

## Findings & Recommendations from the “Energy – Gender Study”

This document presents action-oriented findings and recommendations extracted from the study: **“Gender Analysis of UNDP Energy Portfolio and a Framework for Action”**. The referred study was commissioned in 2020 by UNDP’s both Gender and Energy teams and was finalized in April 2021. It is based on a review of 17 projects and initiatives, including several energy projects in the Vertical Fund portfolio, as well as general policy guidance and documentation. To inform the analysis a total of 24 interviews were conducted within UNDP stakeholders at HQ, regional and country offices, and with outside partners.

For more detail, please refer to the full document [available here](#).

## Core Gender Issues in Energy

<p>The basics</p>	<p>In developing countries, due to deeply entrenched inequalities, social norms, and unequal power relations, men and women often have different roles. Women bear most of the responsibility for household tasks. These include heavy tasks like collecting water and firewood, cleaning and washing (mostly without the aid of labour saving appliances) with women bearing 60-80% of unpaid domestic world globally. As informal workers and entrepreneurs, women earn less, save less, and hold more insecure jobs.</p>
<p>Discussion on women</p>	<p>Universally, where energy inequality exists, it is generally women who are excluded or disadvantaged in relation to decision-making and access to economic and social resources. There are clear patterns of women's inferior access to resources and opportunities. Moreover, women are systematically under-represented in decision-making processes that shape their societies and their own lives. This explains why, even though women and men should equally participate in and benefit from energy and development, the focus of the discussion is centered on women.</p>
<p>Assumptions on equal benefits</p>	<p>In most instances, energy policies and projects take limited cognizance of the gender perspective, guided by the assumption that men and women will benefit from energy interventions in the same way. The direct implication is that women's needs may not be addressed sufficiently, and at the same time, important information can be missed in their design, resulting in these policies (unintentionally) discriminating women and other unprotected sectors of the population.</p>
<p>Energy access and cooking</p>	<p>Women and children, especially girls, spend significant time and effort in fetching fuel, fodder, and water for domestic chores (which makes them more exposed to gender-based violence). Indoor pollution caused by burning of biomass fuels contributes to 3.8 million premature deaths each year, 60% of which correspond to women and children. When women gain access to electricity and clean cooking services, multiple impacts are manifested, starting with greater convenience, freeing up their time, reducing their drudgery to improved health, livelihoods and overall quality of life.</p>
<p>Technology uptake</p>	<p>Men and women have different preferences and face different types of constraints to adopting technology. Understanding, recognizing, and addressing perceptions, experiences, and inequalities between men and women can help to design interventions that will lead to better and more sustainable development results. Differences may reside in women's access to information and extension services; access to capital to invest in technology; appropriateness of design, including affordability, and cultural acceptability.</p>
<p>De-risking investments</p>	<p>Community and household level acceptance of interventions like energy efficiency measures (efficient appliances programs) or clean cooking is critical to success and sustainability of investments. Women are uniquely positioned to disseminate as well as enhance acceptance of energy technologies, either individually or through their networks.</p>
<p>Decentralized renewable energy</p>	<p>Decentralized renewables for energy access systems will play a pivotal role in meeting universal energy goals and government demand is growing for support on how to plan for the energy infrastructure of the future. Such systems provide good opportunities to open new economic potential for the poor, unlock resilient livelihoods for communities and employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, helping to close the inequalities gap.</p>

<p>Productive uses of energy</p>	<p>Within electrification programs, interventions to foster productive use of energy tend to focus more on men. This is because typically women and men engage in different types of income generating activities and livelihoods, at different locations and have different access to enablers such as assets, finance markets, infrastructure and skills. Since men are mostly involved in large enterprises than those run by women, they are often more attractive to private sector suppliers and are easily targeted for productive uses of energy. Women, often more reliant on fuels such as firewood and charcoal for running their businesses, are less likely to benefit from electrification programs, unless consciously targeted.</p>
<p>Women entrepreneurs hip</p>	<p>Women owned businesses and entrepreneurs typically lack access to markets, market information, digital and personal services, networks, and mentorship, necessary ingredients for business growth and sustainability. They also suffer from systemic barriers such as lack of ownership of productive uses of land, limited access to banks, financial services and credit. As a result, most are constrained in their growth and performance. Yet, women entrepreneurs in the energy sector, individually and through groups are proving their mettle, especially in reaching remote, last mile locations with renewable energy.</p>
<p>Transport and urban infrastructure</p>	<p>Urban infrastructure including public transport is not gender neutral and has a major impact on the quality of life of women. Women, especially those that juggle care and work roles, are time poor. Thus, the proximity, affordability, availability, and security of transport have a high impact on their lives. Socio-cultural norms may shape the way women use public transport. They may face risks to their personal security and hence, may need a chaperone. Women tend to take public transport to a higher extent and have different travel needs (types, frequency, times). Infrastructure requires to accommodate women’s encumbrances such as children, elderly and groceries. Therefore, integrating a gender perspective into sustainable urban mobility systems makes them more suitable for – and therefore more likely to be adopted -by more people.</p>
<p>Digital divide</p>	<p>After Covid-19, the offer of electronic services has risen and is expected to continue to do so, including e-government services, e-commerce, virtual education, and electronic financial services. A stable reliable and affordable electricity supply needed to access these services. Also, the digital divide, where women are less likely to own computers, phones and internet services, risks widening existing inequalities. For example, not considering that women are 21% less likely to own a mobile phone (in a world where phones provide access to safety, organizing networks, early warning systems, mobile health care and money transfers) may result in novel energy policies that leverage on digital technologies, to perpetrate existing gender inequities.</p>
<p>Energy workforce</p>	<p>Women are under-represented in the energy workforce, particularly in leadership positions in politics, energy, and climate actions. Women’s participation in the energy sector overall is estimated at 22% (and 32% in the renewable energy workforce), most in administrative positions and non-STEM technical positions (IRENA).</p>
<p>Agents of change</p>	<p>In most countries, renewable energy policies show limited gender-responsiveness. Even when they make a reference to gender, the predominant themes are women’s time poverty, indoor air pollution in the context of biomass use and women’s health. Energy policies largely characterize women as victims or beneficiaries, to a small extent as potential stakeholders but seldom as agents of change. Women need to be included as collaborators and innovators in the global energy transition</p>

## Vertical Fund Portfolio

### Overall Findings and Recommendations

#### Overall Findings:

- Within the UNDP energy sector portfolio, the performance and reporting on gender has improved over the years and is more structured than before. The requirements of the environmental financing mechanisms have ensured that the VF projects include specific gender actions in the project life cycle. However, the performance is variable in terms of gender, with some projects being ambitious, while others committing only to the minimum required.
- There is considerable scope for improvement in tracking progress and results on gender. There are no outcome indicators and mostly track minimum output indicators. As a consequence, even when significant gender results are experienced, they do not find a prominent place in reporting and are, at best, captured anecdotically (particularly in energy access projects).
- In most projects the existing level of expectation from gender is modest.

#### Overall Recommendations:

- ✓ Improve the results frameworks for better tracking of gender progress and results and raise the level of ambition. Include gender responsive outcome level indicators and targets and include disaggregation of relevant data by sex.
- ✓ Build a gender policy advice element in all projects, ensuring that the experience and lessons from projects on the ground are translated into national policy, either energy or climate change policy.
- ✓ Track the gender responsiveness of the portfolio as a whole. Possible indicators include number of projects/proposals that include promoting gender equality as a primary objective and number of approved proposals that contain a gender assessment and a project-level action plan.
- ✓ In green recovery support efforts consider the inclusion of: i) energy access and clean cooking solutions as building blocks needed for building a sustainable future for poor rural and peri-urban families and ii) access to appliances, which will have a bearing on women's wellbeing and their ability to start home-based business that may be more important in the "new normal".
- ✓ Target the areas of de-risking investments through attention to gender and closing the gender gaps in digitalization.

## Energy Access Projects

### Findings:

- Withing the VF portfolio, while both men and women are benefitting from energy access projects, and women are participating in some training and income generation activities, results are less visible in transformative areas such as women owning energy assets and benefiting from productive uses of energy.

### Recommendations:

- ✓ Upscale transformative areas of women gaining owning energy assets, energy entrepreneurship, and benefiting from productive uses of energy, in these ways fostering women's social and economic empowerment.
- ✓ Build in women's entrepreneurship in projects by: i) working with private sector to create opportunities for women in value chains, ii) facilitate access to finance, and iii) test and promote the use of digital platforms.
- ✓ In ongoing and new projects targeting productive uses of energy, identify gender-specific gaps in the baseline assessments around women's livelihoods and target measures to address them.
- ✓ Consciously map out entry points within energy access activities with linkages to occupations where women predominate.
- ✓ Create an enabling environment that crosses the division between the electrification and clean cooking sectors, including spaces for dialogue between stakeholders in both sectors.
- ✓ Scale up women's enterprises at the last mile.
- ✓ Support utilities and mini-grid developers to pilot and scale up electric cooking services.
- ✓ Strengthen the project – policy link and the extent to which gender mainstreaming lessons are being translated into policy.

## Some Projects related to Energy Access

### PROJECT: Increasing access to clean and affordable decentralized energy services in selected vulnerable areas of Malawi 2015-2020

- ✓ Targeted 30% women's inclusion in training on clean energy mini grid planning, design, regulations, standards and construction methods
- ✓ 400 people trained in various aspects of mini grid planning, design, regulations and construction, 25% women
- ✓ Electrified health center allows for safer deliveries and vaccination storage
- ✓ Women started running hair salon businesses and sale of refrigerated drinks
- ✓ Two electrified grain milling plants have women's drudgery as they no longer must walk to get their maize ground.

### PROJECT: Renewable Energy for Rural Livelihood, Nepal, 2014-2019

- ✓ Women received training on house wiring, entrepreneurship, business management, technical skills, financial literacy, cooperative management and skill-based training on tailoring, computer education and bakery.
- ✓ Access to finance was facilitated for women and marginalized groups in the demonstration projects through microfinance activities.
- ✓ The project supported the revision of the new renewable energy subsidy policy and delivery mechanism, which provides additional financial assistance to single women-headed and disadvantaged households.
- ✓ Supported Alternate Energy Promotion Centre (AEPCC) to formulate its productive energy use promotion modality, which helped women and marginalized communities to establish enterprises using electricity with provision of additional financial assistance. Until 2019, 1500 productive use enterprises were established with financial assistance of AEPCC; of which female entrepreneur operate 70 enterprises.

### PROJECT: The Green Charcoal project: Addressing barriers to the adoption of improved charcoal production technologies and Sustainable Land Management practices through an integrated approach, Uganda 2014-2018

- ✓ Women's needs were considered in the design of the Namibian Kiln for improved charcoal production
- ✓ To improve the role of women in the charcoal value chain, men were mainly involved in charcoal production whilst women in trade. The Project strengthened women's charcoal marketing, pricing and contract negotiation capacities as well as introduced them to other enterprises including tree planting, briquette making and crop production.
- ✓ Under climate smart agriculture capacity building initiative, the Project trained both men and women on seed and farm input selection based on quality; and safe use of agro-chemicals.
- ✓ Capacities were built for women and youth entrepreneurs in production and marketing of briquettes, within charcoal producing associations.

### PROJECT: Enhanced Rural Resilience in Yemen 2016-2019

- ✓ Women and youth were trained as solar technicians and learned how to establish, manage, maintain, and promote their solar micro-grid businesses. The businesses help them move from reliance upon humanitarian assistance to sustaining themselves and helping their communities with their businesses.
- ✓ Initially, women faced skepticism and even mockery from the community. But tasks such as negotiating with tribal leaders and recruiting security guards saw them breakthrough local gender barriers. Now the whole community benefits and the women who made it happen are role models. Other benefits generated include improving security by lighting settlements at night, reduced financial pressure lessens the risk of families agreeing to under-age marriage for girls.
- ✓ The solar micro-grid and individual businesses have provided women and youth with a sense of dignity and are starting to take on new roles in their communities.
- ✓ One grid is owned and run entirely by women, something extremely unusual in an area with strict gender restrictions.

## Projects on energy efficient transport and urban planning infrastructure solutions

### Findings:

- Projects in the portfolio show innovative approaches in designing transport and infrastructure interventions that are gender responsive, include public safety measures to address harassment against women in public spaces, and gender parity in employment.
- Strategies that have worked well include:
  - Engaging women's groups as a means to mobilize women, especially in situations where they are vulnerable and hesitant to take up activities by themselves.
  - Engaging with both national governments and municipalities, as well as with key stakeholders (such as city mayors).
  - Encouraging gender parity in employment through organizations participating in the projects.
  - Including women in the process of planning as they can reveal their specific needs from infrastructure projects.

### Recommendations:

- ✓ Continue designing gender sensitive transport and infrastructure interventions, including safety measures to address harassment against women in public spaces (they have worked well).
- ✓ Engage women's groups especially in situations where they are vulnerable and hesitant to take up activities.
- ✓ Engage with national governments municipalities and stakeholders.
- ✓ Encourage gender parity in employment but increase efforts to institutionalize this in the national systems by working closely with government.
- ✓ Engage gender specialists and dedicate separate budgets for gender-related activities.
- ✓ Urban slums may require attention moving forward (currently not much attention).

## Some Projects related to Efficient Transport and Sustainable Urban Planning

- ✓ Women's safety and needs built into the various infrastructure created including bus stations, bicycle lanes, etc.
- ✓ Incorporation of inclusive and safety features in the design of bus stops such as being in a well-lit area as well as having proper lighting themselves, designated places that safeguards them from harassment and violence in the streets, displaying information on the national campaign on "Zero Violence" (against women). The design itself was developed through a participatory process.
- ✓ Project being implemented in close link with the local government as well as the municipal authorities to ensure its institutionalization.
- ✓ Large number of women were included in surveys (targets for participation) and training in different areas.
- ✓ Capacity building initiatives undertaken to enhance the understanding on gender issues in the construction and the wider energy sector.
- ✓ Training of municipalities in Land Use Planning, including building capacities of women and enhance their participation in planning processes.
- ✓ Inclusion of women in the forums of the City.

**PROJECT: Asuncion  
Green City of the  
Americas: Pathways to  
Sustainability, Paraguay  
2017-2022**

**PROJECT: De-Risking and  
Scaling-up Investment in  
Energy Efficient Building  
Retrofits, Armenia  
2017-2023**

- ✓ The gender analysis performed at the beginning recommended promoting gender-balanced employment and ensuring that the user outreach, information campaigns and communication and dissemination strategy include women.
- ✓ Sex-disaggregated data was collected for project staff, labor force, apartment buildings, contracted companies' personnel, and beneficiaries.
- ✓ Project staff were trained on Project's gender-related requirements.
- ✓ A number of policies and government actions were supported, in collaboration with the ministries of Labor and Social Affairs and its departments dealing with gender and employment issues. Engagement was made at the highest level.

- ✓ This is a project yet to be implemented but provides good practice in terms of harnessing women's power in groups to address critical environmental and health issues in a situation of vulnerable communities affected by violent conflict, displacement and unemployment.
- ✓ It is planned that women will play a central role in the waste management system. Women-led cooperatives and MSMEs will be supported in establishing the waste collection and sorting, as well as energy distribution organizations. They will set up and lead business opportunities.
- ✓ As a first step a complete gender analysis will be undertaken in both pilot communities to identify gender power dynamics and options for employing women and consulting with women in the communities to ensure their engagement in project decision making. All relevant data collected for planning, design and monitoring purposes will be sex-disaggregated.

***Note that the complete report analyses in more depth each project, identifying improvement and missed opportunities.***

**PROJECT: Decentralized  
Renewable Energy  
Solutions for Climate  
Security in Protracted  
Crisis in Yemen  
2020-2022**

## Recommendations for Global and Regional Energy Approaches

*These approaches refer to global and regional initiatives such as the Climate Investment Platform (CIP), CIP call for proposals, Options Papers to feed into the new Strategic Plan, DREI framework, UN's Renewable Energy Offer for the Sahel, the Latin America and Caribbean Energy Narrative, among others.*

### **Findings:**

- UNDP's regional and global initiatives provide an excellent platform to integrate gender at a large scale.
- Some of these initiatives integrate gender well, and others do not consider gender dimensions. Across these, there is a need to have common operational procedures.

### **Recommendations:**

- ✓ For all its global and regional approaches, UNDP should adopt a bold target to reflect the commitment to gender, for example, *75% of all initiatives will make a substantial contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment by 2025.*
- ✓ For the update of the Energy Strategy and Energy Offer, the following areas are suggested to take a more prominent role: i) gender mainstreaming in the enabling environment, ii) women as agents of change and iii) addressing women's wellbeing. More details in full document, page 8 box.
- ✓ All key documents such as concept notes, strategy documents, call for proposals, should include a commitment and guidance on gender mainstreaming. Develop common operational procedures. Emphasize gender issues in all missions and meetings.
- ✓ Empower women as agents of change, collaborators and innovators in the global energy transition. In particular to the High-Level Dialogue on Energy set up a task force for gender and prepare a publication. UNDP is well positioned to drive a gender responsive agenda.
- ✓ Partners must be required to submit proposals that contain or plan gender assessments and project level gender action plans, along with dedicated budgets. For this purpose, UNDP should provide concrete guidance on designing gender responsive interventions, along with concrete examples and resources.

*Note that the full report identifies particular recommendations for the CIP, DREI, for the Covid-19 Offer and for the next Strategic Plan (Pages 8 -11).*

## Good Practices and Recommendations on Policy Advice

*These approaches refer to policy advice not necessarily framed within a Vertical Fund project. It could be embedded in NDC advice through the Climate Promise, the NDC Support Program, Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions, or direct support to National Governments in coordination with Country Offices.*

- For providing gender-energy policy support to national and local governments, the following areas of work can be considered:
  - i. Create capacities on gender-responsive energy service delivery
  - ii. Collect, analyze, and use sex-disaggregated data
  - iii. Develop policies and plans that encourage women's entrepreneurship, engage women in productive uses of energy and encourage women's ownership of energy assets
  - iv. Develop policies and plans that encourage women's well-being, such as: clean cooking interventions, access to energy efficient appliances, lighting streets and community places (women's safety needs), among others
  - v. Pursue gender parity/engaging women in energy sector jobs
  - vi. Promote women's participation and leadership in decision making processes related to energy.
- Embedding climate and energy actions within national mandates on gender equality.
- Involving gender specialists throughout processes and dedicate separate budgets for gender-related activities, such as with the NDC Support Program in Ecuador.
- Demonstrate through pilots, such as with the NDC support process in Peru.
- Strong inter-institutional coordination between national bodies that deal with climate change, energy and gender equality. Engaging with national partners such as Ministries of Women Affairs to contribute substantively to policy making discussions.
- Allocating funding to building capacity and raising awareness on the link between gender and climate change or energy.

## Making it Work

To implement the previous recommendations, the following priority actions have been identified for UNDP's NCE/Energy Team:

### Clarify Roles

- Clarify roles and responsibilities on gender mainstreaming actions within the Energy Team including:
  - **Heads of Energy team:** final responsibility for gender mainstreaming, strategic decisions, ensure gender is reflected at the core of the energy strategy, ensure all new programming has strong gender angle.
  - **Gender focal point and gender task team:** three member team (w/both men and women), facilitators for gender mainstreaming.
  - **Project leaders:** accountability for gender mainstreaming, ensuring gender assessment, planning and budgeting for gender activities, M&E.

### Develop Tools

- There is a need for more practical guidance and concrete ideas on the linkages of gender with energy concepts. Resources to be collated in an easy-to-use form include:
  - **A basic gender-energy information base** (module), with core concepts, UNDP's gender priorities in the energy sector, and introduction to other material available.
  - **A gender mainstreaming package** that contains concrete entry points, along with a listing of available examples and resources for each type (energy access, urban, etc).
  - **Tools for programming**, including quick lists to integrate gender into: ongoing tasks, organizing workshops, developing TORs, preparing budgets and communications.
  - **Sample indicators** for measuring gender results, including women's entrepreneurship, productive use of energy, employment and infrastructure.

### Strengthen capacity

- Among the energy team there is a need to build a common understanding of the overall gender mainstreaming objective of the energy portfolio, as well as practical knowledge of what steps to take within each person's own area of work.
  - **Go through basic gender-energy module** (above) to ensure that all are up to date with state-of-the-art approaches (specially at on-boarding).
  - **Organize a brown-bag session** once every six months to share experiences and good practice.