



CAPACITY BUILDING FOR THE ENERGY TRANSITION

A transition to clean energy will not just be about energy; it will be a transition to sustainability. Business-as-usual cannot go on in a sustainable economy. So institutional transformation and capacity building for sustainable development is imperative. It will entail broad and varied activities cutting across all sectors of the economy. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) describes capacity building as "building abilities, relationships and values that will enable organisations, groups and individuals to improve their performance and achieve their development objectives." Capacity building also involves initiating and sustaining a process of individual and organisational change spanning government institutions, the private sector, and the civil society. The UNEP document emphasises three aspects: a) capacity building as a catalyst and a constant fuel for the process of change; b) the importance of building both individual and institutional capacity; and c) involvement of a wide range of different groups in society.

The first step in capacity building is a carefully conducted needs assessment. But before doing this, it is important to assess the already existing capacity in terms of the work done, structures, and institutional settings. A careful evaluation of the impact and lessons of past and ongoing capacity building programmes, if any, is required. After that, a needs assessment study should be done for setting priorities and designing programmes. The most important questions to be addressed are as follows. What capacities should be built? For whom? In which areas or on what topics? For what objectives? Once these questions are answered, the task becomes easier. At the institutional level, capacity building involves creating new institutions or new units within existing institutions geared for accelerating the transition, transforming existing institutions through organisational development, re-training or skill-upgrading of existing staff, and bringing in new talent capable of leading the transition.

First and foremost, capacity building should begin in the Karnataka Renewable Energy Development Ltd (KREDL), the state nodal agency (SNA), and the electricity utilities in Karnataka. Then, of course, a variety of allied departments and organisations like the industry department and its undertakings, agriculture department, irrigation department, etc., will have to be re-oriented. This multi-faceted activity should attain top priority. For the purposes of this feature, however, we will emphasise only on the key state nodal agency in Karnataka i.e. KREDL.

The New Role of SNAs: SNAs in India were originally set up to implement off-grid renewable energy programmes in the respective states. To begin with, this was done under a centrally funded programme called the Integrated Renewable Energy Programme. So, when grid-connected renewable energy projects began to be installed with the commercialisation of wind power, biomass power, and small hydro power, most SNAs were not prepared for this transition. However, over the years, grid-connected renewables have emerged as an important and necessary activity on account of three main reasons: energy security (due to impending depletion of fossil fuels), price volatility of fossil fuels, and climate mitigation. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw the gradual and undeniable emergence of renewables as a grid-connected power generation option. India already has over 22.4 GW of generation in the country and 50 billion units of electricity generation. Wind power, with over 15.9 GW of installed capacity leads the way. In view of this transition in the character of RE development, SNAs have to take on so many new functions, important among them being:

- Implementation of grid-connected renewables in a big way (resource assessment, project approvals, grid planning, monitoring of implementation, market development, etc).
- Function as nodal agency for renewable energy certificates (RECs).
- Monitoring of RPO/RPS compliance.
- Nodal agency for energy efficiency.
- Accounting for voluntary emissions reductions.
- Coordination of biofuel development and other alternative fuels.

Capacity Building of KREDL: As the first step, Government of Karnataka may consider capacity building and strengthening of KREDL. In fact, WISE was employed by the Karnataka government to undertake a study for this purpose, which is completed. It is a comprehensive study covering human resources, provision and development, infrastructure requirements, financial management, ten-year business and RE development plan, policy and regulatory reforms, procedural improvements, etc. Such a comprehensive approach to restructuring and strengthening KREDL will contribute greatly to effective and accelerated development of renewables in Karnataka.