

# Lighting up lives

Tata Power's Akshay Urja Deep project is a one of its kind project wherein, the company provides for installed green solutions i.e. tailor made solar lighting systems for fishermen's boats, near the port city of Gujarat...



With power comes great responsibility. Proving this adage true, Coastal Gujarat Power Limited (CGPL), Tata Power's wholly-owned subsidiary, has been carrying out a number of community development projects around the 4000 MW (800 x 5 units) ultra mega power project (UMPP) near the port city of Mundra in the state of Gujarat. This UMPP is India's first 800 MW unit thermal power plant using supercritical technology, set up as an energy-efficient, coal-based thermal power plant in the country.

With the objective of safeguarding the livelihood of the villagers, the company has undertaken project 'Akshay Urja Deep' where the company installed green solutions i.e. tailor made solar lighting systems in the fishermen's boats. It was observed that due to insufficient lighting at sea and in the fishing boats, fishermen were compelled to avail loans at high interest rates to be able to afford the high costs of kerosene lanterns, better quality boats and other equipments. The company took timely heed to the fishermen's plight with regard to the lack of modernized equipment and proper infrastructure, and kickstarted project Akshay Urja Deep. The struggles were further eased by CGPL

in partnership with Tata Power Solar System Limited and Tata Power Community Development Trust (TPCDDT). The solar lights fitted in the boats are stand-alone systems, which require minimal maintenance. The Akshay Urja Deep programme has received administrative recognition from the Government of Gujarat and the same has been administratively endorsed by the office of the Commissioner of Fisheries Gujarat state. Approximately 325 fishermen and 100 boat owners have benefitted and it is expected that the programme will increase the productivity and income of the fishermen. The decrease in the debt of villagers with the provision of solar boat light has resulted in a saving of nearly Rs 1000 to 2000 per month per villager which was earlier being spent on fuel. Besides monetary benefits, the initiative also has mitigated health risks and resulted in environmental benefits due to the replacement of kerosene lamps and generation of electricity without pollution. The company claims that it has also contributed to the objective of the National Solar Mission by setting up an enabling environment for solar technology penetration in the country. Following the success of Akshay Urja deep

phase I project, Tata Power, through CGPL launched phase II, wherein, 131 boat owners residing temporarily at Tragadi Bunder were identified and provided with solar boat light systems in order to help them better earn their livelihood. After successful completion of Phase I which benefitted more than 65 boat owners at Modhva, a team of Tata Power analyzed and discussed the requirements of the local fishermen, post which phase II of this initiative was initiated. The company also trains the local fishermen to efficiently utilize and maintain solar boat lights. Among the renewable

of Modhva fishing hamlet to enhance their fish catch through better fishing nets and fishing equipments. Due to the constant wear and tear, fishermen are required to change their nets twice in a season which turns out to be an expensive affair. Under this program, the company provided technical inputs for better fishing practices, which have resulted in a high quality of fish catch, thereby increasing the fishermen's income.

Additionally, AKSRP in association with CGPL and VDAC has been working towards the development of fishing infrastructure for fishing as an occupation and



sources of energy, solar energy has a huge potential in Gujarat, which receives 5.5 to 6kwh/sqmt/day with 300-320 sunny days/year. This is the second largest amount for solar power generation in India. The solar lighting system is an ideal lighting solution for boats, mainly in remote sections where grid power is not reliable. The project is being backed by the technological support of Tata Power Solar Systems, a Tata Power company.

Speaking on the initiatives undertaken by the company for the fishermen community, Mr Anil Sardana, Managing Director- Tata Power stated, "It is Tata Power's endeavour to improve the quality of life of its communities and we are proud to drive such initiatives for the well-being of the community. We aim towards social mobilization of the fishermen community through sustained educational initiatives. The success of the initiatives undertaken motivates us to contribute further to this cause. We would also like to thank the government of Gujarat and all our partners in their unrelenting support and guidance to achieve our goal of community development."

Over and above these initiatives, the company also boasts of providing livelihood support to 467 fishermen

diversification of livelihood options. Before initiating the activities, a systematic value chain analysis study was carried out by Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) at Modhva under the project. The objective of this study was to analyze the fisheries value chain for fisheries in Kutch at macro level to integrate and develop the value chain for fisher folks of Modhva village of Mandvi Taluka to improve the livelihood of the community. CGPL has also partnered with Fisheries Management Resource Centre (FishMARC), an NGO which comprises of recognized sectoral experts with decades of experience in cooperative institution building among marine fishing communities.

This association aims to ensure sustainability of traditional livelihood of the fisher folk. The core component of the project is cooperative institution building among the traditional artisanal marine fishing communities. It is aimed at releasing the fishing families from the grip of debt and helping them improve their earnings and enhance their quality of life.

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