Highlights from South East Asia Regional Working Group

On 24th and 25th July 2012, the GSMA Green Power for Mobile Programme hosted another successful South East Asia Regional Working Group in Phnom Penh, Cambodia co-hosted by Hello (Axiata Group). Over 30 delegates including mobile network operators (MNOs), vendors, energy service companies, consultancies, not for profit agencies, development partner and financial institutions attended the event. The two day event showcased multiple operators’ experiences, new technology & innovations, business models, a break out session and GSMA’s global green power plan for next two years.

After opening remarks from Areef Kassam, GPM Programme Director, co-host Hello’s Head of Operation, Zaki Sharizan, talked about Hello’s initiative on energy efficiency and going green. He also gave an overview of Cambodia’s telecom industry and power infrastructure.

There are eight active MNOs in Cambodia, where there is a 75% penetration rate. There is no national grid in Cambodia and different parts of the country heavily depend on importing power from neighbouring countries; the rate of per kWh power ranges from $0.16/kWh to $0.9/kWh. Sixty per cent of Hello’s towers are indoor and 30% are located in off-grid areas. Three per cent of Hello’s towers are running on green power. Hello is committed to be more energy efficient and plans to contribute more to green initiatives.

Arata Onoguchi from Sustainable Business Advisory (SBA) at the International Finance Corporation (IFC) talked about the background of collaborating with GSMA on Green Power initiatives and described the programme’s future plan. He gave an overview of GSMA-IFC’s achievements so far through this programme and how it plans to engage more effectively with the mobile telecom industry in the future.

Umar Sharif of CamGSM showcased the best case studies from the Cambodian market. They have deployed about 1500 solar sites, which is approximately 66% of their total network. Their target is to reach 80%. As a part of a network modernisation project, 53% of their sites have been upgraded to newer more energy efficient technologies. In their current strategy, all sites outside of the national capital should be deployed with green power. CamGSM is also looking into community power-related projects to support the local community with basic energy access.

Michael Nique, GPM Strategy Analyst, gave an overview of the global fuel cell deployment status and briefly described available different fuel cell technologies.

Following this, Nicholas Pocard, Sales Director for Idatech in the APAC region, talked in detail about the current development of fuel cell technologies. He also gave an overview of comparative analysis among different fuel cell technologies and the financial viability of using fuel cells. Successful cases were presented from the Indonesia market. Thanks to Idatech for sponsoring the day’s lunch.

Day 2 started with a case study from Beeline. Eric Castaneda, the Head of Network Operation, explained that 61% of their network is off-grid with a maximum number of outdoor sites. Increasing fuel cost, low ARPU, unreliable or no-grid site access constraints and heavy market competition are some of the key driving forces for Beeline to consider green power. So far they have deployed 71 sites, approximately 2% of their network. Although Beeline is pursuing adapting cost effective & green solutions, it is faced with the challenges of CAPEX...
investment which hinders them from taking these initiatives to scale.

Dr. Paolo Gemma of Huawei’s energy team gave a quick overview of how Huawei is contributing toward green initiatives and pursuing excellence in the global telecom environment. He described Huawei’s various comprehensive services and product base for implementing green power successfully.

Micheal Nique returned to the podium to introduce the newly launched Mobile and Development Intelligence (MDI) programme. This was followed by an overview of Community Power from Mobile (CPM) and Enhance Utility Access. He describe how operators can become a catalyst and strong support element for community energy access and development projects. He handed over to Chay Lo, the co-founder of 1001 Fontaines, to share their initiative on clean water supply across Cambodia and how this initiative has saved thousands of lives.

After a lunch sponsored by Alta, TK Shih, the CTO of Alta Energy, shared their experience and findings of green energy for telecom towers. He talked about the ease of deploying outdoor sites (off-grid or grid-deficit sites) and their strategy to look primarily at new outdoor sites that can utilise green power. TK also presented some generic technical schematics and financial analysis of green power deployments. Alta Energy is currently active in India and looking to expand its footprint to South East Asia. Alta Energy’s JV partner, Xintong, is one of the leading green power solution providers in China.

The last speaker, Deepak Pandey, Senior Engineer at Nepal’s Ncell, brought a very insightful case study to the working group. Deepak walked the delegates through Ncell’s transition over the last few years and reasons for considering renewable solution as a key component for their new and upcoming deployment. Only 17% of Ncell’s sites are connected with reliable grid; the rest are either off-grid or unreliable grid. To date, only 5% of Ncell sites are deployed with green power which is targeted to be increased to 12.3% by 2013. Because of its unique landscape and the problems the country has, renewable energy is very well suited to Nepal’s telecom network. Ncell and its parent company Telia Sonera are very much committed to promote green power across its network.

The Working Group closed with great feedback and many suggestions for the next event. The Green Power for Mobile Programme would like to welcome all Asian stakeholders to attend the Working Group again next year to see how the industry progresses over the next 12 months.

Breakout Session

In the afternoon of day one, delegates were divided into two groups for a break out session; one for Network Operators and the other consisting of vendors/service providers. The topic ‘Industry barrier to deploy green power, and how infrastructure share can assist green deployment faster’ was discussed with both groups identifying their concerns, connection, disconnection and suggestions. Mixed feedback was received from both groups. For vendors and service providers, key areas of concern were related to proper understanding of energy-related technologies within operator community and push back from investors/CFOs. They suggested arranging sessions for CFOs to share knowledge on varieties of technologies and their business models. This group also suggested creating a rating system to for vendors so that network operators can easily identify which vendor can be more suitable for them.

On the other side, the operator groups concern was investment pushback, technology road maps and efficiency. The lack of visibility of success stories is another area that the network operators pointed out. GSMA Green Power for Mobile Programme listed down all the thoughts of both groups and will be addressing these as a priority in the next phase of the programme.

About the GSMA Development Fund

The GSMA Development Fund brings together our mobile operator members, the wider mobile industry and the development community to drive commercial mobile services for underserved people in emerging markets. We identify opportunities for social, economic impact and stimulate the development of scalable, life-enhancing mobile services.

For information on the Green Power for Mobile Programme, please email: greenpower@gsm.org

For information on the Community Power from Mobile Programme, please email: cpm@gsm.org