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ScienceDirect

Energy Procedia 57 (2014) 840 – 849

Energy Procedia

2013 ISES Solar World Congress

Urban Low Emissions Development Strategies and Action Plans

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Abstract

Cities can be vibrant, innovative and exciting places to live but unplanned, high-carbon urban growth, alongside rising energy costs and increasing demands on service delivery, are putting pressure on local governments, threatening economic growth, poverty reduction and urban quality of life, and contributing to dangerous rises in global temperatures and subsequent climatic changes. It is understood that cities which pioneer a low emissions development model today will attract future investment, reduce energy costs and become efficient, inclusive, clean places to live and work tomorrow.

Local governments have an important role in addressing non-technological barriers to support the transition to a renewable energy future. Two projects will illustrate approaches taken in this context. The Urban-LEDS project (www.urban-leds.org), funded by the European Commission, and implemented by ICLEI and UN-Habitat, supports local governments in emerging economy countries (Brazil, India, Indonesia and South Africa) to integrate low-carbon strategies into all sectors of urban planning and development, by defining and approving Urban Low Emissions Development Strategies (Urban-LEDS). The process is supported by experienced European cities, especially those with an understanding of policies, technologies and stakeholder engagement relevant to energy efficiency, renewable energy electricity, heating and cooling. The second project - The Municipal Climate Action Plan (PACMUN) (http://iclei.org.mx/web/index.php/seccion/PACMUN) – has been successfully implemented in Mexico by ICLEI, and is extended for two more years. Here technical and institutional assistance is offered by the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change (INECC), with the project is financed by the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Mexico. In both projects the switch to renewable energy is being explored in a wider community strategy.

The paper will address the methodology and approach taken by selected cities, with a focus on planning and approach to renewable energy, the use of local resources and the involvement of civil society in processes.

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Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of ISES.
doi:10.1016/j.egypro.2014.10.293

Selection and/or peer-review under responsibility of ISES.

Keywords: local climate and energy action, local government, renewable energy, low carbon strategies, municipal climate plan, civil society

1. Introduction

In many countries the high rate of urbanization, increased energy demand and high resource intensity, seem to be in conflict with creating a good quality of life and shaping a sustainable energy future. Yet, these issues need to be tackled in the framework of low-carbon, sustainable development approaches. This implies the need to reduce dependency on declining fossil fuels by optimizing energy efficiency and stimulating renewable energy use, changing lifestyles and perceptions, shaping a green economy and social equity system.

It is estimated that in 2010, more than 50% of the world population lived in urban areas - almost 3.5 billion people – and that by 2050 it will reach around 68.8% [1]. While cities are large contributors of greenhouse gas emissions, they can also be strong actors in climate change mitigation and adaptation. The main drivers for the deployment of renewable energy relate strongly to both these areas, with potential to improve energy security, sustainable socio-economic development, and a host of environmental benefits.

However, there are also significant challenges considering non-technological barriers to the deployment of renewable energy, including [2]:

- Policy and regulatory barriers
- Institutional and administrative barriers
- Market barriers
- Lack of information and awareness
- Lack of qualified staff
- Public resistance and cultural barriers

Local governments, through their roles, legal mandates, and as the closest level of governance to their communities, can play a highly relevant role in the removal of these barriers. This is also one of the aims of support offered by ICLEI through its new GreenClimateCities programme, building on more than 20 years experience in working with local governments on climate change mitigation. The focus is on outlining of Urban Low Emissions Development Strategies, paving the way to sustainable development.

Nomenclature

cCCR	carbon*n* Cities Climate Registry
CCP	Cities for Climate Protection Campaign
GHG	greenhouse gas emissions
LE	Low Emissions
LED	Low Emissions Development
LG	local governments