



## India-Africa knowledge, tech partnerships the way forward (Comment: Special to IANS)

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Experiments on exchange of knowledge and technologies from [India](#) to [Africa](#) in the energy space offer a recipe for addressing development. Toward this, the Third India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) in [New Delhi](#) during Oct 26-29 promises to be an event to remember.

Knowledge exchange and transfer are going to be key for achieving the expectations. For this, partnerships within and between countries as mentioned in Goal 17 of the SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals) will be imperative.

One such example is the sharing of Indian knowledge and expertise in the energy space, under the aegis of the Knowledge Partnership Programme supported by DFID India and implemented in partnership with IPE Global.

Learning from past experiences and partnerships will help. While the goals are inextricably linked to each other, so are the solutions. Along the way, some lessons were learnt on the formula of successful partnerships. These included (a) responding to a key demand and matching the

technology solution with this demand, (b) appropriate identification of partner, (c) involving all stakeholders so that there is collective ownership over the process and the solution, (d) building skill and capacity for sustaining and mainstreaming of the technology, (e) involving policymakers for appropriate policy formulation and (f) honoring the spirit of partnership on equity and joint learning principles.

Two experiments - one on green brick technology transfer and the other on entrepreneurship development in the renewable energy space to provide access to bottom of the pyramid communities - offer insights into just what is possible. Knowledge can be Power!

One of the major drivers of poverty is lack of access to clean energy, which dramatically affects and undermines health, limits opportunities for education and development, and can reduce a family's potential to rise up out of poverty. Around 19 percent of the global population (1.3 billion) lack access to electricity, and 2.7 billion (39 percent) still rely on traditional three stone fires for cooking. Over 95 percent of this population lives in rural areas of South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### Nurturing renewable energy entrepreneurs

Financially viable entrepreneurship models for renewable energy (RE) can help bridge the energy divide. An approach used to develop RE enterprises in India has been to support the entrepreneur to incubate the business through a well thought out plan. This approach was one worth sharing.

With technical support from IRENA (International Renewable Energy Agency) and the CIE (Centre for Innovation Incubation and Entrepreneurship), the project brought together incubators, entrepreneurs, renewable energy associations and the government to share experiences and learn from the approach in India.

Participants appreciated the support that a structured approach offered to the entrepreneur including the financial support systems. A letter of intent was signed between 11 countries and other learning platforms have been formed.

#### Arresting deforestation in Malawi

What started out as a pilot experiment in technology transfer for green brick technology transfer from India to Malawi resulted in outcomes that showcase green and good quality construction, entrepreneurship development opportunities, improvement in wages and most important of all, dignified employment opportunities for women.



Malawi has a high urbanisation rate in the world, leading to an increase in the demand for housing - and housing materials, especially bricks.

Traditional brick making in Malawi uses fuelwood: Estimates indicate that 1.7 billion units of burnt clay bricks will be annually required for walling alone. This volume will be produced at the cost of 850,000 tonnes of wood. At this rate, Malawi is staring at complete deforestation within 30 years. Alternate brick making technologies are thus imperative and given the demand for bricks, the market is primed.

With technical support from India a vertical shaft brick kiln (VSBK) was piloted with CCODE (the Centre for Community Organisation and Development), Malawi, and inaugurated in January 2015. The kiln has since breached the 0.6 million production mark. Compared with traditional bricks, VSBK bricks (a) use half the energy and are yet twice as strong, (b) will dramatically reduce deforestation, (c) save 20-30 percent on construction costs (d) has created new jobs for women - one third of 200 employees at the kiln are women - earning thrice the average monthly salary and (e) built businesses of the entrepreneur: As of August 2015, business worth \$67,000 was generated.

Sandwiched as it were between the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) conference in September and the Conference of Parties (COP) 21 later this year, the timing of IAFS is opportune. As expectations from these three events are high, knowledge exchange must take centre stage. For this, partnerships within and between countries as mentioned in Goal 17 of the SDGs will be imperative. While the goals of these three events are inextricably linked to each other, so are the solutions.

(22.10.2015 - In arrangement with KPP-IPE Global, an international development consulting group, with whom Indira Khurana is Policy Lead - Resource Scarcity, Food Security and Climate Change, The views expressed are those of KPP-IPE Global. She can be reached at [ikhurana@ipeglobal.com](mailto:ikhurana@ipeglobal.com))

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