



# Gender in Access to Clean Energy

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# Poverty and energy

- Poverty is the focus of development
- What are the energy dimensions of poverty?
  - Poor households use more biomass in low efficiency equipment
  - Collection is often by human physical effort
  - Health implications (eye & lung disease; spine damage; hygiene)
  - Little access to modern clean energy forms

Poverty and energy has a gender dimension

# Why gender matters in energy

- 2 billion people lack access to modern energy, rely on traditional fuels main for cooking and heating
- Women represent up to 70% of the rural poor many as head of household,
  - ...earn 10% of the world's income
  - ...own only 1% of the world's property
  - ...account for 2/3 of the total number of illiterate people.

# Why gender matters in energy

- Women & men have different energy roles
- Women bear the main burden of biomass collection
- Women's invisible human energy crisis needs modern clean energy

# Why gender matters in energy

- Women are general disadvantaged compared to men from same group:
  - Women have less access to credit etc.
  - Women & men have different knowledge
  - Women & men experience energy poverty differently

# Why is role of women neglected in energy programmes?

Research and experiences show three important factors:

*No data – no visibility; no visibility – no interest*

*No ownership – Ministry for Women? Energy? Finance (PRSPs)?*

*Lack of understanding on how to incorporate gender/women into energy policy/programmes/projects*

# Supply side perspective of household energy

- 1.4 billion people don't have access to electricity; 2.7 billion people rely on biomass as primary activity
- Most emphasis is on electricity – grid & decentralised systems – doesn't address cooking
- Solar cookers – niche technology rapidly abandoned once project implementers leave
- Women like biogas & LPG – although some are afraid of explosions



# Demand side perspective of household energy

- We talk about **energy services**:  
*The desired and useful products, processes or services that result from the use of energy*
- More than cooking!
- Many households live in **energy poverty**: *Absence of sufficient choice in accessing adequate, affordable, reliable, clean, high-quality, safe and benign energy services to support economic and human development*

# Cooking

- Biomass continues to dominate – also used by wealthy households (someone else does the cooking!) – even in urban households
- Indoor air pollution consequences well recognised but other aspects of biomass collection less well documented
- Women are often not involved in stove design – overwhelming surprise when ‘improved’ stoves are not taken up
- Reasons are complex – technical, social, financial

# Lighting

- Electric light transforms lives – but not always as promoted
- Safer – fumes & fires
- Not always for productive uses (extending the working day) – farmers still work by the sun
- Women like time management aspects
- No empirical evidence that women study/read in the evenings – or go out if there is street lighting

# Modern communications

- TV, Radio, Mobile Phones, Internet – transform lives
- Cultural/political – sense of identity; realisation ‘it doesn’t have to be like this’
- Financial – income generation (new sources & new markets); banking
- Knowledge
- Entertainment

# Household as centre of income generation

- Many SMEs are based in the household – particularly for women simultaneously with household tasks – important contribution to HH income even in rural households
- Little known about the contribution of energy – methodologically difficult to measure (eg disaggregating from domestic uses)

# Household as centre of income generation

- Process heat & transport are major energy services required
- Biomass will be bought
- Electricity can extend working day – not used to increase production but to make working conditions more comfortable – not best option for process heat

# Energy for micro-enterprises

- Many of women's informal sector activities are energy-intensive: food processing, fish smoking, baking, beer-brewing, restaurants, pottery, salt extraction...
- Severely affected by rising energy costs & fuel shortages (20-25% of food processing costs).
- Labour- and effort-intensive, tiring, unhealthy & dangerous.

# Energy for women's enterprises

- Many in informal sector
- Missed by agencies
- Could benefit from energy efficiency
- Energy costs of SMEs are estimated at between 5 and 10% of the total input costs
- Women's major barriers to EE programmes:
  - Access to finance
  - Access to information



# Energy for micro-enterprises

- Women's enterprises provide critical source of income to families, even when part-time & seasonal.
- SE4ALL – it's a rights issue; it's an equity issue; it's an efficiency issue

# Increasing access: women can also be energy entrepreneurs

- Women can do maintenance and repair
- Women can be in project management
- If issue of physical strength is raised – think about the daily loads of fuelwood and water women carry!

# Women can be part of the energy value chain

- Women are users of household equipment so may be more sensitive to customers' requirements
- More acceptable as demonstrators to women of cooking with new fuels
- Women can more effectively market to women (particularly where there are cultural constraints related to contact with men who are not family members)

# Successful women energy entrepreneurs need not only technology but:

- CREDIT (women receive only 10% of credit given by formal institutions)
- Access to raw materials (incl. land ownership & control over cash crops)
- Management & organization
- Training
- Marketing

# Closing thoughts on promoting energy access (SE4All)

- Have to understand household motivation: **priorities** (eg urban solar water heaters in South Africa)  
**assets** (value of women's time & status)  
**cash flow** (small quantities – daily basis)
- Price is not always determining factor in up-take
- Who makes the decisions about buying energy services? Primarily men – even about stoves