

Statement for the SEforALL 2017 Forum *Going Further, Faster – Together*

We have just over a decade to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) on *ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all*. While there has been some progress in improving access to electricity, over 1 billion people remain without it. Progress on clean and safe energy for cooking is even slower. Almost 3 billion people still cook with polluting fuels and indoor air pollution remains the biggest environmental killer, particularly affecting women and children under five. This is a health and gender inequality crisis that needs urgent action.

The scale of the challenge requires all to play their part, and civil society organisations (CSOs) play a key role in this endeavour; particularly when it comes to championing the voices of those most vulnerable to energy poverty.

Energy services must meet community needs to be sustainable

CSOs and community organisations have decades of experience and expertise in connecting poor and marginal groups to energy services at household and community level, as well as providing power for farms and businesses. Their experience, supported by wider research, shows how access to energy can enable sustainable development. But to do so, energy services must be integrated with the wider development needs of communities and take into account their local context, including gender issues, to be financially, socially and environmentally sustainable.

Investing in the right solutions

The vast majority of energy investment still goes to the centralised grid and to power generation, yet 87% of energy poor people live in rural areas far from the grid. To provide them with energy access, much greater and targeted investment is needed in distributed electricity solutions as well as clean cooking. Current levels of investment in decentralised solutions are inadequate to meet the need – particularly from governments and multilateral banks. For communities near the grid, adding more power will not connect them unless political, technical and financial barriers are overcome. This includes more investment in making new connections affordable, and more integrated and inclusive energy planning.

New approaches to energy planning

Much greater collaboration and coordination is needed between a range of actors - governments, donors, investors, energy enterprises and civil society groups - to deliver energy services that are sustainable and scalable. Traditional 'top-down' planning approaches have not achieved universal energy access. As trusted intermediaries, civil society are well placed to support 'bottom-up' planning, including building understanding among poor and marginal communities of new distributed energy services and products.

The convening role of SEforAll

SEforALL could play a key role in supporting greater communication amongst stakeholders, including sharing regular progress updates on meeting SDG7, as well as emerging best practice. This includes highlighting the work of the Global Tracking Framework on measuring energy access across the different attributes of the SDG7 target.

To ensure we are on track to deliver SDG7 by 2030, we need:

- Better ways of measuring energy access that focus on whether services are affordable, reliable, safe and provide sufficient power to meet the needs and aspirations of poor and marginal groups
- Scaled up support for energy access by donors, governments and investors, particularly investment in distributed electricity and clean cooking solutions
- More integrated and inclusive national energy planning processes, so that services are designed to meet the development needs of poor communities, and are financially, socially and environmentally sustainable
- Investment in building the technical, human and institutional capacity required to deliver SDG7 at national level
- More support for developing countries to strengthen their national enabling environments, particularly to incentivise investment in distributed solutions
- Increased research on what blends of public and private financing can deliver access to different groups, including innovative financing approaches for delivering energy to the poorest communities where market-based approaches may not work