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LAUNCH OF SOUTH ASIA WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY RESEARCH (WISER)

*A joint Collaboration of
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
And Energy Management Centre (EMC)*

Thiruvananthapuram/Kerala, India : 22 March 2010

Venue: Kanakakunnu Palace

Master of Ceremony

Mr. A.M. Narayanan, Head of Energy Efficiency Division, EMC

11:00 – 11:10

Welcome Address

Prof V. K. Damodharan, Vice Chairman, EMC

11:10 – 11:20

Keynote Address

Ms. Elizabeth Warfield, Deputy Mission Director, USAID/India, New Delhi.
Promoting Clean Energy Access for Women in South Asia

11:20 – 11:30

Presidential Address

Mr. L. Radhakrishnan, IAS, Principal Secretary (Power), Government of Kerala

11:30 – 11:45

Inaugural Address

Honourable Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Government of Kerala,
Smt. P. K. Sreemathy Teacher

11:45 – 11:55

Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks

Mr. S. Padmanaban, Director, SARI/Energy Program, USAID/India, New Delhi



WOMEN'S INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY RESEARCH (WISER)

Access to clean and sustained supply of energy is one of the prerequisites for development. Yet plans and programs to improve women's economic opportunities most often do not design steps that can facilitate access of energy services to them. This phenomenon is especially true especially in rural areas or for depressed economic classes. USAID / South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy (SARI/Energy) organised an application Workshop on efficient energy management and renewable energy during 21st to 25th April 2008 in Kerala to discuss the problem and possible solutions to address them. A fruitful outcome of this meeting was an overall understanding of the need to urgently promote active participation and leadership of women in the field of energy. This led to the formation of the South Asia Women in Energy network. Energy Management Centre - Kerala (EMC) and other known experts in the region provided the knowledge partnership for this workshop.

A second workshop was conducted in Dhaka, Bangladesh and a selected team went to United States for SAWIE Executive Exchange in Washington during May 12-20, 2009. The vision for a Centre of Excellence at the EMC evolved during these interactive sessions and especially during the Executive Exchange in Washington. The participants were exposed here to projects and site visits that demonstrated the utilities of clean and decentralised energy.

Further to EMC's request, Government of Kerala have examined the proposal of formation of the South Asia Women in Energy Regional Centre of Excellence at EMC and granted permission vide Government Order No: G.O(RT) N: 226/09/PD dated 25/08/09.

The South Asia Women in Energy Regional Centre of Excellence is subsequently named as Women's Institute of Sustainable Energy Research (WISER) based on discussions at the EMC. The activities of this Centre will be focussed on facilitating enhanced access to clean energy for women in the SAARC countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

WISER's proposed objectives include the following:

- a) Reduce poverty among rural women through increased access to and use of clean energy services, especially renewable energy sources such as solar and other feasible technologies in the region.
- b) Create awareness among rural women on the negative impacts of using conventional sources of energy such as kerosene, firewood etc. on the natural environment, global warming and climate change etc.
- c) Promote micro-finance activities and help women become socially and economically empowered and contribute to the GDP in the region.
- d) Collaborate with private sector entities to promote, manufacture and use appropriate and efficient domestic energy products and design services.
- e) Serve as a regional resource centre, library, space for lectures and exhibitions, and training institute to educate women on energy efficiency and moulding them as 'catalysts for change' in the energy sector.

WISER would also promote targeted technical assistance from experts and institutions in the region. Through USAID's mechanism, WISER will also be supported by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) which is one of the prime laboratories for renewable energy technology development and application in the United States. NREL develops renewable and efficient energy technologies and practices, advances energy related science and engineering, and transfers knowledge and innovations to wide range of energy sector institutions to address energy and environmental goals.