The IEA DSM Programme has initiated new work to focus on the complexities of human behaviour when using energy. Participants will begin to unravel these complexities in order to access the huge end user behaviour change potential for DSM programmes. Only once the ‘loop’ between behaviour change researchers, funders, policy makers, DSM implementers, and energy end users is closed will this potential be realised.

The year 2012 will bring the start of new work that concentrates specifically on energy end user behaviour change. There is, of course, huge potential for Demand Side Management programmes if this potential (estimated to be as vast as 30% of total energy demand - Gardner and Stern 2010) could be easily accessed and directed. However, as many other IEA DSM Tasks have discovered, the ‘market failure’ of energy efficiency is often due to the vagaries of human behaviour and choice. The best ideas, policies and programmes have been shown to fail again and again in achieving their desired outcomes. The current social norm is still NOT to see energy saving behaviour as a major priority in achieving a transition to a sustainable energy system.

There are several reasons for these challenges and this Task sets to uncover, unravel and define them in order to provide clear recommendations to policy makers and DSM implementers. One of the main challenges is that humans are often still regarded as economically rational actors whose behaviours can be influenced by fiscal incentives alone. However, the complexities influencing human behaviour are so vast and manifold that such simplistic approaches almost invariably fail. It is imperative to uncover the context-specific factors (from infrastructure, capital constraints, values, attitudes, norms, culture, tradition, climate, geography, education, political system, legislature, etc.) that influence human behaviour in specific sectors (the factors that influence our transport behaviours often differ from those driving our hot water usage, for example).

In addition, there are a large variety of research disciplines that endeavour to study human behaviour (social and environmental psychology, environmental and behavioural economics, anthropology, science technology studies, practice and innovation diffusion theory, etc.), each with their own models and frameworks, advantages and disadvantages. Unfortunately, they usually do not communicate well - not with each other and not with the end users of their research - the policy makers and DSM programme designers and implementers. This leads to confusion and lack of context-specific programme or policy design that is based on the best behavioural information or models.

Another crucial issue relates to monitoring, understanding, learning about and adapting initiatives in a more systematic manner. DSM projects demonstrate great diversity of goals, scope, participants, resources, etc. to meet the diversity of implementing environments. As a consequence, developing a generic evaluation and monitoring...
Why Participate?

- Know how and why to prioritise DSM research and implementation (ex ante evaluation)
- Share each other's best practice/lessons learned and build strong expert network
- Be able to prove ongoing, lasting success and long-term behaviour change outcomes from DSM policy and programmes (ex post evaluation)
- Be able to design policies and programmes that better suit the national context to effectively target households and SMEs with DSM interventions
- Build capability of multi-disciplinary research networks and influence of research end users to ensure their needs are met to address 'real life' problems
- Increase ability to secure funding, as end-user engagement and multi-disciplinary research approach, together with a strong evaluation scheme to prove successful outcomes
- Achieve better DSM intervention designs to increase energy system security, economic efficiency, energy affordability and meeting environmental and climate targets

A framework that is widely applicable and does justice to this diversity is difficult. However, there is a real and urgent need for more appropriate and effective monitoring, evaluation and learning of successful DSM implementation.

The fact that there is little robust and concrete evidence on the contribution of DSM to a more sustainable energy system is not helpful when trying to garner support and demonstrate value to investors, policy makers and other relevant actors – especially when different actors are likely to be interested in different contributions and outcomes.

Currently, DSM policy makers and other relevant stakeholders fund and/or support DSM programmes on a rather ad-hoc basis because they lack the means of assessing their impact on contributing towards a more sustainable energy system.

In conclusion, there is no behaviour change silver bullet, like there is no technological silver bullet. Designing the right programmes and policies that can be measured and evaluated to have achieved lasting behaviour and social norm change is difficult. We hope that this two-year Task will help address these difficulties and come up with guidelines, recommendations, and examples of best (and good) practice and lessons learned from various cultures and contexts. We will rely on sector-specific experts (researchers, implementers and policy-makers) from all countries to engage in an interactive, online and face-to-face expert platform and contribute to a comprehensive database of best (and good) practice examples, pilots and evaluations. In the end, there will be several deliverables, the most important being the platform for continued exchange of knowledge and successes.

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