

Women's Major Group Input to Secretary-General Reports for CSD-15

Section I:

ENERGIA Input on Gender and Energy in Developing Countries

Section II:

WEDO Input on climate change, unsustainable consumption and production, corporate responsibility and accountability, nuclear energy, renewable energy, and CSD governance.

Both sections include inputs from members of the Women's Major Group.

Section I:

ENERGIA – International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy

Submission to the Secretariat for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

August 2006

A. Background

The CSD Secretariat has solicited inputs from Major Groups that will be reviewed as they prepare the Secretary-General's Reports for CSD 15 on policy recommendations relating to the topics of energy for sustainable development, climate change, air pollution and industrial development. These reports will focus on policy options and possible actions to overcome constraints and obstacles, and meet challenges, that were identified at the CSD 14 session in May 2006. ENERGIA has prepared inputs concerning gender-related issues relevant to the policy discussions affecting energy and air pollution issues, primarily with regard to issues affecting developing countries.

Key points on Gender and Energy from CSD 14 Chair's Summary Part I

Part I of the Chair's Summary of the CSD 14 session included a number of references to the importance of improved energy services for cooking and heating to reduce indoor air pollution and advance health, education and employment opportunities for women (paragraphs 21, 60, 61, 75, 153, and 172).

Other sections emphasized the need for collecting gender disaggregated data to evaluate the impacts of energy projects (paragraphs 31 and 215) and assessing projects' social benefits in terms of women's health, education and income opportunities (paragraph 78).

There was particular mention of the importance of greater involvement of women in developing energy policies and designing and implementing energy projects (paragraphs 77, 201, 238), and the need to put women at the center of decision-making and management (154).

In addition, the summary included references to the need for energy to support income generating opportunities for women (paragraphs 78 and 154), as well as micro-finance programs to provide energy for women's enterprises (paragraph 120). Women's need for improved education, training and awareness of energy options was also noted (paragraphs 31 and 143).

Gender and Energy Issues Mentioned in CSD 14 Chair's Summary Part II – High Level Segment

Part II of the Chair's Summary for CSD 14 covered the High Level Segment of the CSD Session, which included dialogues with and among government ministers. Specific references to gender and energy included interventions calling for:

- improving access to modern energy services, particularly for poor women and children (paragraph 8);
- improving capacities and raising awareness about energy options, especially among women (paragraph 8);
- involving women at all levels of energy decision-making, management and implementation (paragraph 8);
- addressing the serious health threats to poor women and children in developing countries caused by indoor air pollution resulting from traditional cooking methods (paragraph 11); and
- involving the major groups, especially women and youth, in CSD 15 policy decisions (paragraph 30).

In the section on 'Responding to challenges: the way forward', the Chair's Summary of the High Level Segment included the following issues among the **challenges to be addressed in the course of the CSD 15 Policy Year**:

1. integrating a gender perspective in planning, decision-making, management and implementation (paragraph 36 g);
2. enhancing the roles and status of women, as participants and agents of change (paragraph 36(g));
3. providing access for all to reliable, affordable energy services, giving particular attention to the rural and urban poor, especially women, in order to meet basic human needs and the MDGs (paragraph 36(h)); and
4. reducing air pollution, with particular attention to indoor air pollution from traditional biomass fuels and its health impacts on women and children (paragraph 36(l)).

ENERGIA's suggestions for policy options and actions are designed to address these particular challenges.

B. Proposed Policy Options and Actions to Address Gender and Energy Challenges Identified at CSD 14

Challenge 1. Integrating a gender perspective into planning, decision-making, management and implementation

Energy policies in many developing countries neglect energy needs in rural areas relating to domestic, agricultural, and small-scale informal production activities – ones where women tend to predominate. In fact, policies and programmes generally viewed as gender-neutral may miss important issues and inadvertently discriminate against women. Gender sensitive energy policies and programmes would recognize that women and men have different energy needs due to their differing social and economic roles and would promote provision of energy technologies and services that match those needs. Gender sensitivity in national energy policies is most likely to be advanced by more general government policies related to gender equity and the advancement of women. [See [Gender and Energy for Sustainable Development: A Toolkit and Resource Guide](#), UNDP and ENERGIA, 2004, pages 21, 28-33, for more detailed information and references to research and case studies, www.undp.org/energy/gendereng.htm. See also the Introduction to [Generating Opportunities: Case Studies on Energy and Women](#), UNDP, 2001, www.undp.org/energy/publications/2001/2001a.htm.]

Specific actions recommended:

- a. Provide gender and energy training and capacity building for government officials and agencies.** Gender sensitive policies can best be achieved through gender mainstreaming, an approach which ensures that concerns and needs of both men and women are considered in all planning and policy-making. To reach this goal, government officials and staff members may need targeted training and capacity building workshops to raise their awareness of gender disparities and discrimination against women. It would also be helpful to provide specialised training designed to create a cadre of energy professionals – both men and women - who can help integrate a gender perspective into national policies and projects.
- b. Introduce gender budgeting.** Public expenditures on infrastructure and social services may currently reflect and support gender disparities, but can also be used to transform gender inequities. Gender budgeting is a tool that involves examining the entire government budget to determine its differential impacts on men and women, boys and girls, and attempting to balance the overall impacts.
- c. Collect and use disaggregated data to capture different impacts and needs of women and men.** In each step of policy processes – defining the issues, examining policy alternatives, making policy choices, implementing policies, and evaluating results – policymakers should use data differentiated by gender to determine who is using what forms of energy to do what. In most cases, this would require new approaches to government data collection procedures.
- d. Use needs assessments as starting points for policy and programme development.** Energy policies and programmes that focus on demand-side considerations rather than supply-side energy targets are more likely to reflect the needs of women and poor households. Needs assessments can also help integrate energy policies and programmes with other development initiatives relating to health, education, agriculture and job creation.

Challenge 2. Enhancing the roles and status of women, as participants and agents of change.

Energy ministries and institutions tend to be male dominated and, as a result, the issues identified and solutions offered often have a male bias. One way to promote the development of gender-sensitive energy policies is to ensure that more qualified women are engaged in policy-making positions. Another way is to pay more attention to the concerns, capabilities and contributions of women through the use of participatory planning and decision-making processes. In addition, broad-based policies and programmes are needed to remove political, social and practical barriers that inhibit women's full participation in development processes. [See *Gender and Energy for Sustainable Development: A Toolkit and Resource Guide*, UNDP and ENERGIA, 2004, pages 20-22 and 37-41, for more detailed information and references to research and case studies, www.undp.org/energy/gendereng.htm]

Specific actions recommended:

- a. Promote the training and recruitment of women professionals.** Affirmative action should be used to increase the participation of trained women in the energy sector and improve their status. Overall, there is considerable need for more mainstream acceptance of women in technical and scientific roles. Support for professional development of women can help governments incorporate gender sensitivity as an integral part of energy policies and practices (although the presence of a few women, by itself, will not guarantee the adoption of gender-sensitive policy goals).
- b. Use participatory processes to actively involve women in the design, selection, promotion and use of energy resources and technologies.** Informed participation by intended beneficiaries is crucial for successful energy policies and interventions. However, since women are so often excluded from decision-making processes, it is important to consider the specific constraints that keep women's voices from being heard and adopt procedures that enable women to contribute effectively.
- c. Draw on women's practical experience as users and suppliers of energy and custodians of natural resources.** Since in many developing countries women are the primary users and suppliers of traditional fuels, it makes sense that they should be consulted concerning their views on energy problems and priorities. Women have a wealth of information that could be tapped if there were mechanisms established to encourage their input, especially in terms of designing energy delivery systems that address community needs and environmental impacts.
- d. Support training programs for women to become energy technicians and producers of simple energy technologies.** Better access to information and technical training can increase the ability of women and women's groups to contribute to energy solutions, including the adoption of new, cleaner fuels and equipment. However, lack of literacy and the ability to handle bookkeeping and accounting is a major obstacle for many women in developing countries. Technical training in machine operation and maintenance and business skills often needs to be combined with some basic education. Local gender sensitisation workshops have proved to be effective in boosting women's confidence in their ability to learn new skills, building support from husbands and traditional leaders, and promoting women's full participation in community development processes.

Challenge 3. Providing access for all to reliable, affordable energy services, giving particular attention to the rural and urban poor, especially women, in order to meet basic human needs and the MDGs

Lack of modern energy services in developing countries is linked with poverty, poor health, and overwhelming burdens on women who must gather fuel and carry water to meet household needs, and cook over smoky indoor fires. Women in such circumstances have few opportunities for education, employment, or social and political engagement, and the prospects for their daughters are similarly limited, since girls are frequently kept home from school to help their overburdened mothers.

Investments in basic energy infrastructure that would reduce women's current burdens could bring substantial returns in terms of meeting the commitments of Agenda 21 and JPOI, as well as the Millennium Development Goals – by increasing options for producing income and reducing poverty levels (MDG 1), providing more educational opportunities for women and girls (MDG 2) and greater empowerment of women (MDG 3), improving health and safety for women and their families (MDGs 4, 5 and 6), and ensuring more sustainable use of natural resources (MDG 7). [See [Gender and Energy for Sustainable Development: A Toolkit and Resource Guide](#), UNDP and ENERGIA, 2004, pages 17-20, 23-24, and 34-37 for more detailed information and references to research and case studies, www.undp.org/energy/gendereng.htm.]

Specific actions recommended:

a. Link access to energy for women with employment and enterprise development opportunities, not just household activities. Poor women in developing countries generally cannot afford to pay to pay for new equipment unless it somehow can be used to generate income or reduce fuel costs. Therefore, energy policies and programmes will benefit women the most if they combine household energy services with the types of value-added productive activities typically undertaken by women, which are often informal, home-based, and fuel intensive. The results in terms of poverty reduction will be even more effective if greater access to energy for women is combined with information about possible income-generating activities from new energy equipment, business and managerial training for enterprise development, and/or training in producing and distributing new energy technologies. In some cases, it is most effective to focus on village-based initiatives, working with women's associations to organize community level energy systems and related economic enterprises.

b. Improve energy financing options available to women. Women face particular constraints in gaining access to credit for acquiring energy-related equipment. Most rural banks and lending institutions have collateral and credit history requirement that exclude poorer borrowers, and women may face additional legal restrictions limiting their ability to own land or other assets that could be used for collateral, or requiring their husbands consent to any business transactions. Support for innovative financing arrangements, including adaptations of existing micro-credit programmes that provide for larger loan amounts and longer repayment periods, could help women gain access to energy-related equipment they could use for generating income.

Challenge 4. Reducing air pollution, with particular attention to indoor air pollution from traditional biomass fuels and its health impacts on women and children

Inadequate or unaffordable access to cleaner and more efficient fuels and cooking devices, and related appliances and equipment, present barriers preventing women, especially in rural areas, from moving away from the use of traditional fuels in smoky indoor cooking and heating fires. Energy policies that focus on expanding affordable access to cleaner burning stoves and modern fuels - such as, for example, liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) - can be effective in reducing women's use of fuel wood and traditional biomass. [See [Gender and Energy for Sustainable Development: A Toolkit and Resource Guide](#), UNDP and ENERGIA, 2004, pages 9-10, 16-17, 22, 28 and 39-40 for more detailed information and references to research and case studies, www.undp.org/energy/gendereng.htm.]

Specific recommendations include:

- a. Adopt measures that increase access to modern cooking fuels in rural areas in locations and quantities convenient for women.** Better distribution and marketing systems for liquid or gas fuels (including liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), kerosene, butane, propane or natural gas) are needed to reach women in isolated rural areas. Promoting sales of small-sized containers would make it easier for women to purchase and carry the fuels. In some cases, government subsidies may be required to make these fuels affordable. In addition, investments in local production of biogas and other biofuels (such as ethanol and biodiesel), or biomass briquettes, represent viable alternatives to continuing reliance on expensive imported fuels.
- b. Increase availability of cleaner-burning biomass stoves, solar cookers and solar hot water heaters.** It is possible to reduce indoor air pollution by promoting the development, distribution and use of locally-designed cleaner-burning stoves. Women and community organizations can be engaged in designing, producing and marketing locally-appropriate improved stoves. In addition, the introduction of solar cookers and hot water heaters, where appropriate, can reduce the need for indoor fires.
- c. Promote household practices that increase ventilation and reduce exposure to indoor cooking fires.** Even without expensive changes in fuels, stoves or equipment, efforts can be made to promote the use of vents, windows, stove hoods, and chimneys, or rearrange kitchen areas, to allow greater ventilation of smoke from indoor fires.

Section II:**WEDO – Women’s Environment and Development Organization**

Submission to the Secretariat for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development
August 2006

In addition to the gender and energy recommendations developed by Energia, WEDO has developed policy and action recommendations that are also of significance to the Women’s Major Group. These recommendations are focused on climate change, unsustainable consumption and production, corporate responsibility and accountability, nuclear energy, renewable energy, and CSD governance.

Climate Change*Recommended policies/ actions*

Conduct a gender impact analysis in relation to all policies and activities related to climate change

Employ gender balance and ensure women’s participation in climate change decision-making and projects

Build awareness about the gender implications of climate change, specifically engaging women and women’s organizations as agents of change

Ensure international cooperation and joint action around the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol, with developed countries taking the lead

Ensure women’s involvement as trainers, trainees, technology producers, and technicians in programs and projects related to climate change and disaster prevention

Related CSD Challenges

Responsibility of developed countries to take the lead in actions on climate change in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibility

Enhancing public awareness of climate change issues in order to influence personal behavior and build support for public measures

Enhanced international action and cooperation under the Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol

Rationale

The IPCC has noted that the impacts of global warming will fall disproportionately on developing countries and the poor within all countries. Women are the poorest of the poor and serve multiple roles from caregivers to resource managers, but are often not prioritized in disaster preparedness or climate change mitigation activities. Women are poorly represented in

planning and decision-making processes in climate change policies, limiting their capacity to engage in political decisions that can impact their specific needs and vulnerabilities. Yet women provide social capital for mitigation, adaptation and coping with environmental change, actively organising during and after disasters to help their households and community. Women and gender issues are grossly underrepresented in discussions on climate change, and forums like the CSD and UNFCCC should seek to tackle this issue adequately.

Unsustainable consumption and production

Recommended policy/ action

Ensure that the countries with the highest rates of consumption and production per capita take steps to transform these unsustainable patterns

Related CSD Challenge

Unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, with developed countries taking the lead

Rationale

Developed countries are the highest contributors to unsustainable consumption and production, yet little is being done to curb this problem. These countries should set the example of implementing awareness campaigns and setting benchmarks related to this issue.

Corporate responsibility and accountability

Recommended policy/ action

Ensure that all policies and programmes are guided by a human rights perspective rather than private sector interests

Related CSD Challenge

Corporate social and environmental responsibility as a permanent feature of business culture and adopted by a broad cross-section of the international and national business communities as basic rules of good business was recognized by most State representatives as essential to the achievement of sustainable development.

Rationale

At CSD-15, business and industry were given special status (including their own day) and market-based strategies were widely validated as a fix-all solution to energy poverty and access. Although the CSD-15 report mentions strengthening corporate environmental and social responsibility and accountability, the related initiatives and processes are weak and largely voluntary. The strong focus and faith put on the private sector's ability to overcome the barriers and challenges posed by the four thematic areas of CSD-14 is symptomatic of the current trend

to prioritize the private sector's involvement over the social and economic rights of women and men.

Nuclear energy

Recommended policy/ action

Phase out nuclear energy sources and shift subsidies from nuclear energy to the research, production and dissemination of renewable energy technologies.

Related CSD Challenge

Ensure environmentally sound, socially acceptable and cost effective solutions and address nuclear safety and spent fuel and waste management as well as public concerns on these issues

Rationale

While some countries at CSD-14 identified nuclear energy as a possible supply option, the impacts of nuclear accidents don't stop at the borders of nations, as evidenced by the Chernobyl disaster and other disasters. Nuclear energy is an unsustainable, polluting, and dangerous source of energy, and brings with it related problems of uranium mining and nuclear waste. The CSD should take a strong stand against nuclear energy in favor of other sustainable and safe options.

Renewable Energy

Recommended policies/ actions

Replace fossil fuels and nuclear energy with alternative, renewable, and non-polluting energy sources.

Increase subsidies and facilitate the transfer of technologies in order to significantly increase the adoption of energy efficiency and renewable energy sources.

Enhance awareness about the benefits and cost effectiveness of solar, wind, and other renewable energy sources.

Related CSD Challenges

More technological cooperation on advanced energy technologies, including advanced, cleaner fossil fuel technologies

Regional alignment of standards and labelling for consumer appliances, fuel quality and vehicular pollution controls is critical

Increased focus on energy efficiency in the transport sector, including consideration of bus rapid transit systems and vehicle fuel efficiency standards

Training, capacity-building and promoting greater awareness about the advantages of energy and resource efficiency in industry, Governments and households

Rationale

At CSD-14, we witnessed the push of “clean coal” and “clean nuclear power,” but these are not clean and renewable sources of energy. Alternative energy is no longer just an “environmental” topic — it is also a viable avenue for revitalizing economies. Many renewable energy technologies are now fully mature and costs are competitive with those of technologies relying on fossil fuels. Renewable energy sources, such as solar power, hydro power, biomass energy, etc, can be harnessed locally, are usually inexpensive or free, and are less damaging to the environment. Many countries are dependent on polluting sources of energy even though practical alternatives exist that don’t threaten health and the environment. Antiquated energy technologies contribute to air pollution that impact human health, particularly poor and disadvantaged communities – in developed, developing, and transitional countries.

CSD Governance

Recommended policy/ action

Renew CSD’s role as a forum for multilateral action, goal-setting, and equity.

Rationale

The majority of government interventions at CSD-14 reviewed micro-level or domestic activities, rather than efforts toward international cooperation and achieving benchmarks that should be at the heart of the CSD. The CSD-14 bureau did not include any women, and women were mostly absent from panels. In Agenda 21, Chapter 38 requests that the Secretary-General work toward gender balance, as defined in Article 8 of the Charter of the United Nations. Thus, specific actions should be taken by the bureau to ensure that CSD-15 is based on multilateral discussions, sets global targets and timetables, and ensures gender balance.