



European
Commission



Women and Sustainable Energy Stakeholder consultation

Brussels, 7 and 8 December 2016

Summary Report on the Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on the “Women and Sustainable Energy” Initiative

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A global meeting with broad consensus paving the way for action

The *Stakeholder Consultation Meeting*, held in Brussels on 7 and 8 December 2016 in view of launching the future Programme on “*Women and Sustainable Energy*”, successfully gathered more than 100 participants from all over the world, representing public authorities, donors, financial institutions, private companies, NGOs, civil society and community-based organisations.

The summary below gives a general overview of the main points of discussions and conclusions of the event, from the plenary panels and working group sessions.

The opening remarks presented by Mr Roberto Ridolfi, director for Sustainable Growth and Development, Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, underlined the EU’s commitment to both **gender equality and sustainable energy**, setting the scene for the fruitful discussions of the day regarding the context of women and energy and the gendered aspects of energy poverty, as well as the opportunities offered by sustainable energy. The interventions and presentations examined the challenges related to women’s engagement in the energy sector across different countries and regions, and the role of stakeholders in empowering women in the sustainable energy sector.

Gilda Monjane, Gender Energy Advisor, Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy of Mozambique mentioned the lack of sustainability of solar systems caused by a disparity between men and women’s training skills. Solar panels are left to disrepair when the men with the necessary skills leave the community looking for better job opportunities. For that reason she is now teaching women in her community on how to install and maintain solar systems.

Gifty Baaba Asmah, Executive Director, Daasgift Quality Foundation of Ghana explained that she is linking up the lighting and cooking producers, manufacturers and suppliers with the community, and implementing awareness and capacity-building programmes.

Jean-Louis Ville, Acting Director Human Development and Migration, Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (DEVCO) - European Commission, pointed out the lack of access to energy is gendered and the importance to link SDG5 (gender equality) and SDG7 (sustainable energy).

Koin Etuati, Energy Policy Officer, Economic Development Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Community focused on indicators for electrification rates and access to modern forms of energy for cooking outlining the importance of partnerships with different types of stakeholders.

Claude Turmes, Member of the European parliament, highlighted the importance of European Union support in decreasing renewable energy technologies costs (solar panels, LEDs and batteries). Thanks to this, universal access to energy will be easier to reach.

In the four working group sessions, based on the experiences shared, a series of challenges were highlighted and suggestions made on how best to address the barriers. Issues such as access to finance, skills, education, information and knowledge, enabling framework, social and cultural barriers were thoroughly discussed.



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Women's entrepreneurship and access to affordable finance

The debate opened on **availability versus accessibility** to finance. Overall, participants agreed that access to finance for renewable energy projects remains an important *challenge* limiting women's enterprises. Part of this challenge is related to financing sustainable energy technologies as such (e.g. risks for the investor), but it is also gender specific: banks may not be keen to lend to women because they lack collateral, credit history, bank accounts, etc. Another issue highlighted was that women may feel more confident and secure in dealing with a more trusted and confidential source of finance with other criteria taking less weight. Moreover, local financiers often lack the capacity to understand renewable energy projects and therefore, providing technical assistance to banks should also be considered. For larger projects, a suggestion was made to provide technical assistance to women to submit projects under ElectriFI calls.

Debates also covered the issue of **loans versus grants**. Grant capital may be needed to start businesses before private finance can take over or for some components that never pay back with loans being used to develop and grow these businesses. Furthermore, grants should cover aspects such as training, mentorship, and piloting of new approaches. However business models with large grant components should be avoided because they distort markets.

Conventional finances do not correspond to business models that are implemented by women. It is necessary to bring the two worlds together – financiers and women. Aggregation is the key challenge, selecting the most suitable way to allocate significant funding to many small entrepreneurs as transaction costs are high. The financing instruments themselves need to be based on women's experiences, address gender issues, be local and context-based, and include specific gender methodologies and indicators. Participants also highlighted the need for flexible, new and innovative systems, which bridge the gap between informal group savings and the formal banking system by, for instance, recognizing informal saving or sharing systems. Guarantees are never enough. Trust in micro-finance institutions also needs to be built. A valuable experience on result-based financing was also presented. Policies and regulations should enable private sector development (e.g. profit repatriation).

Discussions across the working groups also took place concerning the financing component. A consensus was that an appropriate mix of grants and loans is needed and this mix should be proposed by the applicants as it depends on the income level of beneficiaries and the approach they want to implement.

Women and sustainable energy technologies

The working groups identified a number of specific *challenges* in relation to women and sustainable energy technologies such as women's limited access to productive and financial resources, lack of available time, of affordability for technologies and fuels, and of access to affordable basic education and information. Moreover social and cultural barriers might prevent or restrain women from engaging in entrepreneurial activities. Added to these are the common challenges faced by sustainable energy projects such as the lack of an enabling local/national legal environment, of coherence between sectors but also between donors or insufficient engagement of the private sector in remote areas. Finally, some challenges are specific to the technologies themselves (costs, mal-adaptation to context, etc.). On *opportunities* for women in the sector, participants pointed out the multiple opportunities for women at all stages of the value chain, from R&D and design to last mile distribution. The types of technologies mentioned ranged from cookstoves, biogas, solar systems, mini-grids, briquettes production, waste-to-energy, waste management & recycling to biochar. Furthermore, many income generating activities (food processing, catering, etc.) can be based on energy productive uses without limiting traditional activities. It was recognized that women can also play a key role in the development and distribution of sustainable energy technologies as they are among the main users.

Recommendations stressed the need to capitalize on women's inherent skills and to mobilise women's networks, stressing also the relevance of women's added value in energy-related income generation.

Strengthening women's engagement in the sector requires to also include gender balance in decision-making and in the workforce as a whole, and to integrate women at all levels of organisations. Thus, capacity-building, including focusing on leadership and agency¹, mentoring, championing and awareness raising should play a central role within governments and local authorities, but also communities and men in the communities.



Participants suggested to adapt business models and interventions to the local context; to adopt a life cycle approach for the projects (“cradle to grave”); to promote good business ethics and inclusiveness as well as innovation (in products, business models, etc.). Local manufacturing should also be encouraged and there is the need to think beyond household needs and adapt existing renewable energy technologies to already ongoing activities.

Finally, it is important to continually learn and further develop: doing research (to gain a better understanding on sustainable energy technology relevance’s markets, barriers and impacts), monitoring, documenting lessons learnt, successes and best practices are all instrumental in this.

Enabling environment for women’s empowerment & entrepreneurship

Participants shared and exchanged their experiences on the enabling measures for boosting women’s active role and entrepreneurship in the SE sector, such as capacity building, vocational training, awareness raising, advocacy and decision-making.

Recommendations therefore included the necessity to involve and sensitize men at different levels, from children and young men to older men, including also leaders of communities, religious leaders, policemen, etc. Beyond individuals, awareness raising is also needed for local partners and authorities and must be adapted to the different contexts, and respond to women’s needs and realities in each country.

At the level of the government, advocacy is needed to ensure legal protection and end discrimination through reformed laws and regulations. According to the participants, advocacy is also needed to facilitate the dialogue between different ministries, institutions and/or stakeholders.

Capacity building and training were also identified by the participants as important tools to address the lack of information and skills, both technological and financial. However, these must target not only women, but also policy-makers, local authorities and the banking sector, and should be adapted to the educational level of the participants. Media as well as academia and research institutes were also identified as key to address information asymmetry.

In general, specific measures for capacity-building, trainings, advocacy and awareness should be adapted and addressed at all levels. It is important that the measures do not target only women

beneficiaries but also local organisations. Finally, the issues should be placed in their specific local context and an inclusive process to select women benefitting from trainings, programmes, etc. is needed to ensure the acceptance of the community and guarantee sustainability.

Role of stakeholders and partnerships

Discussions in this working group revolved around the following issues: types of partners and their role; the possible involvement of the private sector; the geographical scope of the Programme; co-financing; and the types of activities to be covered under the Programme.

Partnerships and types of partners

Participants stressed the need to include different types of entities in the proposed partnerships, such as academia, civil society, government (local, regional, national) and private sector. Complementarities between those partners were highlighted:

- **Academia** has the potential to provide research, general guidance and strategic planning;
- **Civil society organisations** (CSOs) can similarly “bridge the gap” and reach the most remote areas and poorest people (i.e. unattractive segments for the private sector). CSOs’ understanding of the local context also enables them to play an instrumental role in awareness raising and capacity building as well as in identifying local stakeholders to be involved. The participation of CSOs whose main field of expertise include gender based issues, women’s rights or women’s entrepreneurship was emphasized. These partners should be treated as equal partners even if their financial share may be less important;
- **Governmental institutions (at all levels)** are able to inscribe local projects in national programmes to increase their leverage, and/or partnering public agencies in order to ensure the integration of energy across sectors.
- **The private sector** is a key contributor to scale up the successful initiatives and then ensure the sustainability of the actions.

Overall, participants suggested that composition and type of partners should be left as open as possible based on the complementarity and added value of the different partners in relation to their

¹ Defined as thoughts and actions taken by people that express their individual power.



demonstrated respective field of expertise.

Building on existing partnerships

There was a consensus that building on existing partnerships could be the most appropriate strategy, as they should build on experiences and proven models to ensure scaling up, replicability and sustainability, but also because building new partnerships requires a long time and significant investment.

At the same time, participants also called for flexibility in the building of partnerships: while some partnerships may be obvious and established before the start of a project, some of them may arise in the course of the project, and might require a more flexible approach.

Geographical scope

While participants mentioned that it might be more equitable to have all regions involved, it was also acknowledged that the total amount for the Initiative (EUR 20 million) should not be spread over too many countries, and that projects should have a critical mass. Rather than funding many small projects, it may make sense to focus on a few large projects, or even just one very significant project. However, this does not rule out the fact that several regions could be included in the proposals. The CfP could leave it open to applicants to involve partners with different thematic and geographic expertise, and to have several regions included in one proposal. Another advantage of multi-regional partnerships is that they allow for more efficient coordination and richer sharing of experiences and information.

EU rules for grants

Nonprofit Clause

Participants expressed some concerns over the fact that grant beneficiaries cannot make any profit. This clause was seen as contradictory with the need to boost women entrepreneurship and might de-incentivise local manufacturing and distribution. The direct beneficiary is not allowed to make profit from the grant but of course final beneficiaries (women) are allowed to profit.

Co-financing

Co-financing is foreseen to be 20%. The participants voiced concerns over the minimum co-financing requested and that some partners might not be able to fulfil this requirement. While allocating smaller grants to several proposals would lower the amount of co-financing required, it may not ensure a critical

mass and more efficient partnership as mentioned above.

Activities under the CfP

The programme should be open to different types of technologies, as they will be related to the type of beneficiaries identified.

With regard to capacity-building activities, the term "vocational training" was seen as maybe too specific. It was acknowledged that capacity-building and skills enhancement will include, but not be limited to, vocational training. A key element would be to let the partners develop the rationale for how best to build a comprehensive approach and to support and enhance women's know-how and expertise in the SE sector (as entrepreneurs, but also possibly as employees, leaders, etc.).

Other recommendations

It was also stated that it is important to share and disseminate knowledge horizontally, in order to allow partners to share virtually, or potentially face to face experiences and results from the Programme.

The Way Forward

An important conclusion across the working groups is that addressing the existing challenges to enhance the active role and entrepreneurship of women and to empower them in and across the sustainable energy sector, needs a comprehensive and integrated approach. Concretely, this means that it is essential to address questions of access to finance and energy services *together with* capacity-building/skills development, awareness-raising, and advocacy measures.

The next step is to elaborate the guidelines for the Call for Proposals for the "Women and Energy Initiative" also taking into account the points debated in this consultation and the responses to the questionnaire survey.

Participants are welcome to send out any further comments or suggestions until 10 January 2017 to the following address: EuropeAid-WOMEN-ENERGY@ec.europa.eu

