Clean energy towards a better quality of life; the ENERGY FOR LIFE project

Energy is recognized as being the principal means for providing access to basic needs such as food and water, while offering opportunities to improve the quality of life of people. Nevertheless, the type of energy has a direct impact not only on the quality of life of the local populations but also on people the world over. Whether wealthy or poor, living in developing, emerging or industrialized countries, we all live on the same planet, sharing the same air and water. As such, there is irrefutable interdependence between industrialized countries and developing countries in the energy sector, confronting common problems such as the depletion of natural resources, pollution, climate change, etc. Therefore, the promotion of close collaboration, shared solutions and strategies while supporting the advancement of developing countries has become necessary.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) recognized the explicit link between access to energy services and poverty alleviation. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI) on Sustainable Development, developed during the WSSD, states that poverty eradication, changes in consumption and production patterns, along with the protection and management of natural resources for economic and social development are the over-arching objectives of the plan and problems such as global inequalities, loss of biodiversity, climate change and globalization must be dealt with. Consequently, the JPOI called upon the international community to work together at all levels as to improve access to affordable, adequate, reliable and appropriate energy services for sustainable development as to facilitate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals set by the United Nations and adopted by governments worldwide.

Energy and development

When looking at the current energy situation around the world, it is clear that the energy consumption per capita is much higher in industrialized countries than in developing countries; industrialized countries account for less than 20 percent of the world population while consuming more than half the energy. The fact is that the improvement of quality of life in developing countries can only be attained with access to energy. Nonetheless, there is growing concern about the increasing demand on fossil fuel, and its impacts on natural resource depletion, higher CO2 emissions, and overall environmental degradation. Consequently, there is increasing interest in the use of alternative energy since it is recognized as playing a crucial role towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development. As such, increasing international cooperation within the framework of the links between renewable energy and development is required to improve awareness and to support development activities through specifically designed renewable energy projects.
Why the Energy for Life campaign?

The *Energy for Life* campaign project was developed with the objective of promoting renewable energy as a tool towards poverty alleviation and sustainable development as to improve the quality of life in Europe and in developing countries. The campaign will further demonstrate the interdependence between energy and development.

The Energy for life project was initiated in 2009 and is implemented by project partners from 9 countries namely: Germany, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Spain, Laos, Cambodia, Brazil and Tanzania. Its intention is that all people from European countries must become aware of the problems associated with natural resource utilization and exploitation, and with the problems associated with climate change; people must realize that there is a connection between energy and development thus action must be taken. This can only be achieved by raising awareness on the need to improve the North-South relations, by strengthening international cooperation towards a better understanding of the link between renewable energy and development, with a better comprehension of the benefits of sustainable energy production and its use on a global scale, and by promoting the implementation of renewable energy projects and related investments. Overall, the Energy for Life project is an awareness raising three year initiative, which aims to convince stakeholders and the public in general that making a commitment to renewable energy is an investment in the future of Europe and of developing countries.

**A virtual information platform; The Energy for Life website**

To meet the objectives of the programme, and as a tool for governments and non-government organizations, for decision makers and investors, a virtual information platform on renewable energy was developed as an instrument to provide data on renewable energy. The information for this database is to be collated through the responses collected from an especially designed questionnaire. This questionnaire was developed to ensure that all people with information will be capable of answering the questions: local and international GOs and NGOs, private companies, local, regional and national authorities and decision makers, secondary and college level youths, the public in general and anyone interested in contributing to the implementation of renewable energies and to the development of developing countries through access to energy as a human development right, to the mitigation of climate change and depletion of natural resources, to poverty reduction, and to the improvement of quality of life.
To make the database more accessible, dynamic and understandable for all levels and segments of society, the answers from the questionnaire are presented in the form of a virtual energy map, showing information on operating and planned renewable energy installations, including but not limited to their location, their type and their capacity. Moreover, a minimum of 60 selected best practices from successful experiences (about 20 per continent of Asia, Africa and South America) are to be presented, and shall serve as the basis for the development of a best practice Handbook. This Handbook is to be elaborated through a one year research grant that has been awarded for a scholar to conduct a specific study on the “Scientific and empiric evidences of links among renewable energies and development”. The Handbook will analyse and compare selected best practice renewable energy projects including their legal framework and barriers as to identify common issues and requirements associated with the success of each of the projects, and the basis for their replication. The Handbook will present guidelines for energy actors on how to assess renewable energy projects in the preparation of their baseline, on the proper and successful planning and implementation of renewable energy systems, and on how to evaluate their impact. The study will not only allow the collection and dissemination of information but will also enhance scientific research and the spread of knowledge on the relationship between renewable energies and development.

The energy for life website went online in March 2010. The internet portal is the heart of the campaign. Here, Energy for Life partners offer public institutions, companies and private citizens a platform of information about renewable energy, information on current activities of the Energy for Life project and acts as the framework for the presentation of the database. The website is the main tool for the information campaign and serves not only as information but also as an exchange platform at European and international levels. As a dynamic platform, its objective is not only short term but also long term as to allow a regular updating of information. It allows the exchange of information on existing and planned installations, and can act as a matchmaker for projects seeking support for the implementation of new systems used in the production of clean energy, whether in the form of steam, heat, biogas or electricity. Although initially in English and only presenting projects in the partner countries, the platform is to be translated into various languages and will, in the future, include projects from any and all countries.
An online game on renewable energies is also being developed as to show children 10 years and older about the potential of renewable energy and their applications. This will be done through a role-playing computer game while competitions and prizes for winners will be offered. Finally, national workshops and international conferences will be conducted to discuss the use of renewable energy and its impact on poverty alleviation and sustainable development. These activities will also be announced and reported on the web site.

A free of charge interactive information exchange centre

The German partner Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sonnenenergie e.V. (DGS) plans to continue the development of this database even after the project’s termination in 2012, with the support of European and internationally active key players in the sector of renewable
energy, who are expected to continue their entry of information into the database. There are already numerous projects installed and operating in developing countries. However, there is very little information available on these projects and in most cases their existence is totally unknown. The platform not only serves for those seeking information, but can also benefit those offering renewable energy services such as developers, installers, operators along with public and private organizations. As a FREE OF CHARGE information dissemination base, it allows the promotion of technology and knowhow, and shows to governments, public and private organizations, United Nations organizations and others, applied and adapted technology and knowhow about renewable energy, or the request for assistance in the installation of a new renewable energy system as to improve the quality of life of people in remote communities.

For more information on the partners, the project and its activities, or to add information about your project in our database, please visit our website at www.energy-for-life.info

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