

Biogas system in
Lao, Southeast Asia,
financed by the
German Embassy.

Photo: Energy for Life

Promoting renewable energy projects

The Energy for Life campaign aims at presenting the potentials of renewable energy as a tool towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development. Its launch was promising.

When looking at the current energy situation worldwide, it is clear that the energy consumption per capita is much higher in industrialized countries than in developing countries. Industrialized countries account for less than 20 % of the world population while consuming more than half the energy. It is a fact that improvements to the quality of life in developing countries can only be attained with access to energy. This implies not only an increased use of fossil fuels, but also an enhanced interest in the use of alternative energies as tools towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development.

To meet its objectives, a project website went online in March 2010, which offers information about renewable energy, informs on the current status of the Energy for Life (E4L) projects and acts as the hub for the presentation of a database and online game. The website is the main tool for the information campaign and serves not only as an information platform but as an exchange platform too.

Overview of best practice

The E4L database will promote best practice and successful projects: information gleaned from the responses to a specially designed online questionnaire. These projects show the potential of renewable

energies as a means for a higher standard of living. One such example of best practice can be found in Lao PDR in Southeast Asia. Within the Reepro project (Promotion of the Efficient Use of Renewable Energies in Developing Countries), eight fixed-dome 4 m³ biogas systems were installed in the Oudomxay province. Using 20 kg of daily produced manure as fuel, each system produces 1 to 2 m³ of biogas that is used for cooking for 2 to 3 hours every day. This reliable energy improves the people's standard of living not only by reducing their monthly expenses on fossil fuels, but by also reducing the quantity of wood to be collected and by offering supplemental income through the sale of any bio-fertilizer not used on their own land.

The biogas plants were financed within the framework of a small grant programme by the German Embassy in Laos. However, the plants were not donated to the eight households, and the households were committed to pay back 50 % of the material costs – about US\$ 150 – within two years after installation. This money was then used to establish a village fund, which grants social loans for the installation of further biogas plants by further households.

The compiled information in the database is to be presented in an online energy map. Furthermore, an online learning game on renewable energies, aimed at children and teenagers aged 10 years and over, is to be developed. Finally, national workshops will be held, and the project outcome, conclusions and recommendations will be discussed during an international conference to be held in Spain in 2011.

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Further information:
www.energy-for-life.info
www.reepro.info