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Strengthening Regional Energy Linkages in South Asia



Participants from different countries were placed into teams to discuss opportunities for regional cooperation.

Under the South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Cooperation and Development (SARI/Energy) USAID hosted a training seminar in July of 2003 in Bangladesh designed to increase awareness of the importance of establishing energy linkages within South Asia.

The countries of South Asia are endowed with enormous natural resources. Natural gas, oil, coal, water, air, solar energy, and ocean waves are all potential sources of energy. Home to 20% of the world's population, South Asia only accounts for 5% of world's commercial energy consumption. There is a huge demand for energy that is not being met. Individual countries do not have enough capacity to exploit their own resources. As a result, many people, especially in rural areas, are suffering from lack of energy.

Regional co-operation can improve their standard and living and increase economic growth by reducing dependence on imported energy, and making energy cheaper and more widely available.

By bringing together respected energy regulators and scholars from around the region, this program took important first steps toward the realization of this beneficial scheme. Each participant made a presentation showing the existing interconnections and areas for potential implementation. In one example, it was found that surplus hydropower in Nepal and Bhutan coincides with seasonal peak demands in India and Bangladesh, where supply is limited. The participants left the training convinced of numerous benefits cooperation.

One participant noted, "At the end of the day, with all the controversial debates, we all came to a consensus that regional energy linkage, despite political disputes, is of paramount importance for a win-win situation and mutual benefit to alleviate poverty. We all were determined to meet some day with feedback on what we envisage to do in our countries."

At the end of the training, participants initiated an action plan and selected representatives from each of five South Asian countries to form a committee to meet with the SAARC Energy Committee about improving regional energy linkages. By providing funding for a joint forum to meet and with the assistance of facilitators, they will continue developing options to strengthen existing energy linkage in South Asia. The main goals of the forum will be to propose guidelines for a regional tariff, and for the establishment of a regional regulatory authority.

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For more program information visit the SARI/Energy web site at: <http://sari-energy.org>