

REPORT

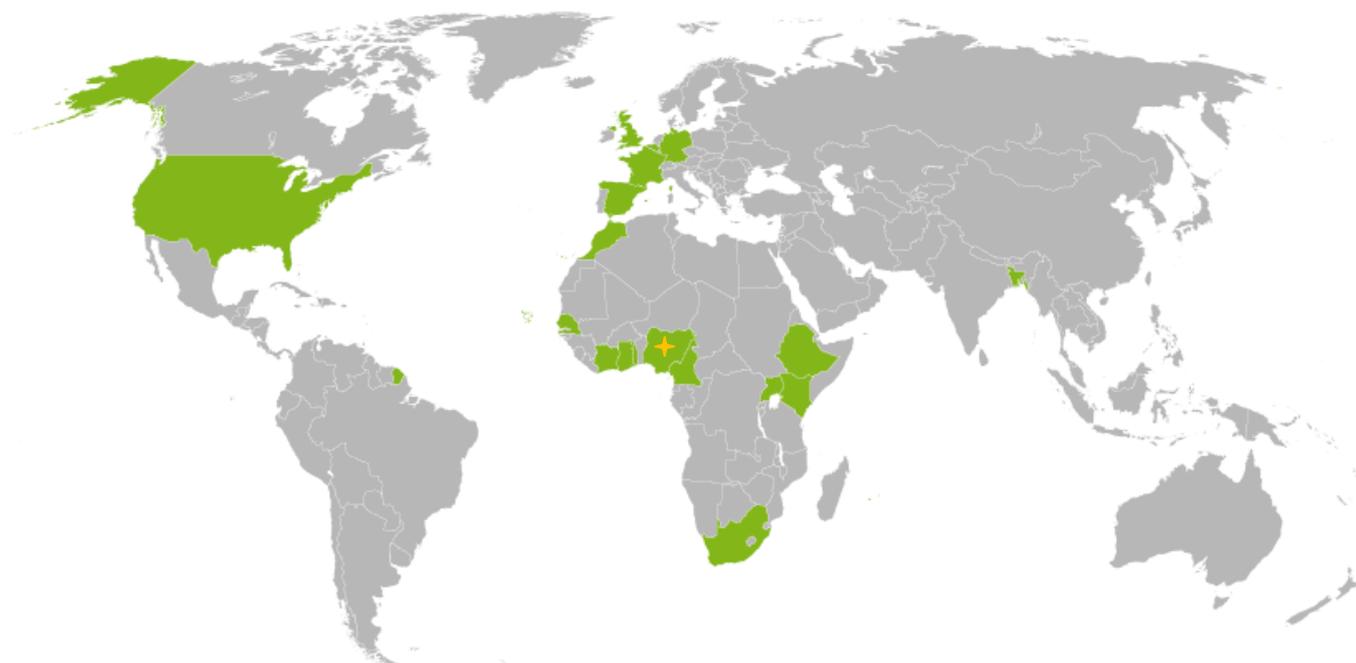
3rd international conference of the African Renewable Energy Alliance on Renewable Energy & Gender

June 29 – July 01, 2011 – Nicon Luxury Hotel, Abuja, Nigeria

Solar powered public screening of the Women's Football World Cup 2011

June 30, 2011 – Institut Français, Abuja, Nigeria

The conference assembled 72 participants from 19 countries to facilitate a pan-African information exchange. Policy makers, representatives from business and civil society consulted about policies, technologies and financial mechanisms for the deployment of renewable energies in Africa, reflecting the fact that gender is a main determinant that defines access, ways of utilization, opportunities and control over all energy resources.



Awareness raising for the advantages of sustainable, renewable energy production and usage at all levels of society is essential in order to achieve the momentum needed for an energy revolution in every African country. According to Hon. Elizabeth Thabethe, Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Republic of South Africa, **this energy revolution should be lead by women!**

Dr. Rose Mwebaza, Regional Expert on Gender and Climate Change Adaptation, UNDP/African Adaptation Programme from Uganda pointed out that it is not about a competition between men and women. *“There are different gender needs and we have to target these. Programs must specifically target women. Just as the topic of renewable energy had to be mainstreamed during the past decades, mainstreaming gender in the energy topic is what needs to take place in every discussion now.”*

Training and capacity building on renewable energy were perceived as important elements in terms of job creation in the green economy. Zohra Abib of EnR'afrique Morocco shared her experience, and the Engineering Capacity Building Program from Ethiopia was presented.

Most **renewable energy technologies are mature** and have been tried and tested in various conditions across the globe. African countries now have the advantage that most R&D had been conducted and lessons learned can immediately be implemented into projects in the African context. The World Future Council member Dipal Barua shared his experience of enhancing people's quality of life with the provision of Solar Home Systems, Biogas and Improved Cookstoves in Bangladesh. As similar conditions apply in many African nations, the elements of his concept could easily be adapted from Bangladesh.

Barua touched upon the importance of making energy services available to the rural communities by offering appealing and suitable financial schemes such as micro credits. Clearly the financial institutions play an important role in access to energy and the energy transition. AREA Member Hervé Azemtsa from Cameroon pointed to the available **UNFCCC Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)** as a financial source which until now is largely untapped by African project developers. *"Africa is losing money every day it is not making use of such financial mechanisms as CDM."*

Most private banks and some central banks seem to be more than ready to offer tailor made **financial services** to project developers. Still, what these financial institutions are looking for is a **clear policy** that describes the framework for their investments. One of these policies that make renewable energy projects predictable and thus bankable is the so called **Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT)**. Several consultants as well as representatives from Energy Regulatory Commissions from Kenya and Uganda reflected on the positive results this legal framework has lead to in almost 60 countries worldwide.

At the core of REFIT is the obligation of the grid operator (mainly the utility) to purchase electricity produced by anyone from renewable energy sources for a fixed price of a period of 15-20 years without having to negotiate at length Independent Power Producer (IPP) contracts. A properly planned and implemented REFIT will lead to a vital electricity market with many producers, **more transparency** and better **energy security**.

Of course one needs to take into account the grid extension (most African citizens are not connected to the national electricity grid) and its situation in terms of capability to absorb many energy sources with fluctuation in production.

A **challenge** remains to provide the majority of Africans in the **rural areas** with **sustainable, renewable energy services**. Technical solutions exist and once the political decision makers throw their passion and weight behind it there's nothing really in the way to stop serving people's needs.

A practical example of energy efficiency was illustrated by the Developmental Association for Renewable Energies (DARE) Nigeria with their **fuel efficient cook stove** that only consumes 20% of the firewood to prepare a meal for up to 15 persons. This **CDM financed project** was showcased during the evening event and DARE served delicious meals to the participants of the solar powered football world cup screening.

The African continent is endowed with an **abundance of renewable energy sources**. Sustainable use of its biomass, harvesting the huge solar, wind, hydro, tidal/ wave and geothermal potential could easily provide access to clean, affordable and modern energy services for every African citizen and business.

One thing that many participants pointed out is the importance of high **quality products** installed and maintained in a **professional** manner. There's nothing more dangerous to the spread of renewables than failed or non functioning projects that serve as a negative example to undercut the credibility and ability of renewable energy technology.

The Ghana Energy Commission gave a brief introduction on their **Geospatial Toolkit for Renewable Energy Planning and Policy**. An interactive database allowing decision making based on a range of facts & figures that can be selected, interlinked and modeled into a map and spreadsheet. It is envisioned that the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) should spearhead the process of updating and improving the toolkit to make it adoptable by the West Africa sub region.

Similar important steps in mapping have been undertaken by the Ministry of Industry and Energy, Cape Verde. They have produced a thorough **catalogue outlining the potential of different renewable energy sources** (wind speed, solar radiation) for all their islands. This research is the necessary basis for project developers to determine where it is most suitable and thus profitable to invest. These identified renewable energy “hot spots” are now reserved for energy production in order for Cape Verde to become energy independent from expensive fossil fuel imports.

Participants of the conference committed themselves to **personal action plans** on renewable energy reflecting their attendance of Power Kick for Africa 2011.

Everyone left the conference with a positive outlook on the prospects of the African people with access to **renewable energy as a key enabling factor** to achieve the eight Millennium Development Goals.

“I hope we can make this world a green & environmentally friendly world if we all keep working together in the future. Let us work together to change lives of our people. I believe we can do it together! It is time for us to put things into practice, establish and strengthen relationships for positive impact.” Conversation of Mr. Dipal Barua, Bangladesh and Ms. Gifty Asmah, Ghana.

“The AREA in my understanding should be a melting point where private sector and policy engage with the purpose to improve energy service delivery through renewable and sustainable energy sources and technologies.” as one participant from Kenya phrased it. *“AREA should engage the public sector a bit more deeply so that they can come to the discussion table more sincerely and enthusiastically. This would ideally lead us to come up with a practical list of things to do to enhance energy service delivery through renewable energy.”*

*“Africa has for long suffered, but the inspiring and passionate words from many participants is a stimulus prompting me to believe that **change on a large scale is possible, and we can make it happen**, through viable and genuine partnerships and through concrete action.”* said a participant from Senegal after the conference.

The African Renewable Energy Alliance (AREA) is going to partner with the 2012 UN Global Campaign for Sustainable Energy for All. AREA will further nurture its vital international cooperation and stimulate knowledge and information exchange for the acceleration of renewable energy in Africa.

To join the AREA network please sign-up at www.area-network.ning.com
Additional information on our programme is available at www.area-net.org

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