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## **EGI-SA ROUNDTABLE EXPLORATION OF BEST ALIGNMENTS BETWEEN (GOOD) POLICIES AND THEIR IMPLEMENTATION**

Hosted by the Electricity Governance Initiative

*Promoting informed and constructive engagement between Parliament and civil society on energy, climate and the transition to a green economy.*

Dakar Room, IDASA 2 November 2011 5-8pm

Facilitated by Stephen Davis, Behaviour Change Researcher at Project 90 by 2030

Stephen Davis gave a short introduction as to why the EGI was hosting this roundtable discussion between community groups, civil society and Members of Parliament. The discussion would be using a positive systems change approach and aimed to be the beginning of a continuing conversation and wider process. The discussion would take the form of an interactive exploration of the best experience around energy policy and its implementation. The group would look at when alignments between policy and implementation have been best and discover what can be learnt and applied from those successful moments.

Stephen hoped that all the participants would leave with a renewed sense of what is possible and discover how they could each use their own influence to ensure that good policies around energy are developed and successfully implemented.

Stephen gave a brief outline of what had been discussed the previous day at the Energy Caucus civil society meeting – energy access and poverty, employment, economic growth, environmental impacts (air, water, land) and climate change, insufficient use of resources, optimal energy mix, diminishing fossil fuel supplies and safety (nuclear), politics and governance etc. What emerged from the meeting was that everyone – Government and civil society – all want the same thing: access to affordable, clean energy for all.

The participants at the Energy Caucus meeting were passionate about these topics and had spoken from their own experiences and some new ways of thinking about the problems had been explored. There were also some young participants in attendance and it was good to see the youth having a stronger voice and engaging in energy and climate change issues.

This roundtable workshop was going to focus on successes which would be shared via film and there was a film crew recording the proceedings. Stephen asked everyone to contribute as much as they could from their own experience.

A screening of "first light" was shown – a short video from Project 90 by 2030 on a successful project which provided renewable energy to rural communities who previously had no access to electricity. A small solar panel was attached to each home to power interior lighting.

The participants were grouped around four tables, each with six participants. A series of questions, all positively framed, were put to the group for discussion and each table. Each participant was asked to introduce themselves to their group and share what they appreciate most about energy. Each group was then to discuss and agree on the three most intriguing questions in their respective groups.

Discovery questions:

1. Tell me about a time in your community benefited from a renewable energy development?
2. Share an experience of where good policy was implemented for the benefit of society?
3. Tell me about an experience where diverse stakeholders worked successfully together towards a common goal.
4. Share a story about an energy supply option that was clean, safe and affordable?
5. Describe a situation where local infrastructure was developed with community involvement?
6. Share a story when you or someone you know learned something about energy technology?
7. Tell me about an initiative that generated sustainable jobs for unemployed people.
8. Share an experience of a partnership/coalition for action that you have been part of that made a positive impact.
9. Tell me about a time when you really appreciated and valued energy (or other resources)?
10. Any other questions?

*A group story:*

*Pupa told his group about a crèche which had used solar cookers and hot boxes and saved money on their energy bills and could then use the saved money for other things needed, such as food for the children. There was also a project that had solar geysers installed, but the engagement with the community had been unclear. The water rates had gone up which the community had not been expecting and were unable to pay.*

*Monica shared the details of a project in Gauteng where a group of women were sewing wonder boxes and selling them which was empowering these women and creating employment, as well as reducing their energy bills.*

*Gary had heard a story on the radio about a courageous entrepreneur in Khayelitsha who had built his own solar water heater with no formal training and was now selling these.*

*Frustrations in this group were aired with municipalities who vanish during the process and the lack of transparency in decision making. They felt that it would be more useful for to equip the community the tools and knowledge that they needed.*

*Thamisile was part of a school garden project in her community which became a feeding scheme for the children.*

*Monica shared a story of residents of slum buildings, which had had their electricity supply cut off, were using paraffin and fires and candles indoors which was unhealthy and dangerous.*

Stephen then asked each small group to report back to the larger group and asked them to share their experience of talking about stories of success and which three of the discovery questions did each group choose to talk about.

Group 1: this group shared quite a few informative stories about how to save energy. A group in Khayelitsha was using ethanol instead of paraffin, which lasted longer and was safer. They had also discussed a solar panel project.

This group chose questions 4, 7 and 8.

Group 2: found the sharing of success stories exciting, especially as there were MPs present in their group.

They also chose questions 4, 7, & 8

Group 3: this group had shared stories of projects in JHB where a food garden helped feed local school children a successful solar cooker project.

The questions which were chosen were 8, 2,6.

Group 4: a good policy that this group valued was the right to a healthy environment (contained in the constitution).

This group chose questions 2 , 3 and 8.

The question that stood out and got support from every group was question 8. This would therefore be the question that all the groups would start to look into more deeply.

One group requested to add a question to the list: identifying examples of where decisions around energy use have been transparent. i.e. where Eskom or Municipalities had involved the communities in the decision making process.

Everyone was then split into pairs and asked to interview each other.

Paired interviews: participants were asked to answer the following question as far as possible from their own experience: Describe in detail an example of an experience of a partnership/coalition for action that you have been part of that make a positive impact. Groups then reported back on projects that they had heard from their partner which they found new and exciting.

The group looked at what makes an initiative successful. Most of the projects that stood out didn't only have an energy component, but which also had sustainable, direct benefits and impacts on the people who were affected. They also had an education component. Other important factors that made stories or projects a success were times when all people involved took responsibility, the Government was willing to assist and participants volunteered their time. Sharing solutions and successes with stakeholders were also important factors. Sometimes existing community structures were used – such as the Kuyasa CDM project. Commitment by all involved was also key.

*Inspiring stories:*

*A community was creating a carbon sink by assisting in the rehabilitation of a local wetland. This young participant learned that if dragonflies are flying on the water that means that the water is clean enough to swim. She liked the story as this wetland was in the local community and their project would stop dumping in the wetland. This was a sustainable restorative initiative and had direct impacts on the community and had an educational aspect as well.*

*Gary also heard about this wetland project from Pupa and enjoyed the fact that this project was creating jobs, cleaning the water and allowing fish to return so that people could eat them and flowers were growing there so that the community could sell them.*

*Brenda told the group about an area in Meshach's community where dumping had been happening created an unsightly health hazard. The community met with the government and asked that they start clearing the area more regularly. The community then started building a park in the cleaned up areas to prevent further dumping. Five months later this park is still there. This was a successful project as the Government was prepared to assist and the community was prepared to volunteer to clean it up.*

*Happy enjoyed hearing about success stories that continued after the original implementator had left, leaving them to start more projects.*

*Monica told us about the importance of education. Earthlife Africa JHB educated people about alternative energy and energy efficiency such as wonder boxes.*

The group then watched a short film called "free energy" produced by filmmaker Jacqueline van Meygaarden which showed a family enjoying the benefits of solar power.

The group was split into pairs again and asked to discuss the following values:

1. Without being humble, what do you value most about your ability to contribute to a sustainable energy future?
2. What is the single most important contribution you have made to increasing awareness/implementing safe, clean, affordable and sustainable energy technology?
3. What do you experience as the core human values in our discussion about the energy system? Give some examples of how you experience those values.

*Reflections:*

*One participant worked for an organisation that was passionate about renewable energy and climate change. This was a fortunate place to be in as she could contribute as an individual as well as in her professional life. She gave a few examples of actions that she did in her day to day life such as switching off lights, cycling, fixing leaky taps, recycling, turning off her geyser and she was also a vegetarian. She didn't feel like she was doing a lot, but her partner, Happy, said that he felt that she was making a very positive contribution and gave her positive feedback. She also discussed how happy she was that she had become a vegetarian but said that it wasn't easy.*

*Wikus told the group that he and his partner had discussed honesty in debates. They felt it was important for people who make statements actually make changes in their personal life. "Walking the talk".*

*Dipou felt that using less energy was important. It was also important to educate people about the impact their energy choices made.*

*Bongani shared a story where a community had taken the initiative and installed their own solar panels on 15 sites. Values that he felt were important were cooperation, working together and the right to live in a safe environment that is not harmful.*

*Amy learnt a lot about what her partner was doing to educate people in her community about climate change, such as the 'one garden one house' project. She learned the value of respect from her partner – respect for the earth and respect for one another.*

*Another pair spoke about passion. Indigenous knowledge about renewable energy is key as trying to create awareness when talking about things that one cannot touch or see can create confusion. Simplifying the message and imparting knowledge in the correct way is very important.*

*Meshach heard from his partner about the value of taking a chance, taking a risk on a new venture, not being afraid of change and being courageous. His partner was involved in the wind farm business.*

The groups were asked to bring all the tables together and to think of three wishes for South Africa's energy system.

Three wishes for South Africa's energy system:

- SA's energy to be locally driven or controlled
- SA has clean energy; everyone values energy; SA has enough energy for everyone to live well.
- SA begins the process of educating people about renewable energy, which is decentralised and is affordable.
- SA recognises and achieves its enormous potential in terms of renewable energy and takes steps to achieve this potential.
- SA closes all uranium mines.

- *Everyone in SA becomes involved producing clean energy.*
- *The increase in renewable energy spurs the realisation of green rights.*
- *SA energy to be more decentralised so that people don't have to depend on one central source.*
- *Every energy decision should have a rights based approach.*
- *There is a champion for renewable energy in Government.*
- *Renewable energy receives equal funding and subsidies as other sources of energy.*
- *SA has a clean public transport system.*
- *There is transparency in decisions around climate change*
- *More energy comes from renewable sources.*
- *SA's energy system is more responsive to people and their needs*
- *SA's energy is clean, safe and efficient and government consults with communities*
- *An alternative energy system with rights for all humans and animals.*
- *Government should listen to us and give us energy that will be affordable.*
- *A renewable energy system that is transparent, easily accessible, clean and safe.*
- *Nuclear power to be ended and government listens to those who talk about renewable energy.*
- *Suppliers and distributors in energy are involved with stakeholders, SMEs and communities. This is achieved without a segregatory element.*
- *Decisions are made on evidence, people's needs and sustainability*
- *Government to put money into enabling community leaders to educate everyone on climate change and what the alternatives need to be so that we can have a revolution!*
- *A bank on nuclear power*
- *Subsidise renewable energy so that 1 in 5 people work in the solar industry.*

After hearing everyone's wish for SA energy system, Stephen put the following question to the group: *How do we achieve all the wishes that were expressed here this evening? What needs to happen in order to get there?* Stephen suggested taking the values that had been expressed along with the factors that emerged that were important in making projects successful from the discussions could be a good starting point for a conversation and process in order to work towards achieving the expressed wishes for SA's energy future.

Stephen drew the discussions to a close and thanked the group for their contributions and the EGI for hosting this important event.

The notes from the meeting will be distributed to all the participants as well as the film covering events over the past 2 days.

**Notes taken by Olivia Andrews, Project 90 by 2030**