

Welcome Address

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Mr Chairman, Distinguished Guests, Ladies, Gentleman and Colleagues

I consider it a great privilege and a honour to warmly welcome our guests and resource persons from a number of Asian countries who have accepted our invitation to attend this workshop in Sri Lanka. We are indeed fortunate and consider it a great honour to have Dr Pandey with us as a resource person who is an internationally recognised and respected personality and a pioneer researcher in the field of indoor pollution and health. We also welcome the ARECOP team from Indonesia led by the agile and hard working Christina Aristatnti. We are grateful to Christina for giving this opportunity of holding this workshop in Sri Lanka, which also indicate the recognition of our commitment and the work we have done in the field of kitchen improvement. Mr. Auke Kuupmann is no stranger to us. He has been associated with biomass energy projects in Sri Lanka since 1985. He is also a person who has done great service to the development of Biomass energy in the Asian region while he was the CTA of the FAO/RWEDP. WE are happy to see you back in Sri Lanka.

In this workshop we focus on the role of the kitchen which plays a major role in sustaining the quality of life of the people. Any project related to the kitchen focuses on the vital linkage of woman, firewood, and the stove in carrying out their important functions in the development of the society. Considering the multi-functional developmental role played by the kitchen, any development intervention related to the kitchen encompasses and addresses poverty and gender concerns, energy shortages, health and environment improvement, domestic and rural income generation activities,

housing and a host of other development issues. Unfortunately the conventional development thinking does not recognise the vital role played by the kitchen in the society and therefore does not incorporate or accommodate any activity to facilitate the improvement of the kitchen in their development strategy. For example do we have any strategy to meet the firewood demand in the future and to mitigate drudgery experienced by the women in collecting and using firewood. The WHO in the 2002 report reveals that wood smoke is the 4th highest risk factor in mortality and morbidity in the Asian region. What plans do we have to meet this challenge which effects mainly poor women and children.

The role played by the kitchen facilitated by the linkage of stove, woman and firewood is grossly undervalued and unrecognised.

The following chart gives some positive and negative characteristics of a kitchen which calls for interventions ,

- Characteristics of a Kitchen
(The need for a Development Focus)**
- The kitchen accounts for nearly 52% of the total energy consumption in Sri Lanka.
 - About 88% of the kitchens use firewood for cooking.
 - Almost 90% of energy used in the kitchen are from firewood.
 - Stores food, water and related equipment.
 - Enables the important function of cooking which contribute towards quality of life of the people
 - Generates and stores waste, garbage and poison.
 - Women and Children spend most of the time in the kitchen.
 - Allows socialising inside the kitchen.
 - Maintains cultural and traditional practices.
 - Creates unhealthy environment and drudgery.

It is indeed beyond reason how development planners and other concerned people could ignore and play down the role played by the woman and kitchen in development of a society. But unfortunately it is so.

We in the developing countries use almost ten times less energy than the developed countries. Although it is not desirable to ape the west characterised by over consumption and pollution, we still need to consume more energy to sustain a reasonable quality of life. Let this energy be renewable, indigenous and unpolluting which also promotes self reliance in energy. Therefore biomass could still be the major source of energy in the future in many developing countries. However there is a need to improve biomass technologies which make biomass more attractive and convenient to the users thus removing the drudgery associated with biomass use.

I earnestly hope that this workshop will not be confined to an academic or an intellectual exercise or a holiday but will lead to initiating or improving concrete and practical interventions in improving the kitchens in your own countries. This is an important occasion not only because it provides a rare opportunity to share and learn from each other's experiences but also because it has brought together experts from several professional backgrounds to focus on a neglected topic. I have no doubt this workshop will provide ammunition to fulfil your objectives of participation.

However the seriousness of your work at the workshop should not deprive you of enjoying the beautiful beaches around the hotel and I hope the field trip will provide the opportunity to learn more about Srilanka and take back sweet memories.

Thank You