



INTERNATIONAL ENERGY FORUM



energy

Department:
Energy
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

IEF SYMPOSIUM ENERGY POVERTY: COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO HELP ACHIEVE THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

JOHANNESBURG, 8-9 DECEMBER 2009

AN IEF EVENT IN COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA

“Indoor pollution from biomass used for cooking prematurely kills 1.6 million people a year.”

BACKGROUND

The 11th IEF (Rome, April 2008) noted that “over two billion people do not yet have access to modern energy services. This perpetuates the poverty cycle and inhibits economic development, availability of clean water and food, while preventing training and acceptable health standards.” Ministers at the Forum called for the solidarity of IEF countries and a step change in the collective efforts of all relevant international organizations to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals by halving poverty rates by 2015.

Following the concern illustrated by Energy Ministers, the IEF convened a symposium on energy poverty in Johannesburg on the 8-9 December 2009, hosted by the Department of Energy of South Africa. Symposium participants discussed the most effective means to alleviate energy poverty through informed dialogue and enhanced cooperation and partnership.



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KEY FINDINGS

- 2.5 billion people lack access to modern fuels for cooking and heating and this figure is set to increase to 2.6 billion by 2020, according to recent projections. 1.5 billion people have no access to electricity, 85% of them live in rural areas. The use of non-commercial fuels poses a severe health risk, affects longevity, reduces the productive capacity of entire communities and makes education more difficult.
- The causes of energy poverty cannot be divorced from the causes of general poverty; for countries in which the per capita income is less than \$1 USD a day, 90% of the population use biomass or dung for their cooking.
- Although an international problem, energy poverty can be improved through domestic energy policy reform, including energy poverty reduction plans. Effective combat against energy poverty demands a managed coordination of financial, social and energy policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Site-specific solutions are an essential component of ending energy poverty. Local communities should take an active role in the choice, planning, development and maintenance of programmes in place.
- Energy poverty programmes are severely underfunded, and the recent credit crisis has made this even more difficult. More funding is needed to fill the investment gap. Public funding should go toward non-commercial aspects and business-oriented approaches for projects that are commercially and environmentally sustainable.
- Large scale; grid-based projects should not be the only focus. Consideration should also be given to smaller, low cost community-based solutions with potential for immediate and sustainable results. Models that are replicable, scalable and based on local autonomy are most effective.
- There is a need for more international awareness, greater cross-sector, intergovernmental and private sector cooperation. Reducing energy poverty requires a coordinated effort to develop clear and sustainable policies and an institutional framework that foster both public and private sector investment and encourages enhanced public-private partnership. Pro-poor “smart” subsidies should be temporary, transparent and well targeted.
- Energy poverty issues should be added as the 9th Millennium Development Goal to achieve universal access to modern energy services.
- The initiative “Energy for the Poor” launched by King Abdullah at the Jeddah Energy Meeting and supported by the G20 leaders should be given a new impetus and more widespread support to mobilize the significant funding required to bridge the energy poverty investment gap.



ENERGY POVERTY, COLLECTIVE EFFORTS TO HELP ACHIEVE THE MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS