



Insights from joint research interviews

What is the role of global technology collaboration in terms of internalisation of skills and capabilities from external actors in the wind and solar sectors in Kenya? How can such collaborations be shaped to help develop more appropriate pathways of low carbon development in the local context? What is the role of the national innovation system, including local policies and institutions in realising this potential?

In February 2017 the IREK research team conducted a series of joint interviews with key informants in Nairobi, Kenya.

Conducting interviews as a joint research team provided an opportunity to:

- **introduce the researchers and the IREK project to a number of key stakeholders in the sector**
- **gather information and test some broad hypotheses of the overall project**
- **gather shared data relevant across work packages of the project**
- **develop a common knowledge-base and understanding of the field**
- **strengthen internal research team relations based on the shared experiences**

The informants included representatives from a variety of organisations from independent power producers, government agencies to research institutes and other relevant actors in the energy sector. The following are some of the insights the research team gained from the interviews:

On policy discussions

- Some of the key policy discussions that stakeholders raised included issues about tariffs, licensing and the potential future grid connection of off-grid or mini-grid

renewable energy projects and the need for greater clarity on this.

- There is a lack of transparency and implementation of some of the relevant frameworks, for example on issues of local content regulations in the renewable energy sector.
- The issue of expansion of the national grid and matching the slower growth in consumption is viewed as a clearly political issue for KPLC (Kenya Power).
- There is scope for more discussions on coordination between policy frameworks, looking for ‘pockets of efficiency’ and capability building.

Experiences from renewable energy project developers

- Financing and risk guarantees remain a key challenge in planning and implementing renewable energy projects.
- The limited availability of capital and technical expertise has been a major barrier for local renewable energy equipment producers in expanding the market and conducting research and development.
- There is a balance to be struck between purely private sector/business collaboration and the wider developmental priorities in terms of capability building.

- Projects like Lake Turkana Wind Power which are the first of their kind require a lot of capacity building around all aspects of the project from project management of the planning, negotiation of a Power Purchase Agreement with KPLC and the government, within construction and logistics to the final integration to the national grid.

Development partner interventions

- Development partners aim to promote renewable energies through both project development programmes, supporting local government actors in policy development and implementation mechanisms, as well as through assistance for market entry for 'home' firms.
- Development partners also support capacity building through educational programmes such as the solar technician training at Strathmore energy research centre.
- There are also a number of donor pilot and demonstration projects such as the Talek minigrid. Although their aim is rather to enable private sector entry into the renewable energy space, such demonstration projects are needed to test and show-case possible financial and business cases.

On the energy system and planning

- A major challenge for players in the Kenyan energy sector is establishing realistic projections for the demand and supply ratio and managing the diversity of energy sources in a more efficient manner.
- The challenge of wayleaves in Kenya (i.e. The Wayleaves Act regulating governmental construction on private land) means that

the construction of new transmission lines is usually a lengthy process and can have major economic consequences.

- The Kenyan energy system is not very strong with a peak at 1640 MW and not enough back up on major transmission lines to reduce disruptions. However a large number of projects from power evacuation projects, expansion of the network, reinforcement of the grid and interconnectors to neighboring countries are under way.
- There is a balance to be found between opening up and enabling independent power producers while not overloading the grid with excess supply or ending up paying for power not used.

The informants also raised a number of questions about the implications of upcoming policy shifts:

- ***How would you define local content in renewable energy projects?***
- ***How would an auction system for Independent Power Producers change the way things are unfolding?***

The contributions from the stakeholder interviews will form important input into various parts of the IREK research as well as the project as a whole.

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Read more about the IREK project at
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