Universal Energy Access

“Expanding access to affordable, clean energy is critical for realizing the MDGs and enabling sustainable development across the globe.” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

Energy access is a development priority

Some 1.4 billion people have no access to electricity and a billion more only have access to unreliable electricity networks. About 3 billion people rely on solid fuels (traditional biomass and coal) to meet their basic needs. Access to modern energy services for cooking and heating, lighting and communications, and mechanical power for productive uses is a vast area of unmet need. The energy access challenge is particularly acute in the least developed countries, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

The benefits of achieving universal access to modern energy services are transformational: lighting for schools, functioning health clinics, pumps for water and sanitation, cleaner indoor air, faster food-processing and more income-generating opportunities, among others. These services are directly linked to achieving the Millennium Development Goals:

- Reducing poverty and creating jobs by making possible income-generating and entrepreneurial opportunities (MDG 1);
- Empowering women by liberating women and girls from time-consuming tasks, such as collecting fuel, pounding grain and hauling water, freeing time for education and economic activity (MDGs 2 and 3);
- Improving health conditions by decreasing women and children’s drudgery, and eliminating ‘kitchen smoke’ that kills 2 million people – mostly women and children – every year (MDGs 4, 5 and 6);
- Promoting clean energy solutions that contribute to low-carbon development (MDG 7).

Universal access to modern energy services is achievable by 2030. There are no fundamental technical barriers, and proven and innovative solutions exist. The capital investment required for universal energy access represents only around 3 per cent of the total global energy investment. Governments must make universal energy access a top political priority. Practical, effective and large-scale actions are needed to invest in capacity development, mobilize public-private partnerships and massively scale up successful and innovative solutions to overcome extreme energy poverty.

How UNDP is contributing

UNDP’s overall goal in the area of energy is to achieve universal access to affordable, clean and modern energy services for sustainable human development, with a clear focus on the poor. Specific outcomes are:

- Promoting universal access to modern energy services for the poor.
- Enhancing sustainability, security and affordability of modern energy.

UNDP helps developing countries achieve these outcomes by focusing on three key areas of intervention:

- Strengthening policy and institutional frameworks consistent with low-emission, climate-resilient development. This forms the basis of the strategy employed by UNDP.
Women in Burkina Faso operate a multifunctional platform (MFP). Women’s annual incomes increased by $45 and they saved two to four hours per day on domestic chores such as fetching water, grinding and milling after the introduction of MFPs in several West African countries, with UNDP support. Literacy rates also increased.

- **Mobilizing and expanding financing options aimed at achieving market transformation to catalyze public and private finance.** This includes creating enabling policy and regulatory frameworks and removing barriers to better access the market.

- **Developing effective approaches for scaling up energy service delivery,** through a combination of field-proven and innovative business models that are financially and institutionally sustainable.

Over the last two decades, UNDP has built an extensive portfolio of projects and programmes, and acquired a wealth of experience and expertise in supporting countries to use, expand and shift towards sustainable energy for development. UNDP has supported over 2,500 energy projects in over 150 developing countries. UNDP’s support for energy access focuses particularly on the poor by promoting diverse solutions – both electricity and non-electricity options including grid and off-grid options as well as decentralized solutions. UNDP promotes the use and transfer of a wide range of clean energy technologies and works across a range of scales, from individual households and villages up to national, regional and global levels. Programme funding includes UNDP resources, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), GEF Small Grants Programme, governments, and private sector and civil society partners.

In West Africa, a regional policy with ambitious targets was developed by member countries of ECOWAS, the Economic Community of West African States, in collaboration with UNDP. The policy is mobilizing action to expand access to modern energy services to 36 million more households by 2015.

In Mauritius, with UNDP support, a pilot Feed-in-Tariff (FiT) scheme was launched in 2010, to enable the participation of small-scale independent power producers to introduce grid-connected solar photovoltaic systems. UNDP promotes micro hydro power and solar photovoltaic projects in countries such as Afghanistan, Bolivia, India, Lesotho, Maldives, Mauritius, Malaysia, Nepal, Peru, Sudan and Tanzania.

In Burkina Faso, Ghana, Guinea, Mali, Senegal and Uganda, for example, some 2.4 million people have benefited from access to mechanical power by over 1,600 multifunctional platforms for water pumping, agro-processing, income-generating productive uses and other value-adding local level activities.

UNDP promotes more efficient use of biomass and clean energy resources through, for example, energy-efficient cook stoves, biogas and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG). This has been demonstrated successfully in a range of countries, most recently in Bhutan, Kenya, and Pakistan.

In Kazakhstan, South Africa, Tunisia, and Uruguay, UNDP has assisted the development of their wind energy potential by building the right enabling environment, assessing the wind resource, designing appropriate financial incentive schemes and regulatory measures, building capacity, and piloting and demonstrating actual wind farms.

The UN General Assembly has designated 2012 as the *International Year for Sustainable Energy for All.* In response, the UN Secretary-General, with UN agencies and other partners, is launching a *Global Campaign on Sustainable Energy for All*, aimed at galvanising political commitments and catalysing sustained actions towards achieving sustainable energy pathways. UNDP will lead country-level engagements as part of the campaign, including raising awareness, supporting national coordinating committees, and helping countries develop plans of action for universal energy access.

**For more information visit:**

[www.undp.org/energy](http://www.undp.org/energy)

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