



ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE ENERGY SERVICES



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As a concerted and coordinated effort at reducing poverty globally, leaders of 189 countries met in 2000 and agreed on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Goal number one, which aims to reduce by less than half the number of people living on less than one dollar a day, underpins the other seven. Meeting the MDGs challenge requires attention not only to the eight goals, but also to their inter-relationship with energy since energy interacts with all aspects of social and economic development, including livelihoods, water, agriculture, environment, population, health, sanitation, education, job creation, and gender-related issues. Modern energy services are a pre-requisite for increasing productivity and improving livelihoods. Productive activities in the rural areas are less efficient or in some cases impossible without the services energy provides. Consumptive activities at the household level such as cooking and space conditioning also require energy. Gender equity and energy issues are also intertwined. For example, measures to reduce the gender gap in education will be difficult as long as girl children's time is consumed with fuel collection instead of attending schools. Moreover, improved access to affordable gender and environment-friendly energy technologies has potential to reduce drudgery and illness of women and children.



It is well understood that most of the poor in the Asia Pacific region, although living in areas that are declared electrified by definition have limited access to modern energy services. In addition, with increasing rate of urbanization and migration of rural poor in search of jobs and income, access to energy services will be of major concern even in the urban and at the periphery of urban centres in Asia-Pacific. The recent rise in oil prices, if sustained, will place enormous strain on development options and priorities of many poor energy importing countries. Increasing populations and incomes in the region will also result in increased demand for energy. It is anticipated that by 2010 energy consumption in the region will account for one-fifth of global consumption levels. This increase may well translate into increased pressure on fossil fuels and forest (primarily for fuel wood), contributing to environmental degradation and impairing the goal of reaching environmental sustainability.

REGIONAL ENERGY PROGRAMME FOR POVERTY REDUCTION (REP-PoR)

Given the strategic importance of creating equitable and affordable access to energy services to contribute to attainment of development goals (e.g. reducing poverty and gender gaps) and the need for re-orientation of conventional approaches to energy towards the promotion of energy systems based on renewable energy, energy efficiency, and cleaner fossil fuel technologies, UNDP has launched the Regional Energy Programme for Poverty Reduction (REP-PoR) for the Asia-Pacific region.



Khardung Anim Dratshang, one of the religious institutions that received a pair of improved stoves (right).
Photos: Ugen P.Norbu

In the past, there has been greater emphasis on technical and economic issues and, more recently, on the environmental aspects of energy with social concerns receiving less attention. Over the past few years, lessons learned from projects that have very much been sectoral based have led to the need for a shift from sectoral and technology-driven approaches to one which embodies energy as a basic need for the poor. This programme will thus pay attention to improving access to energy services that meet peoples' needs and priorities focusing on the "un-served" and poor.

In order to ensure that this regional energy programme supports efforts to achieve the MDGs, the following three operational principles are being adhered to in the implementation of REP-PoR:

- To adopt a 'people-centred' approach, reaching beyond the technical issues, to deliver energy services that meet people's needs and priorities and to ensure that communities have a voice in the decision-making process on how to meet their energy needs.
- To work across sectors to integrate energy more fully into development processes (building a deeper understanding of the linkages among energy, poverty reduction and gender issues) and to take a holistic approach to energy sector rather than a project-based approach.

- To work at local/ national, regional and international levels, in order to develop energy policies that are pro-poor, pro-women and pro-environment.

GLOBAL PROGRAMMES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Global partnerships provide effective mechanisms for defining commonly shared problems and channelling resources and expertise in support of specific types of energy initiatives. UNDP is actively engaged in several partnerships that were launched at the WSSD.

The Global Village Energy Partnership (GVEP) promotes expanded energy markets in rural areas. It brings together representatives of developing and industrialised countries, public and private sector organisations and multilateral institutions to increase access to modern energy services as a means of reducing poverty and enhancing economic and social development. The 'LPG Rural Energy Challenge' boosts efforts to deliver cleaner, more efficient fuels for household use and business development. This is a public-private partnership between the World Liquefied Petroleum Gas Association (WLPGA) and UNDP, and it targets rural and peri-urban areas with the objective of expanding affordable access to LP gas. Modern efficient fuels are essential not only for heating and cooking, but also to support small businesses that use heat processing. The LPG Challenge addresses the adverse impacts on health, the environment and economic productivity related to dependence on traditional biomass fuels in rural areas. UNDP is also a partner in the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD), facilitated by the UN Environment Programme, which is working to build and share energy expertise among leading research and academic institutions. In addition, UNDP works on energy activities jointly with many partners, such as UN agencies, the World Bank, the World Energy Council and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.