



Comment

DE provides the cure

how access to energy can improve lives

Advancements in medical technology, the development of 'miracle drugs' and improved hygiene have achieved remarkable results in terms of improving the health and well-being of people around the world. Perhaps even more relevant to people's health and quality of life, however, is the availability and access to clean and reliable power. When energy access improves, so does the population's health, life-span and education level. Access to power brings the ability to keep foods and medicines fresh and refrigerated and the ability to read and work even when the sun is no longer out. Decentralized energy (DE) technology can often provide the cure in terms of access to power that is efficient, affordable and benign to the environment. That is the message that has been recently delivered by WADE in several prominent policy dialogues.

Former WADE Chairman Tom Casten participated in the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) in New York. This event brought together more than 1000 leaders from around the globe, including some of the most senior and influential people from government and industry, to focus on solutions to four global problems, amongst which are energy and climate change. Tom explained to the audience how recycling waste energy is an existing solution that can reduce carbon dioxide emissions in the US by 20%, while at the same time knocking \$100 billion off of US electricity bills. Because of the power that the CGI has to go beyond talk and put solutions into action, this could lead to incredible opportunities for DE to help knock down the barriers to greater deployment worldwide.

WADE was also at the Humanitarian Development Summit in Nairobi, which brought together key international donor countries, UN agencies, NGOs, foundations and the private sector to discuss the complexities of development in Africa and beyond. The topic of DE as a development tool was addressed,

along with other pressing issues relevant to development such as healthcare, the AIDS crisis, shelter, water, sanitation and agriculture. WADE presented on the particular importance of DE as a piece in the development puzzle in areas with underdeveloped grid infrastructure.

WADE recently went to Sri Lanka to present a study on opportunities for decentralized energy in that country, based on an application of the WADE Economic Model. WADE was in Colombo when the project report was presented to the Secretary of the Ministry of Power and Energy. In Sri Lanka, access to energy and energy security are major social and political issues, given the fact that Sri Lanka imports virtually all of its fossil fuel needs. Therefore, notwithstanding the relative availability of electricity and fuels for the country's population, rising global fuel prices have created a situation where there are economic constraints on access to power. Application of the WADE Economic Model demonstrated that decentralized energy could facilitate the use of Sri Lanka's indigenous biomass resources, thereby reducing the reliance on foreign imports and lowering energy prices (see an article in *COSPP* Sept–Oct 2006 for more on this country).

As these events demonstrate, the health and well-being of a society are dependent not just on medical technology but also on energy technology. DE is delivering the cure around the world.

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