

The Need for Better Energy Services



Well over a billion people in the developing-world currently lack access to electricity and an equal amount rely on traditional fuels such as wood, animal dung and crop waste to satisfy their energy needs. The significant time needed to collect traditional fuels each day, primarily by women and children, limits time for income generating activities, education and family care. Moreover, the current form of energy use has adverse environmental impacts at the local, regional, and global levels, including air and water pollution, erosion and climate change.

To address these impacts and improve the lives of rural people in developing countries, the United Nations Environment Programme, UNEP, has collaborated with a number of institutions to launch the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD) at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, 2002.

GNESD is based on the firm belief that access to affordable, modern energy services is a pre-requisite for sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. GNESD is designed to increase the capacity of Centres of Excellence in developing countries to contribute to energy, development and environment issues; enabling them to incorporate sustainable development issues in their work. GNESD helps to build and share knowledge via publications and network meetings among participating Centres.

The creation of GNESD is a response to United Nations General Assembly resolutions, the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the recommendations of the G8 Renewable Energy Task Force Report (2001).

A Themed Approach

The activities of GNESD are organized thematically. The themes address various aspects of providing new and environmentally sound energy services to people in the developing world.

The Network will support and strengthen activities that link energy and sustainable development, primarily through information exchange, learning, analysis and study, policy support and capacity building. Activities include assisting developing-world governments in strengthening policy frameworks for sustainable energy projects, programmes and investments.

The GNESD approach within each theme is to help promote the research, transfer and adoption of cleaner energy services to the developing world by strengthening the collaboration between the participating Centres, which can also influence sustainable energy policies, strategies and programmes. The ultimate target group for GNESD activities is developing world decision makers in the energy and environment field.

The first GNESD theme is "Energy Access" with a primary objective of identifying viable and proven policy options in rapidly reforming energy sectors that provide cleaner and more sustainable energy services to the world's poor. At present eight developing world Centres of Excellence participate in the "Energy Access" Working Group. They cooperate mainly via the GNESD website to access GNESD publications and contribute to the theme work. These Centres are all renowned for their work on energy, development and environment issues.



Network Objectives

The longer-term objectives of GNESD are:

- Enhanced national institutional capacities to develop policy and undertake planning and research efforts that integrate solutions to energy, environment and development problems.
- Reduced pollution from energy activities (while allowing developing countries to meet growing needs for energy services).

The immediate objectives contributing to reaching the longer-term objectives are:

- A general strengthening of Network partners' ability to acquire, assimilate, and apply existing knowledge and experiences.
- Improved understanding of the links between sustainable energy and other development and environment priorities, and technology and policy options, leading to better articulation of practical policies that can be adopted so as to promote energy for sustainable energy.
- Changes in government policies and programmes, and private sector, investments, so that these favour energy for sustainable development approaches.
- A communication infrastructure that provides a means for partners to share experiences and draw on each other's strengths, expertise, and skills, and
- Strengthened South-South and North-South exchange of knowledge and collaboration on energy issues of common interest.



Membership with Experience



AFREPREN/FWD



Additional centres will be invited to join the Network in the near future.

An international interim Steering Committee representing the GNESD partners provides strategic direction and oversight. The GNESD donor countries and organisations include Denmark, France, Germany, United Kingdom, USA, UNF and the UNDP. EU and UNEP are also members of the Steering Committee, which is jointly chaired by Thomas B. Johansson of IIIIEE, Sweden and Ogunlade Davidson of EDRC, South Africa.

The participating Centres of Excellence are currently: African Energy Policy Research Network (AFREPREN) in Kenya, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Thailand, The University of São Paulo (IEE/USP) in conjunction with the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (COPPE/UFRJ) in Brazil, Energy & Development Research Centre (EDRC) in South Africa, Environnement et développement du tiers-monde (ENDA-TM) in Senegal, The Energy Research Institute (ERI) in China, the Bariloche Foundation (FB) in Argentina and The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in India.

Contact Us

The Secretariat for GNESD is located at Risø National Laboratory, Denmark, which also hosts the UNEP Collaborating Centre on Energy and Environment (UCCEE).

The GNESD website is located at www.gnesd.org and contains additional information and contact points. The information provided here and the views expressed do not necessarily represent those of UNEP or Risø National Laboratory. For additional information or comments please contact the editor, Per Kolbeck (per.kolbeck@risoe.dk).

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