



Africa has a once in a generation opportunity to 'recover better' with sustainable energy

Sustainable Energy for All sets out clear, practical steps for African countries to recover better from COVID-19 and close energy access gaps

June 30, VIENNA: As countries continue to rebuild from the COVID-19 pandemic, a new guide by [Sustainable Energy for All \(SEforALL\)](#) shows how clean energy investment can support countries to 'Recover Better', and use this unique moment to reset their economies and close energy access gaps.

According to [The Recover Better with Sustainable Energy Guide for African Countries](#) that was released by SEforALL today, countries that commit to an ambitious recover better strategy today can deliver long term economic growth, new jobs, and sustainable energy for all in the long-term.

This is particularly key for Africa after COVID-19 has highlighted the deep regional divide on energy access progress. Africa is a region full of promise and a growing economic powerhouse, yet this progress is stifled without access to sufficient, reliable and affordable energy.

The [latest data](#) on Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) – access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030 – shows that progress in Africa is still off track to meet global targets. 565 million people still lack access to electricity, and a further 900 million lack clean cooking solutions. The pandemic risks setting progress even further behind.

By acting on the enabling measures put forward in *The Recover Better with Sustainable Energy Guide*, countries across Africa will benefit from increased GDP, affordable energy provision, and improved agriculture, gender and health outcomes. This re-set can also spark progress at the speed and scale needed to meet SDG7 and help put the global economy on a trajectory in line with the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals.

"COVID-19 has changed the world as we know it. As countries rebuild economies from the impact of the pandemic, they are faced with a unique, once in a generation opportunity to 'Recover Better' with sustainable energy", said Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and Co-Chair of UN-Energy. "There has never been a better time to invest in clean, efficient renewable energy. Countries that recover better with sustainable energy will see the pay off in the form of resilient economies, new jobs, and faster energy development. By making this investment, African countries can develop a competitive advantage."

Speaking on the launch of the guide, **Professor Yemi Osinbajo, SAN, Vice President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria**, said: *"COVID-19 has presented a unique opportunity to accelerate transition to that clean, affordable, reliable and renewable energy source offered by the sun. Nigeria is committed to the full utilization of this abundant solar energy source. The Federal Government has already removed fossil fuel subsidies and included 5 million solar connections in our post COVID economic sustainability plan – first steps to new jobs and a cleaner, healthier environment. We commend Sustainable Energy for All for producing this practical 'Recover Better' guide that will help African governments close the energy access gap and deliver economic growth for the benefit of our people."*

The global economy is increasingly being powered by clean and efficient sources of energy. According to research, dollar for dollar investments in clean energy creates three times the number of jobs compared to fossil fuels. Every 1,000 customers connected to decentralized energy solutions - solar home systems or solar mini grids - supports approximately 25 jobs.

Also speaking in support of the guide, **Amina J. Mohammed, Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations**, said: *“Access to sustainable energy is pivotal to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Paris Agreement. As we work to recover better from the impacts of COVID-19, African countries have the opportunity to drive faster progress on the energy transition with efficient, renewable energy that protects the most vulnerable, delivers sustainable growth and supports climate action.”*

Riccardo Puliti, World Bank Global Director for Energy and Extractive Industries and Regional Director for Infrastructure in Africa, said: *“Access to energy is crucial for Africa to recover from the ongoing health, economic and social challenges caused by the pandemic. We welcome this new guide from Sustainable Energy for All that outlines ways in which African countries can seize this unique moment, and in return, unleash economic growth with clean, sustainable energy.”*

As countries seek to recover better, SEforALL have highlighted key policy measures that governments should adopt to ensure a successful energy transition in this period. This includes:

- **Ease of doing business:** Governments should create a supportive business environment that ensures investments are driven as fast as possible, including significantly reducing red tape, reducing the number of permits required and time it takes to get permits / waivers (if available) for renewable energy and clean cooking equipment and appliances.
- **Set robust policies and empower national institutions to drive development:** Governments need to work now to establish or empower institutions such as regulators and rural electrification agencies to ensure the right frameworks are in place to successfully drive the development of renewables, increased electrification and access to clean cooking.
- **Eliminate fossil fuel subsidies:** With the price of oil the lowest it has been for 18 years; governments must take this opportunity to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies. When the price of fossil fuels rises again, governments should refrain from re-introducing the subsidy.
- **Move towards cost-reflective tariffs:** The natural tendency for countries will be to cut the cost of electricity, but this should be avoided. The reality is that electricity is largely consumed by wealthier residential or by industrial / commercial clients. Governments should allow cost-reflective tariffs that allow utilities to perform better and increases investments in energy access and clean energy.

Other key elements outlined in ***The Recover Better with Sustainable Energy Guide for African Countries*** include: Invest in robust data, declare a moratorium on new coal-fired power, invest in energy efficiency and invest in people so they can take advantage of new clean energy jobs. [Read in full here.](#)

SEforALL has developed *The Recover Better with Sustainable Energy Guide for African Countries* to support African countries as they develop their post COVID-19 recovery plan and stimulus packages. The guide is part of a series which includes guides for countries in the Caribbean region and Southeast Asia region due to be released soon. More information can be found on the SEforALL [website here.](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Contact:

For further details on the report or any interview requests, please contact; Beth Woodthorpe-Evans, Sustainable Energy for All: beth@SEforALL.org | +1 202 390 1042

About Sustainable Energy for All

Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) empowers leaders to broker partnerships and unlock finance to achieve universal access to sustainable energy, as a contribution to a cleaner, just and prosperous world for all. SEforALL exists to reduce the carbon intensity of energy while making it available to everyone on the planet.

SEforALL is led by [Damilola Ogunbiyi](#), CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and Co-Chair of UN-Energy. Ms. Ogunbiyi took office on January 1, 2020.

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