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 mainly 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 generally disadvantaged compared to men from the 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 (e.g., 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** (e.g., 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