

NGO Network Support for Renewable Energy

Location

Brazil

Problem

Lack of institutional support for the promotion of renewable energy.

People

Non-governmental organizations involved in renewable energy

Solution

Formation of National Network of Civic Organizations for Renewable Energy (RENOVE) to increase the production and use of clean and efficient energy in Brazil.

Timeframe

2000 to present

Results

Support and networking of Brazilian NGOs engaged in RE-related activities; support for policies promoting the use of RE; support for RE projects; policy dialogue with legislative and executive branches of government.

In July 2000, eighteen non-governmental organizations (NGOs) convened in Bahia to establish the National Network of Civic Organization for Renewable Energy (RENOVE). RENOVE was created by Winrock International Brazil and its partners with USAID/EGAT support, and later further developed under the USAID-Brazil Mission's Brazil Clean and Efficient Energy Program (BCEEP). Since its inception, RENOVE has grown to include 32 Brazilian non-profit entities (NGOs and universities) engaged in rural development, specifically in such essential activities as energy, health, education, management and natural resources preservation, eco-tourism, fishing, fruit drying, craftwork, gender, capacity building, leadership and human development.

RENOVE's objectives are to share the individual strengths and experiences of its members to promote the use of renewable energy (RE) in improving quality of life for rural communities in Brazil. RENOVE provides key support to further the role of RE in rural development by providing training and capacity building; encouraging formulation of public policies for RE use; providing technical assistance and disseminating the findings, lessons learned and results; identifying RE credit lines and supporting fundraising for sustainable projects for social and economic productive uses of RE.

For the first time, at least in political and institutional spheres, RE is now considered a viable alternative to diversify the national energy portfolio. It is now seen as a more efficient way to supply energy to remote rural communities far from the grid. As a result of RENOVE's efforts a series of legislative and regulatory mechanisms have been proposed or adopted to improve RE technology utilization. These include the

provision of secure, long-term federal power contracts, the introduction of subsidies for solar, wind, biomass and small hydro power plants and the introduction of a more aggressive renewable energy national portfolio standard. Partnerships catalyzed via the RENOVE network have led to the development of several RE projects, including solar-powered water pumping systems in five communities in the Mamirauá Sustainable Development Protection Zone and an organic agriculture farm in the state of Ceará. The projects are co-funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Science and Technology, through the National Science and Technology Development Council and by the British Embassy.

RENOVE is working with the national electric power regulatory agency, the Ministry of Mines and Energy and other governmental agencies to establish standards and reduce regulatory barriers for decentralized RE. Important modifications to Brazil's most important RE law have been proposed that reflect

contributions from RENOVE to facilitate the purchase of large-scale grid-connected RE systems and eliminate certain obstacles to the development of small (<1 MW) hydro facilities. The Brazilian Congress has invited RENOVE to participate in a nationwide dialogue on social aspects of the country's emerging biodiesel program.

RENOVE will continue its policy work in 2004 and increase emphasis on capacity building within the network. The United Nations Development Programme has already expressed possible interest in funding some of this work. RENOVE's future looks bright as this vibrant advocate of renewable energy in Brazil continues to develop innovative solutions to address energy needs nationwide.



RENOVE member "Health and Joy" uses music to engage Amazonian children in educational activities.