



SDF and UNDP to jointly implement projects

STAFF REPORTER

The SAARC Development Fund (SDF) and UNDP will collaborate in implementing two projects in the region, according to an SDF press release.

The two organisations will implement the Economic Empowerment of Women through Energy Access in Mountain Countries of South Asia project. The objective of this project is to empower women in the mountainous regions of South Asia (specifically in Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Pakistan) through access to sustainable energy services to contribute towards achieving the goals of economic empowerment of women while simultaneously targeting better health, and gender equality.

“Clean energy services for electrical, thermal and mechanical applications will catalyse livelihood activities to reduce poverty and improve quality of life among women, thus empowering them economically,” the press release states. The project’s focus is to go beyond providing access to sustainable, reliable and affordable modern energy services for cooking, heating, illumination, and mechanical power for water pumping.

The project is expected to reduce time-poverty for women, through access to more efficient, renewable energy services, which will allow them to participate in economic activities that empower, enhance women’s role in the energy supply chain as energy end-users (at household and enterprise levels) as well as energy suppliers and promote women’s

health, for instance, by linking them with clean cooking energy technologies and access to better health service centres

SDF has committed USD 3.1 million (M) for 50 percent of the total budget of USD 6.2 million in the form of financial co-funding. The project is aimed at 11,840 households, 50 women entrepreneurs and 500 community members as direct beneficiaries and 121,317 persons and 150 women entrepreneurs as indirect beneficiaries.

The project is expected to ensure gender equality by demonstrating Energy-Plus innovations through community participation; strengthen women’s role in mountainous areas, in the energy supply chain as energy users (at household and enterprise level) as well as energy suppliers; promote women’s health by linking them with clean energy technologies/fuels and access to better health service centres; develop initiatives that are inclusive and integrate with the region’s gender and economic development programmes.

The second project the two organisations will collaborate on is titled Support to Value Chain development, Entrepreneurship and Skill Development and Improved Connectivity.

“This is a unique and innovative project which adopts a regional approach to enhance economic opportunities for MSMEs through value chain development, entrepreneurship and skill building in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka,” the press release states.

In and across six SAARC

member countries UNDP country offices will work together closely on removing bottlenecks and barriers for vulnerable populations to increase their access to social protection, financial inclusion, enterprise development and skill building. More specifically, the project will aim to achieve enhancing capacity of vulnerable communities specifically economically and socially marginalised groups in the region to enable them to benefit from increased trade and economic activities, develop core economic niches in specific regions of SAARC countries through development of value chains for products, goods and services among SAARC countries; providing customised training on entrepreneurship, skill development, export facilitation to MSME in the region; support to existing and potential entrepreneurs in areas of access to finance, innovation incubation, sourcing of raw materials, technology upgradation, and product and market diversification.

SDF has committed USD 7.8M for 50 percent of the total budget of USD 15.7M in the form of financial co-funding. The project is aimed to target 163,400 persons as direct beneficiaries in the components of social protection, financial inclusion, SME export capacity strengthening and market improvement (under social and economic programme) and at least 0.5 million people as indirect beneficiaries.

The project will assist to implement the Sustainable Development Goals and achieve the following targets: end poverty in all its forms everywhere, ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions, promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation, and reduce inequality within and among countries.