

9 Nov 2022 | 14:00 CET | Virtual

PWCET Series

**Employment & Entrepreneurship in
the DRE Sector - a Gender Perspective**



PWCET Series – 7th Event

Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Decentralised Renewable Energy Sector – A Gender Perspective

Introduction

Under the new joint initiative 'Paving the way for Clean Energy Transition with Decentralised Renewable Energy (PWCET) Series', the [Alliance for Rural Electrification](#) (ARE) and the [Green People's Energy](#) (GBE) organised the seventh event titled "Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Decentralised Renewable Energy Sector – A Gender Perspective" on 9th November 2022. The webinar had **424 registrations** and attracted **more than 125 attendees**, worldwide.

Event Summary

The webinar was opened by, **Mr. Jens Jaeger, Director of Policy & Business Development, ARE** who introduced ARE, the PWCET series and the topic of the webinar to the audience.

Mr. Deepak Mohapatra, the Senior Officer - Business & Market Development, ARE carried on with the proceedings of the session as the moderator.

Mr. Thomas Fohgrub, Head of the GPA Coordination Unit, UNITAR gave a keynote speech where he explained why women and girls are the important clients and beneficiaries of DRE solutions in rural areas. Focusing on the audience that was keen on learning more about the subject, Mr. Fohgrub explained that the lack of clean energy for cooking is one of the key problems affecting the health and safety of women and girls in rural areas. Majority of these women still use dirty fuels like firewood and charcoal to cook and hence, causing premature deaths arising from illness caused by household air pollution.



He also presented that women and girls are more likely to suffer health risks resulting from unreliable energy infrastructure. This was portrayed by the medical records from one of largest refugee camp in Tanzania, indicating major medical operations were conducted on women.

In conclusion Mr. Fohgrub explains that the energy sector needs people with passion and engineering skills are not always mandatory. People from all backgrounds can play a crucial role in transforming the entire ecosystem.

The first speaker was **Dr. Laurence Keke, Head of Business Development West Africa, ENGIE Energy Access**. Dr. Laurence Keke began by introducing the mission and business activities of ENGIE Energy Access. She further outlined the different solutions offered by the ENGIE with the aim of addressing the sustainable development goals (SDGs) especially SDG 7 that is in line with energy access. The two energy solutions that ENGIE Energy Access offers in rural and peri-urban areas of Africa are the solar home system and the and the mini-grid solutions.

Dr. Keke emphasised on the mini-grid business activities that focus on women in rural communities:

- MySol Grid - mini-grid business enables the development of small industrial platforms used by women to process crops, add a higher value to their products and increase their income
- MySol Grid subsidiaries develop training programmes for communities, with a focus on women entrepreneurs
- The companies implement a social electricity tariff that will allow low-income households to access electricity, especially single mothers with children
- Aside from electricity, the companies provide the electrical appliances on a lease-to-own model to support women as they launch their business

She went on pointing out the two main barriers to gender equality in the DRE sector as lack of skilled women and lower access to finance for female customers. After that, she shared ENGIE's commitment of having 50:50 gender ratio goal by 2030. Lastly, the conclusion was made with the recommendations that investing in capacity building and technical training for women,



implementing gender mainstreaming plans with a clear set of targets and promoting income-generating opportunities for women would mitigate the gender equality barriers.

The following speaker was **Ms. Laily Himayati, Collaboration and Networking Lead for MENTARI Programme, HIVOS**. Ms. Himayati started by giving a brief introduction of HIVOS, that is guided by humanist values to ensure that gender equality is embedded in every project implementation. HIVOS is known for its reputable small scale renewable energy access programmes like the Indonesian domestic biogas program, Sumba Iconic Island and the MENTARI program which is a bilateral between the UK and Indonesia.

Hivos' work in rural energy access

2009 - 2021

To provide access to clean cooking for communities that lack access and affordability for energy for cooking; To create a self-reliant Indonesian domestic biogas sector

2011 - 2020

100% Renewable Energy by 2025 for Sumba community through multi-stakeholder approach and a model that can be replicated in other islands

2020 - 2023

Policy – Brokerage – Demonstration – C&N

Inclusive economic growth and poverty reduction through increased utilization of low carbon energy in Indonesia

Yayasan Humanis dan Inovasi **Hivos**

The barriers related to gender and inclusion (G&I) in small-scale renewable energy projects were presented as:

- Women and marginalised groups are not involved in the project planning

- The social context and cultural norms sometimes prohibit women and marginalised groups from equally benefitting from renewable energy opportunities
- Women do not have the same access to jobs in the renewable energy sector as men
- Women participate less in formal meetings, have less decision-making power and fewer opportunities for capacity building
- Women's safety and security are not considered in renewable energy projects

Ms. Himayati also highlighted example of another initiative titled the Africa Biogas Partnership Programme that has benefited about 65,000 households. Gender mainstreaming was implemented in this biogas programmes by improving the quality of women's life through optimising health, providing clean cooking energy options, and promoting women in the clean energy supply chain.

To conclude she outlined the lessons learnt from G&I implementation in small-scale RE projects:

- Conduct baseline studies on G&I to develop an effective action plan for project execution
- Apply specific strategies to involve women and marginalised groups
- Link programmes with systems and institutions at the local levels

The last intervention was by **Mr. Vincent Renaud, Director, Benoo**, an organisation that develops productive uses for solar projects in Africa. This organisation aims at contributing to the socio-economic development in Africa using renewable energy and digital tools. Mr. Renaud began with information on one of their off-grid projects which was carried out in Togo. The project provided a baseline for the successful implementation of other projects.

The renewable energy projects contribute to socio-economic development of rural areas by providing new jobs, improving the quality of goods and services to improve the quality of life and curb the rural-urban migration. The inability to pay for energy and appliances and high development costs for installing renewable energy projects were identified as the two main challenges that the consumers face. Thereafter, a case study from Togo was presented citing a woman entrepreneur being able to grow her business with access to renewable energy and electronic appliances.

Finally, Mr. Renaud concluded that renewable energy helps women entrepreneurs in rural areas to grow and sustain their businesses.

Mr. Mohapatra thanked the speakers for their presentations and facilitated the panel discussion with questions from the audience. Some notable questions are highlighted below:

Audience interaction and moderated discussion

Q1: What is the business strategy used in Cote-d'Ivoire (west Africa) for a woman who wants to join the ENGIE team especially if she doesn't have a background in Engineering?

Dr. Laurence Keke: *"People who want to be part of the team can check the company website for job advertisements. There is a place for everyone in the team and one doesn't need to have engineering background to be part of the Team. Everyone brings their own skills to the team."*

Mr. Thomas Fohgrub added *"One doesn't need to have an engineering background to work in this sector. There are so many areas about commercialization, understanding customers, developing business cases and all these aspects do not require technical skills."*

Q2: Is the business profitable for Benoo as it is dedicated to rural people with small revenue?

Mr. Vincent Renaud: *“There is no link between rural areas and low incomes. It is not exactly true that rural Africa is poor. It is better to understand that the incomes in rural areas and investigate how renewable energy goods appliances be used to increase these incomes.”*

Q3: How can cultural barriers and gender-based stereotypes be overcome to promote a gender-inclusive clean energy sector?

Mr. Thomas Fohgrub: *“In the humanitarian space you can influence a gender inclusive clean energy sector because the main implementation is done through NGOs before the private sector comes in and often the NGOs are aware of the cultural challenges. It is not something that can be overcome overnight however it’s something we need to do and let reality take over.”*

Dr. Laurence Keke: *“Education can help to reduce this barrier as it gives opportunity to everyone to be included in the society. If we can train girls from the primary schools and give them the chance to propose their skills to companies and the society. Having the opportunity to see role models can also help to see that it is possible.”*

Ms. Laily Himayati: *“During the facilitation process we ensure that women must participate in community meetings where we explain the benefits of having the renewable energy system for all groups in the community. We promote that nobody is left behind in the development. To cope with social conditions and cultural values we ensure the participation of women by going to each door through a collaborative socialization with church activities.”*

To conclude the webinar, **Mr. Deepak Mohapatra, the Senior Officer of Policy & Business Development, ARE** thanked the panellists for their contributions and the audience for their active participation. He also suggested the audience to follow ARE and GBE webpages to be updated on the latest information on the topic.

Annex: Webinar Programme

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| Programme 90 Minutes | <p>Opening and welcome remarks Mr. Jens Jaeger, Director of Policy & Business Development, ARE</p> <p>Moderator Mr. Deepak Mohapatra, Senior Officer – Business & Market Development, ARE</p> <p>Keynote speech Mr. Thomas Fohgrub, Head of the Coordination Unit for the Global Platform for Action on Sustainable Energy in Displacement Settings, UNITAR</p> <p>Speaker interventions and dialogue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Laurence Keke, Head of Business Development West Africa, ENGIE Energy Access • Ms. Laily Syukriah Himayati, Collaboration and Networking Lead for MENTARI Programme, HIVOS • Mr. Vincent Renaud, Director, Benoo <p>Moderated discussion and audience interaction</p> <p>Closing remarks Mr. Deepak Mohapatra, Senior Officer – Business & Market Development, ARE</p> |
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Partners:

About GBE

Dr. Gerd Müller, the Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, announced a new initiative, named Green People's Energy for Africa (GBE) in June 2017. This initiative aims to enable, expand and secure the supply of sustainable energy in rural Africa. It is part of the Marshall Plan with Africa and relies on the broad participation of small and medium-sized enterprises, municipalities, cooperatives, public associations and citizens.

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About ARE

Established in 2006, the Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) is the global association for the decentralised renewable energy industry, catalysing private sector driven markets for sustainable electricity services, creating jobs and powering equitable green economies.

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