

## **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy**

**Launching of the 'National Biomass Cookstove Initiative' on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2009 at New Delhi**

### **PRESS RELEASE**

#### **A New Initiative on Improved Biomass Cookstoves**

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is launching a new initiative on biomass cookstoves, with the primary aim of enhancing the availability of clean and efficient energy for the energy deficient and poorer sections of our society.

A large section of our country's population – 75% of the rural households and 22% of the urban households, according to the National Sample Survey's 61<sup>st</sup> survey -- still uses biomass for its cooking needs. An estimated 80% of the residential energy in India comes from biomass, much of it burnt in traditional chulhas. The adverse health and socio-economic implications of this form of energy supply are enormous, with women and children at particular risk. The burden of biomass fuel collection and processing for cooking also falls mainly upon women and children (mainly girls), who spend significant time gathering fuel resources every day.

Therefore, providing a clean cooking energy option for these households will yield enormous gains in terms of health and socio-economic welfare of the weakest and the most vulnerable sections of society. At the same time, the cleaner combustion in these devices will greatly reduce the products of incomplete combustion which are greenhouse pollutants, thus helping combat climate change.

This initiative of MNRE is envisaged to be structured differently from the earlier National Programme on Improved Chulhas, although it will build on the several successes of that programme while also drawing lessons from the experience gained from its implementation.

The starting point of the current exercise is the user. The solution on offer should, first and foremost, be easy to use and maintain and conform to local cooking habits across the country. Its adoption must make economic sense to the household. The programme is conceived not as a handout to poorer households, but rather as an economically sustainable business solution. As the Prime Minister of India has often said, we need to make the poor of this country bankable.

This new initiative is also based on the recognition that that cookstove technology has improved considerably in the past few years. But further advances are still possible and, indeed essential. Our aim is to achieve quality of energy services from cookstoves comparable to that from other clean energy sources such as LPG.

MNRE has held several brainstorming sessions and consultations over the past few months with a range of stakeholders and experts from civil society, academia, business, and government to develop an understanding of current activities and future potential of such a programme. The Prime Minister's Office has been closely associated with these deliberations.

Under this Initiative a series of pilot-scale projects are envisaged using several existing commercially-available and better cookstoves and different grades of processed biomass fuels. This will help in exploring a range of technology deployment, biomass processing, and delivery models leveraging public-private partnerships.

At the same time, it will set in motion a series of activities that are designed to develop the next-generation of household cookstoves, biomass-processing technologies, and deployment models. This may include an innovative global contest to develop combustion units with high thermal efficiency and low pollution characteristics and, in parallel, appropriate biomass-processing devices. The Initiative will aim for a significant enhancement of technical capacity in the country by setting up state-of-the-art testing, certification and monitoring facilities and strengthening R&D programmes in key technical institutions. An independent monitoring and evaluation component is envisaged to assess the activities and fine-tune them on an ongoing basis. And, last but not the least, it will welcome and promote participation by civil society and private actors to make it a true public-private partnership.

MNRE also believes that the technologies and delivery models that will be developed through this Initiative will be useful for other developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America whose populations also suffer from health and other problems related to biomass use in household cooking. Therefore success of this Initiative could well have a transformative impact not only for our own citizens but also for the energy poor in other developing countries.