

**Launch of Report:**  
**Access by consumers to essential services: Energy, water and sanitation**

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**Access by Consumers to essential services:**  
**energy water & sanitation**

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# Access by Consumers to essential services:

energy water & sanitation

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Development Commission,

Geneva Palais des Nations, November 22, 2022.

# International policy frameworks



- **UN Guidelines for consumer protection**, 1985 revised 2015 to include as '*legitimate needs*' of consumers (para 5): '*access to essential services*'; '*protection of vulnerable & disadvantaged consumers*'; specific reference to water, energy and '*universal access in public utilities*';

- **SDGs** referred to by Guidelines. Most relevant:  
SDG 6 *Clean water & sanitation*. universal access by 2030.  
SDG 7 *Affordable & clean energy*. Universal access by 2030. M  
Energy did not feature in MDGs of 2000.

SDG 12 *responsible consumption & production*

Also: SDG 3: Health: SDG 11: Sustainable communities: SDG 13: climate:



# Features and problems of network services

- Households consume <16% networked water;
- Energy: EU 26%, SS Africa 40% but much lower coverage;
- World not on track for SDG coverage targets;
- Neglect of informal settlements and sectors. 24% global urban population in slums. 55% in SS Africa.
- Affordability – ‘poor pay more’ syndrome. Non-connected pay highest unit prices (or pay in time spent searching).
- Acute difficulties of targeting. Errors of exclusion & inclusion
- Subsidies for connectivity more effective than for consumption – & cheaper.
- Customer care (eg ease of payment) makes for better consumers.

# Competitive markets

- **Competition in the market:** failures of retail competition in energy and return to price caps before current crisis;
- **Competition for the market:** decentralisation a growing trend: competition for access to grids; but not to forget public procurement and services of general interest with obligations.
- **Formalising the informal sectors.**
- **Micro-generation (eg roof panels) may 'residualise' existing grids?**

# Reconciling access and sustainability

Recognition of mini-grids & link to existing grids to improve reliability.

## **Energy efficiency (EE)**

reduces need for consumption subsidy

should be neutral between negawatts and megawatts

helps evolution of energy sale companies to energy

service companies selling 'Negawatts' – see ISO

50007

**Fiscal approach** has led to large scale resistance, including in high income countries.

# Conclusions

Debate transcends current crisis. Present systems need adapting and transition requires short and long term investment.

Not all subsidies are wasteful. They can be a form of investment.

Demand reduction through EE underestimated. Allows more to consume to better effect with higher cost-recovery. Eases demand peaks.

Need to balance decentralisation and universality. Long term risk of new 'poor pay more' syndrome with poor consumers stuck on residual systems.

Customer care and responsible consumption have important roles to play.

**Thank you!**  
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