

Practical Action's Energy project wins EU funding

International development agency, Practical Action, has secured €950,000 to fund its work highlighting the need for poor people in the developing world to gain access to energy.

The project, which runs from April this year to March 2013, focuses on poor people in the Sub-Saharan region of Africa and is 75% part funded by the European Union. The remaining 25% is co-funded by a consortium of partners, brought together by Practical Action.

Consortium partners comprise the Stockholm Environment Institute from Sweden, the Barcelona-based Universidad Politecnica de Catalunya from Spain and non-governmental organisation EDUCON from the Czech Republic.

Access to energy in this region is vital for poverty reduction. Smoke from cooking in the home causes the deaths of 1.6 million people around the world every year, that's even more than Malaria, due to a lack of access to gas and electricity meaning that people must rely on burning harmful fuels to cook. Fuels such as wood, dung and coal produce toxic fumes that cause a number of serious respiratory diseases.

Together with Practical Action, the partners aim to raise awareness across the European Union of the role of energy access for the poor in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to meet the targets laid down by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), including halving global poverty by 2015.

"We are contributing to poverty reduction in some of the most marginalised areas in the poorest countries, through improving access to energy at a local level. This improves the effectiveness of existing aid funds and we are also calling for increase aid funds to be dedicated to this area of work," says Practical Action's Sara-Jane Brown. "This project pursues policy changes in the EU and the member states to not only increase aid funds for Africa but to improve the effectiveness of these funds. EU policy on energy access needs to change in order to reduce the high number of deaths that currently occur from smoke inhalation and to raise the profile of an issue that kills more people than Malaria, but which very few people are aware of.

"Our hope is that EU policy and decision makers will recognise the importance of energy access in the developing world and push for changes in policy that will dramatically improve the lives of people in poor communities by enabling money to be spent more wisely."

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