

Biogas for northern Bangladesh

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur
Infrastructure Development Company Ltd (IDCOL), German Technical Co-operation (gtz) and Grameen Shakti have expedited activities to increase the number of biogas plants for renewable energy in the Northern region.

IDCOL, a government owned investment company, has fixed a target to set up 37,669 biogas plants in Bangladesh by 2012, under its National Domestic Biogas and Manure programme (NDBMP). It has also set a target to set up 25 percent of the total target of biogas plants in the northern region, which is yet to be brought under the national gas grid.

Nazmul Hoque Foysal, senior programme manager of IDCOL, said in a seminar recently, "We have achieved almost 60 percent of the target in the northern region. We hope we'll fulfill the target in next two years."

Both IDCOL and gtz, in collaboration with their partner organisations, are setting up the biogas plants in the eight northern districts.

Though Grameen Shakti is a partner of IDCOL, it has its own biogas programme.

Other partners of IDCOL, which are working under NDBMP, include Development of Poor (DOP) and Gram Bikash Kendra.

Foysal said Grameen Shakti is a major partner of IDCOL, which set up 1,652 biogas plants in the eight northern districts since 2006. Each of these plants is capable of producing 1.6 to 4.8 cubic metres of biogas.

The construction of a biogas plant that can produce 1.6 cubic metres to 4.8 cubic metres of biogas costs about Tk 25,000. IDCOL donates Tk 9,000 for each plant. The beneficiary spends 25 percent of the total cost. The partner NGO that helps with construction spends the rest of the money. As per contract, the beneficiary will have to refund the money taken from the NGO in instalments.

Grameen Shakti Rangpur Divisional Manager Delwar Hossain said Grameen Shakti targets to set up 100 biogas plants every month in the region.

"We set up 350 large biogas plants that are capable of producing 6 cubic metre to 30 cubic metres of biogas. This is Grameen Shakti's own model. Grameen Shakti and the users themselves funded construction of the plants."

There is a biogas plant constructed by Grameen Shakti at Parbotipur market, he said. Using biogas from the plant, Parbotipur municipality produces electricity that is being supplied to eight shops in the market.

Hossain said, "Wastage from the market, including blood from the slaughter houses and chicken litter, are damped in a chamber. These are used to produce biogas to operate the generators."

Parbotipur Municipality Mayor Minhajul Islam said eight shopkeepers in the market do not



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A generator lights up a poultry shed in the northern district of Rangpur. People in the region now opt for biogas to produce electricity.

have to worry about electricity as they can use biogas to run the generator continuously.

There are eight big biogas plants in Lalmonirhat district, each of which also produces 30 cubic metres of biogas. Generators using biogas from these plants are producing electricity, said Hossain.

Nurul Islam of Mohendranagar in Lalmonirhat sader upazila said he constructed 8 biogas plants by using the litter from his poultry farm that has 62,000 birds. Using

the biogas, he runs a generator to light the poultry shed. The workers of the poultry farm cook food by lighting a fire by using the biogas, he added.

"I also have plans to set up more generators to produce electricity for a husking mill."

Foysal of IDCOL said reduction of workloads, especially for women; improvement of health and sanitation conditions; increase in agriculture production with proper utilisation of slurry; employment generation;

protection of conventional fuel sources; and reduction of greenhouse emission are also their objectives.

Programme Officer of gtz ANM Zobayer in the same seminar said, "gtz generally gives support for construction of big biogas plant. We are yet to construct any in the northern district but we have contacts with Kazi and Kazi of Thakurgaon to construct a big biogas plant."

The objective of the programme is to further develop

and disseminate biogas plants with an ultimate goal to establish a sustainable and commercial biogas sector in Bangladesh."

He said gtz, through its partner organisations, has been trying to increase the number of biogas plants of 6 cubic metres each since 2005 across Bangladesh.

gtz is giving training and technology support to its partner organisations to set up biogas plants for renewable energy.

"Using the biogas, he runs a generator to light the poultry shed. The workers of the poultry farm cook food by lighting a fire by using the biogas"



Garment scraps head for Western living rooms at Christmas

AFP, Hatibandha, Bangladesh

Every year, Bangladesh's garment sector produces billions of dollars worth of high-street clothes for major western brands -- and generates mountains of fabric offcuts in the process.

While an informal recycling sector has sprung up to deal with the scraps of leftover jeans and T-shirts churned out by the country's 4,500 garment factories, it produces only low-value products for domestic consumption.

But one Bangladeshi entrepreneur

has found a new, more lucrative way of dealing with the estimated 100,000 tonnes of scrap fabric the garment sector produces each year: making rag-rugs for export.

The rags produced by the garment factories are seen as worthless waste but I saw that they could be a way to build a business -- then Kik picked up my products and everything started to take off," Tauhid Bin Salam told AFP.

Tauhid set up his company, Classical Handmade Products Bangladesh, in 2008 and has

now built it into a successful business with an annual turnover of 80 million taka (1.2 million dollars) and a workforce of 530, mostly women. Tauhid's first buyer, German company Kik Textilien, is one of Europe's largest textile discounter with a presence in six European countries. It primarily sources its low-cost goods in China and Bangladesh. His four factories are stretched across the impoverished north of Bangladesh, where non-agricultural work is scarce and his rag-rug factories provide a valuable source of

jobs, especially for rural women.

Traditional garment waste processing units tend to be concentrated in Dhaka, where nearly 11,000 people are believed to work in the informal sector, recycling garment factory waste into cheap clothes for domestic sale.

Tauhid's factories are now producing some 80,000 rugs a month, all of which are exported and sold in Germany, where Kik is preparing for the usual Christmas surge in sales at its stores.

"We are now planning to increase the volume of our orders and begin selling those rag-rugs in other European countries such as Austria and Slovenia," Petra Katzenberger, Kik's corporate social responsibility manager, told AFP.

The rugs have proved a big hit in Germany, as they are cheap, unique, handmade and environmentally-friendly, said Daniel Seidl from the Bangladesh German Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Nearly three percent of all Germans now own one of these rugs," Seidl told AFP, adding that this was about two million people.

Tauhid uses only 100-percent cotton scraps from the best quality clothes to produce his rugs, saying that the company could easily expand as there is so much scrap waste to use up thanks to Bangladesh's booming garment sector.

Fabric scraps are collected in huge bales from garment factories, taken to Tauhid's factories where they are sorted into different colours and trimmed into long, thin strips of cloth.

These strips of cloth are then woven by hand into rugs using a traditional wooden hand loom, and while the size -- 60 cm by 90 cm (about two feet by three feet) -- is uniform, each rug's pattern is unique.

"Every year, a large garment factory will produce enough scrap material to make one million rugs," Tauhid said.

There are up to 600 large garment factories in Bangladesh -- defined as a factory which employs over 1,000 people -- out of a total 4,500 factories overall.



Women make handloom rugs in a factory in Hatibandha. There are up to 600 large garment factories in Bangladesh -- defined as a factory which employs over 1,000 people -- out of a total 4,500 factories overall



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