First WHO Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health: Improving air quality, combatting climate change – saving lives

Side Event

Regional Perspective: Energy Access for Health in Sub-Saharan Africa

Tuesday 30 October 2018, 13.30–14.30
World Health Organization, Geneva – Salle C

Policies designed to meet Sustainable Development Goal 7 targets on energy access, energy efficiency and renewables have the potential to also provide vast benefits for human health (SDG 3), and spur progress across the entire Sustainable Development Agenda. One key area of connection between energy and health in the Sub-Saharan region is the lack of access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking, which has negative effects on the health of 3 billion people. Household air pollution produced by polluting fuels and technologies is a cause of some 4 million deaths from noncommunicable diseases (including heart disease, stroke and cancer), as well as pneumonia. Inefficient household energy use is a particular health and livelihood risk for women, children and infants. Access to clean fuels and technologies has the potential to save millions of lives each year. Over a billion people still lack access to electricity, and must rely on polluting candles and kerosene lamps to light their homes.

Inefficient energy use by industry, transport, waste burning, construction activities and buildings represents a major cause of air pollution and related ill health in urban and peri-urban areas. Given that current trends suggest that energy demand is expect to increase in almost all key economic sectors in cities, planning should aim to minimize the production of air pollution.

Energy access challenges also affect health care delivery. Around 25 per cent of health care facilities in 11 sub-Saharan African countries have no access to electricity, a major barrier to the delivery of essential primary health care. In the absence of power, many basic life-saving interventions cannot be performed safely or at all: lighting operation and examination rooms, safer deliveries and functioning of neonatal units, sterilizing equipment to prevent infection, maintaining the cold chain for vaccines and other medical supplies like storing blood transfusion sets, powering medical devices, and many more. Powering health care facilities with clean sources of energy, coupled with energy efficiency measures,
will reduce health-sector carbon emissions and operating costs and contribute to the vision of health for all.

Investing in energy access, renewables, and energy efficiency (the three target areas of SDG 7) will be instrumental to reducing poverty, contributing to sustainable economic growth, and generating significant health benefits.

**Session objectives:**

- Provide details on the critical need for improved energy access in Sub-Saharan Africa to provide health benefits, particularly in the areas of households, community infrastructure, and health care facilities
- Explore key opportunities for achieving significant health gains through expanded energy access in the African context

**Provisional Programme:**

**Keynote presentation:** Her Excellency Hajia Samira Bawumia, Second Lady of Ghana

**Moderator:** Mr. Minoru Takada, United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (UNDESA)

**Panel discussion**

- **Dr. Helen Petach**, USAID - *Cooking and household energy access, and importance of eliminating kerosene use*
- **Mr. Waltaji Terfa Kutane**, WHO Ethiopia - *Recent WHO Household Energy Assessment Rapid Tool (HEART) reports on Opportunities for Transition to Clean Household Energy in Ghana, Ethiopia and Kenya*
- **Mr. Dominic Brain**, Head of Programme Development and Funding, Christian Aid - *Breaking the barriers and other insights on women and energy*
- **Ms. Pam Belcher-Taylor**, Mayor of Paynesville, Liberia – *Solid waste management in Paynesville, Liberia*
- **Mr. Josh Karliner**, International Director, Health Care without Harm – *Importance of energy access for health care facilities*
- **Mr. Samson Tsegaye**, Solar Energy Foundation – *Perspective of Ethiopian NGO working on clean energy*