

Sorsogon town, experts conduct renewable energy training to benefit residents, mitigate climate change impact



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A town located along the Philippines' typhoon belt recently held a training session as part of its sustainable socio-economic and energy development plan, and local disaster risk reduction and management program.

The local government of Irosin municipality in Sorsogon province, which is more than 500 kilometers south of Manila, hosted the Training of Trainers on Renewable Energy and Solar Power Sharing last October 22, 2020 at the town's municipal hall.

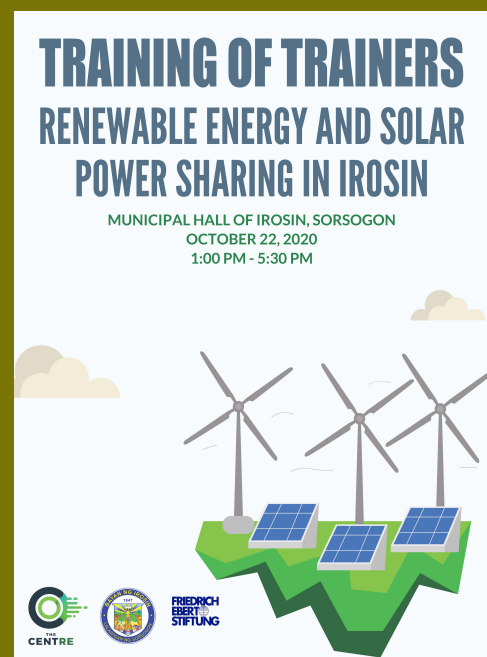
The training co-organized by the Center for Empowerment, Innovation and Training on Renewable Energy (CentRE) was first of its series of Trainers' Trainings to help local electric consumers broaden their knowledge about renewable energy and climate change. "Irosin is honored to host this event which will help empower electricity users in more ways than one," Irosin Mayor Alfredo Cielo, Jr. said as he welcomed over 30 participants from Irosin and resource persons from CentRE. "This training program will help encourage participation of local residents in realizing renewable energy that will not only give them social and economic benefits, but will also contribute in national efforts to address climate change."

At least 20 members of the LGU, peoples' cooperatives and associations, and school in Irosin completed the first Training of Trainers of the Irosin LGU and CentRE that would provide the participants a deeper understanding of renewable energy and its role in sustainable development and disaster resilience.

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-Mayor Alfredo Cielo, Jr.





Members of CentRE provided inputs on key topics, beginning with Renewable Energy (RE) and Climate Change delivered by the CentRE Associate for R&D, Engr. Jessa Ibanez who presented a general introduction on RE and its importance in reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Just Transition and Energy Democracy as framework in tackling renewable energy and climate change was then discussed by CentRE vice president Wilson Fortaleza, a fellow of Center for Power Issues and Initiatives. He highlighted the impacts of climate change such as food shortage, water and health crises, and destruction of shelter, livelihoods and jobs, thus the need to shift to low-carbon economy particularly through renewable energy. He stressed that just transition and energy democracy should be the guiding principles in this energy shift to address climate change. These can be achieved by leaving no one behind – affected sectors and communities have to be involved in decision-making, social dialogues with workers conducted, and participation of other stakeholders elicited in the planning and implementation of programs.

For his part, Engr. Riedo Panaligan, president of Center for Renewable Energy and Sustainable Technologies – CentRE vice president internal, stressed that as solar is the most abundant energy resource, the technologies that transform this energy into electricity have to be maximized. He explained how solar photovoltaic system works and how this can benefit the people economically and environmentally.

Another CentRE member, Engr. Mel Romano who is CEO of Enerpower Access Solutions, Inc. talked about the energy situation in Irosin. He also discussed how Solar Power in Irosin through Distributed Energy Resources (SPIDER) can provide more affordable and sustainable electricity to members of this community or association-based solar power sharing system.

Ms. Anna Dominique Ortiz, project officer of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)- Local Governments for Sustainability, explained the importance of tackling energy efficiency and energy conservation measures especially at the local government units.

Some actions identified during the discussion were the following:

- Learn from success stories or experiences about energy democratization with renewable energy here, if any, and abroad. Energy democratization ensures that multi-stakeholder concerns will be heard and addressed. Study the models of remunicipalization of public services in Europe as well as the hydropower system in Bhutan.
- Continue dialogues between SORECO I & II, LGUs and other stakeholders in Sorsogon, and tap the Peoples' Survival Fund to facilitate the development/ deployment of RE pilot projects and broaden capacity building activities in Irosin and Sorsogon province, particularly in the municipalities (BIG LaSoLar).
- Create "self-help/own-use" association/ cooperatives for individual residences and facilities (especially schools and government building) in Irosin. The solar power sharing system has to be presented to broader stakeholders to encourage their participation. Developing trainers who will be partners in achieving this goal can help realize wider participation in RE initiatives.

- Resume development plans involving other renewable energy sources in Irosin and neighboring LGUs in Sorsogon. These also include continuing RE training that started in November 2019.
- Ensure that energy efficiency and conservation measures are part of awareness-raising and education activities especially among the LGUs. Also, tap the Department of Energy to conduct an energy audit of public buildings.

Given the general success of the training session, the Irosin LGU and the CentRE vowed to conduct additional trainings in the near future that will cover other technologies such as hydro, wind, and biomass/biogas which will be useful for other LGUs as well.

