

Intervention Lesha Witmer (Netherlands Women's council) on behalf of the Women Major group/ caucus 2 May 2006 "Improving Access to Energy services"(morning).

A major constraint for getting affordable, safe energy to (especially) rural areas is the combination of high cost of the "traditional" big installations and transport compared to local means. The slogan seems to be big (system), long distance, high cost instead of appropriate – local – system, close, low cost local ownership.

Develop local solutions at smaller scale and with local input and management is a better solution. Sharing information makes it possible to involve local communities they make their own choices, because they know what the choices are.

Most people are willing to pay for energy services, not all are able to pay. Poor people can spend the little they have only ones, just like most of us. Rural communities still depend largely on trading services and goods (and not work with money). However "in kind" contributions are seldom part of the tariff structures and subsidy-systems. We recommend to be creative and look this possibility too.

We thank Norway for their comments on microfinance and land tenure. We would like to hear more from Argentina about the local / regional maintenance centres. We recommend the EU for finally starting the EU energy facility; our concern however is that the procedure to access the funds is so substantial and complicated that we need to do capacity building with the CSO's and seed money to actually develop the projects to be allegeable and are therefore concerned that the funds will not reach CSO's / NGO's.

Women are the main costumers using electricity for household uses, small business and in communities with the majority being women – due to war, economic migration etc. – and female headed households, they have to maintain the installations/ technology. However, if and when vocational training is part of the program, women are not seen as the group to educate because it does not fit in the traditional role division. That is not sustainable and we urge to facilitate women (groups) by giving them appropriate training and let them handle the management and maintenance. The above is especially of importance in rural areas and will bring down exploitation cost and make the investment sustainable.