

# Press Release

## 6<sup>th</sup> ARE Energy Access Investment Forum surpasses its reputation as the flagship event on finance for energy access

**22 March 2021** - The Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) concluded its 6<sup>th</sup> Energy Access Investment Forum (EAIF), hosted virtually from 17 to 19 March 2021 and supported by GET.invest, a European programme supported by the European Union, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands and Austria. Throughout the event, participating decentralised renewable energy (DRE) stakeholders from across the globe renewed their commitment towards addressing investment gaps and achieving universal energy access globally and in particular in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Almost 1,400 participants from 105 countries attended the flagship event that included public and private sector financiers, project developers and decision makers.

Key highlights of the EAIF include:

- Building a flourishing DRE sector in the wake of COVID-19
- Fast-tracking investment through integrated decentralised electrification policies
- Partnerships as a pillar to support DRE solutions in rural communities
- Innovative business models for rural electrification, including productive uses.

The event featured over 70 top-level speakers from the private sector, national and international public bodies and civil society. On top of the interactive sessions, GET.invest and ARE facilitated over 500 virtual matchmaking meetings between investors, technology providers, project developers, as well as development partners and innovators in the DRE sector.

This year, the virtual event was sponsored by RES4Africa Foundation, TCX Fund, ADEME, Blue Solutions, CEGASA, ElectriFI, EDPR, ENGIE Energy Access, INENSUS, NRECA International, Renewvia Energy, D-REC Initiative, South Pole, Sterling & Wilson, Zimpertec, ECREEE, Odyssey, Practical Action, SparkMeter and WindKinetic. ARE also strategically partnered with Energy Catalyst, ACCESS Coalition, ACP, African Development Bank, CLUB-ER, Frankfurt School of Finance & Management, Green People's Energy, GOGLA, SACREEE, SEforALL, SIAZ, SolarPower Europe and UNIDO.

The event was opened by **Carla Montesi, Director for Green Deal and Digital Agenda at DG INTPA, European Commission**, who highlighted the importance of accelerating efforts to achieve a higher uptake of decentralised renewable energy: *"The future that we want is a future where electricity from renewable energy provides opportunities for **an inclusive** growth and job creation to the people without damaging the planet preserving it for our future generations. This is a clear motivation for our work at the European Union."*

The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion on the green rural recovery post COVID-19. **Frank van der Vleuten, Policy Coordinator for Climate Finance and Energy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands**, said: *“This is the moment to show the strategic economic role of distributed renewable energy, and to grasp its enormous jobs potential, also in the most vulnerable areas. Distributed renewables must be made a priority sector for economic recovery.”*

Speakers at the event highlighted the importance of working together to create a more conducive market environment. **Jon Lane, Associate Director of the Energy Catalyst Accelerator**, stated that the Energy Catalyst has been designed to create such collaborative partnerships between innovators in the UK, Africa, South Asia South East Asia. Their novel approach allows innovations developed in both the North and South to be demonstrated and realised. He added: *“Accelerating innovation is a goal that we share with ARE which has helped us to establish an effective partnership to deliver on this critical ambition.”*

Another central topic of discussion was how to make renewable energy projects bankable and how to ensure enough financing is made available to scale up energy access where it is needed most.

**Roberto Vigotti, Secretary General of RES4Africa Foundation** said: *“Complex issues call for substantial interventions. It is only through major private investments that Africa’s energy access will match its whirling demand. At RES4Africa, we dedicate our daily work to make these investments sustainable, safe and beneficial for both the investors and the local communities, with the crucial support of key partners with alike missions, such as ARE”.*

**Per van Swaay, Senior Vice-President of TCX Fund** added: *“Our mission for this sector, as it is in any sector that generates local currency revenue, is to promote and facilitate the financing of it with local currency, whether from an in-country source or from abroad. A sector-wide adoption of local currency finance leads to a more resilient and sustainable and better-bankable sector. With our presence at EAIF, we aim to ensure that all market participants are fully and properly informed about the financing choices that they are faced with. We thank ARE for creating this important platform for sector development.”*

The event saw the launch of several sector publications, such as the Africa edition of SolarPower Europe’s [O&M Guidelines](#), developed by SolarPower Europe with the support of GET.invest and 10 African solar and renewable energy associations, and the [Clean Energy Mini-Grid Policy Development Guide](#), developed by ARE, UNIDO, AMDA, INENSUS and the AfDB Green Mini-Grid Help Desk. The objective of the Guide is to shape the market conditions to concretely deliver on access to electricity for all by empowering national policy leaders to design and put in place a policy to scale up mini-grid deployment and thus electricity connections, based on experience and building on national political preferences. ARE invites all decision makers to consider the Guide, work together with industry stakeholders and create a more conducive market environment.

On the last day of EAIF, ARE hosted an additional side event dedicated to the launch of the [“NREA TOOLKIT – A Guide for National Renewable Energy Associations”](#), developed by

SolarPower Europe and GOGLA in strategic partnership with ARE and supported by GET.invest and UK Aid. The purpose of the toolkit is to support NREAs in their activities. These include developing, improving and sustaining their services to their members; investing in practicing high standards of management and good governance; and taking measures to assure their sustainability over the long term. It aims to support NREAs to continue to be strong advocates for the growth of the renewable energy sector.

Wrapping up the 3-day event, **David Lecoque, CEO of ARE** concluded: *“After hearing the keynote speech from the European Commission, the financier pitches and all the announcements made by the distinguished speakers during the sessions, I am hopeful. Hopeful that we can overcome the cynicism of some, and achieve a prosperous, sustainable, electrified future for all. Clearly no one country or organisation will achieve this goal by going it alone, nor should it. That’s why we need partnerships. That’s why we need strong, deep and meaningful cooperation between the public and private sector, as well as with civil society. Every actor brings something to the table, and it is up to all of us to be ambitious, to dare to dream, and to work even harder to achieve that dream no matter where we are.”*

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**For further information or to request images, please contact:**

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#### **Note to the editor**

The [Alliance for Rural Electrification \(ARE\)](#) is an international business association with the aim to promote a sustainable decentralised renewable energy industry for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, activating markets for affordable energy services, and creating local jobs and inclusive economies. ARE enables improved energy access through business development support for more than 175 Members along the whole value chain for off-grid technologies.

[GET.invest](#) is a European programme which supports investments in decentralised renewable energy. The programme targets private sector business and project developers, financiers and regulators to build sustainable energy markets in developing countries. Services include market information, a funding database, matchmaking events and access-to-finance advisory. The programme is supported by the European Union, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria, and works closely with initiatives and business associations in the energy sector.

