

## Fourteenth session of the IRENA Assembly

### **Roundtable on the Role of Public Finance and Policy in achieving Universal Energy Access under SDG 7**

16 April 2024, 14:00 – 15:30 GST  
St. Regis Hotel, Saadiyat Island, Abu Dhabi

#### ***Background***

According to the [2023 SDG 7 Tracking Report](#), progress to achieving access to electricity (SDG indicator 7.1.1) grew significantly, with the number of people without electricity dropping by almost half, from about 1.1 billion in 2010 to 675 million in 2021. Despite the noteworthy progress, the SDG 7 target to achieve universal access to energy services remains elusive, with 660 million people projected to still lack access to electricity in 2030. Efforts to achieve universal access to clean cooking fuels and technologies (SDG indicator 7.1.2) have also proven challenging. Although the global population without access to clean cooking decreased from 2.9 billion in 2010 to 2.3 billion in 2021, the current trajectory suggests that 1.9 billion individuals will still lack access to clean cooking by 2030.

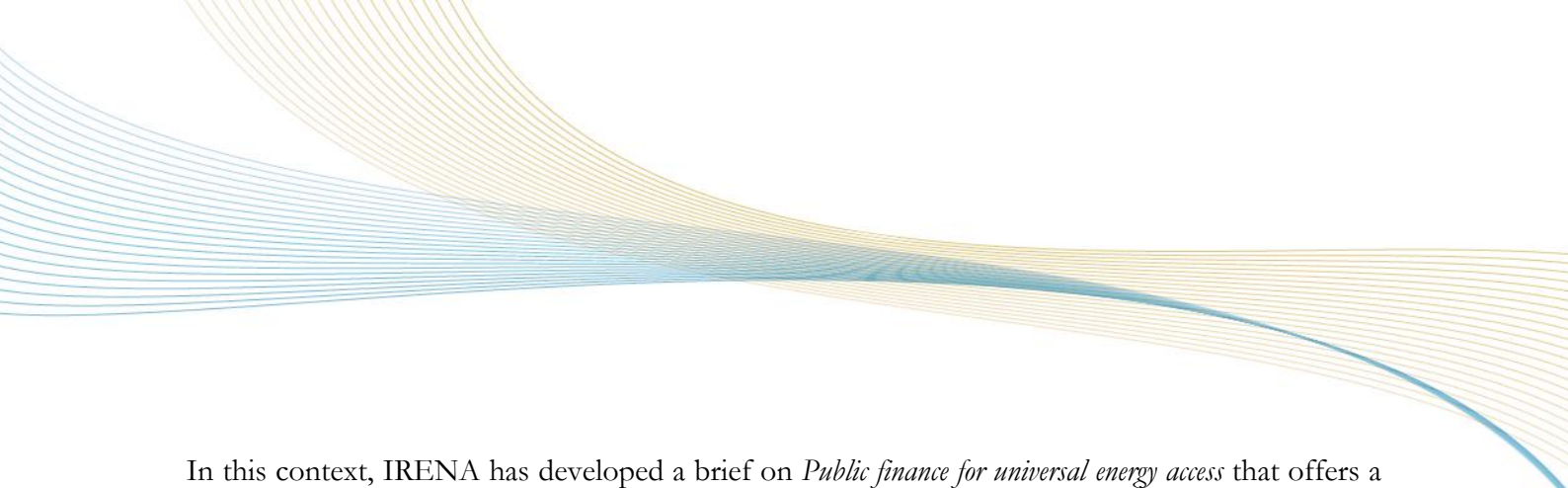
To reach universal access to energy services by 2030, the world will have to drastically increase efforts by scaling up finance, investment, and policy support. An estimated USD 30 billion in annual funding is needed between 2021 and 2030 in grid/mini-grid and standalone renewable generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure to reach universal electricity access, and around USD 6 billion in clean cooking technologies and fuels.<sup>1</sup> While private investments are important and continue to pick up, public finance will remain essential to bridge the funding gap, particularly in areas that are not yet considered investible by the private sector.

Public finance has a core role to play in:

- a. deploying energy services to areas unaddressed by the market (e.g., planning and building the energy infrastructure)
- b. investing in the ecosystem that anchors energy service provision, to influence sustainability and resilience (e.g., in education, agriculture, health, and sectors, as well as capacity building, awareness raising, and skills development)
- c. ensuring access to the last mile, underserved and marginalised communities
- d. bridging end-users affordability gaps, and
- e. de-risking and catalysing private capital effectively through policy and regulatory instruments.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Tracking SDG7: The energy progress report 2023](#)



In this context, IRENA has developed a brief on *Public finance for universal energy access* that offers a tool to guide policymakers and public financiers to track and optimise public financing in advancing energy access. It seeks to map the public financing needs across the energy access ecosystem, identify challenges in scaling public financing for modern energy access, and understand stakeholder preferences across public finance instruments, intermediaries, and recipients.

### ***Objectives***

The session aims to convene governments, development institutions, donor agencies, the private sector, and energy access practitioners to discuss the role of public finance and policies in addressing energy access needs. Stakeholders will exchange best practices and lessons learned in ongoing efforts to deploy public funding toward universal energy access. The event will provide opportunities to identify additional cooperation and collaboration necessary to address the current finance gaps. IRENA's brief on *Structuring public finance for universal energy access* will be launched during this event.

### ***Guiding Questions***

- What factors have contributed to the lag in investments for energy access?
- In what ways has public finance been used to extend electricity services and clean cooking to hardest-to-reach areas? And how is this supporting other SDGs?
- How can public finance be used to align energy policies, strategies, and targets for energy access to achieve the universal energy access goal?
- What are some of the practical ways in which public finance can be used to bridge end-user affordability gaps and mitigate investment risks for the energy access private sector?
- How can public finance instruments be used towards research and development, promoting local capacity building and job creation within the energy sector?
- What strategies can be implemented to increase public finance towards achieving set energy access targets including through international collaboration?
- What kind of analytical and technical support work would you like to see IRENA undertake within the realm of energy access?

### ***Associated Publications***

- [Tracking SDG7: The energy progress report 2023](#) (IRENA, 2023)
- [Global landscape of renewable energy finance 2023](#) (IRENA, 2023)
- [Energizing finance: Understanding the Landscape](#) (SEforALL, 2021)
- [Renewables-based electric cooking: Climate commitments and finance](#) (IRENA, 2023)
- [Off-grid renewable energy statistics 2023](#) (IRENA, 2023)
- [Renewable energy for remote communities: A guidebook for off-grid projects](#) (IRENA, 2023)
- [Off-grid Renewable Energy Solutions: Key takeaway from the 5<sup>th</sup> IOREC](#) (IRENA, 2022)

### ***For further information please contact***

Ntsebo Sephelane, Associate Professional, Energy Access and Renewable Energy Policy, KPFC ([nsephelane@irena.org](mailto:nsephelane@irena.org))

Hannah Sofia Guinto, Associate Professional, Energy Transition Policies and Programme Support, KPFC ([hguinto@irena.org](mailto:hguinto@irena.org))