

1. Publishable summary

General presentation of SustainergyNet

Sustainable development in both, industrialized and developing countries is inseparably linked to the issues of Environment and Energy and their interdependencies. Access to energy is indeed essential not only for promoting economic growth and social development but plays a central role for environmental conservation as well. However, intensive and unsustainable use of energy sources in industrialized countries and enormous inefficiencies in energy production and consumption in the developing world has serious implications for the environment and the climate. Technologies developed to produce energy from renewable sources (like solar, wind and biomass) need to be adapted and implemented where the future energy demand is growing fastest.

Especially in developing countries, sustainable solutions are vital for guaranteeing that economic and social development will be consistent with the preservation of the environment and the mitigation of Climate Change. In Africa, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are particularly active in addressing sustainable development.¹ Their potential support in helping to adapt and implement renewable energy technologies in Africa is urgently needed. Nevertheless, this potential requires more active involvement of CSOs and has not yet been entirely realised. CSOs present important advocates for people's needs and interests, while generally constituting a motivated and creative human resource base, bringing in different and innovative ideas and approaches.

However, their effective involvement in building a renewable energy perspective for Africa still faces great difficulties starting from insufficient access to knowledge and financial resources, lacking interest by RTD performers to adapt their technologies to local needs and limited influence on policy agenda setting.

In line with the commitment of the European Union to support global sustainable development initiatives and the recognition that strengthening partnerships involving Non-state Actors is hereto essential², the overall aim of the Coordination and Support Action (CSA) SustainergyNet is to foster and promote the participation of CSOs in Africa in the field of research policy agenda setting concerning sustainable development, environmental issues as well as efficient energy management.

In this respect, SustainergyNet intends to improve the cooperation and interaction between CSOs and the scientific community and Research and Technology Development (RTD) performers, going beyond the involvement of these actors in implementation and review of development programmes.

¹ In accordance with the definition provided within the Working Programme, we consider Civil Society Organisations to be any legal entity that is non-governmental, not-for-profit, not representing commercial interests, and pursuing a common purpose in the public interest.

² European Commission's Communication on the Participation of Non-State Actors in EC Development Policy, Brussels, May 2003

To achieve this stated aim, SustainergyNet has set the main objective to elaborate and suggest ways on how to encourage and facilitate the cooperation between CSO's and RTD performers in the field of sustainable development, environmental policies and energy management.

Over the duration of two years, five objectives guide the Project implementation. Three of these objectives are pursued in specific work packages. They are: to assess already existing institutional settings and identifying the status quo of CSO involvement in Europe and Africa; to elaborate best practices and recommendations to improve the current situation; and to suggest and present concrete ways to better connect stakeholders from policy, research and civil society organisations. In addition, there are two overall objectives, pursued throughout the Project. One is to promote a global understanding and awareness on the importance and potential of CSO involvement for sustainable development. The other central objective is to ensure the direct and indirect involvement of CSOs throughout the entire implementation process. Here, a specific focus is set on elaborating and strengthening the contact and collaboration with smaller groups, often referred to as grass root movements.

The SustainergyNet consortium is composed of four European and two African institutions, with either civil society, research or policy background. The Organisation for International Dialogue and Conflict Management (IDC), a Vienna based non-profit association committed to promoting international dialogue and active in science communication, is coordinating the CSA.

Presentation of the first year

During the first 12 months of the 2-years-Project implementation, activities have mainly focussed on establishing a common ground and setting the Project on track, on conducting assessment activities and on making the necessary preparations for an international conference-meeting in Nairobi and an embedding e-conference. In addition, some first dissemination activities have been carried out.

In a first step, the official launch of the Project in August 2008 has encompassed initial preparatory work, including the set up of a Project website. This site is located under www.sustainergynet.eu. It aims to provide, throughout the implementation, a comprehensive and concise overview of SustainergyNet, its aim and objectives, to give information about the consortium and forthcoming events, and to present the major outcomes to all interested visitors. An internal login protected area has been established in view of easing the exchange and communication within the Project consortium.

The following Project logo has been developed. It is used on the banner of the Project website, as well as on all Project reports, publications and presentations and in Project related communication. It symbolises the three groups of stakeholders, CSO, research organisations and policy makers, and the potential to go ahead by interaction.



A Kick-off meeting has been organised in the office of the Project Coordinator IDC in Vienna in October 2008. It has gathered representatives from all Project participating institutions in order to discuss the work programme, further define deadlines and responsibilities and prepare the first tasks of the Project. The meeting was joined by the EC Project officer.



Kick-off meeting (Vienna, Oct. 08)



Assessment meeting (Dresden, Feb. 09)

In a second step, comprehensive assessment activities have been carried out in view of identifying the status quo of CSO involvement in sustainable development and energy research and agenda setting processes in Africa and Europe. A series of expert interviews in Africa and Europe and the review of relevant publications have allowed to draw a first picture about current forms of cooperation and interaction between the civil society and the research and policy making level in this specific field. Findings and results have been presented and discussed on a Project assessment meeting in Dresden in February 2009. They have afterwards been analysed, compared and presented in two Assessment Summary Reports. Although not foreseen by the work plan, the Egyptian Project partner Cairo University (CU-IARS) has organised a SustainergyNet workshop in Cairo in June 2009 and invited some of the interviewed stakeholders to exchange their experiences and ideas on CSO involvement. Also initially not foreseen, a further assessment activity has been the mission of the Project Coordinator IDC to Kenya in April 2009. This mission has allowed the coordinator to directly meet and discuss with civil society, research and policy stakeholders in Kenya about multi-stakeholder cooperation for sustainable energy projects. It has hence provided additional inputs to the assessment work laying specific emphasis on the issue of grass root empowerment. This mission has also given initial input to the elaboration of the features and requirements list guiding the elaboration of the CSO Involvement Net that will be developed later in the Project (WP 4).

A third step during the first twelve months of the Project has consisted in making first preparations for the Conference in Nairobi and the e-conference that shall take place in September and October 2009. The consortium has started to elaborate a preliminary list of topics and issues to be addressed during these two

events. Moreover, the technical set up and installation of the e-conference have started. As host of the international Conference, AFREPREN/FWD has carried out first organisational and preparatory tasks.

Besides the launch and regular update of the SustainergyNet website, a first focussed dissemination activity has been the elaboration and distribution of the first Project Newsletter. The Newsletter is available as download on the Project website in English, French and Arabic and has been distributed in hard-copy by consortium partners.

Activities foreseen for the second half of SustainergyNet include the organisation of the e-conference and the international Conference in Nairobi in September and October 2009. The e-conference is to provide an opportunity for energy experts with different backgrounds in Africa and Europe to share and discuss experiences, opinions and ideas on the involvement of CSOs in sustainable energy. It shall timely embed the Conference in Nairobi and contribute inputs to the agenda. At the same time, one day of the three-days Conference will be open for invited stakeholders in order to include their point of view in the consortium's discussion. All these information and ideas will be considered, in a next step, for the elaboration of the "CSO Involvement Net", an online exchange tool to support, encourage and facilitate the networking of different stakeholders on sustainable energy. This open and free tool shall allow its users to get in contact with other actors working in the same field and to exchange information, know how and profiles. The "CSO Involvement Net" will, in a final step, be presented on specific information events organised by the Project partners.

In view of the carried out and planned activities, SustainergyNet intends to make a significant contribution towards overcoming the main obstacles that currently impede CSO involvement in agenda setting for sustainable energy. The expected impact is not only to promote active engagement of civil society organisations in research, but also, as a direct consequence, to increase the contribution of research to sustainable development.



Stakeholder workshop in Cairo (June 09)



Field mission to Kenya (April 09)