CONCEPT NOTE: OFF-GRID RENEWABLE ENERGY STATISTICS ONLINE CONFERENCE

Background

Progress towards universal energy access has been promising over the last decade. The number of people without access to electricity fell from 1.2 billion globally in 2010 to 789 million in 2018. Renewable energy has made a significant contribution to this, with more than 136 million people receiving basic electricity services via off-grid renewables by 2018. However, millions of people remain without access to electricity and many more only have access to very limited or unreliable electricity. Unless efforts are stepped up significantly, an estimated 620 million people will remain without access to electricity in 2030 - a number that could become even higher with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although off-grid electricity production from renewables is believed to be expanding rapidly, it is largely unrecorded in most countries. The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) has attempted to illuminate major global trends in off-grid renewable energy deployment by compiling and publishing data obtained from a wide range of stakeholders and desk research. However, this effort does not provide a long-term solution to the need for reliable off-grid energy statistics in countries that can support national policy and project development and the monitoring of progress towards meeting national and international (SDG) targets for energy access and renewable energy.

IRENA's work has identified several challenges for the collection of off-grid renewable energy statistics, which can be broadly grouped into two areas:

Technical: the absence of standardised methodologies for data collection, measurement, processing, classification and reporting.

Institutional: the lack of co-ordination or processes to collect and compile off-grid data that may be scattered across many different actors in local and national government, the private-sector, international agencies and NGOs.

Progress in both areas will be required if off-grid renewable energy developments are to meet their full potential. While technical issues can probably be overcome quite easily, removing barriers to co-ordination and co-operation are likely to require a concerted effort to develop data sharing arrangements that meet the needs and concerns of all stakeholders.

Objectives and learning outcomes

To address some of the challenges above, IRENA will be holding an online conference in February 2021 on the topic of off-grid renewable energy statistics. The objectives and learning outcomes from the conference will be as follows:

Objectives

- to review and discuss methodologies for collecting off-grid energy statistics;
- to share best practices and experiences from existing off-grid data collection efforts;
- to assess the support required to improve off-grid data collection and reporting; and
- to discuss how data sharing may be facilitated to improve off-grid data collection.

<u>Expected learning outcomes</u>

- increased knowledge about how to collect off-grid renewable energy data;
- identified areas for development of practical guidance; and
- identified barriers and solutions to data sharing in the off-grid energy sector.

Scope and target audience

Although better off-grid data is required to cover a wide range of needs, this conference will focus on some of the most basic statistics required to measure and monitor progress in renewables and energy access. Thus, it will focus on the collection of annual statistics for off-grid capacity and production and the numbers of people or households that are served by off-grid energy.

In terms of technologies, the conference will focus mostly on off-grid electricity generation from renewables (including from small-scale systems such as solar home systems, solar lights and solar lighting kits). However, it may also include other technologies contributing to sustainable energy access such as biogas digesters and renewable clean cooking solutions.

The conference will be open for anyone to participate with a main target audience of people responsible for collecting, reporting or using off-grid energy statistics within governments, the private-sector, NGOs and international organisations.

Format and timeline

The conference will be held online for five consecutive days from 15-19 February 2021. Each session will last for 2 hours (12.00-14.00 GMT) and include four presentations (up to 20 minutes each, with 10 minutes for questions and answers). Panel discussions may also be held in place of presentations on some days. Each day will be concluded with a summary of the main outcomes.

An open call for presentations will be held in November 2020 and submissions will be peer-reviewed and selected for presentation at the conference. Invited speakers will also present at the conference. The organisation of presentations into thematic topics for each day of the conference will be determined once the proposals for presentation have been received and reviewed.

The timeline for implementing the conference is as follows:

12-Nov:	Announce conference and call for presentation proposals
22-Jan:	Deadline for receiving presentation proposals
29-Jan:	Peer-review and final selection of presentations
04-Feb:	Finalise and announce conference dates, times and agenda
04-Feb:	Deadline for recording all presentations
15-Feb:	Hold conference