

## Exposure Visit to TARAurja site to Shivpura, Balrampur

Society for Development Alternatives is implementing a project on "emPowering" rural communities through decentralised renewable energy systems with support from the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) India. Development Alternatives is piloting a women's collective-led "Urja Mandala" (Energy Constellation) model to demonstrate the catalytic role of renewable energy in the sustainable socio-economic growth of rural communities through the productive use of renewable energy.

An exposure visit conducted as part of the project included members of Virangana Lakshmbai Mahila Kisan Producer Company Ltd. from Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh, who visited TARAurja's Solar Mini Grid site in Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh. They were accompanied by teams from Development Alternatives and Transforming Rural India Foundation (TRIF) to gain a first-hand understanding of the overall functioning and management of a Solar Mini Grid site.



Members of Virangana Lakshmbai Mahila Kisan Producer Company Ltd. at TARAurja's Solar Mini Grid site in Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh.

The 60 kW solar mini-grid site where the visit took place was developed in 2014 by TARAurja, an entity of Development Alternatives Group, and it is currently supplying green energy to 165 enterprises. Mr Shivam Tiwari, a representative from TARAurja, guided the participants through the solar mini-grid and provided a detailed explanation of its overall functioning, management and technical specifications. The participants learned about solar panels, their positioning, and the importance of solar energy going forward. It helped the women's collective get an in-depth understanding of the operations of the solar mini-grid plant, including the generation, storage and distribution of solar energy.

The women members displayed a high level of enthusiasm and interest in the operations and management of mini-grids. They inquired about the number of staff responsible for handling the mini-grid, the challenges encountered while setting up the site, the strategies used to persuade clients, and the revenue generated from the mini-grid. The team addressed all their queries, providing insightful information about the challenges and project success. Additionally, the women members also inquired about the current TARAurja electricity packages, including one-time charges and a security deposit. They acknowledged the importance of offering discounts and incentives to encourage more customers to use renewable energy.



The team and members from Virangana Lakshmbai Mahila engaging with the entrepreneurs

After touring the plant, there were interactive sessions with the local entrepreneurs who have been using solar energy from the plant to garner an understanding of how the process works from their perspectives. The interactions centred around topics such as electricity bill payments, load demands,

types of businesses supported, mode of payment for paying electricity bills, and the power supplier's package options. They were also delighted to learn that 165 enterprises were connected to this grid, demonstrating the high demand and potential market for renewable energy in Shivpura.

Overall, the exposure visit to the TARAurja site at Shivpura, Balrampur, was an enriching experience for the Virangana Lakshmibai Mahila Kisan members and the local team. It empowered the participants with the knowledge and sparked interest among the women members, demonstrated their eagerness to explore and support renewable energy initiatives in their communities.