

CEI Interdisciplinary Seminar Series:

Energy in Transition: The End of Aid and What it Means for Achieving Modern Energy Systems in Emerging Economies

The energy landscape in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) is being reshaped by a set of converging disruptions—none more immediate than the rapid rollback of foreign assistance programs that have long supported basic service delivery and infrastructure development. Following two decades of major progress on energy access—albeit with serious gaps in reliability, affordability, and last-mile delivery—the road ahead is deeply uncertain, with many countries facing deep debt burdens, escalating costs, and shifting geopolitical alliances. Against this backdrop, the abrupt gutting of foreign aid has triggered a cascading reallocation of domestic resources in many countries—prioritizing short-term emergencies at the expense of longer-term energy system development. This talk will explore what all this means for the future of energy transitions in LMICs. We'll inquire: What do meaningful, resilient, and equitable energy partnerships look like in a post-aid era? And how do we prepare for a future where energy is not only a development goal—but a frontline in the struggle for economic stability and sovereignty?



Jonathan Phillips

Director, James E. Rogers Energy Access Project
Duke University

For accessibility questions, please contact event contact event coordinator, Danica Hendrickson, danicah@uw.edu

Seminar
Thursday, May 15, 2025
4:00 – 5:00 PM
NanoES 181
Open to public

Coffee & Career Chat
9:30 – 10:30 AM
MoIES 215
Open to all UW Graduate Students

About the Speaker

Jonathan Phillips is the Director of the James E. Rogers Energy Access Project at Duke University, with an appointment at the Nicholas Institute for Energy, Environment & Sustainability. His work focuses on policy, regulatory, and economic issues related to rural electrification, grid de-carbonization, off-grid energy systems, and energy for productivity. Phillips was the senior advisor to the president and CEO of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation during the Obama Administration, helping scale-up the agency's climate finance capabilities and lead the implementation of strategic initiatives, including the agency's \$2.1 billion Power Africa portfolio. Before that, Phillips led private sector engagement and programming with Power Africa at USAID, helping ramp-up the \$300 million presidential initiative into one of the largest public-private development partnerships in the world. From 2007-2014, he held a variety of roles in the U.S. Congress, most recently serving as the senior policy advisor to Senator Ed Markey of Massachusetts. He also served on the House Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming as well as the House Natural Resources Committee. He received a bachelor's degree from the Milwaukee School of Engineering and a master's degree in public policy from the Harvard Kennedy School.