

Reflections from the SEforALL Global Forum 2025 in Barbados

Attending the Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) Global Forum 2025 in Barbados was an extraordinary experience that brought together global leaders, experts, and changemakers to drive action toward universal energy access and a clean energy transition. The forum was not just a platform for exchanging ideas but also an immersive experience that blended technical discussions, cultural appreciation, and real-world site visits to witness sustainable energy solutions in action.

From thought-provoking panels to engaging with energy pioneers from Africa, the Caribbean, and beyond, every moment reinforced the urgency of accelerating the clean energy transition. Beyond the conference rooms, my time in Barbados also deepened my appreciation for how culture, history, and community engagement shape a country's sustainability journey.





Key Takeaways from the Forum

◆ The Power of Partnerships

Achieving universal energy access requires strong collaborations across countries, sectors, and disciplines. Partnerships should embrace diversity, leverage different perspectives, and maintain clear governance structures to ensure accountability and long-term impact. The forum reinforced the importance of public-private partnerships in mobilizing resources and fostering inclusive innovation to scale clean energy solutions.

◆ Humanizing Energy & Social Impact

One of the most compelling discussions revolved around humanizing energy—how energy access should be seen not just as infrastructure but as a tool for empowerment. This was particularly evident in Rwanda, where community-driven solutions are being designed to make energy more accessible, affordable, and relevant to daily life.

A standout case study was Ampersand, Africa's first electric transport energy company. With the longest track record of serving a commercial e-motorcycle fleet and battery swapping, Ampersand is reshaping urban mobility by providing cleaner, more cost-effective transport for thousands of Rwandan drivers. The discussion highlighted that energy transitions must integrate local economic opportunities to ensure equitable benefits for communities.

◆ Addressing Demand-Side Challenges

Investing in energy infrastructure alone is not enough to ensure universal access. A greater focus on demand-side challenges is crucial—strengthening distribution networks, affordability, and access to energy-efficient appliances to make renewable energy adoption

more inclusive. Additionally, boosting energy demand through localized industrialization can drive down costs and accelerate the clean energy transition.

◆ **Mitigating Risk in Energy Finance**

One of the biggest barriers to scaling renewable energy projects, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, is the perceived financial risk. The forum underscored the importance of de-risking mechanisms to attract private investment. Governments, development banks, and international organizations play a crucial role in reducing barriers through policy reforms, financial guarantees, and blended finance models that make clean energy investments more viable.









Barbados' Renewable Energy Leadership

Barbados is at the forefront of sustainable energy adoption in the Caribbean and beyond. With a commitment to 100% renewable energy by 2030, the country is investing in solar, wind, and energy storage solutions to transform its energy sector.

A major highlight of my trip was the site visit to the **St. Lucy Energy Gateway**, Barbados' first utility-scale solar farm. This 10MW solar photovoltaic (PV) facility, commissioned in 2016, spans 42 acres and consists of approximately 44,496 solar panels. It generates around 20GWh of electricity annually, enough to power approximately 7,700 homes, and reduces carbon dioxide emissions by 21,000 tons each year.

Notably, the facility employs an innovative approach to vegetation management by utilizing Barbados Black Belly Sheep to graze under and around the solar panels, naturally maintaining the landscape while reducing operational costs.

Additionally, Barbados is attracting investment in wind energy to complement its solar initiatives. The planned 30MW Lamberts Wind Farm in St. Lucy represents a significant step toward diversifying the island's renewable energy portfolio, recognizing that a varied energy







Sheep grazing on solar panel farms 1

mix is essential to overcome the intermittency of solar power.

Accelerating Clean Energy in Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

A particularly insightful panel featured Kiesha Farnum, Head of Partnerships & Programmes at the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (CCREEE). She highlighted the unique challenges Caribbean nations face in the clean energy transition. Due to their small size, these countries are often grouped together, which can result in generic energy policies that fail to address individual contexts.


Farnum emphasized the need for tailored approaches, advocating for regional cooperation among Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to share best practices, technology, and financing models. The panel reinforced that scaling clean energy solutions in smaller economies requires innovative, collaborative approaches—from pooled procurement to cross-border energy trade—to overcome high costs and supply constraints.





Panel on Clean Energy Transition 1

Cultural Insights & Memorable Moments

Beyond the technical discussions, immersing myself in Barbadian culture added a deeply personal layer to my experience. Barbados, affectionately known as "Bim," is a country shaped by resilience, creativity, and cultural fusion, deeply influenced by West African and British heritage.

 **Music & Celebration:** The sounds of calypso and soca filled the air, reflecting the resilience, joy, and cultural expression of the Bajan people.

 **Culinary Traditions:** Experiencing cou-cou and flying fish, the national dish, provided insight into sustainable food practices and the deep connection between cuisine, history, and the environment.

 **Community & Pride:** Visiting Rihanna's childhood home on Rihanna Drive was a reminder of how community pride and local identity shape global icons. The warmth and hospitality of the people underscored the strong sense of national pride.

One of the most striking cultural encounters was seeing the terracotta relief mural, an artistic representation of Barbados' history and resilience. The engravings of sugarcane, clasped hands, and musical symbols tell a powerful story of unity, struggle, and transformation—much like the SEforALL Forum itself, which symbolized progress through sustainability and collaboration.

A highlight of the trip was witnessing Barbados' stunning landscapes—lush greenery, rolling hills, and breathtaking coastlines. Standing in Bathsheba, with its dramatic cliffs and powerful waves, was a humbling reminder of nature's raw power and the urgent need for climate action.



Golden Square Freedom Park 1



Golden Square Freedom Park 2

An Evening at the Prime Minister's Residence

One of the most unforgettable moments was attending a dinner reception at the residence of Prime Minister Mia Amor Mottley. The evening provided a rare opportunity to engage with global leaders, policymakers, and energy experts in a more intimate setting.

Prime Minister Mottley's vision and leadership in climate justice and renewable energy innovation were truly inspiring. Her commitment to positioning Barbados as a sustainability leader is both admirable and actionable. The reception wasn't just about policy—it was a celebration of Barbadian hospitality, culture, and resilience.



Prime Minister's Residence 1

Global South-South Knowledge Sharing

The forum was also a remarkable platform for South-South cooperation. Engaging with a delegation from Zimbabwe, particularly the PowerLive GDC members, was enlightening. Their work in ending energy poverty through community-driven solutions emphasized equity, accessibility, and local empowerment.

Similarly, my discussions with Ghanaian officials provided insight into their ambitious Energy Transition and Investment Plan, which was developed in just four months—a testament to efficient policymaking and strong leadership in clean energy transitions.

Looking Ahead

This experience reaffirmed my belief that **sustainability is not just about technology and infrastructure—it is about people, culture, and community-driven innovation**. Lessons from **Barbados, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, and beyond** demonstrated that clean energy solutions must be **tailored to local realities, histories, and social structures**.