

2012 AND THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL

Aubagne, 31st January 2012 – Whether it's lighting for a workshop in Benin, a heated room for craft work in Afghanistan or machinery to process farm produce in Mali, energy can create new economic opportunities and improve existing ones. As we enter 2012, the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All, the French NGO GERES seeks to highlight good practice in the field in both North and South and continue speaking up for the rights of people experiencing fuel poverty.

Access to energy is now recognized the world over as key to reducing poverty as well as achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The theme is an official priority for the second term of office of UN General Secretary Ban-Ki Moon. The UN launched the "International Year of Sustainable Energy for All" in 2012. GERES (Group for the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity) welcomes the initiative.

Even today, 2.5 billion people only have access to age-old cooking methods. One third of the global population has no access to electricity and 60% of energy is consumed by only 20% of the world's people, according to figures published by the NGO Practical Action in its study entitled "Poor People's Energy Outlook 2012."

"Hundreds of millions of people will be unable to escape the poverty cycle due to lack of access to energy in 2030."

To guarantee access to energy for all in 2030, more than 150 million more people must gain access to clean cooking equipment every year and 75 million more people must obtain reliable, appropriate access to electricity every year. Although some progress has been seen in recent years, improvements in access to energy have been uneven, varying from continent to continent and with huge disparities in sub-Saharan Africa in particular.

Energy is vital to reduce poverty

Almost 45% of people in developing countries make their living from farming. In most cases, traditional farm production relies on human and animal power.



Alain Guinebault
General Manager

"Universal access to clean energy is directly linked to poverty reduction, the first of the Millennium Development Goals. Targets have been set for 2030. Now we have to translate our intentions into practical action. We at GERES are working on this every day and in the field, developing partnerships so that we can together tackle this challenge which concerns us all."

However, innovative technical solutions developed by GERES do exist: building insulation, bioclimatic architecture, biofuels, renewable biomass, hydro-electricity, photovoltaic power... They help to lighten the burden of chores and improve farmers' practices, thereby increasing their output and raising their living standards at the same time, whilst taking care to protect the environment.

In Benin, for example, GERES is setting up multifunction platforms in rural areas offering services to meet a wide range of energy needs in food processing and small-scale production (grinding cereals, recharging batteries, etc.). The SETUP project provides a sustainable alternative to the manual tasks mainly done by women and is primarily aimed at women and girls, agricultural producers, craftsmen and traders and energy services operators.

Sustainable solutions

In the South, there are also many people who earn their living from micro or small businesses such as street restaurants and stalls, mobile hairdressing services, etc. When they have reliable energy sources and efficient equipment, these micro-businesses can greatly improve their output or services. GERES also stresses the need for

autonomy, giving priority to local products over imports.

In Cambodia, the New Lao Stove is an improved cooking stove that can reduce wood consumption and CO₂ emissions. It mitigates the impact of harmful fumes indoors that mainly affect women and children. Its affordable cost and low fuel consumption mean that both households and small street restaurants can benefit. In addition, the project benefits all the links in the supply chain at national level, from producers via distributors and salespeople to end users.



In Cambodia, GERES disseminates the New Lao Stove (NLS), an improved cooking stove that can reduce charcoal consumption by 22 per cent. As a result, more than 1,150,000 tonnes of CO₂ emissions were avoided between 2003 and 2010. © GERES

Fuel poverty affects the North too

In Europe, a household spending more than 10 per cent of its budget on meeting energy needs (excluding transport) is considered as fuel poor. A study conducted by GERES shows that many poor families actually spend up to 30 per cent of their budgets on energy.

GERES is participating in France in the European ACHIEVE project, which aims at reducing fuel poverty and CO₂ emissions in Europe. Identifying households at risk of fuel poverty at local level offers the opportunity not only to conduct studies but also to raise awareness of energy saving amongst low-income families.

GERES, a key player in 2012

The injustice of fuel poverty is now on the international agenda. As a member and representative of civil society, GERES has been striving for 35 years to develop technologies in the field and make communities aware of the benefits of renewable energy and energy efficiency for health and development.

"GERES intends to make the voices of the fuel poor heard throughout 2012."

In 2012, GERES is launching an awareness-raising campaign for the general public, donors and the private sector, focusing on the importance of access to energy in meeting global development and environmental challenges. Relying on its extensive field experience, GERES intends to make sure that the voices of the fuel poor in the South are heard and to advocate on their behalf, alongside other civil society organizations, amongst both the general public and decision-making bodies at international level.

Convinced of the importance of working in partnership to meet the global challenge of universal access to sustainable energy, GERES starts working closely to the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves (GACC), the official network of the international year of energy launched by the United Nations Foundation. ■

GERES PRESS CONTACT

Cindy CAO

c.cao@geres.eu

Tel: + 33 4 42 18 55 88

GERES

GERES - Group for the Environment, Renewable Energy and Solidarity - is a non-profit association set up in 1976 following the first oil crisis. It now has more than 195 members of staff running innovative sustainable development projects in France and 12 developing countries. Preserving the environment, mitigating climate change and its consequences, reducing fuel poverty and improving the living conditions of the poorest people are the major challenges of our time. The GERES team is playing its part, deploying development engineering and specific technical expertise.



www.geres.eu

PRACTICAL ACTION

The British NGO Practical Action is working for a world free of poverty and injustice, in which technology is used for the benefit of all. To reduce poverty through the use of technology, it aims to work as closely as possible with vulnerable communities building their capacity, improving their access to technical solutions and know-how and, finally, supporting their efforts to influence economic, social and institutional systems in favour of proper use of technology and innovations. To mark 2012, Practical Action has published Poor People's Energy Outlook [available on its website](#).

<http://practicalaction.org/>



2012, INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SUSTAINABLE ENERGY FOR ALL

Launched by the UN Secretary-General, the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All aims to mobilize all key stakeholders to meet the urgent challenge of universal access to sustainable energy. The initiative brings many different constituencies around the table: companies, governments, investors, community groups and researchers. It seeks to forge a common vision around three interlinked objectives: ensuring universal access to modern energy services, doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

www.sustainableenergyforall.org



2012
ANNÉE INTERNATIONALE DE
L'ÉNERGIE DURABLE
POUR TOUS

GERES PRESS CONTACT
Cindy CAO
c.cao@geres.eu
Tel: + 33 4 42 18 55 88