

# REEECAP 2.7 NATIONAL BIOMASS SYMPOSIUM

## **Executive Summary**

A national biomass symposium, as Component 2.7 of the *Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Capacity Building Project (REEECAP)*, took place as the ‘Biomass Workshop on Wheels’ (Biomass WoW) in the week of 29 July – 2 August 2007.

### **Project objective**

The Biomass WoW aimed to bring together stakeholders interested in sustainable use of woodfuel and to link it with achieving greater commitment and action towards Namibia’s biomass conservation strategy.

### **DRFN staff involved**

Tutaleni Nampila Alex Moses Dasius Nelumbu	REEECAP Junior Project Managers
Caroline Coulson	REEECAP Project Manager
John Pallett	Sub-Project Leader
Robert Schultz	REEECAP Project Leader
Patrik Klintonberg Obbe Tuinenburg Detlof von Oertzen	REEECAP colleagues and advisors

### **Project outputs**

- 1) Range of information materials for distribution
- 2) A moving symposium linked with exposure visits to field sites
- 3) Proceedings from symposium
- 4) Media releases through newspapers, TV and radio news and interviews
- 5) Greater realisation of the Biomass Energy Conservation Strategy

### **Project implementation**

Planning for the Symposium started with identification of a route from Windhoek to north-central Namibia and the biomass issues that could be demonstrated at various localities. The programme was discussed with members of the Biomass Energy Management Programme (BEMP) Steering Committee.

Tutaleni Nampila and John Pallett drove the intended route and visited the places and communities where the mobile symposium would visit. Themes to discuss, accommodation, food and facilities for 40 people were planned and modified as we progressed. For instance, it was planned to visit Okakarara to see biogas installations in the area, but these turned out to be too far from the town and there was little to investigate or demonstrate in the surroundings. An alternative stop-over, at a charcoal-producing farm in the Grootfontein area, was selected. Fine tuning with the identified people on the ground continued in the lead-up to the workshop.

Canvassing for participants took place through existing networks of staff and colleagues. Invitations were sent to BEMP Steering Committee members and in turn they were asked to distribute amongst their colleagues. Brainstorming among REEECAP staff identified other organizations that were originally missed, such as the Shack Dwellers Federation and the Charcoal Producers Association. The intention was to bring together a mix of people from various organizations and enterprises who, by their diversity, would generate much discussion and cross-fertilisation of ideas and concepts. Participation with people on the ground involved in various biomass-related activities would further stimulate discussion and forge relationships between organizations who might not, in ordinary circumstances, have discovered their common interests. The overall theme was to demonstrate the opportunities that lie in enterprises based on energy-efficiency. Greater commercial activity in this sector would help the over-arching principle of biomass energy conservation and sustained exploitation of biomass resources.

Information material was prepared by REEECAP staff in Windhoek (Appendix B), and an article prepared by John Pallett appeared in The Namibian in the week of the WoW (Appendix C). On the bus, a small traveling library of books provided reading material. The bus had a loose microphone to include all passengers in discussions and observations, such as changing habitats and vegetation, while it was traveling. Furthermore, passengers were told to always take a different place on the bus for every leg of the trip, and each participant had to give a short talk on their interest and role in biomass issues. 'An Inconvenient Truth' and other videos were shown at evening stop-overs, to initiate discussions.

The bus capacity was 38 passengers, and we had 36 planned participants. Unfortunately there were a number of 'no-shows' at the start of the workshop, and a few more drop-outs on the second day when they realized no per-diem was to be paid (this had been made clear in the invitation). In total, 25 people took part, and an additional seven took part in the Windhoek activities on the Monday morning. The participants are listed in Appendix A.

### **Project outcomes**

- An invigorating and dynamic mix of participants was achieved, and the five days of interaction were stimulating and interesting.
- During the course of the eight months of this project we have confirmed our understanding that the most practical and probably sustainable method to realize the Biomass Energy Conservation Strategy is to increase commercial activities in energy-efficient technologies.
- Participants saw some of the business opportunities lying in energy efficiency. Subsequent interest has been shown in bush-to-electricity and charcoal enterprises (one entrepreneur), greater use of tsotso stoves in urban settings (two participants) and

further promotion of fuel-efficient technologies at the Ongwediva Trade Fair (three organizations) to expand their marketing.

### **Project conclusions and recommendations**

There are many ways to reduce inefficient firewood consumption in Namibia, and to use Namibia's 'problem' wood (bush encroachment), without compromising people's livelihoods but, on the contrary, by boosting local businesses. Innovative schemes, such as municipalities that purchase wood-efficient and solar stoves in bulk and hand them to all new erf-owners (with the small price of a stove included in the price of the property), could give a boost to local small-scale stove producers and simultaneously help with wood conservation.

The projects visited during the WoW that are most successful are entirely commercially driven, notably charcoal and bushblok production and Dezman stoves. These enterprises are marked by having either strong markets or paying much attention to the marketing process. Lessons from these enterprises would be valuable in the whole sector.