



## United Nations Economic and Social Commission to Western Asia (ESCWA)

### Multi-Stakeholder Forum on « Upscaling Investment on Small-Scale Renewable Energy in Rural Areas; A Cross Sectoral Approach ».

Tunis, Tunisia, 16-17 October 2024

## INFORMATION NOTE

### *Background*

The Arab region boasts a high rate of access to electricity, despite disparities in the reliability of the service, positioning the region to be on track to meet its target of achieving universal access to electricity by 2030. However, the biggest share of the population without access to electricity is mainly found in rural areas. In addition, access to financing, employment, high-level education and training, and clean cooking fuels constitute some of the challenges faced by rural communities.

Small-scale renewable energy (RE) systems are transformative for rural development, offering a range of opportunities for enhancing the rural economy by improving the conditions of the productive activities, contributing to energy, water and food security, poverty reduction and lower unemployment level. However, their use in Arab rural areas has been limited and far away from their potential and there is a greater need to mobilize financial resources to harness the full potential of small-scale RE in rural areas, and strategically align between financiers, developers, and end-users.

The Regional Initiative to Promote Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in Rural Areas of the Arab Region (REGEND) works to improve the livelihoods, economic benefits, social inclusion and gender equality of Arab rural communities, particularly marginalized groups, in line with a human-rights based approach to development. Through a bottom-up and integrated approach, REGEND effectively addressed energy poverty, water scarcity, vulnerability to climate change, and other natural resource challenges in three targeted countries: Jordan, Lebanon, and Tunisia.

Looking ahead, and building on REGEND business model, there is a pressing need for robust policy frameworks to address pervasive clean energy deficits in rural contexts, mitigate perceived risks, and ensure the widespread adoption of small-scale RE systems. This effort must be supported by tailored financing instruments that recognize the heterogeneity and diverse socio-economic backgrounds of rural communities to pave the way for a just, inclusive and sustained energy access.

Within the framework of REGEND, the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the National Agency for Energy Conservation in Tunisia (ANME), is organizing a Regional Multi Stakeholder Forum (MSF) on “**Upscaling Investment on Small-Scale Renewable Energy in Rural Areas; An inclusive multi-Sectoral Approach**”.

This MSF will also serve as a platform for multistakeholder engagement and partnerships that would support integrated business model and access to micro-finance and serve as a matchmaking platform, shedding light on a diverse range of policy and financial levers to address barriers and augment investment in small-scale RE through a cross-sectoral approach followed by REGEND and its implementation in Tunisia, Lebanon and Jordan and being extended to Algeria and Mauritania.

## **1. Objectives**

Building on the successes of REGEND Business model, this MSF intends to demonstrate the sustainability of the regional initiative and its impact to support inclusive small-scale renewable energy applications. Specifically, the following objectives would be pursued in this MSF:

- A. Disseminate operational and policy toolkits developed into guidance detailing lessons learned, impacts, and best practices emanating from REGEND's implementation and its knowledge products. This will also include case studies from across the Arab region for enabling inclusive and just energy transitions in view of fostering an enabling environment for mainstreaming small scale RE applications for green jobs, development planning and climate commitments at the national and sectoral levels.
- B. Showcase the nexus between energy, water, and food by drawing from regional expertise and building upon the series of studies and reports ESCWA developed under REGEND and the outcomes from monitoring the Field projects implemented and exchange of experiences from other projects which addresses similar context.
- C. Contribute to reverse knowledge transfer and to the establishment of an active network of rural practitioners including REGEND's beneficiaries, whose capacity were built and whose business models were successful to present and promote the development of new applications in other rural communities.
- D. Serve as a platform for empowering Arab women and rural communities to tell their stories and share experiences on entrepreneurship initiatives on ways to ensure a gender perspective when understanding energy needs of a community and building their resilience following integrated solutions that can be replicated and transferred to others across the region.
- E. Discuss the role, challenges, and opportunities of the deployment of small scale RE solutions in rural areas as part of the overall just and inclusive energy transition and provide multistakeholder tailor-made and targeted solutions for consolidated energy usage within communities of similar characteristics.
- F. Build the capacities of policymakers to develop integrated policies and regulations that create opportunities for inclusive green jobs and strengthen synergies between the different economic sectors in rural areas in support of a country-level efforts aiming to support a just energy transition and propose ways to operationalize their mitigation portfolio for the benefit of rural communities with limited access to energy.
- G. Discuss the derisking of investment in small scale RE in the rural context based on the outcomes of the recent study published by ESCWA and explore strategic frameworks and financial instruments that mitigate risks and enhance access to finance.
- H. Explore opportunities to facilitate private-public sector engagement and support from financial institutions for upscaling investments and expanding REGEND's Business model in the region.

## **2. Participants**

The Event will convene multiple groups and stakeholders, namely: representatives of government institutions and ministries, REGEND's beneficiaries, experts and practitioners in the field, members of ESCWA Committee on energy, local and regional institutions, financial institutions, United Nations and regional organizations, private sector, NGOs and Youth representatives, among others.

## **3. Date and Venue**

REGEND's Multi-Stakeholder Forum will be organized in Tunis, Tunisia on 16-17 October 2024.

## **4. Language**

The forum will be held in Arabic, with translations available from and to English.

## **5. Accommodation and transportation**

Participants are requested to arrange their own hotel reservations by directly contacting a hotel of their choice in Tunis. Participants are requested to arrange their own local transport between the airport, hotel and the venue of the event.

## **6. Entry visas**

Participants are requested to secure their own visas for travel to Tunisia. Personalized invitation letters can be sent to participants to facilitate the process.

## **7. Correspondence**

All correspondence related to the forum should be directed to [escwa-energy@un.org](mailto:escwa-energy@un.org), with copy to Ms. Manal Tabbara, Programme Management Assistant, Email: [tabbaram@un.org](mailto:tabbaram@un.org).