

PRESS RELEASE

ERIA brings New Knowledge and Good Practices on Sustainable Energy Development to Lao PDR

Vientiane, 28 November 2014



ERIA together with Ministry of Energy and Mines, organized a Capacity Building Seminar “*New Understandings and Some Best International Lessons on Energy Development towards Sustainability*” in Vientiane on 28th November, 2014.

About 150 mid-senior government officials from across the country participated in the seminar, designed to share good practices from Asia and beyond as lessons learned for its applicability to Lao PDR.

The seminar was officially inaugurated by H.E. Dr. Bounthavy Sisouphanthong, Vice-Minister of Planning and Investment, who in his opening remarks stressed the need for Lao PDR to embark into new developmental paradigm as it faces a diverse, but unique set of economic, social and energy challenges. He appreciated the efforts of ERIA in generating new knowledge and bring in lessons from best international practices.

Dr. Venkatachalam Anbumozhi, Senior Energy Economist at ERIA welcomed the participants and explained objectives of the seminar arguing that rigorous evidence based analysis on best practices is critical for sustainable energy development and reducing the gap between growing demand and diminishing supply at national and regional levels. Dr. Daovong Phoneko, Director General of Department of Energy Policy Planning, in his remarks thanked ERIA in organizing the seminar to share the new knowledge and stated energy security concerns are rooted in the inescapable need for sustainable development in Lao PDR.

Divided into three technical sessions, the seminar focused on renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency improvement and electricity business. The first session on New and Renewable energy technologies was moderated by Prof. Wongkot Wongsapai of Chinagmai University. Four case studies on biofuel and energy security (Dr. V. Anbumozhi, ERIA), Biogas from Agriculture and Urban Waster (Prof. Pruk Aggarangsi, Chiangmai University), Biomass

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Synesthetic Fuel (Prof. Wongkot Wongsapai, Chiangmai University) and Solar PV technologies and Small Hydro (Prof. Det Damrongsak, Chiangmai University). They brought out the point that the region is well endowed with renewable energy resources that have increasing potential as the technologies for harnessing them improve. A key barrier remains the issue of how to reconcile the high initial costs of such technologies with the challenge of affordability, both at an individual level and country level. The need for rational pricing results in the already low-cost conventional energy forms being made cheaper for the millions of poor –making the large-scale use of new and renewable energy a daunting task.

The second session on energy efficiency and oil security was moderated by Mr. Shimpei Yamamoto, the Managing Director of Research, ERIA. Four country cases on Lao PDR (Mr. Kahmso Kouphokham, Ministry of Energy and Mines), Japan (Mr. Takayuki Kusajima, Toyota Motor Corporation), Thailand (Prof. Thongchai Fongsamootr, Chiangmai University) and Malaysia (Dr. Siew Meng Leong, Green Tech Solutions) were introduced as a show case of nation-wide effort to enhance energy efficiency and attain oil security. Their analysis on activities under fuel efficiency, energy audit, education for conservation, green buildings, suggested that there are well developed practices, institutions and technical capabilities to provide the environment for fast-track introduction of innovative approaches for energy efficiency enhancement. However, some other initiatives such as introduction of market based mechanisms are hampered by the smallness of the markets.

Mr. Kahmso Kouphokham, Deputy Director General, Ministry of Policy and Planning Lao PDR moderated the last technical session on Electricity Business. Energy Economist of ERIA Drs. Han Phumin, and Yenfei Li presented the cases of Clean Coal Technologies and Renewable Energy respectively. From their point of view, the flow of financing from public and private sources, be it through market based mechanisms or through financial intermediaries in the form of grants, soft loans, aid, etc are of the paramount importance for the wider absorption of those technological and business models. Access to finance is further restricted by the lack of knowledge among the project developers on the cost of such technologies.

Prof. Hidetoshi Nishimura, the Executive Director of ERIA wrapped up the day's proceedings with a summary of all sessions and interactive discussions. Closely looking at the importance of new and renewable energy technologies, innovations in energy efficiency and new business models, in the national and regional context, he assured the participants of enhanced role of ERIA in strengthening the policy making capacity of Lao PDR in all appropriate ways.

About ERIA:

ERIA is an international organization based in Jakarta. Since its founding in 2008, ERIA, through its research, supports the ASEAN economic integration process in ASEAN member countries. As the leading economic think tank in the Region and the Sherpa institution for the ASEAN Summit process (including the East Asia Summit), ERIA's research has influenced the policy-making process in the Region and has facilitated the goal of realizing an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015.

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