

## Concept note

**10<sup>th</sup> International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (IFESD),  
7-8 October 2019, UN Conference Centre, Bangkok, Thailand  
From Targets to Action**

### Electricity Access for Social Change

**15:30-17:15, Monday 7 October 2019  
Venue: UN Conference Centre**



**Lead contact: Ms. Lana Zaman, ESCAP; e-mail: [lana.zaman@un.org](mailto:lana.zaman@un.org)**

#### Rationale and Background:

As of 2017, 5.2 per cent of the Asia-Pacific region (232 million people), live without access to basic electricity services. ESCAP's estimation of future progress based on current policies predicts that by 2030, 98.7 per cent of the population will attain access to electricity. In spite of this positive indication, this still leaves 66 million people without access. More importantly, access is frequently treated as a binary variable, which is inadequate because it does not capture the nuances of the quality of access. In some cases, whole villages may be listed as electrified when only a small percentage of households attain access, or when access is technically available, but is too expensive for many households to afford. In other cases, service is unreliable due to frequent power cuts, or it is limited to only support minimal amenities such as lights. Rather than treat energy access as a binary variable, the multi-tier framework proposed by the World Bank provides a more nuanced measure of electricity quality.<sup>6</sup> The framework takes into consideration the number of hours electricity is available, how affordable it is, and how many appliances households could likely operate. Better understanding of the quality of service is crucial, particularly because evidence demonstrates that electricity quality has important implications for socioeconomic benefits.

While the socioeconomic benefits of electricity access are widely discussed, rigorous research suggests that gaining access to low levels of electricity is unlikely to have any detectable impacts on wellbeing. For example, gaining access to lights and fans may be marginally beneficial for rural households, but it does not typically lead to improvements in income, education, health or other indicators of wellbeing. Unleashing these potential benefits requires a higher level of electricity, enough to power small to large appliances with reliability. This session will explore the nuances of electricity access quality and how best to plan and implement programs for social benefit.

## Objectives:

This session will discuss the value of using the multi-tier framework or other indicators to measure quality of electricity access, rather than treating it strictly as a binary. It will discuss some of the data challenges and potential solutions to gather better information on quality of access. The session will further discuss the demonstrated socioeconomic benefits at different levels of electricity access based on recent evidence. Lastly, speakers will discuss how to operationalize electricity access initiatives at the national and regional levels.

## Tentative Agenda:

The following indicative timing is proposed for the session agenda:

- 15:30—15:45 Introductory presentation
- 15:45—16:35 Panel presentations (10 minutes each)
- 16:35—17:10 Q & A
- 17:10—17:15 Conclusion & Closing

## Expected outputs:

This session will serve to promote country usage of the multi-tier framework to better understand electricity access. It will help inform on evidence-based policy for designing and operationalizing electricity access programs that improve social wellbeing.

## Moderator:

**Milou Beerepoot**, Regional Technical Specialist, UNDP Global Environmental Finance – Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

## Panel:

**Lana Zaman**, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, ESCAP

**Richard Blanchard**, Senior Lecturer in Renewable Energy, Loughborough University

**Tahniah Chowdhury**, Deputy Secretary, Power Division, Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, Bangladesh

**Marco Indelicato**, Program Manager, Financing for Energy Access – Asia, International Finance Corporation

**Pariphan Uawithya**, Director, Asia Regional Office, The Rockefeller Foundation