

Gujarat Consumer Interface Meetings (CIMs)

**A DIAGNOSTIC STUDY TO BUILD THE CAPACITY/AWARENESS AMONG
CSOs TO DEMAND FOR DEMAND SIDE MANAGEMENT (DSM) &
RENEWABLE ENERGY (RE) IN INDIA**

– DREC Project

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Introduction

VIKSAT in collaboration with CUTS International, in the support of Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation is implementing a project “Demand Side Management & Renewable Energy in India: Capacity Building of Civil Society Organizations (DREC Project)” in Gujarat. The project aims to build capacities of CSOs in order to influence practice change at the consumer level and policy change at the government level.

The project is primarily directed towards advocating for Energy Efficiency (EE) and use of Renewable Energy Technology (RET) by all types of consumers in a favorable policy framework. Initiated in July 2011, the project envisaged increasing long-term capacity/awareness of consumer groups to demand for DSM and RE initiatives, and also to understand, document and communicate their specific needs to relevant policy makers.

VIKSAT is implementing the project in four districts of Gujarat, namely Kutchh, Ahmedabad, Patan and Mehesana. The districts were chosen after several considerations. In each of these districts the situation pertaining to energy needs and issues were diverse. Mehesana and Patan are two major industrial districts where energy demand is high. In Patan, the population is pre-dominantly rural and agrarian. Kutch, declared as a SEZ, is an emerging hub of industries and multifarious economic activities. Ahmedabad is catered by a private power company, Torrent power, while all other three districts come under the service area of Uttar Gujarat Vij Nigam Ltd, UGVCL, a company formed after dismantling the Gujarat Electricity Board (GEB).

The project is being implemented with eight partner CSOs. These partners have strong grass root presence and a few of them are also working with energy related activities. The project started with successive capacity building activities such as orientation meetings and inception workshop. Successively, a baseline consumer perception survey was undertaken in the four districts through the partner agencies. The survey covered 500 respondents from different types of consumer groups viz. Rural and Urban Households, Farmers, Commercials and Small and Medium Enterprises to identify the problems faced by the consumers and also understand how they perceive energy and climate change issues. The general responses were that Climate change is happening and affecting everybody (96.8%). However, while it was opined (85%) that every individual can do something to adapt to climate change, yet living today was considered more important than taking steps to counter the impact of climate change (89.8%). While 92% were aware about Renewable sources of energy, there was a significant gap noted between the practice or behavior change and awareness level. Lack of adequate push factors like adequate information, after sales services and financial linkages and incentives were cited as the deterrents in promotion of EE products and RET. Nearly 66% of the respondents among those who are using Energy Efficient (EE) products were not satisfied with the products. Awareness regarding identification of the EE products was also poor. 62% of the respondents were willing to pay up to 5% more for ‘clean’ energy. The common expectations of the consumers were availability of government subsidy (48%) and better R&D services (46%).

Taking the learning ahead, a five days’ capacity building workshop was organized at VIKSAT for the capacity building of the CSOs in Gujarat. Twenty five CSOs have participated in the workshop including the eight partner organizations. Resource persons from the state agencies like GERC and GEDA, utilities like UGVCL, research and academic institutions like GERMI and NGOs were invited to give inputs to the participants.

To capitalize on the built capacities of the partner NGOs and reach out to consumer groups in raising awareness about RE/DSM issues, in the next stage of the project, a series of (20) Consumer Interface Meetings (CIMs) were organized in the project area. Attempt was made to learn about the problems faced by the consumer groups across the four stake holders groups and facilitate a discussion about probable and feasible solutions.

Although we had planned for 20 CIMs, 19 CIMs were organized in 4 districts, covering over 900 participants from all stakeholder groups taken together. One CIM with SME was avoided due to administrative issues faced in reaching out to the authorities of Naroda Industrial Estate in Ahmedabad.

Out of 272 respondents covered in the perception survey under the four categories of S/H, 128 (47.06%) were covered in the CIMs (H/H- 57.37%, Urban commercials-66.67%, SMEs- 50%, Farmers - 71.42% and CSOs – 41.22%).

A brief account of the meetings held in Gujarat is presented herewith.

PLANNING PROCESS

Prior to implementation of the CIMs, a brainstorming meeting was held at VIKSAT on 8th April 2012, wherein Bipul Chatterjee, Udai Mehta, Gaurav Shukla from CUTS, Dilip Surkar, Ankur Baruah, Sudeshna Bhojia and Bipin Parmar from VIKSAT, Arnab Ganguly from CRC and Dr R Gopichandran from PAC had participated.

Important issues like inclusion of the SMEs as a stakeholder in the CIMs, quantum of respondents to be covered in each CIM, issues to be discussed, methodology and format of the CIMs were discussed upon. To map the practice and policy change as part of the overall objective of the project, it was important to ensure participation of at least 50% of the consumers who participated in the initial baseline survey.

FORMAT OF THE CIMs

The CIMs were expected to be of intensive small group discussions where consumers may interact with the organizers very closely. Rather than information dissemination the CIMs were planned to be organized as interactive meetings with consumer groups so that a discussion can be facilitated amongst the consumer groups during the CIMs and probable solutions may be come out with. A FGD format was undertaken to conduct the CIMs. Three case studies on Household sector, SME and agricultural sector were prepared to create a concern and lead the discussion towards possible actions in the respective consumer groups. The case studies were based on real life experience of consumer groups in different context and situations. The case studies provided strong ground for practical grounds for local community based actions, and this has rectified generic excuses and start up lethargies.

The approach in organizing the CIMs was participatory in nature. The guiding principle was not that of training or providing inputs but that of meeting people to learn from them about the energy issues at their level. While case studies were developed as a tool for group work, yet they were sparsely used. The facilitators oriented the participants about the overall issues, linking the broader scope with the issue of climate change and global warming. Information sharing on EEP and RET was done so as to set the stage for people to share their experiences. The overall learning of the approach has comprehended in the following points -

- In rural areas the approach worked well. It was apprehended that rural communities will not be much interested with the energy issue and will not interact pro-actively. But, a very warm response was received in the rural areas. People participated in large numbers in the CIMs and shared their concerns regarding the increasing amount of their electricity bills. They also and shared their experience with EE and RE products they were using, though in limited numbers. The warm reception, eagerness to know more, reluctance to bring an end to the discussions, unabashed and forthright attitude, transcending the topics being discussed upon in the rural CIMs gave the team a memorable experience.
- The personal, informal approach that characterised the rural CIMs was starkly missing in the urban context. The urban consumers were found to be sceptical about environment and climate change concerns, but more concerned about cost benefits of using EE and RE run products in terms of monetary gain.
- In case of the CIMs with the sectors like urban commercial, SME and urban H/Hs, the discussions were found to be limited to technical concern and far less interactive (as compared to the rural CIMs). However, the H/H consumers showed some interest in EE technologies for their specific purposes to reduce their power bills. Lack of comfort level amongst the participants and poor inter personal relationships in the alienated urbane settings, lack of similar platforms for collective efforts acted as the prime form of barrier in facilitating meaningful interaction in these contexts.
- The urban CIMs proved to be very cost intensive with relatively poor outcome when compared with the rich rural experiences. VIKSAT had invited external resource persons from institutions like GEDA, GERMI and UGVCL for the urban CIMs, had organised for Overhead projectors and screens to show documentaries and make audio visual presentations. We observed a note of impatience, scepticism, self consciousness, lacking openness while asking questions and sharing experiences, expectation for superior and glamorous logistic arrangements and so on.

The facilitators encouraged open floor discussions during and after each of the topic discussed. Participants asked questions and shared their experiences about the electricity sector. A brief account of the district and stakeholder wise discussions held in the CIMs is presented herewith.

DISTRIBUION OF THE CIMs ACROSS STAKEHOLDERS

In all, 20 CIMs were planned for the state across four districts. Following was the distribution pattern of the CIMs:

- 10 CIMs (Household consumers – Rural/Urban)
- 2 CIMs (Urban Commercial)
- 2 CIMs (SMEs)
- 2 CIMs (Farmers – Rural)
- 4 CSOs (Urban and Rural)

Implementation Period

The CIMs were implemented during 21st May to 17th July. The monitoring and hand holding support to the implementing NGOs was provided by the VIKSAT officials from the H.O and respective field offices in the project area.

Implementation Process

The CIMs were started with CSOs. A user friendly energy manual for advocacy for the CSOs was prepared prior to the CIMs. CIMs with CSOs were organized with direct involvement of VIKSAT. These were seen as a platform for planning com meeting wherein the partner CSOs would an opportunity to experience and get hands on training on how to conduct a CIM.

These CIMs were presided by VIKSAT officials (Ankur Baruah, Sudeshna Bhojia, Bipin Parmar) and a representative from CUTS (Gaurav Shukla).

However, the ground level management of the CIMs, logistics, selection of venue, mobilization of participants and government officials was done by the partner NGOs. In terms of handholding and building capacities of the partners, implementation of the CIMs has provided firsthand experience to both VIKSAT and CSOs in handling grass-root challenges in fostering the objective of the project. The experiences in implementing the CIMs are comprehended in the following points –

- VIKSAT had entrusted the local NGOs to organize the meeting. The basic instructions were telephonically provided. The rest was managed by the NGOs, in fact they organized the affairs better than what VIKSAT could have done from the head office. This happened due to the local presence and existing networking of the NGOs.
- Financial and operational decentralization worked well. Having trust on the capacities of the working partners resulted ownership and commitment in conducting successful CIMs.
- The manual developed was extremely handy. Since it was simple in language, concise, well segregated and yet comprehensive enough, the partners found it quite useful to be referred to frequently as a tool to conduct the CIMs. This not only reduced the dependency of the partners on VIKSAT but also helped to standardize the session contents, thereby ensuring that the quality of the CIMs is maintained.
- Involvement of the partner in the CSO meeting not only to organize and arrange but also as a participant and a presenter (during the session on role and scope of CSOs) proved to be helpful so as to prepare them to handle the Stakeholder specific CIMs in a more articulate manner.
- Every CIM (with the partner CSOs) was followed by a brief planning meeting wherein the VIKSAT team and the partners jointly decided upon the dates and arrangements for the CIMs allotted to them by VIKSAT. They also came up with ideas about how to reach out to the farmers and H/H groups innovatively so that their interest is retained and output of the CIM is maximized. It was collectively experienced that this approach of having the CSO meet prior to S/H specific meeting is apropos to conducting a TOT for the partners.
- VIKSAT's role in the CIMs was supportive if not hand holding. The NGOs took lead while VIKSAT officials were participant observers, filling in wherever required.
- Presence of CUTS official in the meeting acted as a great morale booster for the partners. In spite of the excruciating heat in the hottest district of the state in mid May, presence of CUTS

reinforced the importance of the consumer level interface meetings with the partners. Not only is the presence of external agencies encouraging, there is a lot of experience sharing of other-than-Gujarat-experiences. For e.g., Gaurav Shukla from CUTS had shared WB experiences with the participants. The broader viewpoint and cross learning is always capacitating.

SELECTION OF VENUE

To increase peoples' participation in CIMs, the venue of the meetings was selected with precision. For the CIMs for urban Households, the common place of urban housing complex and community halls were selected. The CIMs with the farmers and rural households were held in the public places like temples, government primary schools and Dairy Cooperative buildings. The CIM with the SMEs were held in GIDC meeting halls and those with the commercial sector were organized in shopping malls. The learning of selecting different types of venues for different types of CIMs are stated in the following points -

- While the public places did help in mobilizing people easily, yet, it also generated unsolicited curiosity in some places. Collection of huge crowds also hindered with meaningful interaction, though in some isolated incidents. In such cases, a part of the energy of the team goes in crowd management and in engaging constructively with the negative forces. For instance, in Khorsam village, Patan, the meeting was held in the diary cooperative building in the open portico. Soon after, the people passing by or those assembling in the shop nearby, started passing comments to distract the participants till they were effectively dealt with and controlled by the Sarpanch of the village.
- Selecting the premises of religious institutions is opportune in rural settings; yet, it should not be dubbed as the religious preferences or intentions of the participating or organising CSOs. Also, the event should be planned in a way so that the routine activities of the institutions are not interfered with. For e.g., in Kahipur, Visnagar, where the farmers had assembled for the CIM, the timings of the CIM coincided with the routine 'aarti' (Hindu religious ritual of worship, songs sung in praise of the deity, when lamps are being offered) and the meeting was stalled for a better part of the time till the ritual was completed.

MOBILIZING PEOPLE FOR THE CIMs

Different strategies were adopted to invite and mobilize the participants for the CIMs. In the rural settings, the existing institutions like the SHGs, youth groups, panchayats, farmer clubs were met with. These groups were made aware of the objectives and the relevance of organizing the meeting. To reach out to the large commercial sector and SME in Mehsana, Kutchh and Ahmedabad, the mall manager, GIDC heads etc. were met with and sensitized about the issue. Pamphlets containing information about the meeting were circulated in large numbers; the mailing lists were collected from the mall manager/GIDC head and collective invitation emails were sent out to all. One of the partners, Samarpan Trust, Visanagar also gave out a press release in the local news paper to publicize the meeting and mobilize the participants. Different approach and strategies to mobilize people for the CIMs are as described below -

- The CIMs were organised during the time that was suitable for the participants. For instance, for the rural households, to ensure more participation of women, the post lunch period was apt. The CIMs for the farmers were done in the evenings. For the urban Households, weekends (Sunday evenings) were considered to be appropriate. For the commercials, the pre-lunch period proved to be the lean time, when customer dealing is limited.
- The presence of the local NGOs in the field, their rapport and relationships with the local community, the participation of the communities in the ongoing programmes of the NGOs played a decisive role in mobilizing the communities in the CIMs.
- The peoples' institutions like the SHGs and Farmer Clubs were the surest means of mobilising people and giving credibility to the organised event.
- Two CIMs (one with the urban households by Samarpan Trust, Visnagar and the other with rural households by GSS, Rapar) were not considered valid owing to poor presence of participants. These CIMs were re-done by the partner agencies to get the desired results.
- It was easier to assemble rural people for the meeting. Long term presence and rapport of NGOs with the rural section helps in bringing people together and generate a response on any issue. The inherent simplicity of the rural people also went a long way in increasing the acceptability of any new initiative. But the same did not hold true for the urban counterparts. It was an uphill task to bring together the urban households. The busy lifestyle, independent and individualistic attitude, cynical outlook, apathy for any socially relevant cause, searching for vested interests in any endeavour, lack of NGOs working with urban masses...featured amongst the issues that hindered the process of organising the CIMs with urban H/Hs.

CIMS WITH RURAL HOUSEHOLDS

5 CIMs were organized with rural households in three districts namely Mahesana, Patan and Kutch. In all, 327 rural households participated in the CIMs, of which 50% were covered under the baseline survey. The major concern of rural households in the Patan and Kutch was poor quality of power supply, particularly voltage fluctuation was shared in the CIMs. In Mehesana supply related problems are not much reported but poor billing services were reported.

In a few places rural consumers have experiences of using solar lantern and solar cooker. They shared that it is very difficult to identify and compare solar lantern while taking purchasing decision since there is no standardization in such products. In the villages where CSOs are facilitating the purchase of solar products are providing better results than the products pushed by the vendors. Except limited users of CFL bulbs energy efficiency is still not a popular subject in among the rural household consumers.

LEARNING AND OUTCOMES OF THE CIMs WITH RURAL HOUSEHOLDS

The overall learning and outcomes of the CIMs with rural households are presented below -

Patan

- People showed a lot of interest in learning about energy efficiency and electricity conservation. They shared that they had no information about availability of EE Products.
- There was a general acceptance that the electricity pricing is increasing day by day. One case study was shared wherein a farmer was charged a whopping Rs. 50,000/- as electricity bill. Soon after they complained and necessary revisions in the bill was done. However, they discussed that no further step was taken to penalise the offender. The people discussed that since the amount charged was acutely inappropriate, hence the consumer could detect the over-charge; there is a possibility of routine cases of overly charged bills getting ignored or un-reported due to lack of will on the part of the consumers or lack of awareness about the procedure to file a complaint. The participants were interested to know about grievance redressal forum.
- One of the key requirement voiced by the people to promote the use of RET was expectation of assistance from the government since the initial costs are too high and unaffordable in spite of keen interest on the part of the consumers.
- There were persistent complaints about frequent fluctuation in Voltage. The people in one of the Patan villages (Khorsam) were unable to comprehend the concept of peak hour. They said that the day time voltage was so poor, that they were unable to use any of the appliances that required good quality electricity supply. When asked what can be the probable cause behind the problem, the analysis was that during day time, electricity is primarily used for lifting water for irrigation and other agricultural work, so households do not get high voltage electricity.
- Some of the people shared that they have been using the solar lanterns distributed by SEWA (a local NGO in Gujarat: Self Employed Women's Association) and have had good experience. These lanterns provide 8 hrs. of continuous lighting. SEWA also provides good service through their ground level functionaries, all of whom are females.
- Another case was identified during the CIM wherein a farmer was given an estimate of Rs. 2.5 lakhs by the utility to get electricity connection in his remotely situated farmland. Finding the cost quoted quite unreasonable, the farmer considered the option of switching over to solar lighting and currently, he is not dependent on the GEB for electric supply. He has installed solar energy operated domestic appliances for use in his farmhouse from GIDC and is using the same since the past five years.
- In Khorsam village of Chanasma Taluka of Patan, 5 solar lights have been installed by the watershed department in the village, in public places. The cost of one lighting system is Rs. 21500/-. 2 systems have been sponsored by the watershed department while 3 were sponsored by the grants of 13th Nana panch.

- ANarDe Foundation, the partner NGO in Patan has also facilitated installation of Gobar gas plants in their project area. During these CIMs, information about the same is shared by distributing pamphlets.

Mehsana

- In Valam village, the PRI had installed 5 units of solar street lights but few of them were functional for only eight months, after which, they stopped functioning in want of repairs. People shared that Solar technology is available. But there is lack of trained technicians.
- People shared that till now they thought that those appliances that were cheap, functional and long lasting (*sasta, sundar and majboot*) are good to be purchased. Now we understand that unknowingly we are causing harm to our forthcoming generation. EEPs are not cheap while buying but now they are aware that in the long run, they will prove to be cost effective. We now understand our responsibility as consumers

Kutchh

- The participants complained of poor quality of power supply. While they received uninterrupted supply of electricity yet, they suffered from rapid voltage dips.
- The participants exhibited ignorance about energy efficiency. They were keen to know more about star ratings, importance of ISI and BEE labelling and so on
- There was a common feeling amongst the participants that such meetings should be conducted to educate the factory owners who are responsible for causing pollution
- There was a lot of curiosity generated about Consumer Interests and about filing of complaints, role of consumers in protection against violation of the consumers' rights, the importance of a cash memo (pucca bill showing an accounted transaction) as against a kuchcha bill or unaccounted transaction)
- The participants also shared that they had no idea about how electricity is produced and that how people can determine tariff.
- In Rapar, Waand Vistaar, the people shared that due to some local initiative as a part of corporate social responsibility, about 400 solar lanterns would be sold in the village wherein the villagers will pay a share of Rs. 100/- per lantern, while the organization (GSS) would mobilize the cost from another donor agency
- The PRI has also decided to take concrete actions to curtail water wastage that is happening due to civil negligence and leakages.

- There was an isolated case sharing wherein it was complained that in spite of spending Rs. 300/- for purchasing solar lamps from dealers, about three years ago, it stopped functioning and repairs was not possible. Exhibited interest in replacing conventional bulbs by CFL bulbs
- Kohli castes are mainly involved in charcoal making (partial combustion of wood from Gaanda Bawal). Migrate from their villages. Less dependence on village. They can use solar furnace in the salt pans where they stay for major part, without any basic facility
- GSS is working in 'Vandh vistaar', comprising of joint families living in scattered fields. This region is bereft of any basic facility and thus, the people there are ready to accept alternative forms of energy.
- Energy saving tips were shared but people felt that by changing behaviour of the children from the very beginning would be the right approach...'we are too old to change'
- The information on RET was limited. Only product they knew about was solar cooker and nothing else.
- Debate started on what is conventional vs. non conventional source of electricity. They challenged that sun is the conventional source and coal is the artificial source of electricity
- People were unaware about the electricity consumption by tube lights and CFLs. Now they understood that CFLs are actually not so costly.

CIM WITH URBAN HOUSEHOLD

5 CIMs were organized with urban households in two districts namely Ahmedabad and Mahesana. In all, 235 urban households participated in the CIMs, of which 50% were covered under the baseline survey. The major concern of urban households in was increasing bill amount. Urban households shared that they are using CFL bulbs but were not emphasizing much on the star rated products except in the case of ACs. They also shared that very few people are adopting power saving practices in domestic appliances viz. switching off the appliance when not in use, proper use of washing machine etc. Another concern of the urban households was managing power in public facilities viz. use of elevator, common lighting etc.

LEARNING AND OUTCOMES OF THE CIMS WITH URBAN HOUSEHOLDS

The learning and outcomes of the CIMs in with urban households were as follows -

Ahmedabad

- The people of the urban residential complex were interested to know about the management of kitchen waste. They asked to know more about the viability of setting up biogas plant

- The people got to know about installation of Roof Top Solar PV panels in a residential complex, that has happened in Gandhinagar
- Back to Basics: It was discussed that there is a need to organize collective community strengthening events to save on energy: events like organising Sundarkand katha, competitions, and picnics, so that people know each other more and a collective will is formed to undertake joint initiatives. Currently, all families in the residential complex lead individual lives and rarely interact with one another. They don't even know each other well, how can we think of purchasing and maintaining any RET collectively?
- Peak hours concept: A new piece of information: The media should make people aware of this aspect because much of the energy saving is possible by following the peak hour rules. This is something we can start doing immediately!
- Some of the participants shared that are ready to buy EEPs, but many things such as Aata Chakki, hand grinders, mixers are mostly used by average households and do not come with star labeling

Mehsana

- The participants enjoyed the demonstration of biomass plant shown to them on the power point and RET demonstration
- There were discussions about the scope of support from the Government in the form of incentives Urban HH
- One of the participants in Mehshana explained to the others Methane concentration in the environment is increasing due to which the ozone layer is depreciating and this is leading to many skin problems
- In nuclear power stations, Uranium rods are used which lead to release of traces/particles of radioactive elements in the atmosphere. This contributes to cancerous growth in living beings.
- Can Hydrogen be used to produce electricity? To this it was discussed that this technology is far more dangerous than nuclear power generation
- An old woman participant said, "...the new generation does not listen to us. I agree to what you have explained but my daughter in law will not listen to me. Now a days people are not bothered about the saving the environment. All they care for is their own luxury. I save water and electricity. I know how to limit my requirements. In our times, there was no need for people like you to come and talk about energy saving. We were frugal in our ways. But today's generation think that frugality is poverty and so are not interested in curtailing wastage. Why don't you work with the young generation?"

CIMS WITH AGRICULTURE CONSUMERS

2 CIMS were organized with farmers in two districts namely Patan and Mahesana. In all, farmers participated in the CIMS, of which 71.4% were covered under the baseline survey. The major concern of farmers was increasing bill amount. They shared that ground water level is depleting year by year due to which they have to install pump sets of higher HPs in 2-3 years. Further, getting new connection for electricity use in agriculture was another major concern of the farmers. Farmers have limited understanding of energy efficient motors and there are other issues related with purchasing decision of

EE motors viz. credit facilities of the local vendor, availability of subsidy, benefits in a flat rate billing system and cost. Many farmers are still using diesel engine for irrigation in the areas where surface water is available or water table is shallow. Very few farmers are aware of solar pumps but most of them showed interest for it.

LEARNING AND OUTCOMES OF THE CIMs WITH AGRICULTURE CONSUMERS

The learning and outcomes of the CIMs with farmers are as stated below -

Patan

- The participants were interested to gain knowledge about the solar energy operated pumps. However, they said that since the water table is receding day by day, hence the cost of installation of solar pumps in their farms will be extremely high and thus not a viable option.
- Cattle rearing not being practiced in the village, gohar gas is ruled out as a viable option.

Mehsana

- Diesel engine is used for water lifting. No new connections are provided by the government. There were quite a few enquiries about solar run pumps.
- There was a discussion that the existing flat Rates of tariff (irrespective of usage) should not be encouraged in the agri-sector. Currently, the farmers have to pay a fixed amount irrespective their quantum of use as a result of which there is indiscriminate use of electricity.
- Interest was also shown towards training for charcoal making, as a source of non polluting and easily available fuel.

CIMs WITH COMMERCIAL CONSUMERS

2 CIMs were conducted with commercial consumers in two districts namely Ahmedabad and Mahesana. In all, 65 commercial consumers participated in the CIMs of which 58% were covered under the baseline survey. The commercial consumers were provided with detailed information about increasing energy crisis in the world and in India. The commercial consumers also shared their concern of increasing power cost in run their business. But, the consumers have different types of energy requirement viz. lighting, heating and cooling system as per their product range and business type. They are also concerned with the energy use in common facilities viz. elevators, decorative lighting, lounges, basement etc. Many of the commercial consumers are aware of energy auditing but very few have carried out the same in their business premise.

LEARNING AND OUTCOMES OF THE CIMs WITH COMMERCIAL CONSUMERS

The learning and outcomes of the CIMs with commercial consumers are stated below -

Mehsana

- There is a need to form a collective platform and meet often to discuss the issues of improving energy efficiency

- Old machinery is not compatible with RET: replacement will require higher level approval
- On asked that if there is a reduction in the transmission losses why are the consumers not receiving the benefits? The resource person from UGVCL, Kadi taluka responded that the benefit is that the supply of good quality electricity is made available to more numbers of villages and consumers.
- There were questions about how to register complaints?
- Energy audit: It was discussed to be a welcome step rather than a constrictive factor.
- It was also discussed that use of capacitors, design of motors, installation of transformers and similar factors affect efficient energy use.

Ahmedabad

- LED can be used to replace the common lighting systems
- A lot of wastage of energy can be done by adopting AC timers in the shops
- The commercial units have a scope to reduce the electricity use during the lean hours
- Management committee is not concerned about the common services (lighting, lifts, etc.)
- There is a scope for installation of solar PV panels on the outer surface of the buildings that are mirrored.
- The design of the buildings should consider these points and installation of solar or other RET should be included therein. This will increase acceptability. But awareness and collective will is required for proper maintenance of the equipment's.

CIMS WITH SMES

One CIM was organized with SMEs in Kutch. The SME sector in Kutch are still in growing stage and most them are new entrepreneurs. The SMEs are found not much aware about energy issues and concerned too. Still the SMEs appreciated the effort and revealed they came to know about new and important things about energy use in industrial sector.

The learning and outcomes of the CIM with SMEs are as follows -

Kutchh

- Carbon credits and Energy Audits: new information gained
- It was discussed that Capacity building was required for all, those at the top to those at the bottom of the structure. While the top people should know why to adopt such measures, the people at the other layers should be capacitated to welcome the change. There is usually very little communication amongst the different rungs in the companies...we work in individual capacities, do not interact with each other
- It was discussed that by increasing energy efficiency it is possible to decrease the operational costs which again add to the profits

CIMs with CSOs

Four CIMs were conducted with CSOs in four districts namely Ahmedabad, Mahesana Patan and Kutch. In all, 4 CSOs participated in the CIMs of which 37% were covered under the baseline survey. The CSOs were sensitized for the energy issues and appealed to increase their participation in promoting EE and RET and in the electricity regulation process. The major feedback received from the CSOs was that they are concerned with the growing energy demand and its interrelation with overall development process, but are clueless about how to take up it as an issue within their scope of work.

The overall outcomes of the CIMs with CSOs were –

- **NGOs: A CRUCIAL LINK:** The CSOs are a link between the consumers at the grass roots level and the policy makers at the upper levels. The CSOs have the strength to work with the grassroots and understand their issues and to advocate the same with the decision makers. Thus they are best suited to mobilize the end users, create awareness and promote energy efficiency amongst consumers and be the channel of communication to connect with the regulatory and policy making agencies.
- **START WITH SELF:** Lack of adequate information with the CSOs, deficit of technical expertise, limited staff and multifarious issues handled by the CSOs....these affect the quality of the work undertaken by the CSOs.
- **COPING WITH STRUCTURAL CHALLENGES:** In the current times, when the CSOs in Gujarat are increasingly faced with receding funds resulting to resource 'crunch', it becomes difficult for these CSOs to work as per the requirements or felt needs. The need to survive and sustain the NGOs presides over other field requirements. Long term commitment and prioritization is required to work in such an issue, which at times might not be possible for some NGOs.
- **WHERE NGOS FIT IN:** There are large gap in scope of energy saving and actual practice at present. To reduce the same, the CSOs can increase awareness amongst the end users. But before that the CSOs need to build their internal capabilities about the same. For e.g., on Mehsana the scope lies in increasing efficiency of the water lifting pumps and introducing RET in agricultural sector. The CSOs need to be futuristic and steer their work towards these issues so as to be effective, holistic and need based in their responses. They should also be able to see the bigger picture and relate their work with the broader issues. Regular and open discussions on the inter linkages between different aspects of development should consciously happen in the NGOs

OVERALL LEARNING AND OVERVIEW

- **Concern of Consumers:** Consumers are concerned about increasing power and fuel price which is taking toll on their budget and prioritization of expenses. They feel that people around, the lifestyle, the environment around, the climate and weather, everything has changed rapidly over a span of the past few years. That it is man made issue is well understood but what was found to be uniform was the 'shifting the blame attitude'. The rural populace blamed the urban brethren for all woes, the urbanites blame the mushrooming factories and industries for misuse and abuse of resources.
- **Power service quality:** Billing and service related problems still exists especially in rural areas : While Gujarat is being positioned as the 'power hub' yet the quality of services provided is still

dubious in several remote regions of the state, especially in Rural Kutchh (wand vistaar in Rapar) and amongst the farmers in Patan.

- **Lacking in awareness:** Consumers showed interest to know about EE products and RE alternatives: There was very little information about EEPs and RET. That their individual actions can create a change in saving resources was a revelation for many.
- **Scope of RET in Agriculture:** Farmers showed interest in adopting solar pumps. The use of solar pumps amongst the salt pan workers in Surendranagar district was eye opening for many consumers. However they were concerned about the increasing cost of installation with the depreciating water table
- **Energy audit:** This concept, though new for many, was found to be well accepted in SMEs However, availability of qualified Energy Auditors was discussed to be an issue
- **Peoples' Institutions:** SHGs are instrumental in facilitating penetration of EE products and RE appliances. Capacity building of the SHGs and other peoples institutions is an opportune activity.
- **Isolated efforts:** At a personal level, many consumers have been adopting EEPs and RE, but the efforts are isolated and choices made were un-informed. There is a need to identify the same, document and disseminate the learning for wider circulation.
- **Standards, labelling and brands:** These play a significant role in influencing the decision of consumers; however, due to lack of information and awareness, consumers are yet to change their practices.
- **Consumer awareness and participation in regulatory system:** This is nominal and the CSOs have a definite role to increase the visibility of the accredited organizations and peoples' participation in grievance redressal, tariff determination and regulation.
- **Role of Media:** The role of media is very limited in promoting awareness regarding consumer role in grievance redressal and in sharing simple and low cost energy saving tips
- **Local Self Government:** This is a potential rung in promoting DSM measures and RET. A high level of acceptance was found amongst the Gram Panchayats about RET.
- **Scope to work with youths:** Youth, School going children, SHGs are a potential vehicle for inculcating DSM strategies. To bring about long term changes in behaviour, it is essential to start early by making aware the impressionable minds of the children and youth.

Conclusion

The Consumer Interface Meetings provided us with first-hand information about perceptions, concerns and preparedness of consumers to go ahead with the energy issue. The learning of the CIMs has revealed that consumers are by and large are aware of the issue but not much has done in the field. There are some genuine concerns of consumers related to technology, cost, convenience and diversified requirements. The Government and concerned agencies need to listen to the voices of the consumers and work with clear focus on different types of consumers in order to convert concerns to actions.
