



IISD Programs

Energy


Guiding the world's transition
to sustainable energy systems



IISD

International Institute for
Sustainable Development

Why We Are Needed



Electricity demand in some poor countries will double in less than 10 years.

Developed countries must ensure new generating capacity to cover shortfalls from ongoing, multi-billion-dollar upgrades of power plants and transmission systems. A transformation towards clean energy systems is underway worldwide.

IISD's Energy Program is devoting much of its effort to helping authorities choose the right system of electricity generation and reduce consumption of fossil-based transport fuels, while offering practical assistance in the implementation of the country's international climate change commitments.

Societies face crucial multi-billion-dollar investment decisions. To get it right, political decision-makers must properly

measure the economic and social impacts of planned electricity systems, choose the right policies and technology options, and ensure financial viability. Access to energy must be fair-priced and universal—but attuned to local dynamics.

Our experts offer practical guidance based on unique comparative knowledge of different national situations. Whether in New Delhi, Cairo, Ottawa, Washington, DC or Jakarta, we work side-by-side with local partners for less costly, more equitable energy systems. Aware of international policy developments, we identify wasteful practices, encourage new thinking, engage civil society and support policy reform.

How We Are Effective

Innovative policy tools and research, influential long-term partners, hands-on process management and a global network of energy experts with proven ability.



We support and are a rallying force behind the eight-nation Friends of Fossil-Fuel Subsidy Reform, whose formal call for coordinated international action was backed by 40 countries, including Canada, France and the United States, at the 2015 climate conference in Paris.

Our own research shows that one year's worth of fossil fuel subsidies received in Middle Eastern and African countries could pay for the entire region's renewable energy targets up to 2020 (see figure). In over 30 countries, IISD has helped host-government ministries and civil society alike achieve social benefits and budget savings by cutting the use of polluting coal, oil and gas, and moving towards renewable, clean energy.

Waste and Opportunity: Middle East and Africa

\$200 billion

Projected cumulative cost of the region's renewable energy targets, up to 2020

Projected cumulative cost of region's fossil fuel subsidies, business-as-usual scenario, 2016-2020

\$1.18 trillion

Our Services

Across Asia, Africa, North America and the Middle East, our unique areas of applied research clarify causes, effects and innovative pathways to reform—and make us privileged advisors to government.

Three examples of Energy Program focus areas:

The IISD Global Subsidies Initiative (GSI) is a world leader in the quantification, evaluation and support to reform of energy subsidies. GSI addresses wasteful and damaging practices wherever they are present, and has become an internationally recognized advisor to decision-makers on the core components of subsidy reform planning.

Climate Change Mitigation: Our experts help governments transition to a low-carbon economy by assessing the role of various policies, including carbon pricing and energy policies, as well as international climate finance. We are supporting countries in unpacking the Paris Climate Change Agreement, implementing Nationally Determined Contributions and integrating them into their broader development strategies.

Sustainable Energy: Our expertise covers renewable energy technologies, under-pricing of externalities, energy policy effectiveness and addressing political barriers to reform. Our approach brings together public and private stakeholders to tackle energy challenges. Recent work includes support to reform of subsidies to coal producers in China, analysis of phasing out coal in Ontario, Canada, and promotion of a transition from kerosene to solar lighting in India.

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