

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

Capacity Building Workshop on “Promoting Green Energy Technology Market in Rural Areas”
Beirut, 24-25 May 2016

Information Note

The Sustainable Development Policies Division at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia will organize a Capacity Building Workshop on “Promoting Green Energy Technology Market in Rural Areas” at the UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon on 24-25 May 2016. Representatives of governments’ relevant Ministries and Agencies from Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman and Sudan will benefit from the Workshop.

I. BACKGROUND

Access to modern energy services is essential for advancing sustainable development in rural areas. Although considerable advances in rural electrification have taken place in most countries of the region, there are still more than 40 million people in the Arab world who still do not have access to modern energy services, most of whom living in rural areas. Connecting these areas to the grid requires high funding cost, and with little perceived return on investment due to lower load demands and the dispersed nature of rural areas, national governments with already constrained resources are more likely to prioritize funding to economic sectors with potentially high growth returns.

Distributed appropriate renewable energy technologies (RE) can provide energy access to dispersed rural communities at considerably lower investment cost than extending the grid. While RE can deliver considerable benefits to rural social services in health, education, entertainment, etc., energy use needs to pay for itself in order to secure long-term energy sustainability in rural areas. The rural productive sector should take the lead in adopting RE technology as tools for enhanced productivity. Thus RE technology will stimulate local economic development through integration in the rural value-chains in agriculture, small agro-businesses and industries, rural traditional manufacturing, etc.

Without necessarily resorting to subsidies, national governments can promote a favorable environment for the private sector to invest in RET in rural areas through relevant policies and adapted and operational regulatory frameworks. There are however many barriers that are preventing the creation of a market demand for renewable energy technologies. These barriers range from weak education of prospective investors on RET and prospective buyers on the value of the energy services, lack of local trained technicians on RET installation, operation and maintenance, to limited national capacity in the policy, technical and financial sectors to improve the penetration of RET in rural areas.

II. SCOPE

This Workshop falls under the United Nations Development Account (UNDA) project “Building Capacities in Developing Appropriate Green Technologies for Improving the Livelihood of Rural Communities in the ESCWA Region” which aims to strengthen the capacity of countries in the Arab region to mainstream appropriate green technology initiatives into national development programmes and policies, in order to enhance livelihoods of rural communities. The UNDA project aims to:

- a) Build the capacity of public and private development institutions on assessing the appropriate green technology needs in rural areas and on understanding the mechanisms that support the mainstreaming of appropriate green technology initiatives;
- b) Enhance the knowledge of policymakers and decision makers on policy options and building their capacity for using policy tools to enable an environment conducive for investment in appropriate green technologies in rural areas in the region.

This Workshop takes note of the outcome of the expert group meeting on “Promoting Market-Driven Access to Sustainable Modern Energy Services in the Arab Rural Regions” to be held on 18-19 April 2016 in Beirut and which focuses on identifying the drivers that support the establishment of a sustainable rural energy market and the challenges facing rural communities in the creation of such a market.

The UNDA project’s outcome is in line with the framework of the “Sustainable Energy for All” initiative and SDG 7, which call for ensuring access to sustainable modern energy for all by 2030.

III. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the Workshop is to build the capacity of the public sector in the Arab countries to enhance the sustainability of RE penetration in rural areas by fostering sustainable RE markets.

IV. FOCUS AREAS

The participants will benefit from the Workshop by acquiring knowledge and understanding on

- (1) Factors that determine the appropriateness of green and sustainable energy technologies in local rural environment and resources,
- (2) Potential and capacity for local manufacturing of appropriate green energy technologies,
- (3) Guiding policy makers in developing policies promoting an investment environment conducive to market-driven penetration of modern renewable energy technologies (RE) in rural areas,
- (4) Strength and weaknesses of different legal and regulatory frameworks for promoting RE technologies in rural areas as implemented in the Arab region and other regions with similar socio-economic characteristics,
- (5) Generic roadmap for instilling modern and sustainable energy entrepreneurship within the rural communities in the Arab region based on a case study on sustainable penetration of biodigesters in rural areas in Egypt.

V. PARTICIPANTS

The participants to the Workshop are public sectors’ representatives including energy experts, policy makers, rural social developers and development planners. They represent the five Arab countries of Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman and Sudan.

VI. ORGANIZATION OF THE WORKSHOP

The Workshop will be held at the UN-House in Beirut, Lebanon on 24-25 May 2016. Participants are kindly requested to arrive at the building at 8:30 am on Tuesday, 24 May 2016 to secure their identification cards and access the building.

The meeting will be conducted in the Arabic and English language. Interpretation will be provided.

VII. LOGISTICAL INFORMATION

Information will be duly provided.

VIII. CORRESPONDENCE

Correspondence and inquiries concerning the Workshop should be addressed to:

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