

Energizing Health

A Strategic Roadmap to promote healthier populations through clean and sustainable energy

High-Level Coalition on Health and Energy

The links between energy and health have never been more important than today. The climate crisis, which is increasingly severely impacting global public health, is at root largely an energy issue, and current projections predict further changes in our climate with increased threats to health. Clean and sustainable energy plays a crucial role in promoting healthier populations and, in this context, there are two key areas where a call to action is urgently needed: on clean fuels and technologies for cooking, and on access to electricity for healthcare facilities.

Some 3 billion people are exposed to high levels of health-damaging pollutants each and every day due to the **lack of access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking**. Such chronic exposure to household air pollution is the cause of nearly 4 million deaths annually from noncommunicable diseases (including heart disease, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and cancer), as well as pneumonia. Inefficient and polluting household energy use is a health risk shared by all populations but a particularly important source of disease in women, children and infants. Urgent action is needed to scale up access to clean cooking solutions to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on health, gender equality, and climate, among others, and ultimately to minimize the future negative effects of the climate crisis thereby facilitating the effective enjoyment of the human right to health.

At the same time, an estimated 1 billion people globally are served by **health facilities with no access to electricity**. Electricity is essential for the operation of life-saving and critically needed medical devices, such as for vaccine refrigeration and surgical-emergency, laboratory and diagnostic equipment, as well as for basic amenities such as lighting and clean water. In many cases, access to electricity can make the difference between life and death, as has been starkly highlighted by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. We need to dramatically accelerate reliable electrification of healthcare facilities, including in remote and rural areas, in order to achieve universal health coverage and reduce preventable deaths. And we need to go even further to ensure that all people have access to safe and clean energy along with the corresponding quality of life improvements this provides.

We are deeply concerned about the slow progress at global level in terms of improving access to clean cooking and access to electricity for healthcare facilities, and, acknowledging the great potential represented by modern clean energy solutions to address these dramatic issues, we hereby **call on national Governments, key stakeholders and the global community** to change pace, and to urgently undertake the following actions:

1 Consider clean cooking and access to electricity in healthcare facilities two priorities, essential to protect public health and mitigate climate change. In this context, clean cooking must be seen as a critical element of disease prevention and should be integrated into national strategies targeting noncommunicable and communicable disease prevention and control. Similarly, access to electricity must be considered a necessity for all healthcare facilities, including those providing primary healthcare services and those that need to store COVID-19 and other vaccines as well as critical medical devices. As such, electricity access must be integrated in national health sector planning, budgeting and monitoring processes and, wherever possible, should be driven by clean and renewable energy.

2 Dramatically increase public and private investments in electrifying healthcare facilities and in clean cooking, taking into consideration their crucial role to achieve universal health coverage and ensure healthier populations. Adequate government support and national resource mobilization as well as involvement of the private sector are essential. National and local governments should set healthcare electrification and clean cooking targets and implement adequate measures and allocations to meet these targets. At the same time, development partners and the international community should consider these issues as cooperation priorities and increase support and resource allocation accordingly.

3 Provide the necessary human and financial resources to design and implement clean energy plans and sustainable delivery models tailored to the needs of the health sector and of households, as a means to disease prevention and to ensure that quality and uninterrupted health services can be delivered to all, without discrimination, particularly in the poorest communities and populations in vulnerable situations.

4 Develop tailored policy and financing schemes, able to unlock the potential of clean and sustainable energy solutions, address the health sector needs, and mitigate climate change. In this context, the growing market of decentralized renewables and energy efficient technologies present a key opportunity to provide clean, reliable, cost-effective, and tailored energy solutions for all, without discrimination, and to improve the health conditions of a billion people who are in need. The involvement of and the inputs from affected communities will be essential to design and implement effective, sustainable and gender-responsive policies.

5 Increase cooperation between the energy and health sectors and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders. Electricity access for all healthcare facilities and clean cooking are not the responsibility of only one sector and cannot be addressed in silos. The dramatic acceleration which is needed can only be achieved if all relevant institutions join forces and resources and work together in a coordinated manner at all levels, from strategy and planning to policies, budgeting, and implementation. In particular, at national level, it is essential to put in place an enabling institutional framework, to unite all relevant actors and ensure continuous coordination and synergies among them, particularly including ministries in charge of health, energy and finance, among others.

6 Facilitate collaboration between private, public, and non-governmental actors. The magnitude of the challenge, and its urgency, require pulling together all available resources and forging partnerships between different communities. At the same time, it is important to ensure a participatory process involving the affected individuals and communities, including those in vulnerable situations. Only this collaborative approach will allow us to harness the public health opportunity offered by clean and sustainable energy technologies available today. We all know that the solutions exist, and we all know what is needed. We are all accountable to make this happen, keeping in mind that delaying means denying. Let's be bold and take action together to accelerate action to achieve universal access to clean and sustainable energy for public health protection.

SIGNATORIES

International Organizations

World Health Organization (WHO)
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA)
The World Bank
International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance
Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL)
Amref Health Africa
The Rockefeller Foundation
Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA)
International Network on Gender & Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA)

Ministries

Ministry of Energy, Ghana
Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India
Ministry of Energy, Kenya
Ministry of Energy and Mines, Lao People's Democratic Republic
Ministry of Health, Lao People's Democratic Republic
Ministry of Health and Population, Nepal
Ministry of International Development, Norway
Ministry of Health, Rwanda
Ministry of Energy, Sierra Leone
Ministry of Health & Sanitation, Sierra Leone
Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain

Global Champions

Ms Samira Bawumia, Second Lady, Ghana
Dr Kandeh Yumkella, Member of Parliament, Sierra Leone

The High-Level Coalition on Health and Energy is convened by the Director General of the World Health Organization under the framework of the Health and Energy Platform of Action (HEPA)



Health and Energy
Platform of Action