

A woman wearing a white blouse and a dark patterned saree is seated at a desk, focused on writing in a notebook with a pen. The room is filled with numerous solar lamps, many of which are lit, creating a warm glow. The lamps are arranged on shelves and tables in the background, suggesting a workshop or a research facility. The overall atmosphere is one of concentration and practical work.

Gender and Energy Research:

Building the evidence base for improving energy interventions' effectiveness

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ENERGIA **NEWS**

Newsletter of the ENERGIA international network on gender and sustainable energy

Building the evidence base for improving energy interventions' effectiveness by taking a gender approach

In this editorial, we start by looking back at some key moments for gender and energy since the previous edition of ENERGIA News in 2015 that influence ENERGIA's work. This was the year in which the Sustainable Energy for All initiative (SE4All) picked up speed, and great steps forward were made in incorporating gender and energy issues in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Both at the international policy level and at the national policy level, the attention to gender in the energy sector is increasing. This means that policymakers are looking for policy recommendations to support and accelerate reaching objectives in the areas of gender, energy and poverty.

The second important event in 2015 for ENERGIA was the start of the research activities for the ENERGIA Gender and Energy Research Programme. The timing of the programme is significant because it will provide some of the empirical evidence that is so highly needed to support the premise that energy access has a different impact on women and on men, and that taking a gender sensitive approach to policy and practice benefits all. This special issue of ENERGIA News has the ENERGIA Gender and Energy Research Programme as its central theme, providing an in depth introduction to the programme's content, its members and stakeholders.

The third significant event in 2015 is a sad one for ENERGIA and the gender and energy research community. At the end of the year, Dr Gisela Prasad, a highly valued member of the gender and energy community and leader of one of ENERGIA's research programme's teams, sadly passed away. This special edition of ENERGIA News is dedicated to her memory. Therefore, we start the newsletter with an article *in memoriam* of Gisela Prasad. Anyone who met Gisela would have recognised an enthusiastic researcher who was capable of motivating the most uncertain young researcher, as well as being a gentle lady with much grace and a winning smile. We will sorely miss her.

The research programme runs from February 2014 to February 2019 with financial support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The objective is to generate and analyse empirical evidence

on the links between gender, energy and poverty, and to translate this evidence into recommendations for energy policy and practice. ENERGIA and DFID expect the results of the research carried out under this programme to contribute to more effective policy and project interventions related to energy access, particularly in support of SE4All, as well as to women's empowerment and gender equality.

The research programme consists of research in five areas that were identified as key areas where empirical evidence is needed¹. These research areas (RA) are:

- **RA1: Exploring factors that enhance and restrict women's empowerment through electrification;**
- **RA2: Productive uses of energy in informal food preparation and processing sectors;**
- **RA3: The political economy of energy sector dynamics;**
- **RA4: Gender and energy sector reform;**
- **RA5: The role of the private sector in scaling up energy access.**

The research areas are related, and the programme has been set up to enhance synergy and exchange learning. Sharing information and networking among the teams about countries or regions of overlapping research interest, as well as about topics such as productive uses, subsidies and indicators for impact assessment, will enhance the quality and effectiveness of the research and its dissemination. The collaboration and cooperation is supported through annual programme meetings, webinars and a reserved fund for joint research projects within each research team's budget, as well as through the support structure including the Principal Investigator, Joy Clancy, the Research Coordinator, Annemarije Kooijman and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAG) that consists of experts in the field of gender and energy.

During 2015, the teams were involved in a scoping phase that included literature reviews, field visits, testing of methods and stakeholder consultations to refine their research questions and develop their approaches for empirical data collection. In this ENERGIA News, the five teams present key findings from this scoping phase



Access to electricity and LPG strengthen women's participation in non-farm enterprises, Kailali, Nepal. (Photo: CRT/N)

and provide messages for stakeholders that, if taken into account, will improve energy access, particularly for women and girls, and thus help achieve SE4All objectives. The teams are now moving into the second phase, which focuses on building up the empirical evidence related to their themes.

A key assumption in the field of gender and energy is that access to electricity benefits women, including contributing to their empowerment. The research team working on the impacts of electrification is investigating this assumption. One key finding is that there is little empirical evidence on how electricity policies and programmes empower women and enhance their position in relation to men. This lack of evidence contributes to energy policies being gender blind, which translates into a lack of gender goals in electrification programmes. While, globally, development agencies and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) advocate the inclusion of gender-sensitive approaches to electrification in their requirements, policy priorities may differ at the national level. The RA1 team reports that stakeholders in the electricity sectors in India and Nepal explain that the lack of gender sensitivity is due to an absence of pressure from the grass-roots level. This is where the research programme will have a significant added value: the RA1 team will look into indicators that can be used to create valid evidence for policymakers and project developers to enhance empowerment through electrification. At the same time, the RA3 team, working from a political economy perspective, will explore the bottom-up approach of empowering women to demand energy access. These complementary approaches will provide policymakers with holistic evidence that can help convince them that taking a gender approach works.

Both the RA1 and the RA3 teams have explored the question as to why energy policies remain gender blind. Policymakers see energy as gender neutral, as benefiting both women and men equally, and thereby fail to see that women and men have different energy needs and assets to enable access to clean energy. This perpetuates, as the RA1 team point out in their

article, a supply-side focus with the implicit belief that an increase in energy supply will lead to economic growth. The RA3 team reveals policy assumptions that increases in rural income, due to economic growth, will inevitably result in increased household purchasing power, which will lead to a switch from biomass to LPG for cooking. However, this completely overlooks intra-household decision-making where, even for cooking energy, it may be men who decide on such a switch. This is an issue in the RA3 focus countries of India and Nepal. Rather, as RA3 shows, it is the empowerment of women, by allowing them to enter paid employment, that can lead to increased incomes and thereby energy access. Research has shown that a key inhibiting factor in the transition to clean energy is the low opportunity cost of women's unvalued labour in collecting and using fuelwood. When women have the opportunity to contribute to the household income, the intra-household dynamics begin to change. Women gain skills and confidence, and this enables them to take control of their own lives. One of the exciting aspects of RA3's research is the ground-breaking application of gender analysis to the political economy of energy. Not only is the team producing much needed insights into how energy policy can be engendered, they are also making a very significant contribution to political economy science.

Energy access impacts on livelihoods, not only through household and social uses, but also, and very importantly, through using energy services to create income. Many women secure an income from working in informal sectors, for example in the informal food sector, where they outnumber men. This is the reason why the RA2 team has chosen to look at the role of energy in productive applications in this sector. The team has already collected empirical data and has identified the existence of energy stacking behaviour in micro- and small enterprises, i.e. that an enterprise uses a range of energy types for different purposes. Women tend to use the energy services they have at home to prepare and store food items, which they subsequently sell elsewhere in the town or city.

In the field of energy sector reform (RA4), a window of opportunity to influence evidence has presented itself. The RA4 report presents the sums of money allocated to fossil fuel subsidies globally, which are huge at an estimated USD 500 billion in 2014. Governments are under pressure to reduce these subsidies and allocate the money to other parts of the economy. This calls for energy sector reform. However, there is very little empirical evidence that can help energy policymakers take decisions that will reduce the negative effects of subsidies while ensuring that SE4All goals are met and that women in low-income households do not unduly bear the burdens of subsidy reform. This makes the research by the RA4 team particularly timely and relevant. The team is looking into the issues of subsidies, their reform and the gendered impacts of this reform on energy access, focussing on cooking and lighting in three countries where reform is high on the political agenda: Bangladesh, India and Nigeria.

One of the challenges ENERGIA has long been addressing is increasing the participation of women in the energy value chain. A significant barrier to women's participation is entrenched in negative cultural attitudes towards women running businesses. In this research programme, both the RA1 and the RA5 teams look at women's roles in the supply chain, the differences in benefits for women and for men of the opportunities offered by developments in renewable decentralised electricity supply, and the barriers to using women's

capacity to support energy supply. When it comes to selling new energy technologies such as solar lights, this can be seen as 'men's business'. The RA5 team is looking at business models that can overcome these attitudes and open up new opportunities for women as entrepreneurs. The team will compare different groups of village-level entrepreneurs in Rwanda: men-only groups, women-only groups and mixed groups. An innovative component of their research is the use of randomised control trials, a method that involves large sample sizes, thereby increasing the validity of the findings. We believe that this is the first time this method has been used in research directed at gender and energy.

This research programme will not only strengthen the evidence base that makes a case for a gendered approach in the energy sector, it will also critically assess the validity of findings from a range of contexts. This will provide important insights into the context specificity of energy access impacts and their influencing factors. Such insights are also relevant for interpreting data external to the research programme, such as the outputs from the large-scale data-collection efforts on energy access that are currently being developed for the Global Tracking Framework (GTF) and the Sustainable Development Goals. The GTF measures the global progress of SE4All towards meeting its objectives and provides an opportunity to collect significant quantities of data on the gendered uses and impacts of electrification.



The MS Swaminathan Research Foundation research team with Dr. Swaminathan and ENERGIA staff. (Photo: ENERGIA)

Members of the ENERGIA Research Programme are collaborating with the GTF in developing gender goals for use at national and programme levels.

ENERGIA has also commissioned a research team, led by Joy Clancy, to bring together lessons learnt from gender approaches by ENERGIA and by other organisations to increase ENERGIA's effectiveness, and to inform policy development and practice on gender mainstreaming approaches.

Since the research programme aims to inform SE4All, we also highlight the relevance of gender from the perspective of this international policy platform. Ms Rachel Kyte, the new CEO of SE4All appointed by the UN Secretary-General in January 2016, is the ideal person to present this perspective. We are very glad to have her in our feature interview. Rachel makes a good case for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions: it increases diversity and there is a body of evidence to show that diverse teams make better decisions. She also underlines the need for evidence-based policymaking to ensure the right decisions are taken for energy access that benefits women and men equally, while taking into account their specific needs and circumstances.

The need for empirical research to influence energy sector policies, investment decision-making and implementation is also emphasised in the article by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). This is the reason for DFID to provide financial support for the research programme. DFID's Alistair Wray provides insights into the context of ENERGIA's research programme which is part of a large programme on Energy Access and Gender that DFID is supporting. He also stresses the relevance of early discussions on research take-up with stakeholders, cross-learning and knowledge sharing, all of which form part of the ENERGIA Research programme.

ENERGIA's activities, including on advocacy and the Women's Economic Empowerment Programme, are highlighted in the final pages of this issue of ENERGIA News. For greater in-depth information about the research programme, we encourage readers to visit the ENERGIA website (www.energia.org) that will provide outputs from the research as it develops.

Notes

¹ J Clancy, T Winther, M Matinga and S Oparaocha (2012) *Gender equity in access to and benefits from modern energy and improved energy technologies; World Development Report 2012 Background Paper.* (ENERGIA/Norad/World Bank)

Editors

Joy Clancy



Prof. Joy Clancy is a founder member of ENERGIA and is currently the Principal Investigator for the Gender and Energy Research Programme. On December 1st she was appointed full professor Gender and Energy at the University of Twente, where she joined as a member of the Technology and Development Group in 1989. Joy's research has focused, for more than 30 years, on small scale energy systems for developing countries, including the technology transfer process and the role that energy plays as an input for small businesses and the potential it offers entrepreneurs, particularly women. Recently she has been working on social inclusion and exclusion in biofuel value chains and the impacts on poverty. Joy is also a co-convenor of the Gender and Development Working Group of the European Association of Development and Training Institutes (EADI) and member of the Governance and Technology for Sustainable Development research group (CSTM).

Annemarije Kooijman-van Dijk



Dr. Annemarije Kooijman-van Dijk joined the ENERGIA International Secretariat in the summer of 2014 as Programme Coordinator for the Gender and Energy Research Programme. As Programme Coordinator, Annemarije ensures that feedback and assessment take place to strengthen the research programme, and together with the PI, it is her role to support the synthesis and promotion of the overall findings of the research. Before joining ENERGIA, Annemarije worked at the University of Twente for over 10 years, and at the Energy Research Centre of Netherlands (ECN) for 5 years. Annemarije has a Master's degree in Mechanical Engineering, and a PhD in Energy and Development, on which she has published a book: "The Power to Produce: the role of energy in poverty reduction through small scale enterprise in the Indian Himalayas". Her research work has been on energy and productive uses, renewable energy policy and diffusion of technology in small enterprises.