



## Energy, Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights<sup>i</sup>

Tuesday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018

### Key data

- Global access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking reached **62%** in 2015, while global electrification reached **86%** in 2016.
- **38%** of the global population and almost **50%** of the population in developing countries lack access to clean cooking, relying on solid biomass, coal, and kerosene.
- Over 1 billion people still do not have access to electricity. Polluting fuels are used for cooking in **75%** of households in rural communities across the world, **91%** of rural households in Africa, and **82%** of rural households in the Western Pacific.
- In countries that rely heavily on individualized solid biomass and coal for cooking, household air pollution is responsible for 2.8 million premature deaths every year, including 600,000 in Africa, of which **60% are women**.
- Women and children spend on average **1.4 hours a day collecting solid fuels**.
- Since the 1990s, urban and peri-urban energy poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean has notably surpassed rural energy poverty. Slum dwellers and people employed in the informal sector are the majority of the energy poor.
- **1 out of 7** households in the **EU** lives in poverty, or on the margins of fuel poverty.

### Key messages

- Universal access requires energy to be affordable, appropriate, efficient, modern and reliable, as well as sustainable, renewable and safe for communities and the environment. Marginalized dwellers, female-headed households and people employed in the informal sector often cannot access or afford energy services.
- Inadequate and unreliable access to affordable, efficient and sustainable energy services hinders social and economic resilience of women, limiting academic, personal, family, income and leisure activities.
- Improved lighting and hygiene associated with clean energy and safely managed water contributes to a reduction in maternal and child mortality rates.
- Health and energy poverty are linked: respiratory illnesses from indoor air pollution, physical burdens of carrying heavy loads of fuel and water, and risk of sexual assault while collecting fuelwood, etc.
- Unsustainable energy production is a key cause of climate change, is costly in the long-run, and impacts women in particular, who carry higher biological loads of contaminants from mining, extraction, milling, processing, manufacture & transport of energy fuels, e.g. coal, oil, natural gas, and nuclear materials.
- Women's leadership in sustainable energy production can help influence policy and regulation to protect people, communities and the planet from contamination from open pit mining, strip mining, mountaintop removal, in situ leaching, hydraulic fracturing, steam extraction, drilling, milling, processing, refinement techniques, transport, and camps. These practices oppress women and result in increased violence against women.
- Marginalized urban and peri-urban inhabitants are a key population challenged by energy poverty.
- Ensuring sustainable energy access to the urban poor, particularly women, will not only satisfy energy needs and improve the quality of life, but also encourage income generation and alleviate poverty.

- Dependence on imported fossil fuels has been a major source of economic vulnerability and a key challenge for small island developing States for many decades.
- Lack of sex-disaggregated data in the energy field is a major problem in adopting gender-oriented policy, and many of the 2030 indicators are not disaggregated by sex. Each stage of energy planning and policymaking needs to factor in gender dimensions and actively support and advance women's rights to meet SDG 7 and SDG 5, at a minimum.
- Sustainable energy, including enhanced accessibility to modern energy services, energy efficiency and use of economically viable & environmentally-sound technology, plays a vital role in sustainable development.

## Recommendations

1. Integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into all energy actions to advance the SDGs.
2. Empower women in the design, production and distribution of modern energy services by developing their technical and business skills and establishing financing schemes to support gender-specific programmes and women's access to capital.
3. Develop gender-responsive policies, programmes and monitoring systems, and ensure equal participation of women in decision-making bodies in energy institutions.
4. Build the capacity of policymakers and planners on gender integration in energy policies and tools to develop and implement these policies.
5. Address data gaps and reliability to better inform the tracking of progress. Integrate systematic and sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis into programming and policy formulation, including collecting data on women's and men's resource use, knowledge of, access to and control over resources and economic opportunities.
6. Build gender and social inclusion firmly into sustainable energy opportunities, financing, and services by including women-centric business models for expanding energy access as a top national political priority.
7. Uphold the application of the "precautionary principle," as well as other safeguards, by ensuring the exclusion of inefficient energy approaches that have proven to be inequitable, ineffective, dangerous and otherwise unsustainable (i.e. large dams, nuclear energy, fracking).
8. Progressively reduce fossil-fuel subsidies to allocate resources to renewable energy technologies.
9. Make political and financial commitments to ensure that all households switch to clean fuels and clean, efficient stoves and have access to decentralised renewable energy solutions in the short term.
10. Adopt policies to support women-led projects through mechanisms that support the right of women to self-produce, consume, receive fair payment for excess electricity fed into the grid, store energy and engage in demand-side management.
11. Include women-centered funds methodically into existing sustainable energy financing vehicles, recognizing both rights-based and efficiency-based arguments for doing so.
12. Relax the requirements on land tenure, reduce tariffs for low-consuming households and businesses, and ensure access to decentralized renewable energy services.
13. Recognize that urban and peri-urban poor, particularly women, are entitled to electricity connection and other energy services.
14. Promote energy democracy and move away from top-down, market-based approaches for energy distribution and control over natural resources. Communities, including women, should have control over their own energy systems as well as over other natural resources.
15. Ensure a human rights and gender equality approach to sustainable energy.

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<sup>i</sup> For reference: See the Women's Major Group HLPF 2018 Position Paper at <https://tinyurl.com/y7bry64r>