During the 2015 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development, the Arab Coordination Group (ACG) and the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) agreed to set up a joint task force to promote energy access in Sub-Saharan Africa. This initiative aimed at exploring the feasibility of these communities working together on a specific issue. This session will be an opportunity for the secretariats of the ACG and the DAC to brief participants on activities in 2016.

The ACG-DAC Task Force on Energy

At the 2016 Arab-DAC Dialogue on Development, the core group of the ACG-DAC Task Force on Energy (Netherlands, OECD, OPEC Fund for International Development, United Kingdom) reported on the work modalities and the activities of the Task Force during 2015, namely preparing country mapping exercises and examining the energy sector in two pilot countries (Uganda and Malawi). In this respect, they noted the positive experience and lessons learnt from setting up and working together at the country and sector levels through a light-touch and decentralised approach.

What is more, the newly-created Task Force delivered concrete solutions to improve the co-ordination of providers working to enhance energy access in Uganda. This work, with the Netherlands and OFID taking central roles, led to the organisation of two multi-stakeholder workshops in Kampala to discuss the challenges of ensuring energy access in Uganda (e.g. ensuring adequate levels of power generation, affordability) and to agree on an investment roadmap, aligned with government plans.

At the 2016 Arab-DAC Dialogue, a number of decisions were agreed to take forward this work, namely to:

- Monitor the cases of Malawi and Uganda and report back on progress at the 2017 Arab-DAC Dialogue.
- Seek to broaden the membership of the Task Force and engage other Sub-Saharan African countries.
- Allocate resources to the Task Force and develop a new work programme, should membership of the Task Force expand.
- Explore triangular co-operation options in the energy sector.
- Explore the feasibility of using the collaborative model developed by the Task Force in other areas, such as education.

Through 2016, the Netherlands provided regular updates to the Task Force members on the case of Uganda. ACG institutions are now part of the energy providers’ committee meetings and are informed regularly of its activities. One of the key outcomes of the Task Force activities in 2016 has also been a refocusing of energy priorities by government and providers away from large scale energy generation towards transmission, energy access and affordability. As a result, OFID approved recently an energy-related private sector investment in Uganda, aligned with Uganda’s new energy focus and in co-ordination with other providers.

In Malawi, the United Kingdom continued leading the Task Force work on the ground. In 2016, the governments of Malawi and the UK signed an agreement to address energy access through renewable energy, and as part of the UK’s new Energy Africa Campaign. However, staffing changes and a recent reassessment of the UK’s role in Malawi’s energy sector have limited progress there. The UK remains open to facilitate any contact with other providers working on energy in Malawi.
Task Force members also sought to broaden the membership base and expanding work to other Sub-Saharan African countries in 2016. Several consultations and discussions were held with a number of DAC members. These consultations showed that there was interest in collaborating on renewable energy and energy efficiency through a regional lens. However, it was not possible to find DAC members with spare capacity on the ground to support Task Force operations in another African country. Accordingly, the Task Force was not in a position to broaden its membership, expand activities to other African countries, or explore triangular co-operation options. Therefore, no additional resources were allocated to support this work and no new work programme was developed. Importantly, however, the objective of the Task Force as a country-based co-operation platform that can help accelerate access to reliable and affordable modern energy services remains relevant in supporting the Sustainable Development Goals. As such, and building on its success in Uganda, it is proposed that the ACG-DAC Task Force on energy continues its work in 2017 to fulfil the objective of broadening its mandate. In addition, the collaborative model developed by this Task Force is being used as a model for possible future joint work on education in fragile settings (see session 3 of Arab-DAC Dialogue 2017).