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ACCESS TO MODERN ENERGY TO THE URBAN POOR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: POTENTIAL FOR POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

With growing urbanization and more than 50% of the world's population living in urban areas a new face of poverty is evident, one in which informal urban communities cannot access or afford basic modern energy services for their development and empowerment. As an enabler of development processes, access to electricity in urban and peri-urban contexts plays a key role in providing possibilities and solutions to the urban poor. Energy poverty is no longer a rural-only phenomenon, and a concerted effort is needed to find solutions. Taking this into account, the Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development (GNESD) initiated the Urban Peri-Urban Energy Access (UPEA) project in 2006. The objective of this study was to understand the barriers to energy access in the context of the urban poor in seven countries. Barriers from both the supply and demand sides for energy were investigated. Findings from the studies show that factors including a lack of institutional coordination, weak alignment between energy policies and urban planning, and insufficient financial and social incentives play key roles in constraining access to electricity for the urban poor. Overcoming these barriers will require innovative solutions in policies, decision-making, financing, multi-stakeholder dialogs, social inclusion, international cooperation, and knowledge sharing regarding good practices.

Keywords: energy, urban settlements, sustainable development, innovative policies, poverty alleviation, best practice recommendations