

**Women's Major Group Statement
CSD-14 Multi-stakeholder Dialogue
May 3, 2006**

In spite of energy services being essential for human existence, energy poverty impacts on the livelihoods of rural and urban communities in developing countries. This energy poverty has a gender dimension in which women are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to energy services. Women spend large amounts of time and physical energy obtaining traditional fuels; work over indoor smoky fires that cause respiratory illnesses and other diseases; and grow and process food and transport heavy loads without motorized equipment.

Again in spite of this situation, energy needs for the poor communities, particularly the women and children in these communities, in terms of access to energy services, are rarely taken into account in national policies, programmes and projects. Energy agencies tend to focus on increasing fossil fuel supplies and expanding electrical distribution grids for industrial and urban expansion. Most energy managers are male engineers with primarily technical and little social, expertise.

Achieving gender-sensitive energy policies and initiatives is well within reach as governments gain a better understanding of the linkages between gender, energy, and development; enable women to take part in decision-making; improve women's access to energy technologies, training, and financing; and empower women to become energy entrepreneurs. Relatively simple changes, such as gathering data that reflects impacts on both men and women, can make energy policies more effective and equitable for end users.

Governments that follow this approach have already benefited and learned the following important lessons:

1. **Supportive government policies help promote the integration of gender concerns into energy policies, projects and planning processes.** In Uganda for example, the National Gender Policy was a significant factor in the gender-responsiveness of the Uganda Photovoltaic Pilot Project for Rural Electrification.
2. **Income-generating uses of energy technologies can help make energy services affordable for women, and increase their social and political status.** In Mali, the Multifunctional Platform Project for village power has enabled women's groups to operate equipment, lighting, and water pumps, providing the women with a source of income and gaining them respect for bringing significant benefits to their villages.
3. **Introduction of energy technologies are most successful when they address the needs of people meant to use them.** In India, a stoves disseminated programme led by the government, received improved results only after changes

were made to its implementation, to explicitly consult with women end users and involve women involvement in maintenance and women increased participation in the overall process.

This CSD session is a microcosm of how the world approaches the energy sector. When women raise the flag that it is important to differentiate between women's and men's energy needs and uses, governments and global institutions stand in agreement, as they have done here beginning with the gender and energy panel on Monday. But progress in understanding the gender-energy linkage, in the larger world or at the CSD, has not automatically translated into bottom-up and rights-based approaches to energy planning. The Women's Major Group sees CSD-14 and -15 as an opportunity to bridge this gap between understanding and concrete action—toward energy planning that puts women's empowerment and their adequate participation in management and decision-making at the center, not only in developing countries, but also in industrialized countries and countries in transition.