considerate bureaucrat to have guided the Energy Management Centre to progress – a man of letters! We expand his name as Learned Radhakrishnan. This you will realize when he speaks to you. Welcome, Mr. Radhakrishnan!

Next let me welcome Ms. Elizabeth Warfield, Deputy Mission Director of USAID India, New Delhi, who has taken so much pains and time to be present here today, as well as to ensure that a centre of excellence for women of south Asia is established in EMC that is being launched today. She had been in her career served several countries including Egypt, where Ms. Elisabeth was the mission director. We all look forward to her Key note address.

Mr. S. Padmanaban, Director, SARI/Energy, USAID New Delhi is no stranger to Trivandrum. He can claim a bit of Keralan background and that apart, he has been the original architect of the proposed WISER. He has immense global experience in the energy field for a much longer period, including his stint with World Bank and earlier in the National Productivity Council, India. Without him several programs which were organized to replicate some of the EMC innovations on Women in Energy, would not have come into being. We look forward to his continuing support to the WISER programs in future as well. Welcome back to Trivandrum, Mr. Padmanabhan!

Ms. Mercy Thomas, Regional Project Coordinator of SARI/E – (in full) South Asia Regional Initiative in Energy of USAID - is here. Master minding the WISER and its proposed research and action programs in south Asian countries, she has spent quite a lot of time and several visits to Kerala to get all of us to this day of launching.

PA Consulting Group is behind the implementation of WISER, with EMC in the forefront. Mr. Michael Hajni, Head of PA in India, its Principal Consultant Dr. Nandita Mongia who earlier worked at very senior levels with UNDP, Ms. Vinita Kathuria, Manager, Outreach and Events of PA are actually behind the very quick realization of this program as well as this first training session for Afghan. Let me welcome all of them.

Last but not the least, the technical support for WISER program is given to EMC by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Washington. Ms. Cecile Warner and Ms. Shannon Cowlin from NREL are present here to handle several of the technical sessions along with EMC experts. EMC-NREL linkage is a continuing relation, which will necessarily grow. Let me welcome its first Ambassadors to this event in particular.

The media – both print and electronic – in Kerala, are a quite enlightened body of journalists, who have always highlighted scientific, technical and social events, especially those related to problems of women and the poor, with consistent accuracy. Let me specially welcome each one present here from this most powerful Fourth Estate!

It is likely that I would have missed out some persons or organizations present here, but if it is, it is not intentional. Let me welcome one and all, once again.

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