

## Side Event

# Strengthening the empirical Evidence: Gender inclusive energy policies enabling progress towards the SDGs

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### Timing and Venue

Date: 09 May 2017

Time: 09.30-11.00

Room: C5, Vienna International Centre (VIC)

Cluster: Policy; Knowledge Management

### Background

Gender equality and energy are both critical in international efforts to reduce poverty and combat climate change. This has been acknowledged in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and their importance is cemented in Goal 5 of the SDGs which is intended to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls”, and goal 7 that aims to “ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”. Energy interventions impact men and women differently as well as their capacity to respond and take up opportunities modern energy offers. Access to modern energy services is crucial to transforming the lives of men and women. Both in developing and industrialized countries, it is vital that current and future energy policies take into account the differential needs of both women and men. However, robust empirical evidence is missing to prove these differential needs and that taking a gender-sensitive approach leads to better outcomes. In addition, there is a need to strengthen the link between researchers and policy makers as well as practitioners in order to have more informed policy development and to ensure that the objective of access to sustainable energy for all is reached.

This side event brought together researchers, policy makers and practitioners to reflect on the state of art of the empirical evidence on energy interventions that are delivering on gender impacts and the ones that are not. Furthermore, the aim of this side event is to identify key gaps within the existing research and pinpoint areas that needs to be addressed to ensure more gender equitable outcomes of energy interventions. The discussions coming forth from this side event will also contribute to HLP 1: The role of Energy in the Post 2015 Development Agenda and focus on the need to build and create new evidence on the links between gender, energy and poverty reduction.

### Key Questions

This side event will mainly focus on discussing the following key questions and discussion points:

- What are the differential energy related needs of women and men and what is the empirical evidence that taking a gender responsive approach leads to better (more sustainable) outcomes?
- What are the major gaps identified so far? Why is it important to address these gaps and how could this be done?
- How can we involve stakeholders, such as energy users, practitioners and policy makers in reaching the overarching objective of sustainable energy for all?

## Key Messages

**Please summarize the key message in full sentences. Each message is expected to be 2-3 sentences long, without attribution to a particular speaker.**

- Energy access is key to opening up opportunities for men and women in developing countries. It is vital that current and future energy policies take into account the needs of both women and men. However, there is a need to strengthen robust empirical evidence to substantiate the business case for taking a gender-responsive approach to achieve SDG 7 and to reinforce the link between researchers, policy makers and practitioners in order to have more informed gender-aware energy policy and programmes.
- While there is evidence that electrification contributes to women's wellbeing current empirical evidence suggests electrification alone will not lead to women's empowerment, be it social, political, or economic. Research indicates that energy interventions that aim to build women's economic empowerment need to be linked to complementary interventions that strengthen women's decision making and ownership of assets such as changes in legislation on women's land rights and inheritance. However, not enough data is available to prove that hypothesis.
- Research indicates that there is a perception that poor people and women are often considered the beneficiaries of subsidies and their reform, but there is a lack of empirical evidence on impacts of subsidies and their reform considering gender related impacts. Empirical evidence does show, however, that gender-blind policies can have an adverse effect on women and the poor's energy access due to their specific needs not being taken into account during the policy design. Only when the differentiated impacts of subsidies on women and men are understood can adverse outcomes be mitigated to ensure positive impact of policy reform and formulation.
- Research indicates that the informal food sector is dominated by women entrepreneurs, and is particularly energy intensive with the use of traditional and modern energy sources being prevalent. However, energy policy remains predominantly silent on this sector and urban planning policies and by-laws are typically hostile to informal businesses due to a lack of engagement with the sector leading to a lack of understanding of the needs and aspirations of the women and men who work there. Local, regional or national energy policies need to integrate the strategies to address bottlenecks and build on opportunities in informal food sector as an important sector for women productive energy needs.
- Gender equality and the empowerment of women have a significant positive impact on sustained economic growth and inclusive and sustainable industrial development (ISID), which are drivers of poverty reduction, social integration, and environmental sustainability. It is vital to mainstream gender dimensions in all programmes, policies and practices, throughout the whole

cycle from design up to monitoring & evaluation. Such an approach will contribute to meeting the goals of SE4All and the SDGs.

- While it is important to consider the gender impacts of energy on women and men, it is also important to ensure women can benefit from employment opportunities in delivering modern energy services, while also increasing their empowerment & positive spill-over effects in health etc.
- Assessment of SE4ALL country action agendas showed that a campaign on women, energy, children and health led to greater recognition of the gender, energy and time poverty nexus, in the Country Agendas. There was also the recognition of the link between energy access and health benefits, not only in the context of clean cooking solutions but also for improved maternal health outcomes. However, there is the need that energy policies have a greater focus on gender and energy needs among the urban poor and to position women as agents of change for the energy transition and to ensure that gender considerations reflected in national energy policies are translated into actionable initiatives and that monitoring of these policies is done in a sex-disaggregated manner to have better comprehension of the impacts on women's and men's needs and livelihoods.

## Moderator



**Ms. Sheila Oparaocha**, *International Coordinator and Programme Manager, ENERGIA*

*International coordinator and programme manager Sheila graduated in 1993 with a Bachelors degree in Veterinary Medicine from the University of Zambia and pursued her MSc in Gender and Rural Development Studies at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT). After completing her Masters, Sheila continued to work as a research associate in the Gender and Development Program at AIT. Whilst living in Thailand, she also conducted research in Lao PDR, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Malaysia. Sheila joined the ENERGIA team in October 1999 and works for the ENERGIA Secretariat, as the programme manager of ENERGIA Phase 5. She oversees three large programmes (a programme on Women's Economic Empowerment, a research programme and an advocacy and policy influencing programme), several smaller ones as well as a number of consultancies.*

## Panelists



**Mr. Debajit Palit**, *Associate Director and Senior Fellow, Energy and Resources Institute (TERI)*

*Mr Debajit Palit has around 20 years of experience working in the field of clean energy access, technology adaptation, resource assessment and energy planning; project implementation; rural electrification policy and regulation; gender and energy; impact assessment of energy sector projects and capacity building. He has vast national and international experience working in projects for UN organisations, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and National Governments across countries in South and South east Asia and Sub-Saharan*

*Africa. Mr Palit has written widely on energy access and rural electrification issues, particularly on South Asia, and has published around 40 research papers in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings and books. He is a sought-out speaker on rural energy issues, renewable energy mini-grids –technology and business models and energy-gender-poverty nexus and has participated in a number of national and international conferences and workshops across Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas.*



**Ms. Lucy Kitson**, Senior Policy Advisor, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD)

*Lucy Kitson works as an economist in the IISD Geneva office. Her focus areas are Climate Change, Energy and Trade. She has over seven years' experience in the Energy Sector, which includes five years working as a commercial analyst in the oil and gas industry and, more recently, in the renewables industry. Prior to this she worked as a researcher at University of Cambridge, focusing on the economics and deployment of renewable generation. Lucy has experience of sustainable development issues in the business environment, having worked at the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) as a Project Officer, focusing on the Cement and Tyre Sectors. She also has a degree in Development Economics (MSc.) and work experience in India, China and Tanzania.*



**Dr. Nthabiseng Mohlakoana**, Post-Doctoral Researcher, University of Twente

*Nthabi is employed by the Department of Governance and Technology for Sustainability (CSTM) at the University of Twente as a Post-Doctoral Researcher. She joined CSTM in 2010 to pursue her PhD study titled: "Implementing the South African Free Basic Alternative Energy Policy: A Dynamic Actor Interaction" which she completed and defended in December 2014. She is currently coordinating a multi-partner project on Productive Uses of Energy in South Africa, Senegal and Rwanda under the DFID funded ENERGIA Gender and Energy Research Programme. Her other tasks at CSTM include supervision of Bachelor and Masters students' projects as well some lecturing. Nthabi has more than 15 years of research experience in the area of energy poverty and development as well as in gender and energy research. Throughout her career, Nthabi's work has mainly focused on research that influences policy to provide low-income households and communities in developing countries with better energy access while taking gender issues into consideration.*



**Mr. Jossy Thomas**, *Gender Focal Point for the Energy Department, Industrial Development Officer, UNIDO*

*Mr. Jossy Thomas is currently the Gender Focal Point for the Energy Department. As Industrial Development Officer of the Renewable and Rural Energy Division at the Energy Department of UNIDO and as long time Sustainable Energy practitioner, he has over 18 years of international technical cooperation experience with UN ESCAP, Bangkok and UNIDO. He has a Bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering from the National Institute of Technology, Bhopal, India, a Master’s degree in Energy Technology from the Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok, and has an MBA from the Open University, UK. He currently manages more than 20 projects in Africa and Asia that promote sustainable energy and inclusive development, as well as include projects that focus on empowering women or have a strong gender lens integrated.*



**Ms. Ana Victoria Rojas**, *Energy Task Manager, Global Gender Office (GGO), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)*

*Ms. Ana Victoria Rojas is a sustainable development specialist with more than fifteen years of experience working with policy makers, program practitioners, international organizations, NGO’s and grassroots level organizations in Latin America, Asia, Africa and Europe. She has a background in environmental law, graduating from the University of Costa Rica (Law Bach. and Lic. degree in Law) in 2001 and pursuing her M.Sc. on Environmental Management, at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (2003-2004). Ana has built her expertise as a sustainable development specialist working on climate change, energy, poverty, gender and sustainable development sectors. She has worked for CEDARENA, in Costa Rica, BothENDS and ETC Foundation/ENERGIA in the Netherlands. Ana combines her current position as energy task leader for IUCN’s Global Gender Office with the provision of technical support to gender and mitigation pilot projects in the Mekong Region.*

**Coordinator**

Katharina Proestler, UNIDO