

Advocacy Event on

“Building & Improving Partnership among Stakeholders in Solar Energy Sector – Some Doable Models”

14th June, 2016 at Hotel Cygnett Inn Repose, Guwahati, Assam



Background:

1.1 RGVN, Assam with the support of CUTS International and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Government of Australia organised an advocacy meeting titled “Building & Improving Partnership among Stakeholders in Solar Energy Sector – Some Doable Models” on 14th June, 2016 at Hotel Cygnett Inn Repose, Guwahati, Assam.

1.2 The workshop aimed to present RGVN’s work and create an advocacy and dissemination platform under the CUTS SDIP advocacy message “Promoting Renewable Energy Technology Transfer, Trade and Knowledge sharing in South Asia”.

Highlights and Proceedings:

2.1 At the outset the aims and objectives of the SDIP programme was shared with the participants and then it was explained why the advocacy meeting had been called.

2.2 The presentations started with the opening remarks by Dr. Amiya Sharma (ED, RGVN). He said that it was important to dwell on solar energy and take it to the hinterland. Presently, the same group discussed and debated on solar energy. This awareness should also be disseminated to the rural locals.

2.3 It was discussed that presently a policy – both state and central was necessary for solar energy and its usage. However just waiting for this policy to take shape was inadequate, as time is running out as far as clean energy is concerned.

2.4 A presentation by Mr. Barun Barpujari ex CMD Assam Oil threw light upon the history, the advantages of using solar energy and what systems would work in the NE in comparison with the models that work in the rest of India. As insulation was low in the North East a mega park would not be feasible here.

2.5 Mr. Sanjay Sharma from UBI Bank, Panjabari, said that the UBI Panjabari Branch had financed 40 solar projects in the NE. This had been done in partnership with private entrepreneurs and AEDA hence subsidy was also made available in 10 cases. Fifteen of the proposals were for irrigation system and the subsidy had been availed from NABARD.

2.6 Mr. Mrinal Choudhury from AEDA shared experiences of the different solar projects under AEDA and how these have been received by the community. *Surya Mitra* was a government scheme to provide training to young entrepreneurs who want to take it up as a profession. The rooftop solar scheme was also discussed and the feasibility of the same for Guwahati city.

2.7 Ms. Aneeta Dutta shared the RGVN project which had been carried out in Chandmari area of Baksa district close to the international border. This was done in partnership mode with RGVN, Free Power and the Community wherein 14 shops had been set up in a small market. Of the 14 beneficiaries there were 3 women and one physically challenged entrepreneur. This project had been piloted under the SDIP programme and was found to be suitable for such areas. The beneficiaries paid an initial amount of Rs 500 and Rs 20 per month for any damage that may arise. The project was then described by Mr. Babul Ch Newar, who had been recruited as community mobiliser in the area.

2.8 Mr. Arup Rajkhowa then spoke of some other models that had been taken up by RGVN in some remote villages. The drinking water project presently being carried out in the Morigaon dist of Assam was one such project.

2.9 Free Power, was represented by Mr. Bhaskar Kakoty, private entrepreneur, who spoke about the problems faced by entrepreneurs in the absence of any policy. He also emphasised that there is an absence of a clear North East India oriented policy for solar energy for the availability of subsidy and promoting entrepreneurship in solar.

Way Forward:

Based on the discussions the following learnings have been put forward:

(i) It was important to take up solar energy in the region. Even though insulation in NE was low, as compared with some states of India, an example could be taken from Germany, which has the same problem but has used it to an advantage.

(ii) It is necessary to have synergy amongst all players in the region. A policy for the region should be made and disseminated to the concerned parties. The absence of a sound policy was affecting the work of the private entrepreneurs.

(iii) Entrepreneurship and service provision should be developed in solar. It could become a very good source of livelihood for youth.

(iv) Certain innovative projects should be thought of –such as mini cold storages and drying units, which was necessary in the region due to the high humidity.

(v) If a lead bank was appointed for solar financing, this would help entrepreneurs greatly. The lead bank would be a single window system for project financing and subsidy that could be availed.

(vi) Successful projects to be replicated hence experience sharing is necessary.



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An Advocacy meeting on
"Building and Improving Partnership among stakeholders in Solar Energy
sector - Some Doable Models."

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