

## 2. PLANNING APPROACHES TO GENDER IN ENERGY

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### 2.1. The Fundamental Purpose of a Gender Approach in Energy Planning

In the previous lecture we have seen that the understanding about how women should be involved in development has itself evolved over time. The current preference is to think not in terms of special or separate programmes for women, but in terms of *gender*. There are still a number of different positions however that can be taken regarding the reason for and purpose of a gender approach in energy planning.

#### **Gender for Efficiency**

Many energy planners are increasingly aware that their projects have been less than satisfactory, and have interpreted this in terms of failing to understand the needs of the people concerned. For a number of years it has generally been accepted that *participation* is a fundamental requirement for project success, because it is understood that a proper understanding of people's needs and priorities can only be gained through a participatory process. Similar to this is the notion that each gender has its own requirements and its own constraints which need to be taken into consideration. A gender approach ensures that these needs and constraints are at least understood by the planners, which should enable them to design better project and programme interventions.

The film "Gender Analysis for Community Forestry", produced by the FAO Forests, Trees and People programme is a good example of this approach to planning with gender. In the film the different roles and requirements of men and women are explained, and we see how the project is modified to suit these requirements.

This approach to gender makes no attempt to change the basic roles which men and women play. It accepts the status quo and maximises project efficiency by ensuring that the project is sensitive to these roles.

#### **Gender for Equity**

At the other end of the scale there are energy planners who see the gender approach primarily as one which highlights inequalities in society, and which stresses the fact that in almost all societies women are subordinate to men in most respects. The purpose of applying gender analysis is, in this view, not to increase the success of projects by fitting them more closely to people's current needs, but to change the status quo: to meet not just the practical needs of women but to help them meet their strategic needs and to give them more power relative to men. The gender analysis is used to identify the most serious blockages to women's control over resources, to document the conditions under which women work relative to men, and to propose changes which benefit women.

## **Intermediate Positions**

Most energy planners find themselves between these two extreme positions. Most energy planners, particularly in the area of wood energy, are more than aware of the enormous burden carried by women, literally and figuratively, as regards the daily supply of household fuel. Increasingly planners are also becoming aware of the fact that solving woodfuel supply problems is difficult for women because of their lack of rights to land: it is often much more difficult for women to plant trees than for men to do so. Most planners are also aware of the inequalities as regards labour inputs in agriculture (women provide the bulk of agricultural labour worldwide) and the 'triple role' of women, which means that on top of agricultural work they have all their housework to do too. In other words, it is almost impossible to deny the fact that women have a relatively hard time compared to men in rural life—and from there it is a relatively short step to taking the position that this is unfair and something should be done to improve their situation vis-a-vis that of men.

Changing the relative status and rights of women however means interfering in social practices which are considered to be culturally determined, which raises the fear that many positive cultural values will be lost as well. Some societies are much more willing to make fundamental changes as regards women's position than others and the energy planner, whatever his/her own personal views on the subject, will have to be very sensitive to the realities and the potential for change. In some cases it is a big step even to accept that women have practical needs which are different from men's, and need to be consulted concerning what these needs are. In other cases this is well understood already and the energy planner may be in a position to initiate deeper changes, for example by increasing women's control over certain natural resources.

The point is that awareness of gender, and use of gender based planning procedures, can help the planner whether the aim is efficiency or whether the aim is equity; and in most cases, the aim is in fact somewhere in between.

## **2.2. How the Gender Approach Fits into the Overall Planning Approach**

Another point of discussion in gender and energy planning is whether the inclusion of gender issues is a relatively simple matter or whether it requires a complete overhaul of the planning procedures and a rethinking of planning theory. There are proponents of both positions.

### **The 'Add-Gender-And-Stir'<sup>1</sup> Position**

Many planners feel that gender is a socio-economic variable just like many others (class, income group, ethnicity etc) and that if proper data on gender is made available, gender can simply take its place alongside these other variables. This position is one taken by many planners who feel that the basic model of planning they use should not be changed, whether it is based on a rational comprehensive type of planning ideology or on socialist principles or on participatory procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> Anyone who is familiar with supermarket convenience foods and their preparation will be familiar with this phrase! It refers, for example, to packets of ready made cake mix: all you have to do is add an egg and stir and the cake is ready. The parallel in this case is that 'gender' is just one of the many ingredients in the energy planning cake mix and that it can be simply added without making any further adjustments.

## **The 'New Paradigm For Gender Planning' Position**

In contrast to this a growing number of planners feel that the old models of planning are so firmly based in the idea of the household as the basic unit in society and the man as the primary decision maker, that totally new models will have to be developed if gender is to receive the attention it deserves. Such views are held both by planning theorists of the far left, who have tried and apparently failed to integrate a feminist angle into marxist theory, and by planning theorists of the right who support the principles of market economics and capitalism as the engine for development. Indeed theorists of all political persuasions are engaged currently in developing new planning models in which it is hoped that gender will be the central issue. One example is represented by the ecofeminists who are working from a quite different set of assumptions about what development *is*; starting from a new theoretical base they will presumably eventually develop planning procedures which reflect this. Other writers, for example Moser (1993), stress the need for a 'new paradigm' but so far outputs have been more procedural than theoretical. One of the difficulties with approaches such as that proposed by Moser is that while gender is central to the planning procedures adopted, many other important issues environment, class, technical options etc. are completely left out of consideration.

### **Intermediate Positions**

It is of course very possible to take an intermediate position between these two extremes, and in the short term at least it is likely that most planning agencies in the energy field (as in other areas) will be more concerned with how to modify their planning methods to incorporate gender than with designing totally new methods. The matter of immediate and practical concerns are: what types of planning procedures should be introduced, and at what points in the planning cycle?

## **2.3. Alternative Ways of Embedding the Gender Approach in Planning**

Even if (as is usually the case) the choice is made to modify existing planning procedures to incorporate gender rather than scrapping the whole system and starting again, there is still some choice available as to where and when the gender procedures will be inserted.

### **Using Gender Analysis As A Filter**

A parallel might be made with environmental concerns. In many agencies Environmental Impact Statements are compulsory for all project proposals and these are made following a standard procedure and with specified types of data. Once the EIA is made, it is reviewed and should the impacts on environment be found very severe, the project must be modified, or may even be rejected totally. The format of the EIA is fixed, but generally the decision to modify or drop the project is made by a committee or in consultation with staff and people concerned. It is possible to envisage the gender component of planning in a similar way; to see gender analysis as a 'sieve' or filter through which all project proposals should go before approval. Thus projects are not deliberately designed with gender as a primary concern, but some degree of equity is assured because all projects have to pass a 'gender test', so to speak.

Not surprisingly perhaps, use of gender analysis in this way is most often found in conjunction with the 'add gender and stir' approach.

## **Building Gender Into The Project Cycle**

Another approach which has been taken by some agencies (for example, it is proposed by SADC TAU, the energy agency for the southern African countries, as a model for all national energy planning agencies) is to work through the project cycle ensuring that gender issues are considered at every stage. This is akin to the 'wearing of gender specs': it involves consciously seeing the gender aspects of the development process as it is going on, and the gender impacts of potential interventions. This is a more thorough going approach to incorporating gender issues, and it means that a variety of different planning tools or analytic frameworks will be needed for use at different stages and at different levels of data aggregation. The result will be that gender considerations may be creatively taken into account from the very beginning of the process (problem identification and project formulation) and not merely used to filter out 'poor' projects. It presupposes of course that the agency concerned already uses the project cycle method and sticks to this rigorously, which is by no means always the case even when agencies claim to use the project cycle as their basic planning procedure.

## **Building Gender Into Other Planning Procedures**

Some agencies base their planning procedures on other models such as the Logical Framework or ZOPP, or possibly around computer based energy models which predict supply and demand etc. In principle there is no reason why gender issues should not be incorporated into such models, whether they are used at the beginning of the planning process to identify potential interventions or at the end to evaluate them. The important thing is to set up a procedure involving the use of gender analytic and planning tools such that they fit into whatever planning model is already in use. In this way the gender issue is 'mainstreamed', and not kept apart as a separate (possibly omittable) procedure.

Reading material attached: SADC Guidelines for Gender in the Energy Project Cycle.

## **Reference for Further Reading**

Moser, C.O.N. (1993) Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training. London: Routledge, especially chapter 5 'A new planning tradition and methodology'.

## Annex 1: Exercise on Planning Models

### Notes

This exercise can be done in small groups of mixed national origin. There is unlikely to be much variation between countries as regards the basic project planning procedure used but try to group people so that within any group the members use the same type of model.

For part 2 there may be more variety but this is all to the good, since it will allow discussion of differences within the groups. It is probable that most participants will find the idea of disaggregating energy supply and demand by gender strange, difficult, and probably also not cost effective (most models work on basis of households as consumption units). One of the reasons to disaggregate in this way would be to highlight the role women play with regard to energy (both supply and demand side). Discussion on this point might usefully be coupled and compared to discussions regarding the incorporation of women's household work into National Accounts, a move which is now being promoted by various international agencies and adopted in some countries in the region (in principle).

1. What model does your agency use as the basic procedure for planning wood energy projects?

- ! List the stages through which work on project planning passes
- ! At which stages would it be feasible to introduce analytic procedures which identify gender concerns.

2. What model does your agency use for national or regional level energy prediction and forecasting?

- ! Does this disaggregate estimates by any subgroups in the population (urban/rural; income groups; ethnic groups etc)?
- ! What is the potential to disaggregate the model also by gender?
- ! What would be the value of such disaggregation by gender?