

**Country**

India

**Implementation period**

2003-2005

**EC co-financing**

€ 131.038,00

**Partners**

- Leicester Energy Agency, UK
- RMC - Rajkot Municipal Corporation – India
- ENERGAIA – Energy Management Agency of Gaia, Portugal

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**EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION**

## Asia Pro Eco II

Promoting sustainable solutions for the environment between Europe and Asia

### Renewable energy to fight poverty

"Access to energy can be brought much closer to billions of people and millions of households if we harness renewable sources. Access to energy is, moreover, a way out of poverty and isolation."  
*Loyola de Palacio, Former Vice-President of the European Commission*

Increasing energy demand coupled with scarce resources to satisfy it are major problems affecting societies all over the world. Transnational partnerships between governments, researchers and industry are needed for long-term solutions to this global problem.

The Leicester Energy Agency with partners from Portugal and India set out to promote the use of renewable energy in both Europe and India, by developing a framework for minimising energy-related contributions to climate change and air pollution, while improving the quality of life, particularly among the local governments and communities in India, Portugal and the UK.

With the European Commission's support this project – "*Partnership Support for Renewable Energy between European and Asian Towns*" – builds on existing cultural links between Leicester and Rajkot and aims to raise awareness through training and information sessions on renewable energy in the three partner cities. Through networking and the involvement of businesses, the opportunity is also provided for exchange of best practice and experience between the EU and Asia. Through a concerted action in Leicester, Vila Nova de Gaia, and Rajkot, the project is a significant contribution to the development of new policies and projects in the field of renewable energy.

### Education for a Cleaner Environment

This project presented significant results in terms of objectives achieved, based on a close collaboration between all the project partners, which was translated into benefits for the local target population:

- Three workshops/seminars on renewable energy in Leicester, Rajkot and Gaia attracted local government officials, business representatives, experts, and members of the community, enabling renewable energy information to be exchanged with the participants. This helped to raise energy awareness locally, and identify obstacles to renewable energy and actions to support renewable energy;

- Each partner has investigated and identified energy technologies relevant to their areas, and prepared best-practice case studies and training material which has helped to illustrate during the workshops the potential use of renewable energy technologies at local level;
- Links with different local organisations working with renewable energies and with industries and manufacturers of renewable energy products were developed and the possible introduction of alternative energy sources in industries was discussed;
- An information package to educate children on the use of renewable energy was produced.

The participatory approach and co-operative methodology adopted by this project has therefore reflected itself in the results achieved at the local level:

- In Rajkot, activities that have been carried out include a renewable energy workshop, exhibition, planning of an energy park, proposed training of municipal engineers for the compliance of building byelaws, and the establishment of solar powered street lights at certain locations in Rajkot;
- In Vila Nova de Gaia, Energaia investigated the potential for photovoltaics with a local water company, and support has been provided with implementing a solar thermal energy project at a municipal swimming pool;
- In Leicester, ongoing support has been provided for specific local/regional renewable energy projects, for example giving advice and information on renewable energy to businesses, community groups and residents.

### Lessons Learnt

It became clear from the positive results of this project that a good and strong partnership is essential to achieve the expected outcome. Due to the distance between the partners of the project the use of new communication technologies, for example web conferencing, to help with communication and to potentially reduce the need for travelling to meetings, has been investigated and has helped with the collaboration between the partners. There is scope for further investigation of video/web-conferencing in order to minimise travel requirements in related projects.

A strong partnership, helped by the existence of previous cultural links between two of the municipalities involved in the project has also helped to establish a common understanding and agreement on the aims and methodology to be used.

The community participation was also a main factor that influenced the success of the workshops/seminars held in the different countries. Apart from representatives of local government and businesses, also renewable energy technology experts and local community groups/residents have shown interest in participating in these actions, which greatly contributed to a more widespread awareness of sustainable energy issues.

### **Outreach and Dissemination**

This project has built on previous EC funded projects in each of the partner's countries particularly in the field of renewable energies. It has built on the methodology used in a previous SIREN project related to renewable energy, and has received some assistance from a previous Asia Urbs project involving Leicester City Council and Rajkot Municipal Corporation. The synergies established between the different projects have improved the project's capacity to involve and reach out to the local population.

The renewable energy toolkit from a previous European Commission supported ENTHUSE project has been used in the Leicester Renewable Energy Workshop as part of this Asia Pro Eco project. Its use has also been considered by ENERGAIA, for its work in Vila Nova de Gaia, as well as by Rajkot Municipal Corporation, with its renewable energy matrix being translated into Portuguese and the toolkit being translated into Rajkot's local language, Gujarati, respectively.

Many stakeholders have been involved in the project (municipalities, local industry, experts, local population), which helped with anchoring the project in the involved societies and with ensuring the dissemination of sustainable energy information in the project.

### **Sustainability**

As regards sustainability this project was very much concerned with the transfer of knowledge to the local stakeholders on sustainable energy and on how to reduce negative energy-related environmental impacts. In this sense, the workshops held in each of the partner countries have been an important tool to increase awareness of alternative energy options.

Relevant information has been disseminated to a wide range of local stakeholders, including business representatives and local government bodies, on renewable energy technologies and climate change issues. Apart from these, also residents and experts have been willing to take part in the workshops, which demonstrates the positive impact the project has had on engaging the local community in these issues, promoting indirectly the adoption of good practices related to sustainable energy.

Particularly in Rajkot the workshop and the exhibition received a lot of media attention, making the project visible to the wider public.

An important positive aspect that contributes to the sustainability of this project is the fact that it was able, not only, to establish synergies and extract benefits from previous EC funded projects, but also to create links with the following new projects in Rajkot:

- Proposal for the establishment of an energy park;
- Proposal for a capacity-building training program for the municipal engineers and planners so as to ensure compliance with a new building byelaw promoting the use of solar water heaters.

### Recommendations

The workshop approach used in this project, involving local government, business representatives, local residents and technology experts, can be considered as a way to raise energy awareness locally and to identify obstacles to sustainable energy, in other similar projects,

For an effective partnership project of this kind it is considered that it is important that there is a strong commitment to the aims and approach of the project from the partners, and that there are clear benefits from the project in each partner town.

Opportunities should be explored for related partnership projects between partners from the EU and Asia. For example the approach used could be applied in other energy/environmental projects such as energy efficiency projects in other local areas.

In addition to regularly monitoring progress during the project, it is recommended that actions arising from the project be monitored after the project is completed.

