

Press Release

Brussels, 4 February 2021

ARE closes first ever Technology & Innovation Forum with resounding success

The Alliance for Rural Electrification, in cooperation with GET.invest, a European programme supported by the European Union, Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Austria, held its first ever [Technology & Innovation Forum](#) (TIF 2021) on 27-28 January 2021. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the event was held virtually.

The event attracted over 1,000 registrations including energy experts as well as a diverse group of stakeholders, financial institutions, and civil societies. Speakers at the virtual event discussed innovation as a key driver of economic growth, development, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation. In emerging markets, new high-quality and modular technologies, such as AI, advanced GIS mapping, remote monitoring, new control software and systems, as well as innovative energy storage solutions and productive use applications are helping drive last-mile rural electrification with decentralised renewable energy (DRE).

David Lecoque, CEO of ARE said: *“At ARE we see innovation as essential to the future of the sector DRE sector and as key driver of economic growth and development in rural communities, as well as climate mitigation and adaptation.”*

Dr. Deborah Cornland, Programme Manager & Energy Specialist at the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) confirms: *“Continued innovation, expansion of renewable energy system capacity, and improvements to existing energy systems are critical to economic and social development. They are pre-requisites to achieving access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. Sida is proud to have supported this event through the GET.invest programme.”*

TIF 2021 provided an important opportunity to shed light on, and stimulate stakeholders' thinking about how they can contribute to furthering innovation and progress in promoting investment in DRE systems. New technologies boost efficiency of systems, increase their longevity and technical sustainability, help project developers better estimate demand, increase financial sustainability of projects, mitigate climate change, and help communities respond to health crises, for example via the deployment of modular health clinics for rural communities. The challenge remains the affordability of such solutions, making the solutions known to end-users and understanding customer needs.

In addition to high level discussions and debates, GET.invest and ARE were able to facilitate over 200 virtual matchmaking sessions, enabling investors, technology providers, project developers, as well as other innovators in the sector to connect.

Ross Bruton, Head of Venture Services at the Energy Catalyst Accelerator commented: *“A key road block to transforming energy access innovation into impact is the creation of value propositions that are matched with customer needs, supported by business models that*



increase the confidence of financial backers. Energy Catalyst has so far issued £60 million of development finance to 156 energy access projects, across 310 organisations to drive innovation in the sector and demonstrate future impact on energy poverty.”

Olivier Jacquet, VP Access to Energy Business Development MEAS at Schneider Electric commented: *“At Schneider Electric, we believe that access to electricity and digital is a fundamental human right. Our ambition is that by 2025 we can bring access to electricity to more than 50 million people. Universal access to modern energy by 2030 will require an acceleration of innovation and scalable cutting-edge technologies.”*

The event was sponsored by Schneider Electric, Norvento Enerxia, NXT Grid, SparkMeter, and Studer Innotec. ARE also strategically partnered with Energy Catalyst, ACCESS Coalition, CLUB-ER, Efficiency for Access, Energypedia, India Energy Storage Alliance, Mini-Grid Partnership, Power Africa, Power for All, REN21, Smart Power India, and UNIDO ITPO Germany.

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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 21st 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 170 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.

