

Inauguration of the first women-led solar mini-grid in Mihinpurwa, Uttar Pradesh



Snippets from the launch

Development Alternatives, in collaboration with Transform Rural India, recently inaugurated a pioneering 60kWp solar mini-grid in Mihinpurwa, Bahraich, Uttar Pradesh. The launch on January 27th marked a significant milestone, unveiling a first-of-its-kind women-led renewable energy project in the region. The project is set to benefit over 700 individuals within its first year of operation, with the potential to create a positive ripple effect on a much larger scale.

The primary motivation behind this project lies in addressing the prevalent reliance on expensive and environmentally harmful diesel gensets, which currently power 75% of enterprises in rural India. The women-led decentralised renewable energy system is a game-changer, offering a clean and affordable alternative to micro-entrepreneurs, particularly those in the local carpentry market in Mihinpurwa. Urja Mandala - energy constellation model shows the potential of a Private-Public-Community partnership, with women at the forefront of decision-making and implementation. The Urja Mandala not only provides a sustainable energy solution but also serves as a model for inclusivity, equity, and empowerment in the broader context of green energy transition.

At this initiative is the Virangana Urja Mandala Mahila Samiti (VUMMS), a special purpose committee comprising 16 women from the registered entity Virangana Laxmibai Mahila Kisan Farmer Producer Company. VUMMS will own, operate, and manage the Mihinpurwa Urja Mandala, showcasing the potential of women-led cooperatives in driving impactful change at the grassroots level.

The soft launch event also provided an opportunity for the women's collective to share their vision of Urja Mandala and inform entrepreneurs about the benefits of solar-powered electricity. One of the entrepreneurs from Badhai Mandi, who recently joined as a customer, shared his views on how solar energy will enable him to purchase new tools for his business, ultimately leading to increased business opportunities.

The Energy Transition for Rural emPowerment programme is supported by the Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation and reflects a commitment to promoting sustainable development by transitioning away from traditional, polluting energy sources to cleaner and more accessible alternatives. The Mihinpurwa Urja Mandala not only addresses the immediate energy needs of the community but also contributes to a larger vision of fostering economic growth and environmental

sustainability. By offering a viable and scalable solution to the energy challenges faced by micro-entrepreneurs, the project serves as a beacon for future sustainable development efforts in rural areas.

With the launch of this women-led solar mini-grid, it becomes clear that empowering women is not just a social imperative but a key driver for transformative change. The Urja Mandala model stands as a shining example of how collaborative efforts, driven by diverse stakeholders, can create a more just and green energy landscape, laying the foundation for a sustainable and inclusive future in rural India.

