Gender and Energy Research:
Building the evidence base for improving energy interventions’ effectiveness
ENERGIA’s gender approaches: Learning from experience

Joy Clancy and Nthabi Mohlakoana

For more than twenty years, the ENERGIA network has been building a substantial body of experience with gender mainstreaming in the energy sector. The approach ENERGIA uses is summarised in Box 1. ENERGIA’s International Secretariat considers this to be an appropriate moment to document this work in a systematic way that can then be used to inform the future work of ENERGIA, its network members and partners and, most importantly, other energy sector players. To achieve this, ENERGIA commissioned research by a small team with the objective of bringing together lessons learnt from gender approaches adopted by ENERGIA and other organisations. The ultimate goals are to increase ENERGIA’s effectiveness, to enhance ENERGIA’s role in setting the stage for other organisations and to inform policy development and practice about successful gender mainstreaming approaches. The research will also provide input to the research teams in the Gender and Energy Research Programme funded by the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID).

The two main gender approaches that the research team focused on are gender mainstreaming (GM) and gender auditing of energy policies and projects. These approaches have been widely used by ENERGIA in a range of projects and programmes in its networks in a number of countries in Asia and Africa. In this research, only activities between 2005 and 2011 were reviewed, covering Phases 3 and 4 of ENERGIA’s programme of activities. The year 2005 was significant for ENERGIA in that it marked the beginning of the TIE ENERGIA project1 that had the goal of ensuring that gender is integrated into energy access by strengthening the human and institutional capacity in 12 African countries. ENERGIA’s methodology for gender audits was developed as part of this project. Given that this is an approach that ENERGIA has been closely identified with, and that has been implemented in a significant number of countries, it is analysed separately. The year 2011 marked the end of ENERGIA’s Phase 4 programme that had concentrated on mainstreaming gender in energy projects.

We focused on gathering data in three countries (Kenya, Nepal and Senegal) through in-depth interviewing methods and supplemented this with data from Philippines, Sri Lanka, Botswana and Tanzania collected through a written survey. Interviews were held with individuals and organisations that have partnered ENERGIA and/or ENERGIA’s National Focal Points in

**BOX 1: Definition of ENERGIA’s gender approach**

ENERGIA sees its approach to mainstreaming gender in energy projects as a process of helping energy projects and their stakeholders:

- To identify gender issues in an energy project through the use of practical tools
- To agree on gender goals that the project wants to achieve
- To develop a strategy and action plan for how these gender goals can be met
- To successfully implement gender-focussed activities in their projects
- To institutionalise gender mainstreaming capacity within the project and its partners
- To track the performance of the project in terms of its implementation, impacts and institutionalisation of gender issues (Cecelski and Dutta, 2011).

This definition was further elaborated in the Call for Expression of Interest for the DFID/ENERGIA Research Programme as an approach that not only analyses the differential impacts of proposed energy interventions on women and on men but also gives:

- full recognition to women’s and men’s different needs for energy based on consultations that consciously seek advice from both women and men;
- recognition of the potential of women and men to participate in energy supply; and
- recognition of the need to tackle institutional barriers that limit women’s participation in energy planning and production, and in their access to energy for a variety of end-uses.

We view the basis of a gender approach to be the use of gender analysis and asking questions in relation to women and men, hence avoiding neutral terms such as ‘household’, ‘people’ and ‘communities’. A gender approach involves taking action to change policies, institutions and projects so that they actively promote gender equality.
these countries during the relevant period. Additional interviews have been held with a range of ENERGIA’s project partners as well as with staff from World Bank’s Africa Renewable Energy and Access programme (AFREA) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

Gender tools and methods
Over the years, ENERGIA has used a number of tools and methods in working with partners in the various countries. During our data collection process, we distinguished the following: (i) Gender Action Plans (GAPs), (ii) Capacity building, (iii) Advocacy and (iv) Gender audits. Based on the information we have collected and analysed for this study, we discuss each approach below through the experiences of some of ENERGIA’s National Focal Points and their partners.

One of the tools that ENERGIA uses to mainstream gender in projects is the Gender Action Plan (GAP). A GAP is a document that articulates what a project wants to achieve, from a gender standpoint, what activities it will undertake towards this, and how it will monitor its progress. Nearly all of the projects we have reviewed included a GAP as one of their outputs. While we are currently gathering more detailed data, the general reaction has been positive. A GAP is considered to help in achieving objectives. Sustainable Community Development Services (SCODE), an organisation concerned with renewable and sustainable energy solutions for low-income households in Kenya, is an example of one of the organisations that, once they have used a GAP in an ENERGIA project, have gone on to mainstream the tool as standard practice within their organisation and apply it in other projects.

Capacity building has been one of the core activities. Several respondents who have been involved in training courses, or in projects that have used ENERGIA’s GM approaches, have cited examples of projects in which they have continued to use these approaches. Respondents now have a better understanding of the concept of gender. There are examples where organisations have built their gender competence by partnering with ENERGIA, and this has allowed them to win contracts they consider they would not have won without this capacity building.

One of the well-received outputs of ENERGIA’s capacity building efforts is the document “Mainstreaming Gender in Energy Projects: A Practical Handbook”. The handbook was developed in collaboration with 20 medium- to large-scale energy access projects in Africa and Asia, a number of whose partners have become ENERGIA focal points or have become project partners. Typical responses from respondents who have used the handbook are: “it helped me organise my thinking and didn’t take time to put in place” and “it is practical and very clear on how to mainstream gender in projects”.

A number of respondents cited Advocacy as one of ENERGIA’s strengths. ENERGIA is seen as able to make issues visible and then bring them to the international table. One respondent summarised ENERGIA’s approach at the country level as “giving ownership to processes, and working in a transparent, participatory and consensus-building manner that inspires people to take up gender issues”.

Gender audits
The mainstreaming approach of gender audits was developed by ENERGIA during Phase 3 when the network was interested in developing tools and approaches for mainstreaming gender in energy policy. This approach was developed as an alternative...
to gender budgets, which were being used by feminist economists to provide a mechanism for assessing the impact of government revenue and expenditure on women, men, girls and boys. While this was a powerful tool, the skills and knowledge required to understand government budgets are beyond many citizens and therefore the tool is not very inclusive. This lack of inclusivity and the failure to reach the grassroots was at odds with ENERGIA’s general mainstreaming approach, and hence the use of gender audits with participatory methods for data collection and gender analysis by key stakeholders in the energy sector, including ministries and utilities. Initially there were audits in Botswana, Kenya and Senegal. In Phase 4, further audits were conducted in other African countries (Ghana, Zambia, Lesotho and Nigeria) as well as in Asian countries (India, Philippines and Pakistan). A handbook on how to conduct an audit has been developed (http://bit.ly/25b3BMn).

We have been able to identify a number of changes in energy policies as a consequence of the audits. For example, in Kenya, the 2004 energy policy had very few sentences on gender mainstreaming, whereas the revised policy in 2011 incorporated gender issues. Uganda now has references to women in its energy policy, albeit only in the component related to renewables. Similarly in Senegal, the Renewable Energy Policy includes women as a target group which is linked to a member of the audit team becoming the minister responsible for renewable energy. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics is now expected to collect sex-disaggregated data for the energy sector linked to sustainable energy. In Botswana, the Ministry of Energy has carried out a survey on demand-side management in which questions were asked on energy use in households by gender.

We have conducted a stakeholder analysis in which ENERGIA’s National Focal Points in three focus countries (Kenya, Nepal and Senegal) have been analysed to identify the types of stakeholders they associate with, and how influential these stakeholders are in mainstreaming gender in energy policy processes and outcomes. This will enable us to identify which gender approaches work best with which stakeholder, as well as whether there are gaps in engaging with stakeholders that demand new strategies.

Preliminary conclusion
Although we have still to complete the analysis, we can say that ENERGIA’s gender approaches are successful in the sense that they are adopted by ENERGIA’s partner organisations once they have used the tools and seen the benefits they bring in helping projects meet their objectives. These approaches have evolved over time as interest in and experience with gender in the energy sector have grown. This mirrors one of the aims of this piece of work: to identify the need for new directions and new methods.

Acknowledgement
We would like to thank Yacine Diagne Guess, Lydia Muchiri and Indira Shakya for their contributions in designing the research, data gathering, observations and feedback on the analysis.