

Women as a Major Group at the CSD

Submission to the Secretariat for the UN Commission on Sustainable Development

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A. Integrating a gender perspective into energy planning, decision-making, management and implementation

1. Energy policies, legislation, and programmes should recognize that women and men have different social and economic roles, and should place more emphasis on domestic uses and small-scale agricultural and informal income-generating activities where women predominate.
2. Gender mainstreaming approaches should be used to ensure that concerns of both men and women are considered in planning and policy-making. Government officials should receive training on how to integrate gender issues into their work.
3. Disaggregated data should be used by governments to identify and quantify different energy needs of women and men, design and implement policies and programmes, and evaluate results.
4. Gender audits and needs assessments should be used to ensure that energy policies focus less on supply targets and more on demand-side considerations, in order to better reflect the needs of women and poor households, and also to help integrate energy actions with national poverty reduction plans and development initiatives on health, education, agriculture and job creation.
5. Gender budgeting should be applied to public energy expenditures and investment programmes in order to make targeting of policies and resources more equitable.

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

7. Since energy ministries and institutions are generally male-dominated, governments should adopt affirmative action programmes to ensure that more qualified women are trained and hired for policy-making positions.
8. Participatory processes should be used to actively involve women in the design, selection, promotion and use of energy resources and technologies.
9. Training programmes should encourage women to become energy technicians and producers by including machine operation and maintenance, as well as other technical and business skills.

10. Given the gender imbalances in the CSD bureau, panels, and delegations, the CSD should prioritise increasing women's participation and representation.

C. Providing access for all to reliable, affordable energy services

11. Without modern energy services, women and girls must gather fuel and carry water for household needs, and cook over smoky indoor fires. Increased investments in basic energy infrastructure are needed to reduce women's burdens and meet the Millennium Development Goals, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition. Governments should address women's access to energy in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and national sustainable development plans.

12. Increased access to energy for women should be coupled with employment and enterprise development opportunities, since most poor women in developing countries cannot afford to pay for new equipment unless it can be used to generate income or reduce fuel costs.

13. Improved energy financing options should be made available to women for income-generating activities, since women face particular constraints in obtaining bank credit or owning land and assets that could be used for collateral.

D. Improving health by reducing indoor air pollution from traditional fuel use

14. Governments should focus on expanding access to cleaner burning and more efficient cooking fuels (such as LPG, kerosene, butane, natural gas) especially in small containers that women can afford and carry, and should explore investments in local production of biofuels for use in meeting the energy needs of the poor in an environmentally friendly way. Governments should commit themselves to halve the percentage of people cooking with traditional biomass fuels by 2015.

15. Indoor air pollution should be reduced through cleaner-burning stoves, and solar cookers and hot water heaters, as well as vents, windows, stove hoods, and chimneys for better ventilation.

E. Taking action on climate change and ensuring gender-sensitivity in related policies and programs

16. Since global warming will disproportionately affect poor women, governments and institutions should conduct gender impact analyses to identify gender-specific needs and protection measures related to floods, droughts, and other disasters. Information is also needed on connections between gender-based resource use patterns and environmental impacts, such as deforestation due to inappropriate agricultural practices or weak tenure rights.

17. Women play a critical role in mitigating and adapting to environmental changes. Governments and institutions at all levels should involve women in climate change decision-making and take advantage of their particular skills in natural resource management and conflict prevention. .

18. Without secure access to and control over natural resources, women are less able to cope with climate change. Thus, as part of their climate change activities, governments and institutions should work closely with women's organizations to improve women's access to resources.

19. Governments should work to ensure international cooperation and joint action on implementation of the UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol. Developed countries that are the major sources of greenhouse emissions should take the lead, and non-binding agreements should be discouraged.

F. Ensuring accountability for sustainable industrial development

20. Developed countries currently have the most unsustainable consumption and production rates and should use awareness campaigns, legal requirements, and economic incentives to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency.

21. Rather than depending on private sector involvement and market-driven approaches, the CSD and governments should adopt rights-based strategies designed to directly benefit those most affected by energy poverty and the impacts of climate change.

H. Alternative energy sources that do not endanger the environment or health

22. Governments and other institutions should promote investments in and raise awareness about alternative energy technologies that are readily available and have tremendous potential for supporting economic development with low greenhouse gas emissions. Appropriate alternative energy technologies include wind and solar systems, small hydro-electric generators, modern biofuel systems, and energy efficiency mechanisms.

23. Governments should work towards reducing reliance on fossil fuels. In addition to contributing to global warming, combustion of fossil fuels produces air pollution that negatively impacts human health, particularly in poor and disadvantaged communities. Extraction and transportation of coal and oil also negatively impacts communities by destroying land and degrading water resources.

24. Given the wide-reaching and dangerous impacts of nuclear accidents and radioactive nuclear wastes, environmental degradation due to uranium mining, and health risks from nuclear energy, the CSD and governments should work to ensure that nuclear energy sources are phased out.