

The Africa-EU Energy Partnership

1. Access to Sustainable Energy is a Key to Poverty Eradication

Access to sustainable energy is a key to poverty eradication and the achievement of the MDGs. People do not want energy for itself but for the service it provides. It accomplishes this by underpinning wealth creation through micro enterprises, extending economic activities beyond daylight hours and encouraging locally owned businesses. Energy is a key to reducing hunger and improving access to safe drinking water and provides a basis for better quality water used in cooking. It is also essential in reducing the burden of diseases. It is a key component in functioning health systems.

Access to modern energy services that are affordable, climate-friendly and sustainable is lacking for large parts of Africa's population. Africa is the only region where the number of poor people will increase significantly. And without access to modern energy, the MDGs will not be achieved. The actual situation reveals: Less than 20 per cent of Sub Saharan Africa's population have access to electricity services. 800 million people in Sub-Sahara Africa consume only three per cent of total world energy consumption. In several countries in Sub-Sahara Africa electricity consumption per capita is in rapid decline. Particularly in Africa's rural regions, where 80 per cent of the poor live, energy supply is in a precarious state, with less than 10 per cent of the population having access to electricity. In Sub-Sahara Africa the main use of energy is for cooking and the main users are woman.

In several countries of Sub-Sahara Africa, traditional biomass energy accounts for 70 to 90 per cent of primary energy supply. The number of people dependent on traditional biomass energy is steadily increasing and will double within 20 years. Wood harvesting and charcoal production are key forces driving deforestation. According to the WHO, Africa loses nearly half a million lives as a result of respiratory diseases due to indoor air pollution.

2. Challenges of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership

The Africa-EU-Partnership on Energy states in its rationale: "It aims at creating a momentum that will also mobilise increased financial, technical and human resources in support of Africa's energy development." As a people-centred partnership the predominant question from a civil society perspective is: Has the Africa EU-Energy Partnership set the right priorities to tackle the above mentioned problems and make a real difference for the poor?

The implementation of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership, its Action Plan and Road Map reveal the following challenges:

1. The Africa-EU Energy Partnership prioritises large-scale infrastructure projects, which do not lead to rural development. With respect to energy exchange infrastructure between Africa and Europe (gas pipelines from Nigeria and electricity from the Democratic Republic of Congo) the energy security interests of Europe seem to dominate the debate. Furthermore, large scale-infrastructure projects often haven negative impacts on local people.
2. Due to the low population densities in rural areas in Sub-Sahara Africa combined with small purchasing power, decentralised renewable solutions are more cost effective and should be emphasized. Decentralised solutions are affordable, offer job opportunities and generate income. These require more support for local capacity building on a technical, management and institutional level as well as additional finance and appropriate funding systems, for consumers and service providers.
3. More focus should be given to household energy and the development of modern biomass energy options for cooking. These initiatives should be placed within the energy development policies in general, recognizing their role in reducing poverty. A global partnership for improved cook stoves is needed.
4. With respect to biofuels the Partnership should discuss concerns about sustainability, food and fuel conflicts, as well as social concerns over new investments. The right to food should be the first priority for land use. The coverage of local energy needs should be a core issue for energy-related investments. Small-scale, village-level biofuel production should be developed and promoted to meet local energy needs. Minimum sustainability standards for multinational corporations should be set in the case of biomass production for export.

3. Policy recommendations for the next Action Plan

To strengthen the people and poverty oriented approach of the Africa-EU Energy Partnership and to foster rural development the following aspects should play a predominant role in the next Action Plan:

1. There is a need to set measurable global targets to reduce by half the number of people without access to modern energy within the next decade.
2. All African and European countries should adopt appropriate renewable energy and energy efficiency policies with specific targets and commitments.

3. Innovative and accessible financial schemes for development (production, distribution and utilization) of renewable energy technologies in Africa should be established. These should be transparent, participatory and publicly accountable and be able to deliver small-scale solutions to the energy needs of poor communities.
4. The partnership should exploit synergies with the work of IRENA and closely link future activities. The majority of the IRENA-members are mainly from Africa and the EU.
5. The level of engagement of African governments needs to be strengthened. For that purpose, the added value of the multi-stakeholder approach in the Africa EU-Energy Partnership needs to have a higher profile, and the complementarities of different stakeholders recognized.
6. Civil society participation should be inclusive and strengthened in the Partnership. Therefore civil society organisations, particularly those who are dealing with access to sustainable energy in Africa should be involved systematically.



VENRO is the umbrella organisation of development non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Germany. The organisation was founded in 1995 and consists of around 120 organisations. Their backgrounds lie in independent and church-related development co-operation, humanitarian aid as well as development education, public relations and advocacy. 16 one-world networks are part of VENRO. These represent about 2000 local development initiatives and NGOs. VENRO's central goal is to construct a just globalisation, with a special emphasis on eradicating global poverty. The organisation is committed to implementing human rights and conserving natural resources.



The German NGO Forum on Environment and Development was founded in 1992 after the UN Conference on Environment and Development. It coordinates activities of German NGOs in international political processes concerning sustainable development. Our main aim is the implementation of sustainable development. Issue-based Working Groups develop common positions as well as public relations and lobbying strategies. Once a year the Forum meets in plenary. Coordination and information within and outwards are managed by the secretariat. It is a kind of 'marketplace' for positions discussed by NGOs within the Forum. The Forum's political leadership is a Steering Committee consisting of representatives from environment as well as development organisations.



Practical Action is an international non-governmental organisation working with people in poor communities to help them choose and use technology to improve their lives for today and generations to come. Our work in Africa, South Asia and Latin America is in partnership with poor people and their communities, using technology to challenge poverty. We work with poor people to build their capabilities, improve their access to technical options and knowledge and help them to influence the social, economic and institutional systems for the use of technology.



With the project "Prospects for Africa – Europe's Policies" VENRO seeks an active civil society contribution to the implementation of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership. The project builds on cooperation with African partners that began during VENRO's successful EU Presidency Project in 2007. VENRO member organizations then worked together with their African partners to develop statements for policy makers, the media and interested public on the main topics of the project: energy and climate policies; regional integration and trade; and gender.