Over the last ten years African governments have moved increasingly towards decentralised budgets, giving local authorities increased powers and budgets to govern areas that include both rural and urban population. Yet while cities have a municipal authority to consider new ways of supplying energy to its urban citizens, those governing Africa's rural poor in small and medium towns in the surrounding rural hinterlands have rarely considered energy infrastructure.

Existing research indicates that many local authorities in Africa are struggling as they do not have the capacities and capabilities necessary to govern the complex social, political and economic situations they routinely face. Required to contribute inter alia to financial management, local and regional economic development, strategic planning in the local government, budgeting procedures, tax collection, procurement procedures and standards, ethics for local government staff and elected representatives, and action against corruption, it is hardly surprising that against this backdrop the demands placed on their time and capabilities would see energy planning neglected.

And yet energy - in particular, clean energy for development - is becoming increasingly important not just to them in their specific geographical location, but to the wider region and world more generally. Local authority capacity across Africa therefore poses a fundamental challenge for successfully implementing clean energy for development programmes. In short, decentralisation could open the way for local authorities to become champions and drivers towards cleaner energy, but at the same time, their lack of capacity and capabilities is currently proving a major barrier to implementing clean energy development in African states. For sure, improving the understanding and evidence base of both the opportunities and challenges associated with implementing clean energy for development in Africa and it is this lacuna which this proposed research seeks to address.

To achieve this, the project has a number of foci. First, the project sets out to scope the size of the problem. There is an urgent need to document the roles and responsibilities of local authorities in African states to work out how these new roles impact the capacity and capabilities of local authorities (in different contexts) have been affected by the transfer of powers and budgets under decentralization initiatives. When a hospital needs a new generator, who decides? When the local market needs new lighting, who decides? Who has the power and budget to spend on energy?

Second, and having determined who typically holds the power and budgets, we will then explore their 'energy literacy'. Among all the other capacities and capabilities they must have to govern, our central question is do they have basic energy literacy? We take an energy-literate person is to be someone who: can trace energy flows and think in terms of energy systems; knows how much energy he or she uses, for what, and where that energy comes from; can assess the

credibility of information about energy; can communicate about energy and energy use in meaningful ways; is able to make informed energy and energy use decisions based on an understanding of impacts and consequences. Put simply, there is an urgent need to ascertain whether decision makers have enough knowledge about energy to make positive decisions towards cleaner energy sources, and wider energy access for their citizens.

Here we will focus on local authorities in Rwanda and Kenya. The importance we attached to these two cases is guided by recognition that Rwandan local authorities have been budget holders for a number of years - therefore we expect them to be able to share their experiences of the challenge of running a district - whereas in Kenya, they are about to have elections that will give more power and budget to the local authorities, so they will be able to share both their hopes and expectations

We are working with Loughborough University and Practical Action . This project is funded by EPSRC , DFID UK AID and D ECC and is funded under the USES call