



Visitors from Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority job shadow staff members at Idaho commission

Program is joint effort of NARUC, USAID and Power Africa

Contact: Gene Fadness (208) 334-0339, 890-2712

BOISE (June 17, 2016) – Two officials from the Rwanda Utilities Regulatory Authority (RURA) are in Idaho this week to “job shadow” staff of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission.

Idaho is the first state to host an activity under a new partnership between the National Association of Regulatory Utility Commissioners (NARUC) and RURA, with the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Power Africa.

NARUC’s partnership with RURA enables regulators from the United States and Rwanda to share experience and best practices as well as to problem-solve to support more effective regulation.

“Our objective is to support RURA’s efforts to improve its rate-setting practices so that Rwanda will be able to attract private investment in its power sector and, thus, increase access to electricity for its people,” said Matt Elam, who heads up the Idaho commission’s Technical Analysis Section.

Visiting from Rwanda are Aimee Nshimirimana, a business plan analysis officer in the Economic Regulation Unit and Alex Mudasingwa, a technical compliance and monitoring officer in RURA’s Electricity and Renewable Energy Unit.

Elam, who serves on NARUC’s Staff Subcommittee for International Relations, said Idaho was selected partly because utilities here get most of their generation from hydroelectric resources as in Rwanda.

To date, only about 24 percent of Rwanda’s households are connected to the electrical grid. The central-east African nation of 11.7 million people has an ambitious goal to increase connected households to 70 percent by the end of 2018. Rwanda has 190 MW of installed

capacity, up from just 46 MW in 2004. Its forecasted generation for 2018 is about 563 MW, enough electricity to connect 70 percent of Rwandans to the electrical grid.

The job shadow is also designed to assist RURA in devising cost-reflective tariffs (rates) that will phase-out government subsidies to the nation's only electric utility by the end of fiscal year 2017-18.

Mudasingwa, who has a master's degree in engineering, and Nshimirimana, who has a master's degree in business administration, said they appreciated specifically learning about rate mechanisms in Idaho that encourage energy efficiency; that track changes in water, fuel costs and other variable expenses; and that allow ratepayers to share revenue with utilities once utility earnings reach a certain level. As in Idaho, Rwanda also has a number of independent power generators, so the Rwandan visitors were interested in the way the Idaho commission approves or denies power purchase agreements between utilities and independent generators.

"We appreciate very much the hospitality of the Idaho staff," Mudasingwa said. "It has been perfect, 100 percent."

"This has been a valuable experience for everyone," said Paul Kjellander, president of the Idaho Public Utilities Commission. "Our staff has learned a great deal from Alex and Aimee and we hope we have been as much help to them," Kjellander said. The PUC president expressed thanks to Elam, who was instrumental in bringing the Rwandan delegation to Idaho.

Idaho is a state member of NARUC, whose members include the state agencies that regulate utilities and carriers in the 50 states, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Power Africa is a U.S. government program seeking to attract needed investment in the power sector within sub-Saharan Africa. Its ultimate goal is to increase access to electricity by adding 30,000 MW of clean, efficient energy on the African continent.

###