

Lesotho Renewable Energy – Based Rural Electrification Project

Lighting up the nation

TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES

ON SOLAR PV

LREBRE held three one day solar Photovoltaic (PV) training workshops for the beneficiaries of solar electricity in the rural communities. The aim of the workshop was to ensure that beneficiaries appreciate this relatively new technology and understand its various components so they can maintain and troubleshoot solar PV system problems in a safe and sustainable manner. The training included an overview of solar PV, health and safety issues, trouble shooting and maintenance.



The project has currently installed 222 PV systems in rural households in the three target districts. The systems are mainly used for lighting, playing radio, TV and charging cell phones.



Beneficiaries are thrilled to have the systems in their homes and the demand has increased tremendously. However, one of the barriers envisioned for the widespread adoption of solar PV in the rural areas is the lack of maintenance and access of necessary information by the beneficiaries. Therefore, the project is mandated to build knowledge on maintenance and troubleshooting of solar systems within the rural communities.

During the official opening, Ms. Tau – the Project Coordinator of LREBRE said the programme was designed through an initiative of the LREBRE project to provide rural beneficiaries with the capacity to maintain a solar PV system in a safe manner.



The workshops were held on the 20th, 21st and 29th April 2009 at the project target districts of Thaba Tseka, Mokhotlong and Qacha's Nek respectively. A total of 59 participants attended, of which Thaba-Tseka was 20, Mokhotlong 21, and Qacha's Nek 18. Some of the decision makers in the three districts also attended. It was facilitated by Ntlafalang Consultants.

The dominating methodologies adopted were demonstrations and participatory approach which proved to be highly beneficial to the participants. A training manual was developed and distributed to those who attended. This training manual will be adopted and used by the project in similar trainings. Pamphlets (user manuals) were designed also for PV system users; they are intended to give basic information on troubleshooting and maintenance to the users of solar systems. One thousand and twenty four (1024) copies of the pamphlets were made of which 264 are in English and 760 in Sesotho. More of them will be reproduced in future. These pamphlets are distributed in the three target districts to all the beneficiaries.

The training was well received by participants; this was evident by their active involvement in activities and their eagerness during the demonstration sessions. A 65 watts solar PV system which is approved and used under the project was demonstrated. The demonstrator mentioned that apparently this system has a life expectancy of between 20 – 30 years while the battery has 3 - 4 years. The trainees said that they benefited greatly from the workshop, which they described as ‘unique and new’ to them.

Mr Moranye demonstrating a 65W PV system



In all the three districts, the training was concluded with closing remarks by the respective Districts Council Secretaries – DCS. In his closing remarks the DCS of Thaba-Tseka, Mr. Rantletse expressed an appreciation on behalf of the participants for the opportunity of attending such an informative workshop. He said “renewable energies, especially solar PV will improve the lives of Basotho and that Lesotho experiences very good and strong sunlight”. He urged the participants to make use of the solar booklets provided to them, and not withhold the information from their fellow community members.

Source: Communications and Training
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