

Women's Major Group Contribution to Discussions on Energy and Sustainable Development

Building on international affirmations and commitments on gender, sustainable development and energy, the Women's Major Group presents the following priorities:

1. In developing countries, especially in the poorest areas, where most energy is currently supplied by biomass fuel, primarily by women, policies should be implemented that focus on expanding access to cleaner, more efficient and affordable cooking fuels. Government should make commitments to reduce by half, by 2015, the number of women without effective access to clean cooking fuels, and make improved cooking technologies widely available.
2. Provision of clean and affordable energy services for household and productive activities should be prioritized as a basic need. Governments, the private sector, civil society and local communities should all take an active role in the development, investment and delivery of clean and affordable end-use technologies and fuels that directly meet poor women's household and productive energy needs.
3. National sustainable development plans, including poverty reduction strategies, should prioritize poor women's and men's access and ownership to energy services as a central feature in the formulation of energy policies and implementation.
4. International financial institutions should develop comprehensive strategies focusing on investments in energy infrastructure and end-use technologies that directly meet poor women's energy needs.

Innovative energy financing options should strengthen women's access to mainstream banking and micro-financing opportunities in order to support enterprise development.

5. Governments and Major Groups should guarantee women's effective participation and representation in energy decision-making and management at every level. This should include support to energy institutions to engage with gender issues, and the professional education for women in energy, engineering and vocational technical training. This will facilitate a critical mass of women and men practitioners that can effectively integrate a gender perspective in the energy and development sectors.
6. In conflict and disaster situations, special efforts should be made to ensure that displaced women and their families have access to energy services in ways that do not endanger their lives.

Finally, we call upon governments to recognize the importance of energy access for health care, food security and education necessary to address the impacts of HIV/AIDS. This is of critical importance to women and young girls in developing countries, given that they are the highest risk group.