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## ***WORKSHOP AIDE-MEMOIRE***

Promoting Energy Access for the urban poor in Africa  
*Slum electrification: challenges to be addressed*

Organized by

**The Global Energy Network for Urban Settlements [GENUS]**

Nairobi, Kenya 26-28 October 2009

## **Introduction**

Current patterns of energy production, distribution and utilization are unsustainable, and there are wide disparities in the level of energy consumption within and between developed and developing countries. One third (2 billion people) of the global population has no access to basic energy services. Most of them (1.6 billion people) live in developing countries, mainly in South Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa. They depend on inefficient biomass fuels, such as wood, animal and crop waste for cooking and heating, which have detrimental effects on air quality and health. About three-quarters of the world's commercial energy is consumed in urban areas, and many of the people in direst need of access to modern energy systems are located in rapidly growing informal urban settlements (slums) throughout the developing world. Despite such numbers, the energy needs of poor urban households, and particularly of women, in developing countries have not been properly addressed, as development efforts have focused intensely on the rural poor.

Access to affordable, modern energy services is a pre-requisite for sustainable development and poverty alleviation and, more specifically, for achieving each of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Lack of access to reliable, safe and mostly environmentally-friendly energy is a strong constraint on human development.

To encourage and support the design and implementation of energy-access programmes and projects for the urban poor worldwide, UN-HABITAT established the Global Energy Network for the Urban Settlements (GENUS). This is a dynamic new partnership and collaboration with multiple institutions and stakeholders, including the public and private sectors, governmental and non-governmental organizations, grass-roots groups, national and international development agencies, working in the urban energy sector. GENUS aims to provide world-wide exchange and dissemination of best practices and technologies, awareness creation, capacity-building, advocacy, tools development and knowledge management.

GENUS is a global programme structured geographically to operate in Asia, Latin America and Africa. It addresses three key themes of energy access for the urban poor, namely (i) Improved urban mobility for the poor; (ii) Slum electrification; and (iii) Energy from waste.

### **The Workshop – *Slum electrification: challenges to be addressed***

It is widely assumed that precisely because the urban poor reside in the cities of the world that they must have no energy needs or challenges at all. But nothing could be further from the truth. Even if there is availability of electricity in urban areas, this does not automatically translate into accessibility by the urban poor. UN-HABITAT recent studies show that urban poor and especially slum-dwellers are particularly hard hit by lack of access to modern energy. In part due to poor infrastructure and prohibitively high up-front costs, the poor often face much higher energy costs than the non-poor. They pay more for their cooking, water and electricity than wealthier people connected to the service networks.



Cities in developing countries require a rapid increase in energy production and consumption to accelerate economic development, alleviate poverty and meet the basic needs of their populations. Urban areas offer special opportunities and need thus special attention. They are a hub for economic development and high population density offers possibilities for good economics in terms of electricity access. The current political/environmental agenda in many of those countries is still fragile, and different challenges constrain the capacity of city managers to conceive and design appropriate programs and policies in support of energy access for poor urban settlements.

The workshop will bring together key agencies, institutions and stakeholders involved in urban energy issues in Africa. It will provide an in action-oriented forum for the exchange and integration of various best practices, lessons learnt and perspectives represented by the experts, into the development of a programme of action for improving energy access for the urban poor in Africa. Among other issues, the workshop will address lessons learned and best practices within the continent in terms of how utilities and public authorities have, in selected instances, been able to bridge the gap between the ability to pay for monthly service and user fees and the upfront costs necessary for connection to the grid and proper metering.

The workshop will form the basis of the launch of the GENUS network and programme of work on Slum Electrification in Africa. A similar consultation workshop was held in May 2009 in Asia with a focus on access to transport for the urban poor. A consultation leading to the establishment of GENUS in Latin America with a focus on Energy from waste will be held in the early part of 2010. The series of workshops will culminate in an inter-regional meeting to mark the formal launch of GENUS as global platform on access to energy for the urban poor.

### **Outcomes**

- Developing an understanding of key issues, challenges and opportunities for addressing access to electricity in informal settlements in Africa.
- Mapping of key stakeholders in Africa to be enjoined in the emerging GENUS partnerships and networks.
- Broad agreement on the structure of the GENUS network in Africa.
- Identification of potential anchor institution for GENUS activities in Africa.
- Broad agreement on a comprehensive operating plan and objectives of the GENUS in Africa.

### **Venue**

The Workshop will be held on 26, 27 and 28 October 2009 at UN-HABITAT Headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya (Conference Room 8).

### **How to register**

Contact the Workshop Secretariat for additional information on [genus@unhabitat.org](mailto:genus@unhabitat.org) Registration is free.