

Turning Information into Empowerment, Strengthening Gender and Energy Networking

The course was presented by Ms. Sabina Anokye Mensah, Gender and Development Coordinator of GRATIS Foundation in Ghana, and moderated by Ms. Anoja Wickramasinghe, Coordinator of National Network on Gender and Energy in Sri Lanka. The instructor, using two training Modules, gave a condensed version of normally a 5 day workshop developed by ENERGIA which is designed for training in gender mainstreaming throughout project cycles in the energy sector.

Ms. Mensah highlighted the importance of first understanding the concept of “gender” in order to achieve “gender mainstreaming”. To be gender sensitive is to consider the actual or potential impacts of a policy or programme on lives of women. Gender mainstreaming is intended to reflect the gender sensitivity in project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation so as to try mitigating potential negative impacts.

One of the prerequisites of promoting gender mainstreaming is to have gender sensitive data. During the planning phases of a community development programme in a sector such as energy, gender sensitive data gathering facilitates the design and implementation of gender sensitive projects. ENERGIA developed a data gathering methodology based on a simple and inexpensive Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) method. To avoid validity problems, the lecturer recommends using a combination of different tools and techniques, such as wealth ranking, mapping, modelling and seasonal calendars, interviews, observations and focus group discussions. It is important to know the strengths and weaknesses of each data gathering tool and to be selective to suit specific circumstances.

Through the example of Ghana Gender and Energy Project, Ms. Mensah demonstrated how the method was adapted to an energy programme. The different techniques could be used to identify stakeholders, opportunities and constraints in a given cultural/social context, people’s preferences and specific desires for change. Once all the required information is gathered, which would take extreme patience and good communication skills, the planner can reflect and take stock on the needs and solutions and decide which intervention would benefit the community.