



Digital Seminar Series:

'Maximising the Impacts of Energy Access'

Takeaways from Seminar 2:

'Understanding Communities'

In this digital seminar, we focus on the importance of understanding the development opportunities, needs and aspirations of people and communities as a starting point for energy planning, and how to achieve this. Our panelists: Ayu Abdullah, Co-Executive Director Energy Action Partners (ENACT) and Emmanuel Cyoy Ngeyo, Consultant on Energy Delivery Model (EDM). Here are our key takeaways from the session:

On conventional energy planning:

- Conventional approaches to energy planning devote insufficient attention to community engagement
- This reduces the chances of addressing the actual development priorities of the targeted population

On community engagement:

- Communities are very knowledgeable about their context, their development opportunities and needs
- Moreover, communities have capacities and abilities for supporting and leading (but also for hindering!) the successful realisation of energy initiatives
- The engagement of communities in the energy planning process can happen at three different levels:
 - Obtaining information from the community (one-way exchange): e.g., via surveys, questionnaires and focus groups
 - Educating the community (two-way exchange): e.g., by building a community's understanding of energy needs and energy systems
 - Involving the community in decision making along the whole project journey (ensuring buy-in)

On development priorities and energy:

- People tend to prioritise development aspects that are not directly expressed in terms of energy, such as increased income from farming, better access to healthcare, improvements in education and access to clean water
- Therefore, when planning energy for development it is important to take a cross-sector approach...
- ... and to ask how energy can help to drive improvements in those other development sectors
- Thus, planning requires multi-actor collaboration: as well as the community, the group of actors can include experts from prioritised development sectors, suppliers of suitable technologies and services and relevant political leaders

On challenges faced by community involvement:

- Resistance to cross-sector collaboration
- The tendency of experts to dominate discussions and decisions: this hinders the potential of listening to and learning from the communities
- A lack of awareness among political leaders of the linkages between energy and other development sectors: this causes low levels of political buy-in to support energy programmes
- Low propriety given to community engagement by investment and funding programmes: this leads to a lack of time and resources to involve communities in energy planning



Links to relevant resources:

[Inclusive and Integrated Energy Planning in Kitui County, Kenya](#)

This online article illustrates how the “Energy Delivery Model” has been applied to support the Kitui county government in Kenya to develop an integrated energy plan.

[COMET in Somaliland](#)

This video talks about how the “COMET” tool can help to engage communities in the planning of mini grids to meet their specific needs in their particular socio-economic and cultural conditions.

[The Diffusion of Sustainable Family Farming Practices in Colombia: An Emerging Social-Technical Niche?](#)

This study applies transdisciplinary methodology to learn about the sustainability strategies of farmers’ associations in Colombia. The cases illustrate that an energy technology – such as domestic biodigestion – can be implemented together with other techniques and strategies to strengthen the livelihoods of farming families (cross-sector links).

To the digital seminar:

[Understanding Communities – Maximising the impacts of energy access by understanding the development opportunities, needs and aspirations of people and communities](#)