

Gender and Urban Energy – Workshop to Share Research Findings

Adriana Alvarez

The International Workshop for the project entitled “Enabling Urban Poor Livelihoods Policy Making: Understanding the Role of Energy Services” took place in the Development Planning Unit at University College London on November 23, 2005. This project, funded by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) Knowledge and Research (KaR) Programme, was coordinated by the University of Twente (the Netherlands). The workshop presented the study findings of the three partner organisations - Friends of the Environment (Nigeria), APPROTECH ASIA (Philippines), and Winrock (Brazil) to a wider audience and enabled the partners to receive general feedback on the project. The workshop was attended by researchers involved in urban energy research plus representatives from DFID and the Global Village Energy Program (GVEP). The three researchers from Brazil, Nigeria and the Philippines presented their cases. Several discussions took place as a result of the information presented and the participants compared the research findings to other DFID-funded studies in other parts of the world.

Gender was a cross-cutting issue in the discussions between the research team and the participants. Mainstreaming men was recommended as a strategy to be used in the data-gathering process. In Nigeria, decisions are made by men and one can only speak to the women after having spoken to the heads of their households who are mostly men. In Brazil, the household head, regardless of gender, is usually the decision-maker and almost half of the sample households were headed by women. The concept of household head is also changing in Brazil, as women begin to earn more than their spouses or become the only one working in the family, although men may still consider themselves the head even if they are not working or earning less than their spouses. In the Philippines, whoever earns the income becomes the chief decision-maker within the household – and men and women tend to make decisions jointly. There are an increasing number of male-

headed households as women go overseas to work: mostly as nurses, carers and domestic workers. In all three countries, one could easily detect the importance of involving men in the decision-making process – the participants discussed how decisions are usually made by the couple as a unit, and thus it is essential to involve both men and women in the data-gathering process.

The workshop participants questioned the three country-case presenters about the use of fuel by entrepreneurs – and although each country study had chosen different types of enterprises, they had all focused on ones where women were particularly active. There have also been some distinct reactions to the recent sharp increases in the cost of petroleum products. In the Philippines, women preparing food to sell on the streets have switched to using kerosene and charcoal due to the high price of an LPG cylinder; whereas in Brazil, even though LPG prices have increased considerably, the poor urban female entrepreneurs studied are not going down the energy ladder to lower quality fuels. In Nigeria, despite being one of the world’s major oil producing nations, women entrepreneurs remain on a low rung of the energy ladder, predominantly using fuelwood with the associated negative consequences for their health. The price of fuelwood has also increased because transport costs have risen due to the oil price rises.

In the Philippines, shoemaking used to be a male-dominated business, but now women are involved. This has reflected a change from a factory-based business to a home industry, with some families subcontracted to produce footwear for export. Electricity is essential as families use sewing machines and work at night during peak demands to produce their shoes on time. In Brazil, women entrepreneurs have also set up their businesses in their homes, and their services are often extensions of their domestic chores: they sell food and beverages, sew clothes, and provide manicures and hairdressing services. Women rely on electricity (for refrigerators, hair dryers and sewing machines) and LPG (for cooking) in these activities. Although the concept of household heads is changing in

Brazil, the labour division within the family remains unchanged, as well as the nature of the enterprises taken up by women. In Nigeria, most of the enterprises studied were also headed by women – fish smokers, potters, and akara (fried bean cake) makers – and they use fuelwood, charcoal and kerosene. Women in some communities express their status by fuelwood ownership. Women accumulate wood for their children to inherit, and the greater the amount of firewood inherited, the higher the status of the daughters in the community.

This study was not meant to be comparative, with different contexts in each target country. Although the overall methodology was the same (livelihood framework linked to four hypotheses), each country was free to develop their own questionnaires and research techniques. Universal generalisation was seen as less valuable than the nuances that each individual country presented – for instance, in Nigeria, the urban poor targeted in the study have their health affected by the use of fuelwood and kerosene. Again, in Brazil, the main health complaints found are those usually associated with smoke inhalation (eye irritation, cough, and tired eyesight), even though most did not make use of these sources of energy. It would therefore seem, at least in Brazil, that these health symptoms must be associated with other hazards such as asbestos roofs.

It was both informative and useful to have representatives from other DFID-KaR funded projects present. It provided an opportunity to meet one another, exchange information, and supply joint recommendations to international development agencies. ■

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Regional Strategic Planning and Awareness Raising Workshop of the Pacific Gender and Energy Network

Yogita Bhikabai

The Pacific Energy and Gender Network (PEG) was formally established through the regional workshop “Gender, Energy and Sustainable Development” in August 2003, in Nadi, Fiji (see EN 6.2, pp 10-13). Currently, the network is coordinated through the PEG Working Group with its Secretariat hosted by the South Pacific Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) and works towards “gender equity in all aspects of energy development”.

During the period 2004-2005, PEG undertook a key project on building awareness of gender and energy issues in the Pacific region. This was funded through PEG partners, the ENERGIA Secretariat and the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), and resulted in several outputs including a PEG website and listserver, a Pacific Gender and Energy Bibliography, and communication material in the form of a video and a series of radio spots, posters and flyers (see page 20).

2005 PEG Workshop and its Purpose

SOPAC hosted the “Regional Strategic Planning and Awareness Raising Workshop - Pacific Energy and Gender Network

(PEG)” from 5-9 December 2005, in Nadi, Fiji. CTA funded the event, whilst ENERGIA supported the participation of Ms Christina Aristanti of ARECOP (Indonesia) as workshop facilitator and trainer. Eleven women and eleven men from the Pacific Island countries of Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji Islands, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu participated in the event. The purpose of the workshop was to support the mainstreaming of gender in national and regional energy policies and planning, and to enhance awareness of the need to ensuring equitable access to energy by the rural communities in the Pacific Island countries. Towards achieving this purpose, the workshop set out to prepare a strategic action plan for the period 2006-2008, a PEG Terms of Reference and, further, to conduct a short awareness-raising session on gender and energy.

Opening and Updates from Countries

Mr Anare Matakiviti, SOPAC Energy Adviser, welcomed the participants and opened the workshop on behalf of the SOPAC Director. This was followed by country presentations from the participants of the different countries represented. It was a great

opportunity to share information among the participants and to update on each country's involvement in gender and energy.

Strategic Planning Session

The strategic planning session started with the participants looking at events that had had a bearing on gender and energy during the period 2000-2005 at various levels: global, regional, national and organisational. Following this, the participants went on to map trends in the Pacific region in relation to these discussed gender and energy developments.

Over forty trends were identified, and similar trends were grouped together. In the first sweep, ten groups were identified; and after a second sweep, the ten groups were further consolidated into three groups. The trends in each of these three groups were analysed further by the participants working in small groups. They identified actions and achievements that had led to good trends and so produced pride and smiles, but also sorrow and long faces because of the lack of action and things not done to improve the negative trends. For instance, one of the groups was “proud” of “women gradually coming into the energy sector (technical and managerial areas)” and “regretted” the “mentality/culture that acted as a barrier to full participation of women in the energy sector”.

Finally, ideas on what could be done in the short-term (2006-2008) to bring about a “dream situation” were listed as “common ground” ideas. These common ground ideas were used as a backdrop to the discussion on strategic planning.

The participants at the 2005 Regional Strategic Planning and Awareness Raising Workshop reaffirmed the challenges and constraints identified at the 2003 workshop, namely:

- Addressing the gender linkages to energy is not a priority for the governments involved;
- Insufficient research and information on energy and gender linkages in the Pacific;



Participants of the Pacific Gender and Energy Workshop in December 2005 in Suva, Fiji (Photo: Yogita Bhikabai)

- Lack of gender analysis of energy projects in the Pacific;
- Limited technical, human and institutional capacity for gender analysis;
- Women in the Pacific are generally unaware or uninterested in energy and gender linkages;
- Limited representation of women in the energy sector;
- Cultural restrictions influence gender roles; and
- Unequal participation of men and women in decision-making.

After brainstorming on ways to meet these challenges, six broad strategies were determined:

- Incorporate gender concerns in energy policies, both nationally and regionally;
- Raise awareness of energy and gender linkages in the Pacific Islands region;
- Conduct research and analysis on energy and gender linkages in the Pacific Islands region;
- Build the capacity of energy decision-makers, project officers, National State Actors (NSAs), village electrification councils and local communities in terms of incorporating gender-sensitive participatory approaches and gender mainstreaming tools in energy project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
- Increase the representation of women in energy education and training programmes and on decision-making committees;
- Strengthen networking cooperation with relevant international, regional and national groups and institutions.

These six strategies form the headlines of the Pacific Energy and Gender Network Strategic Action Plan (PEGSAP) for 2006-2008. In prioritising the strategies, capacity building got the highest ranking, followed by gender mainstreaming of energy policies. A digital copy of the PGSAP can be obtained from the SOPAC Secretariat.

Awareness-raising Session

In addition to strategic planning, the programme also included a short awareness-raising session for the participants on gender and energy. This was led by Ms Christina Aristanti using Module 1 of the gender and energy training package developed by ENERGIA. The recently launched PEG video - "Linkages between energy and gender in the Pacific" - was also very useful in developing this training session.

The short time allocated to the training session was used to address several topics that could be useful to the participants in their gender and energy work, particularly in relation to engendering energy projects.

These topics included: gender considerations in energy planning and projects, gender mainstreaming and "women-only" energy projects (and types of approaches), practical and productive gender needs and strategic interests in gender projects, and gender goals in energy projects.

The training was participatory in nature, and the trainer allowed questions and comments from the floor on all aspects of the training exercises. All the included group exercises were preceded by, and based on, concepts presented on PowerPoint slides with reference to the ENERGIA training modules.

The participants found the training sessions informative and their understanding of energy and gender concepts improved. On the evaluation forms, the training sessions were rated highly.

A key recommendation from the training session was that PEG should adapt the ENERGIA training modules to the Pacific context, highlighting Pacific case studies and scenarios.

Looking to the Future

The 2005 workshop delivered the following outputs:

- Pacific Energy and Gender Network (PEG) Strategic Action Plan (PEGSAP) 2006-2008;
- Regional paper for presentation at the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) 14/15 and at the World Summit of Rural Women 2006 in Africa;
- Increased understanding and capacity in dealing with gender and poverty issues in the energy sector;
- PEG Terms of Reference.

The proceedings of the workshop have been published and are being disseminated.

Funding will be sought to carry out the activities in the Pacific Energy and Gender Network Strategic Action Plan (PEGSAP)

The participants were enthusiastic about the outcomes of the workshop and were challenged to work together to put gender firmly on the Pacific's energy map. ■



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with national and regional partners working in the area of energy and gender. She has been with the SOPAC Secretariat since 2002, assisting with the regional information database, technical publications, coordinating regional earth-day competitions, energy policies and other energy projects. She has a Graduate Certificate in Management from Central Queensland University (June, 2004) and a BSc in Physics and Information Systems from the University of the South Pacific (2001). She is continuing with part-time postgraduate diploma studies on Governance at the University of the South Pacific.

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Christina Aristanti facilitating a trends mapping exercise at the workshop (Photo: Yogita Bhikabai)