



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME 



WOMEN'S SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ACCESS

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The Issue

Increasing women's access to sustainable energy and opportunities for energy entrepreneurship are crucial for alleviating energy poverty and realizing gender equality worldwide.

Today, about 1.3 billion people lack access to electricity and 2.9 billion use solid biomass for cooking and heating. Based on current trends, it will take until 2080 to achieve universal access to electricity, and the mid-22nd century for access to clean energy for cooking.

Women's voice and participation have been largely absent in energy policies. Yet women bear the disproportionate burden of energy poverty. Their health and safety are at risk from household air pollution, carrying heavy fuel loads, and lack of lighting – undermining women's social and economic rights, including rights to education and paid employment.

But women are also powerful agents of change. In many countries, they are the primary household managers of domestic and productive energy. As entrepreneurs women have enormous potential to create networks in rural and peri-urban areas that increase the availability of energy services and technologies while lowering costs to consumers.

This potential is vastly under-utilized. Removing barriers to equal opportunities and outcomes for women workers, producers, and entrepreneurs in sustainable energy is necessary for achieving universal access to modern energy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.


Our Strategy for Change

Improving women's access to sustainable energy and empowering women to become energy entrepreneurs is a priority for UN Women and UNEP.

Experience in this field has shown that the transition to sustainable energy requires a shift in the current paradigm from one where women are passive providers and users of energy, to one where they actively participate and take leadership in promoting sustainable energy technologies and their productive uses.

GENDER EQUALITY IN SUSTAINABLE ENERGY: KEY TO ACHIEVING THE SE4ALL GOALS AND SDGs
 This Programme contributes to achieving the SDGs on poverty eradication, healthy lives and well-being, gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, reduction of inequalities, sustainable consumption and production, and access to modern energy for all. It also contributes to the Sustainable Energy for All goals to provide universal access to modern energy services, double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency, and double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix.

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By removing gender-specific structural barriers and discrimination, a level playing field can be created that opens the energy sector to women workers and entrepreneurs. This strategy has proven effective in other sectors to address gender gaps and promote inclusive development and growth, notably in agriculture. Support for gender-responsive energy services and technologies will empower women to seize new productive and income-generation opportunities. This strategy will include:

1. Increasing women's substantive participation in energy policy formulation;
2. Promoting targeted policies to support women's access and economic empowerment in the sustainable energy sector;
3. Removing barriers to access to finance for women entrepreneurs;
4. Facilitating access to education, technical skills and justice for women in the sustainable energy sector;
5. Eliminating harmful social norms and stereotypes about gender roles in energy technology;
6. Increase household and community access to energy services and technologies to reduce unpaid domestic and care work;
7. Increase the capacity of women for productive use of sustainable energy.

These measures will create decent work and income-generation opportunities for women by increasing their access to sustainable energy services, technologies, financing, and skills and capabilities. The resulting improvements in women's safety, wellbeing, and empowerment should make a major contribution to the achievement of a number of SDGs.

How the Programme works

UNEP and UN Women have joined forces, as the leading environmental and gender equality agencies in the United Nations system, to develop a Global Programme on Women's Sustainable Energy Entrepreneurship and Access.

Together, UN Women and UNEP will support countries to create enabling environments for women's entrepreneurship and access to sustainable energy, including the promotion of gender-responsive sustainable energy plans and policies

COVER PHOTO: Burkina Faso, 2013. At a time when 2.9 billion people still use solid biomass for cooking and heating, increasing women's access to sustainable energy and opportunities for energy entrepreneurship are crucial for alleviating energy poverty and realizing gender equality.

FACTS AND FIGURES - WHY INVEST IN WOMEN AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

- 1.1 billion people lack access to electricity and 2.9 billion use solid biomass for cooking and heating homes (UN, 2015).
- 65% of primary schools and over 30% of health facilities in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity (Practical Action, 2014).
- Women have a higher relative risk than men of developing adverse health outcomes due to exposure to smoke from solid fuels, including COPD and lung cancer (WHO, 2014).
- A village woman in northern Nigeria can spend 60 to 80 times more for energy than a resident of an industrialized country (Kofi Annan's foreword to *Africa Progress Report 2015: Seizing Africa's energy and climate opportunities*).
- Solar PV module prices in 2014 were 75% lower than in 2009 (IRENA, 2013).
- Only 20% of the renewable energy workforce is women (IRENA, 2013).
- Women entrepreneurs can demonstrate more than twice the business capacity and success than men (wPower Hub Report, 2014).

and removal of barriers to financing, acquisition of skills, and women's productive use of sustainable energy technologies.

The Global Programme will initially focus on six pilot countries: Senegal, Morocco, Myanmar, India, Indonesia and Bolivia. Implementation will be based on joint annual workplans. It is expected that the methodologies and experiences of the pilots will be replicated and extended to a number of self-starting countries. Country initiatives will be supported by UN Women and UNEP's team of experts.

Partnerships for change

To create the enabling environment for such processes and outcomes to occur will require the mobilization, coordination, and capacity-building of a broad range of stakeholders.

UN Women and UNEP have established networks of local, national and international partners, including civil society organizations, academic institutions and technical institutes in the field of sustainable energy and women's empowerment. The Programme will leverage these partnerships to meet the specific needs of each country context.