



Supporting African Municipalities in Sustainable Energy Transitions

SAMSET

This briefing note describes a novel approach to helping municipal authorities address the energy demands of rapidly growing urban populations in Africa. The population in Africa is expected to double between 2010 and 2040, and urban growth is expected in small and medium-sized cities, where local government capacity constraints are most serious. A long term partnership between municipal authorities, NGOs/CSOs, and academics can build capacity, and a prescribed strategy can lead to progress on the ground.

Changes and Energy Transitions

The population in Africa is expected to double between 2010 and 2040. The urban population rate across sub-Saharan Africa is 38%, but is growing steadily (1.4% a year). Well over half of urban dwellers live in slum conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa, which presents governance challenges. An interesting feature of this growth is that it is expected to take place mostly in small and medium sized cities, rather than capitals. This is where local government capacity is weakest, and there is little to suggest that urban governance capacity will improve significantly: ‘few countries have developed strategies to cope with the challenges posed by rapid urbanization’.

Energy transitions have focused on low carbon development, which aims to enable economic growth without a corresponding increase in GHG emissions. This is based on a climate change agenda. However, the understanding of a ‘sustainable energy transition’ is broader than this, and includes a strong focus on improving access to modern energy as well as the democratization of energy - decentralized of energy systems, increased bottom-up decision-making, and demand-driven planning.

Municipalities can and should be central players in supporting sustainable energy transitions. They are responsible for urban planning, transport planning, building approvals, and provide energy intensive ser-

SAMSET project info

About

SAMSET is a 4-year project supporting Sustainable Energy Transitions in six urban areas in three African countries – Ghana, Uganda and South Africa. A key objective is to improve ‘knowledge transfer frameworks’ so that research and capacity building efforts are more effective in supporting this challenging area.

The Team

The project team includes a leading university in each of the three Africa countries – [University of Ghana](#), [Uganda Martyrs University](#) and [University of Cape Town](#) - as well as an NGO in South Africa, [Sustainable Energy Africa](#). In addition, the team includes two leading universities in the UK – [Durham University](#) and [University College London](#), and a UK consultancy, [Gamos](#).

Project funders

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Sustainable Energy Africa have worked as an intermediary with municipal authorities in South Africa over a 16 year period to promote the use of sustainable energy; the methodology is based on this experience and is rooted in practical approaches to making progress at a local level.

Role of the intermediary

Key to the approach is the involvement of an intermediary organisation, which fulfils a number of functions:

- Links 2 or more municipalities together in a partnership arrangement;
- Facilitates development of Sustainable Energy Strategy by municipal authorities;
- Coordinates local government liaison with national activities;
- Identify barriers and constraints to the successful implementation of projects
- Provides a certain amount of expertise and research capability, but more importantly, has the contacts to be able to source specialist expertise as needed;
- Knowledge intermediary, making technical information accessible to partners;
- Promote learning and capacity building of municipal partners e.g. run courses.



Structured workstream

A structured programme of the following activities is designed to identify priority issues, and to develop a strategy to address these:

- Developing a State of Energy Report on each municipality – examine energy supply and demand (domestic, commercial, transport), including energy access and poverty, and environmental implications of energy use.
- Undertaking primary research to fill information gaps evident from the State of Energy reports.
- Energy futures modeling: using a simple energy modelling package, or even a spreadsheet. Considering energy use in the future based on, for example, population and economic growth trends can help decision makers identify forthcoming problems, and plan accordingly.
- Developing a Sustainable Energy Strategy. Evolving from the previous activities, the strategy identifies areas to be pursued, assigns responsibilities and timeframes.
- Implementation support. The intermediary organisation supports the process by facilitating, sourcing technical support, and communicating technical information to partners. This is arguably the most critical area of work of the programme.

Capacity building

The structured workstream described above, and the work of the intermediary organisation in particular, all serve to strengthen the capacity of municipal partners. Formal capacity building activities have been found to be effective:

- Networking events - municipalities share lessons from implementation of particular projects.
- Week long 'Masters level' courses – relevant not only to municipalities but also to academics, consultants, NGOs, development workers etc.

Networking not only facilitates lessons sharing, but builds relationships between municipalities and enables the development of common positions resulting in a stronger voice to national government.

For more information contact:- melusile@sustainable.org.za

