



# The Gender Face of Energy

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# *Does Gender Matter in the Delivery of Energy Services?*

- **Complex inter-relationship between energy and socio-economic position of women.**
- **Women's overwork in rural developing countries is in part a result of their gendered responsibility for providing cooked food as a household public good.**
- **Sweat energy by women and girls in collecting wood fuels eg., In many parts of India on an average 3 hours a day, they spend on such collection.**
- **'Worldwide, close to two million premature deaths per year are attributable to indoor air pollution from cooking fires.' (UNDP 2001:9).**
- **Harmful effects on children, who stay near the mother, also inhale fumes and thus have adverse effects on the respiratory system.**

# Demystifying Engendering Process

- Engendering is a process to achieve gender equality, and overcome the costs of women's marginalization and exclusion
- Emerged in the mid-1990s, as a concern of the international women's movement and some leading feminist economists (for example Amartya Sen) for alternative strategies to move women's issues out of the periphery and transforming the mainstream of development (policy and implementation)
- Integration/ incorporation of women-centered programs and gender issues into development institutions

# Gender Mainstreaming?

➤ **Increasing questioning of 'gender mainstreaming' for its populist approach and misuse by dominant ideologies and practices to promote:**

**1. Subsuming of gender concerns;**

**2. Women's dependency or "protective dependency" and reproductive work in the poverty reduction frameworks or economic development approaches;**

**3. Hindering empowerment agency of women in terms of provision of effective rights and dignity to the disadvantaged;**

**4. Little attention paid to gender inequalities in voice, power and influence**

Women transporting fuel wood when women's labour has no economic value



Draft power to transport fuel wood  
when opportunity costs of women's  
labour increases



# Improved position of women with their increased control/ownership of energy resources/technology



# Transformation of gender relations with women's participation in economic work and local management





# Gender Analysis

- **Gender is an independent category of analysis, not a subset of poverty**
- **Recognizes that households and communities are not solitary units with undifferentiated labor and resources but in fact made up of women, men and children who may share, compliment, differ or be in direct conflict in their need for or interest in new technologies and socio-economic change**
- **Acknowledges that women (like men) are not a homogenous group – having possible differences based on age, status, class, caste, ethnicity, location etc.**

# Gender Analysis: Four Major Questions

- **Who does what, when and where in enterprise, off-farm, farm, and household maintenance?**
- **Who has access to ownership and control over resources production, knowledge, technology, time and decision-making. Having access without control may mean great constraints and less flexibility in using the resource.**
- **Who benefits from the existing organization of production, community and household resources? This question is closely related to roles, responsibilities and control over resources. For example, technological innovations may increase women's workload without providing any direct benefit to them.**
- **How and to what extent do cultural systems, poverty reduction policies and technology projects address or contribute to the transformation of gender relations/ or the relations between the disadvantaged and the advantaged.**

# ***Some critical concepts***

- **Gender division of labour:** While the gendered division of labour affects household decisions on energy use, the gendered division of labour itself is not something that is completely static.
- **The opportunity cost of women's labour:** If the marginal income from women's labour is much higher than the marginal income from men's labour, then there is a greater likelihood of change in the household division of labour; with men taking up additional domestic responsibilities.
- **Increase in women's income earning activities:** An increase in a woman's income-earning activities does not necessarily lead to a change in either the division of labour or the use of labour-saving methods/devices.
- **Energy, leisure and everyday practices:** Leisure is not a function of enjoyment but a function of self-development, and thus also a function of production and empowerment.

# Gender equality for good economics

- “Gender equality is not only a matter of social injustice but also good economics” (World Bank 1995).
- The United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) called for the promotion of “Gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease”.
- Expanding women’s capabilities (i.e. health, education, access and control of resources, and decision-making), freedom (i.e. mobility, accessing local markets and management of resources), rights (i.e. economic, political and cultural), representation in adequate/ substantial numbers in local, national and international bodies
- Discrimination of and underinvestment in women means a missed opportunity for a higher rate of human capital formation, losses in productivity, and lower welfare of families and society at large. There is extensive data to prove, for example, that women’s independent/ unmediated control/ ownership of assets (labor, land, housing) health, education functions as a catalyst that increases the impact of other investments in health, nutrition, family planning, agriculture, industry, energy and infrastructure.

# Beyond Instrumentalist Approach: Addressing Women's Strategic Needs

- **Gender and poverty frameworks has generally been welfare-oriented: emphasizing women's families welfare, and to some extent reducing women's burdens.**
- **Little attention has been paid to enhance women's voice, power and their economic agency and change in gender relations.**
- **Gender and poverty framework has also been instrumentalist: women's participation in development projects is an instrument for increasing production and productivity; that poverty reduction projects can be "more successful" with women's participation**

# Beyond Instrumentalist Approach: Addressing Women's Strategic Needs

- While these outcomes are not necessarily a bad thing and to some extent raised the visibility of gender concerns in development analysis.
- However, the energy development policies, like poverty reduction approaches have rarely questioned the gender specific inequality and the transformation of gendered existence of women or the strategic needs of women, arising from women's subordinate/ disadvantaged position.