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BIOENERGY PRIMER

MODERNISED BIOMASS ENERGY

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FOR SUSTAINABLE

DEVELOPMENT



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MODERNISED BIOMASS ENERGY

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United Nations Development Programme

with support from the Government of Norway

Sivan Kartha

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United Nations Development Programme

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FOREWORD

There is an unmistakable link between energy and sustainable human development. Energy is not an end in itself, but an essential tool to facilitate social and economic activities. Thus, the lack of available energy services correlates closely with many challenges of sustainable development, such as poverty alleviation, the advancement of women, protection of the environment, and jobs creation. Emphasis on institutionbuilding and enhanced policy dialogue is necessary to create the social, economic, and politically enabling conditions for a transition to a more sustainable future.

Most of those without access to modern energy services belong to the segment of the human population that lives in poverty. Although low energy consumption is not a cause of poverty, the lack of available energy services correlates closely with many poverty indicators. To date, poverty has received scant attention from an energy perspective.

This is particularly remarkable since energy is central to the satisfaction of basic nutrition and health needs, and energy services constitute a sizable share of total household expenditure among the poorest households in developing countries. Policies and programmes that aim to create opportunities for people living in poverty are needed. By making more efficient use of commercial and non-commercial energy and by shifting to higher quality energy carriers, it will be possible to simultaneously improve those people's standard of living, in both the short term and long term.

Biomass energy technologies are a promising option, with a potentially large impact for developing countries, where the current levels of energy services are low. Biomass accounts for about one third of all energy in developing countries as a whole, and nearly 90 percent in some of the least developed countries. Over 2 billion people continue to rely on biomass fuels and traditional technologies for cooking and heating and 1.5-2 billion people have no access to electricity.

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