



Gender in Practice Community of Practice (GiP CoP) Online Discussion

Light Up and Power Africa For Women and Men

Concept Note

"Energy," said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. With access to energy, people can study, go to university, get a job, start a business - and reach their full potential." 1.2 billion people around the world still have little or no access to energy. And more than 2.8 billion do not have access to clean cooking. Energy poverty limits economic development, stifles people's life chances and traps millions of people into extreme poverty.(1)

In contrast, sustainable energy provides new opportunities for growth. It enables businesses to grow, generates jobs, and creates new markets. Children can study after dark. Clinics can store life-saving vaccines. Countries can grow more resilient, with competitive economies. With sustainable energy, countries can build the clean energy economies of the future. Transforming the world's energy systems will also lead to new multi-trillion-dollar investment opportunities.

The Sustainable energy for all (SE4All) initiative argues that universal energy access, increasing the use of renewable energy, improved energy efficiency and addressing the nexus between energy and health, women, food, water and other development issues are at the heart of all countries' core interest, which must be deeply integrated in the development agenda.

Further, the seventh United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (**UN SDG 7**) seeks to "Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all". Improving Africa's energy access is therefore pivotal to achieving this global goal.

Effective development of the continent's energy resources and the energy sector as a whole makes economic sense; every dollar of additional power sector investment in Africa would boost GDP by around USD 15 per capita, according to **IEA projections**.(2)

Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank notes that "we must do all possible to support women who suffer the most from reliance on using solid biomass to cook, with children on their backs, working so hard to feed their households." As evidenced by past investments as well as the Strategic Priority "Light up and Power Africa" and the '**New Deal on Energy for Africa**' which sets the target of universal energy access in Africa by 2025; the AfDB recognizes the importance of modern energy systems to the prosperity and growth of the continent. The AfDB in partnership with other stakeholders including the African Union also launched the **African Renewable Energy Initiative (AREI)**, whose aim is to deliver 300, 000 MW of renewable energy to Africa by 2030.

Gender Inequality in the Energy Sector

Africa has ample energy resources (including fossil fuels and renewables), enough to meet its energy needs, yet the continent struggles to ensure that this bounty reaches its people. The continent boasts huge solar, hydro, wind and geothermal potential. Less than **2%** of Sub-Saharan Africa's energy mix is from modern renewables (excluding traditionally used solid biomass). Over two thirds of Africans **lack access to modern energy**. In sub-Saharan Africa just 290 million out of 915 million people have electricity access; and nearly 730 million Africans rely on the traditional use of solid biomass for cooking.



Women and girls (especially in rural and periurban areas) are mainly responsible for procuring and using cooking fuels.

They therefore tend to carry the burden of “energy poverty” with the resulting negative effects such as devoting less time to income-earning or educational activities. In conflict zones, the search for cooking fuels exposes them to violence.

Further, women generally have less access to finance and energy-related services than men. Studies from Africa, for example, show that women-headed businesses generally face more impediments than men in accessing grid electricity. **Studies done in Kenya, Ghana, Zambia, Ethiopia, and Tanzania** suggest that women entrepreneurs also face greater discrimination than men in the form of delays in obtaining electrical connections and the expectation that they will pay bribes for these services. (4)

A majority of Africans rely on traditional biomass for cooking; this has an impact on their day to day lives. A recent **study** found that women spend 3-5 times as much time as men on domestic activities. The same pattern applies to energy collection. These factors have adverse effects on women and girls.

- First, time poverty hinders them from engaging in education or other productive ventures. Statistics show that women and girls spend a total of **40 billion** hours a year collecting water, equivalent to the time spent at work each year by France’s entire workforce.
- Second, there are significant adverse health effects. About **600,000 deaths** of mainly women and children in Africa annually can be attributed to household air pollution resulting from traditional use of solid fuels such as wood and charcoal.
- Finally, their safety is compromised as poor lighting restricts women and girls’ access to public spaces, and fuel wood and water collection makes them susceptible to attacks. (2)

Development finance institution’s (DFIs) traditionally concentrated on large-scale, capital intensive technology projects designed to provide energy for growth in the formal sectors of the economy. Examples include cash crops and mechanized production, primarily the domain of men. Household activities that require energy, such as food processing, water procurement, transportation of water and fuel, largely the domain of women, are generally not considered when donors and governments plan their interventions in the energy sector. In the past, such gender-blind policies by DFIs unwittingly contributed to widening gender disparities.

Kofi Annan points that “there is no development strategy more beneficial to society as a whole - women and men alike - than the one which involves women as central players.” (3) It is therefore essential to tackle gender inequality in the energy sector. The AfDB is increasingly aiming to address gender issues in all its interventions. The Office of the Special Envoy on Gender in partnership with relevant departments is working to incorporate gender into the Bank’s energy projects. The Bank and its partners have set an ambitious target in achieving universal energy access on the continent by 2025, the success of which is dependent on recognizing the gender-defined roles of *energy production, distribution and utilization* on the continent. Success is also dependent on the *demand side approach* whereby needs of both women and men are taken into account when designing and implementing interventions. This will ensure that the energy access target will be truly universal; and maximize synergies for the achievement of all High 5s.

Objectives of the Discussion

General Objective

The main objective of this discussion is to increase the knowledge and practice-base on effective initiatives to support gender equality in the energy sector; recognizing the gender-



defined roles of energy production, distribution and utilization on the continent.

Specific Objectives

- Promote greater understanding of the relevance and importance of a gender lens in the energy sector as a whole;
- Take stock of effective programmes and partners' support to strengthening of gender sensitive interventions in the energy sector;
- Share lessons learned, successful approaches, challenges and results on how needs of women and men have been effectively addressed in the sector on the African continent and around the world;
- Disseminate examples of projects and initiatives that are successfully addressing these challenges in energy access, production, distribution and utilization;

Methodology

The online discussion will run in 3 phases, with each phase covering different dimensions of the discussion:

Phase 1 of the online discussion (2 weeks): Access to Energy

Success in the implementation of the Bank's energy strategy is dependent on the demand side approach whereby needs of both women and men are taken into account when designing and implementing interventions. This will ensure that the energy access target will be truly universal.

- What does energy poverty mean for women and girls in Africa?
- How can these realities be integrated into the Bank's interventions and projects to improve energy security within the Light Up and Power Africa initiative?
- What can Development Finance Institutions do to ensure Light and Power to support the prosperity of African women and girls?
- How have other organizations tackled this challenge? What can we learn from these experiences?

Phase 2 of the online discussion (2weeks): Energy Production and Distribution

It is crucial to improve not just access to energy but also distribution, extending the benefits of electricity to the remotest communities. There are different gender-defined roles in energy production, distribution and utilization in households, communities, and the market at large. Well-designed energy interventions have the potential to benefit women as suppliers, not just as consumers of energy.

- What are the challenges to women's engagement in the production and distribution of energy?
- How can the Bank address such challenges, with specific reference to empowering women in those sectors? How have AfDB's programmes and projects supported women's engagement in production and distribution of energy?
- What have other organizations including DFIs done to address these challenges? How can we increase the evidence base on the impact of women's successful engagement in these sub-sectors?

Phase 3 of the online discussion (2 weeks): Energy Utilization

"Energy," said UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, "is the golden thread that connects economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. With access to energy, people can study, go to university, get a job, start a business - and reach their full potential." Energy is also crucial for achieving the AfDB's development priorities which aim for prosperity for the continent as a whole (Women and Men). It is therefore important to examine sustainable energy utilization for Africa's future.

- What does sustainable energy utilization mean for women? What has been done to promote sustainability in women's use of energy?
- How does the Bank support sustainable energy utilization for women? How have other DFIs and MDBs tackled this challenge?



- What experiences and lessons could be used to buttress the effectiveness of the Bank's interventions in this area?

Outputs of the online discussion:

The online discussion will feed directly into the implementation of the Bank's energy sector strategy and other initiatives to Light Up and Power Africa. It will enable gathering of experiences and good practices which in turn

will support the development and implementation of projects and programs that take into account gender specific challenges in the energy sector. It will also consolidate a mapping of the Bank's programmes and projects that have attempted (successfully or not) to integrate these realities and address them. A consolidated summary of the discussions with key messages will also be prepared.

How to participate in the online discussion:

You can post your views on the questions asked during each phase of the online discussion in several ways:

- For GiP CoP Members, you can join and contribute from the discussion page on the GiP CoP Virtual platform.
- For AfDB staff and affiliates, you can join and contribute from the discussion page. You will need to login with your organization email address in order to contribute.
- For all others, you can join and contribute to the discussion by logging in the discussion page (with Google, Yahoo, Facebook accounts) or by sending an email with your contribution to: *GiP CoP discussion forum*

All contributions and responses will be disseminated via alerts to the participants and made available online.

We look forward to your participation in the online discussion!

Please send an email to Sylvie Babadjide at(s.babadjide@afdb.org) if you are unable to join or contribute to the discussion.

References

- 1) Sustainable Energy For All: <http://www.se4all.org/decade>
- 2) Sohna Aminatta Ngum (2016), [Empowering women and girls in the quest for universal energy access for all](#)
- 3) Kofi Anan (2001): [Global Futures](#)
- 4) Peter Alstone, Carmen Niethammer, Brendon Mendonça, and Adriana Eftimie (2011), [Expanding Women's Role in Africa's Modern Off-Grid Lighting Market](#)