

S44/1375

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Sub: Comments and suggestions by CUTS and VIKSAT on the "Draft Policy Document on Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) Phase-II".

Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings!!

In response to the advertisement published on MNRE's website seeking inputs from all stakeholders on the "Draft Policy Document on Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission (JNNSM) Phase-II".

Consumer Unity & Trust Society (CUTS) in partnership with Vikram Sarabhai Centre for Development Interaction (VIKSAT) implemented a project titled "A Diagnostic Study to Build Capacity/ Awareness among CSOs to demand for Demand Side Management & Renewable Energy in India (DREC)". The project was implemented in Gujarat and West Bengal with specific focus on understanding the major bottlenecks in greater uptake of Renewable Energy Technologies (RET) and Energy Efficient Technologies (EETs) in India. Following comments on the JNNSM Phase II policy document are based on the findings from the DREC project

1. Poor quality (in many cases complete absence) of after sales service for solar technologies is a major concern facing purchasers of these technologies, especially in the rural areas. To this end JNNSM-II correctly underlines the need for creating village level technicians. However, the number of such technicians should be increased from mere 25,000 which will be highly insufficient if we consider setting up solar technology repairing shops across all the villages in India. Further, such training should also follow linking the trainees with bank finances so as to ensure that the trainee starts his/her own business in the village and do not migrate to urban centers. It is also important that womenfolks are involved in such trainings since they are less likely to migrate to urban centres.
2. While the JNNSM-II policy document admits the need for setting up off-grid solar projects, it is equally important to ensure their long term sustainability. It is extremely important that experience in the Moushuni island (where two solar projects are at the verge of closure) in Sunderbans are not repeated. The case of Moushuni has been elaborated below -

Moushuni is a small island under Namkhana block in the district of South 24 Parganas. Operationalised from 2003 there are two solar power generation projects in Moushuni – one with the generation capacity of 110 Kw (Baliara Solar Project) another with the generation capacity of 55 KW (Bagdanga solar project). The projects were set up as a result of a joint initiative between the Gram Panchayat and West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency (WBREDA). When the DREC project was first initiated residents in Baliara used to get 5 hours of electricity. After one year, the scenario changed drastically. At present the residents are getting electricity for hardly 2 hours. Two of the major Challenges facing the solar mini grid project are – *firstly*, Majority of the plates have become defunct; and *lastly*, since consumers are getting only two hours of electricity, many are refusing to pay their electricity bills.

We hope that our comments and suggestion that reflects those of the grassroots stakeholders will be favorably considered for inclusion.

With warm regards



Arnab Ganguly
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