

GENDER AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Releasing the energies of women



Mainstreaming Gender in the SADC Renewable Energy Sector

Introduction

The energy sector is one of the main drivers for economic development in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), as shown in the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) 2015-2020. The plan places emphasis on energy as an important factor in regional integration and socio-economic development.

Gender equity and equality are also a main area of focus in the integration agenda and SADC Member States have supported the fundamental principle that women and men must be engaged in decision-making at all levels and in all areas of socio-economic development in line with the SADC Treaty. Gender equality frameworks such as the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and the SADC Gender Policy have the objective “to provide for the empowerment of women, to eliminate discrimination and to achieve gender equality and equity” through the development and implementation of legislation, policies, programs and projects.

Gender equality and energy are important factors to the development of the region, however, despite this linkage,

issues to do with gender equality are often dealt with in isolation to energy development initiatives and vice versa. The SADC region has vast potential from solar, wind, nuclear, hydro, thermal, gas, petroleum sources and biomass being the major source of energy in the region. These sources of energy play a pivotal role in the development agenda of any region. Access to affordable, reliable and modern energy is critical in addressing development challenges which include gender inequalities.

Women are in most cases responsible for household chores and this particularly occupies most of their time collecting firewood for cooking, heating and lighting needs. Women and girls are moreover found travelling long distances to carry water for drinking, cooking and other household tasks which take up most of their time and can be a threat to their wellbeing.

These duties can be lifted and women’s lives made easier if households have access to Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs). Through improved access to electricity and modern fuels, both women and men can have time for engaging in other activities which are income-generating and can improve their health and living conditions.

Gender and Energy Frameworks

Globally, gender and energy are recognized as key contributors towards sustainable development. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 is to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all, and Goal 5 calls for the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Africa's development vision Agenda 2063 portrays a continent with access to affordable and decent energy and where women and youth are equally part of a people-driven development.

In SADC, over the past decade most Member States have initiated Renewable Energy programmes for awareness raising, capacity building, research and development with some activities for deployment of renewable energy technologies. However, most of these initiatives are carried out without the support of clearly defined renewable energy policy frameworks and renewable energy master plans which provide for a clear and comprehensive development of this sector.

The main policy instruments concerning energy in the SADC region are:

- SADC Protocol on Energy 1998,
- SADC Energy Cooperation Policy and Strategy 1996,
- SADC Energy Action Plan 1997 and 2000,
- SADC Regional Energy Access Strategy and Action Plan 2010, and more recently,
- Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy & Action Plan 2016

The Energy Protocol acknowledges the importance of energy as one of the key drivers towards economic development and

wealth creation. In order to best achieve these ends, the policy invites Member States to cooperate on energy development, harmonizing policies, strategies and procedures throughout the region. The protocol advises Member States to develop policies that ensure the security, reliability and sustainability of energy supply with Member States cooperating on research and development of low-cost energy sources applicable to southern Africa that can benefit all citizens.

With regard to gender equality, the protocol further calls for the need for gender realities to be considered in the development of regional energy initiatives. Gender equality frameworks in the region such as the Revised SADC Protocol on Gender Development, SADC Gender Policy and the SADC Treaty seek to facilitate the empowerment of women and men and positively influence gender-balanced interests.

The SADC Gender Policy calls for the facilitation of women's access to safe and affordable public infrastructure such as rural appropriate transport services, water, electricity and energy in order to reduce drudgery and enhance economic empowerment.

The revised SADC Protocol on Gender and Development does not give reference to women and energy, however it calls for the empowerment of women in all spheres and for Member States to undertake reforms that give women equal rights, and opportunity to economic resources.

The recent SADC Renewable Energy Strategy and Action Plan is a key regional instrument created to form the basis upon which national renewable energy policies are developed and operationalized within the region. The strategy calls for the energy sector

to mainstream gender in the energy sector, and enhance energy access for women and other vulnerable groups, especially in rural and peri-urban areas, through targeted programmes.

Despite these regional energy and gender policies, there are no clearly defined policies on renewable energy in most SADC Member States. The energy policies are in most cases used as the guiding frameworks for the renewable energy sector. The majority of SADC Member States do not have renewable energy policies and that is a major setback in tapping into the rich resource base of renewable energy fuels which can benefit the Member States. Only three SADC Member States have renewable energy policies—Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland.

Of the three countries South Africa and Swaziland mainstream gender into their policy.

While energy policies do not mainstream gender, existing gender policies do not consider energy issues and do not provide clear strategies on how women and men can strategically position themselves in the energy sector. The majority of all SADC Member States have national gender policies and only four—South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe give reference to the need for equal access to energy between women and men.

Decision Making in the Renewable Energy Sector

Sustainable development can be achieved if both women and men have full and equal participation in decision-making. There is need for the SADC region to de-

Gender and Renewable Energy instruments in SADC countries					
Country	National Energy Policy	RE policy	Gender Dimensions in RE Policy	Gender Policy	Energy Dimensions in Gender Policy
Angola	✓			✓	
Botswana	✓			✓	
Comoros					
DRC	✓				
Lesotho	✓			✓	
Madagascar	✓				
Malawi	✓			✓	
Mauritius	✓			✓	
Mozambique				✓	
Namibia	✓	✓		✓	
Seychelles	✓			✓	
South Africa	✓		✓	✓	✓
Swaziland		✓	✓	✓	✓
Tanzania	✓			✓	
Zambia	✓			✓	✓
Zimbabwe	✓			✓	✓

SADC Directorate of Infrastructure and Service Energy Division in SADC, *Energy and gender policies in SADC Member States*

velop mechanisms for addressing inequalities in the energy sector and expanding the role of women in developing and implementing energy solutions.

The inability to consider gendered interests and the different needs of men and women can limit the effectiveness of energy programmes and policies. Policy implementation and project development are often weakened by the lack of gender responsive considerations and involvement of both women and men equally.

Maximizing the benefits accruing to women is as straightforward as applying a “gender lens” throughout, from the initial policy formulation, implementation, project design and implementation, all the way through to monitoring and evaluation. Women in decision-making positions in the energy sector are under-represented and this is a contributing factor to imbalances

in equal access to energy services between women and men.

While measures to increase the involvement of women in decision-making is important, these actions by themselves will not ensure that energy policy is sensitive to gender differences and inequalities. Although there is a need to increase the number of women planners, engineers and energy technicians, there is also a need to increase the understanding of gender equality issues among all energy planners through capacity building and awareness raising.

Ministers Responsible for Energy in SADC Member States

Country	Male	Female
Angola	✓	
Botswana	✓	
Comoros		
DRC		
Lesotho	✓	
Madagascar	✓	
Malawi	✓	
Mauritius	✓	
Mozambique		✓
Namibia	✓	
Seychelles	✓	
South Africa	✓	
Swaziland		✓
Tanzania	✓	
Zambia	✓	
Zimbabwe	✓	

National Energy Ministries

Governance Structure of RERA Membership

Country	Regulatory Body	No. of Men	No. of Women
Lesotho	Lesotho Electricity and Water Authority	3	3
Malawi	Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority	2	2
Namibia	Electricity Control Board	7	3
South Africa	National Energy Regulator South Africa	5	3
Zambia	Zambia Energy Regulatory Board	6	1
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Energy Regulatory Authority	2	2

Regulatory Body websites 2017

Benefits of Mainstreaming Gender in RE Sector

Mainstreaming gender in the energy sector will contribute to creating space for equal opportunities for women and men to reach full potential and contribute meaningfully towards sustainable development. A focus on increasing participation by women should be a top priority for reforming the energy sector. Increasing the number of women in decision-making positions so that they become at par with men can increase gender sensitivity in finding solutions to problems affecting the energy sector.

Improved Livelihoods

Mainstreaming gender in the renewable energy sector provides benefits which can be classified as practical (ensuring daily survival), productive (income generation), and strategic (changing position in society to gain greater equality with men, towards empowerment).

The **practical** aspect involves, for example, household lighting, improved cooking stoves and other technologies. RETs will enable access to water pumps at household or communal level and reduce time spent fetching water or going to the stream or river to wash clothes or bath. RETs will allow for the use and ownership of washing machines and other modern equipment which can enable the reduction of time spent on these chores previously.

The **productive** aspect involves access to improved technologies for development of enterprises which can make use of water pumps, food-drying installations, refrigerators, electric sewing-machines and hairdressing gadgets among others.

Street lighting is **strategic** in that it allows women greater freedom of movement after dark. Mainstreaming gender in renewable energy enhances access to information through television and radio. Women and men will in addition be able to own and charge mobile phones and other gadgets which can be used to access internet and open horizons. Access to such facilities can enlighten both women and men to be abreast with current trends and hence make them more confident to be part of and participate in public spheres, including decision making arenas.

Social Services Delivery

Mainstreaming gender in the renewable energy sector contributes to social services delivery which include health and education. There are appliances in the health sector that cannot be operated without energy, for example, medical refrigerators, sterilizers, suction machines for deliveries and incubators.

Access to energy will therefore reduce the rate of maternal and infant mortality through the provision of electricity or other forms of modern renewable energy in clinics and hospitals, especially in rural areas. This reduces the risk of maternal and infant mortality, through more lighting in rooms during delivery and the use of advanced equip-

ment and technologies. Access to renewable energies contributes to better educational facilities where boys and girls will have access to lighting for studies. More girls will be allowed to attend school if they do not have to perform essentials of collecting wood and water and both women and men will be able to attend evening classes.

Modern Energy Services

Renewable energy can play an important role in increasing access to modern energy services, which frees woman's time from domestic tasks, permits home study and reading, enables access to educational media and communications in schools and at home, mitigates the impacts of indoor air pollution on women, allows access to better medical facilities for maternal care, and permits income-generating activities. By taking a gender approach, renewable energy suppliers can increase their potential client base and the sustainability in use of their technologies.

Effective Practices from West Africa

Gender equality and social inclusion became important contributions to fully understanding the development impacts of energy programs. As a result, in focusing on the importance of gender considerations when working towards energy for all, some regions, governments and institutions have acted decisively and have taken a lead in crafting strategic plans to address inequalities in energy policies into effective practices.

In West Africa, for example, through the Economic Community of West

African States (ECOWAS), a forward looking policy that prioritizes gender and women centred approaches in all facets of energy and renewable energy development in the region was developed.

Renewable Energy Policy in West Africa

ECOWAS considers gender equality an engine of regional integration and a development objective of paramount importance, seeking to transform “west Africa into a fair and safe community in which men and women have equal opportunities to participate, decide, control and take advantage of all development initiatives.

The ECOWAS Renewable Energy Policy (EREP) aims to achieve universal energy access in rural areas whilst ensuring energy security, sustainability, and access. EREP specifically notes the importance of gender mainstreaming as one of its seven overall objectives. The policy aims at mainstreaming gender in renewable energy-related issues, particularly those associated with women’s productive roles. The policy states that its renewable energy options will offer abundant job opportunities for both men and women, in the industry and trade sectors, but also in the management and maintenance of decentralized and individual energy systems.

ECOWAS Program on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access

The ECOWAS program on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access (ECOW-GEN) was established in 2013 with a mandate to steer ECOWAS Member States in the direction of mainstream-

ing gender in policy formulation, legislative drafting, energy project and program design and implementation, with the intention of promoting equality in energy development, equal access to resources and equal contribution to the decision-making processes that shape and influence energy expansion in West Africa.

To institutionalize the interventions being implemented through ECOW-GEN, ECREEE teamed up with the ECOWAS Department of Social Affairs and Gender and formulated a policy that commits the Member States to take concrete actions toward the elimination of all forms of inequality in energy production and consumption in the ECOWAS region. Through the ECO-GEN program a number of women’s lives were liberated through improved access to RETs.

Way Forward

It has been established that a gender approach leads to greater energy efficiency through greater involvement in decision-making by the end-users. Gender mainstreaming represents an opportunity to intentionally shape programming so that it is not only providing energy to communities, but empowering women within those communities to reduce the time spent on household duties, make further gains in education, enter the workforce, and start businesses. There is need to provide opportunities for those often marginalized, in order to help accelerate economic growth in developing countries. Policies and projects should be developed with a gender lens approach to energy access, this will ensure that programmes are beneficial all the way

West African Clean Cooking Alliance

In line with its objectives to promote energy access, renewable energy and energy efficiency, ECREEE initiated a regional cooking energy initiative called the West African Clean Cooking Alliance (WACCA). WACCA developed an Action Plan in 2012 that was adopted by the relevant ECOWAS national ministries in 2014 as an ECREEE-led program. WACCA aims to ensure that by 2030, the entire ECOWAS population has access to efficient, sustainable, and modern cooking fuels and devices. The WACCA Action Plan includes specific gender actions and recognizes gender integration in the planning and implementation of activities as important to achieving its objectives. Women are identified as important end-users of cooking fuels and technologies, but also as key participants in the implementation of policies and regulatory frameworks on clean-cooking initiatives in the ECOWAS region. The plan also enhances capacity building in clean-cooking initiatives, supports and harmonizes standards and labelling practices, and promotes networking and knowledge-sharing in terms of technologies and innovations. As a result of the ECOW-GEN WACCA initiative, ECOWAS Member States are taking practical steps to develop projects that promote the access of women to energy projects, tapping into the critical role that women play in energy provision and use.

around -- for women, for local communities, and for emerging economies.

The involvement of women in decision-making positions and energy-related fields will contribute to more gender-sensitive energy policies. However, further initiatives should be taken to ensure that energy planners, both men and women, are made aware of gender equality issues. Strategically placing women at the centre of renewable energy and energy access in the region will ensure success in the mandate of providing a response to the needs of SADC Member States with respect to the development and implementation of renewable energy and energy efficiency technology in line with continental and international trends.

The liberalisation of energy markets is opening up new opportunities for the provision of energy services. Renewable Energy Service Companies are springing up, many focusing on rural

areas, offering the potential of good incomes. SADC Member States should ensure that women are not excluded from these opportunities. Gender focal persons from Member States can work with the regional apex bodies to overcome the notion that women are not interested in technical matters. Women can be empowered with knowledge, confidence and physical resources to make the contributions effective. A holistic approach is needed for sharing technical and entrepreneurial skills and opportunities.

There is also need to promote access to cheap renewable energy technologies across southern Africa to ensure easy availability to all. This would require adopting programmes to provide incentives to the private sector and research institutions to produce basic technologies that can be accessed more cheaply by the majority of the people in the region.

Policy Considerations

- ❖ Establish energy gender desks and gender focal points to create advocacy programmes for general awareness of the importance of mainstreaming gender in the renewable energy sector;
- ❖ Develop and strengthen energy policies that focus on improving rural and peri-urban energy systems in order to reduce the workload women have to endure in sourcing biomass and water;
- ❖ Develop programmes that empower women with knowledge, confidence and physical resources to make their contributions effective;
- ❖ Increase the number of women in decision-making positions and actively engage women in problem-solving processes;
- ❖ Increase energy education and build gender-balanced capacity in energy planning, implementation and monitoring;
- ❖ Enhance the development and utilisation of modern renewable energy sources and technologies
- ❖ Establish an efficient energy production, procurement,

transportation, distribution and end user systems in an environmentally sound manner and with due regard to gender issues;

- ❖ Mainstream gender in all energy programmes at the national and regional levels.

Conclusion

Basic services such as electricity for lighting and cleaner cooking technologies are still not accessible to many rural communities, and this impacts disproportionately on women, who generally have responsibilities as the providers and end-users of energy. Southern Africa has moved towards adopting renewable energy technologies, but women in rural areas still do not have access to these options because of the prohibitive start-up cost of installing the equipment. Access to renewable energy will significantly improve the lives of women who currently do not have access through reducing time spent on daily tasks of collecting firewood and fetching water. Mainstreaming gender in energy should be supported by appropriate policies and structures that take into account gender realities in southern Africa.

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