



Gender and Basic Energy Services

Energy for gender issues

One of the roots of poverty is the lack of access to appropriate energy sources. The amount and type of energy consumed per capita, the quality of energy services provided at certain stages of development, and the distribution of those energy services, have all become indicators of development progress. While the richer urban areas have easier access to 'modern' forms of energy (kerosene, LPG, electricity), rural areas and the urban poor still depend largely on biomass. The importance of a decentralised, secure and clean energy supply for economic and social development is often overlooked by policy-makers. Alongside solar energy, biogas and micro hydropower, sustainably produced and efficiently combusted wood is a modern and renewable source of energy with great potential.

Men and women traditionally play different roles, which are determined by specific local (socio-cultural) and global (sustainable environmental) conditions. Gender is discussed as a social factor in the relationships and roles of women and men, rather than in the biological context. Men and women are affected differently by poverty and they have different strategies to overcome it, on the political agenda as well as on household level. Unless there is a clear recognition about these gender-assigned roles, it is difficult to understand how a particular society is functioning and to plan interventions accordingly.

GTZ would like to see women and men contributing on an equal basis to the development process and having equal access to the services provided by development projects.

Challenge

Men and women have unequal access to education, unequal income, and unequal control over resources. Discrimination against women, particularly in the education sector and in the labour market, costs billions of dollars each year in the form of unrealized economic growth. Women are usually under-represented in political decision-making. However, many political decisions have different impacts on men and women.

Different roles in society lead to social division of labor and education between men and women. Women have less access to land, loans and little influence in making their own decisions concerning their private and public life. Thus, they have fewer possibilities to act on decisions, which would cause an energy service and a use adjusted to their requirements.

When it comes to decisions about the type and scope of energy sources used, taking into account energy efficiency considerations and the renewable nature of the energy resources, the influence exerted by women and men varies enormously. Men are often responsible for financing and in some cases for providing domestic energy. Women, by contrast, are mainly responsible for using that energy. Especially cooking is predominantly a woman's responsibility, which means women and their children are the ones facing the consequent discomforts: the heavy and time-consuming workload and health risks. They have less time for education, for income generation and for expression of their interests.

Traditionally women are also excluded from the political planning processes of the energy sector. They are especially not included in the decision process related to financing, technical implementation and sustention. For energy projects it is important to know who uses the energy and in what form, and who reaps the benefits or disadvantages of the various possibilities with respect to energy supply.



GTZ's services

Women need training, capacity building and empowerment. The systematic implementation of gender equality at legal and institutional level allows GTZ to help overcome structural inequality with respect to access to energy resources and services. GTZ has tested and evaluated gender approaches and methods in a wide variety of development interventions. GTZ offers know-how and competence in developing, preparing, and disseminating successful concepts, strategies, and advisory approaches for gender mainstreaming and empowering women. GTZ helps to integrate a gender approach into the implementation of development measures and in country strategies.

The consultancy programme HERA (Poverty-Oriented Basic Energy Services) develops strategies for providing poor population groups in partner countries with a secure and sustainable basic energy supply. This includes strategies for disseminating various technologies (energy-saving stoves, solar systems) and strategies for sustainable market development or for implementing relevant projects. We campaign for the issue of access to basic energy services to be given greater prominence both internationally and in our partner countries.

Gender related impacts of energy interventions

Capacity development is a key strategy of basic energy projects. In practice men as well as women are capacitated in terms of environmental awareness, business management, improved livelihood, health and working conditions.

Production and commercialization of improved technologies can generate jobs and small businesses for both men and women. Training in management and in producing and maintaining decentralised systems provide business opportunities.

Especially for women and girls, using efficient technologies leads to reduced time for collecting fuels and saved money. It allows them to be part of the productive sector and social and cultural life, to participate in opportunities of the formal and informal education system and create independence through generating income of productive work.

This increases women's status and security, reduces their vulnerability and empowers them. Women's roles and responsibilities within the community and the family changes: by becoming entrepreneurs and generating income, women gain more self-confidence and improve their status, which encourages the participation and representation in the energy sector, a field traditionally dominated by men.

Men's role also changes: where innovative, sophisticated and clean-burning technologies are involved, men are more interested in spending time in a clean and smoke-free kitchen, and may even get involved in cooking.

Gender audits: Mainstreaming Gender in Senegal

The first gender audit of energy policies in Senegal revealed in 2008 that the energy policies and programmes lacked the recognition that men and women have different energy needs and interests, and thus also benefit differently from access to energy.

One positive outcome of the audit is that gender and energy has become a familiar notion for all actors at different levels. The energy ministry discussed future recommendations and agreed on actions to engender the energy policy and on installing a gender focal point in the ministry.

Gender sensitisation manifests itself within energy meetings of rural electrification programmes: At the national training of trainers on gender and energy, a project manager recognised that his project serving as an example did not address women's energy needs, and he redesigned the project to specifically target women.

A very concrete outcome of the gender audit is the gender mainstreaming of the energy programme PERACOD implemented jointly with GTZ to disseminate 80,000 improved cookstoves and to electrify 50 villages until 2011.

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