

Summary of side event: Meeting Poor People’s Energy Needs – how to measure what matters

Organised by CAFOD with the support of the World Bank, SE4ALL, Beyond 2015 and CAN International

Context: Post-2015 intergovernmental negotiations on goals, targets and indicators – 24 March 2015, UNHQ, New York

Focus: A discussion on indicators for the SDG7 target on “access to affordable, sustainable, reliable and modern energy services for all”.

Summary:

The side event was organised to discuss how to measure energy access in a way that “no-one is left behind”. The event looked specifically at Target 7.1. “by 2030 ensure universal access to affordable, reliable, and modern energy services” and explored the Global Tracking Framework’s *Multi-tier Framework*¹ intended to measure energy access beyond the current binary approach of either having or not having access to energy. The event was organised in the context of the indicators’ discussion happening at the 3rd Intergovernmental Negotiations on a future post-2015 agenda at the UNHQ in NY and aimed at creating awareness and options in the development of indicators at international and national level. The following Figure shows the different options of measuring access:

Figure 1 Multi-tier Framework - Access To Household Electricity Supply²

		Tier-0	Tier-1	Tier-2	Tier-3	Tier-4	Tier-5	
Attributes	1. Peak capacity	Power	No Electricity	V. Low Power Min 1 W	Low Power Min 50 W	Medium Power Min 200 W	High Power Min 2 kW	
		Daily capacity		Min 4 Wh	Min 200 Wh	Min 1.6 kWh	Min 4 kWh	
	2. Duration	Hours per day	< 4 hrs	Min 4 hrs		Min 8 hrs	Min 16 hrs	Min 23 hrs
		Hours per evening	< 2 hrs	Min 2 hrs		Min 2 hrs	Min 4 hrs	Min 4 hrs
	3. Reliability				Max 3 disruptions per day	Max 7 disruptions per week	Max 3 disruptions per week of total duration < 2 hours	
	4. Quality				Voltage problems do not prevent the use of desired appliances			
	5. Affordability				Cost of a standard consumption package of 365 kWh per annum is less than 10% of household income			
6. Legality				Bill is paid to the utility / pre-paid card seller / authorized representative				
7. Health and Safety				Absence of past accidents and perception of high risk in the future				

At the event, Mikul Bhatia from the World Bank gave an extensive presentation explaining why meaningful energy access is different than what most people think or what statistical offices often measure. He also gave concrete examples of how the SE4ALL initiative is doing this. Participants agreed that the underlying question we need to ask ourselves in the context of a truly transformative global post-2015 agenda is whether the access achieved in the end will be good

¹ <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/energy/publication/Global-Tracking-Framework-Report>

² “Measuring Energy Access with the Multi-tier Approach”, presentation by the World Bank

enough, of good quality, legal, healthy safe for all or climate friendly. It was shown that the Multi-tier approach has the potential to look at ways to measure intermediate stages of energy access that include reliability, quality or affordability. The table above shows the different Tiers of this approach and should be taken into consideration in the development of indicators through the international process but also at national level depending national priorities and circumstances. For instance, participants discussed how Tier-3 could be the minimum Tier for measuring energy access at household level, while Tier-4 should be the minimum level of access for cooking, given new evidence from the World Health Organisation on the devastating health impacts from indoor air pollution from cooking.

At the event CAFOD also launched a briefing paper analysing indicators for all targets under SDG7. The paper was produced by a group of civil society practitioners in the field. To access the briefing follow the link:

<http://www.cafod.org.uk/content/download/24154/173542/file/Energy%20SDG%20Indicators%20Briefing%20Mar%202015.pdf>

Background:

Discussions around the creation of Sustainable Development Goals have recognised that access to sustainable energy is crucial for many areas of development, including food and water security, health, education, livelihoods and women and girls' empowerment as well as tackling climate change. Billions of people worldwide still do not have access to the energy services they need.

The proposed Energy SDG 7 aims to close this gap and "ensure access to affordable, sustainable, reliable, and modern energy services for all".

Given the vast majority of the energy poor live "off-grid", the access gap cannot be meaningfully addressed without greater investment and support for decentralised (off-grid) energy. This is particularly true of electricity, as it is more feasible, sustainable and cost-effective to connect communities to off-grid energy sources than to extend the grid in many countries. This investment will also help communities and countries build resilience to the impacts of a changing climate.

Developing new ways of defining and measuring energy access will be crucial to achieving the new Energy SDG, and ensuring energy services are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable. This event aimed to build the understanding of such approaches among a range of stakeholders, and to contribute positively to the current discussion on the proposed Energy SDG.

Current binary definitions of energy access - namely, defining it as a basic household electricity connection - do not speak to the real development needs of poor people. A binary definition does not tell us if communities have energy that is of sufficient quality, reliable, affordable and safe enough to make it usable. It also does not capture the range of services needed by poor people for their development – not just for household uses but also energy for community use, such as health clinics and schools, and for productive uses, such as running small businesses and farms.

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