

Advocating for women's economic empowerment through energy access in Indonesia & beyond

Background and context

Energy access in Indonesia

From Papua in the east to Aceh in the west, Indonesia covers a distance as wide as the United States. Its land area is roughly the size of Mexico, but spread out over an archipelago of more than 17,000 islands, many of them volcanic. It has a population of 250 million, of which 120 million people live in rural areas. This geography and demography make energy access a huge challenge.

More than 80 million Indonesians live without any electricity, and many more live with unreliable access to electricity - suffering through frequent, productivity-draining black-outs. Electrification rates range from 22% in Papua to 86% in Bali (USAID 2008), with millions of families relying on kerosene for lighting. 82% of the rural population use biomass as their primary cooking fuel (GACC 2011), and almost 100 million people in total rely on smoky, wood-hungry traditional cookstoves. This energy poverty affects women the most, as they bear primary responsibility for household activities like cooking, cleaning, providing water and caring for children.

Women's economic empowerment

The 2010 Gender Development Index ranked Indonesia 108 out of 166 countries. Only 51 percent of Indonesian women participate in the labour force, and they earn 25 percent less than men for their work. Strong patrilineal cultures in Indonesia prioritise men for access to education and jobs. Women are associated with low socioeconomic status due to a lack of educational and employment opportunities, compounded by traditional cultural norms and gender dynamics.

Sustainable energy

Indonesia relies heavily on oil (49%) and natural gas (22%) for its energy services (Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources 2010), and the government significantly subsidises fuel costs to soften the effect of fluctuating global oil prices. However there is growing recognition of the importance of increasing the proportion of renewable energy in the energy mix, in order to meet growing demand for energy services and to expand energy access to remote communities, particularly in the islands of eastern Indonesia. The Indonesian government released a national energy roadmap in early 2014, setting renewable energy targets of 23% by 2025 and 31% by 2050.

SE4All

The World Bank's Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP) has conducted a rapid assessment and gap analysis to inform the development of Indonesia's SE4ALL Country Action Agenda.

UNDP in Indonesia serves as the country focal point, coordinating government, private sector and civil society participation in the SE4ALL process.

While the interests of large-scale infrastructure projects dominate the agenda, there is clear need to advocate for simple, affordable, durable technologies to serve remote communities, and for the role of women in distributing these technologies. This is a far more sustainable and effective approach to increasing energy access than government and CSO programs which give poor quality solar lights and clean cookstoves away for free, and do not provide access to maintenance or warranty systems. Injecting gender perspectives into the SE4ALL Country Action Agenda and national energy roadmap will help increase the level of funding available to these high impact poverty reduction initiatives.

Project summary

The global SE4ALL initiative aims to make sustainable energy for all a reality by 2030, by mobilising action from all sectors of society to achieve universal energy access, improve energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy.

Energy access is a massive challenge for a nation as large and geographically-dispersed as Indonesia. While the Indonesian government is committed to expanding energy access and increasing the amount of renewable energy in the energy mix, existing government policies and roadmaps do not explicitly take into account the role of women in achieving this.

Through five years of implementing women's economic empowerment through energy access projects in Indonesia, Kopernik has gathered compelling stories and evidence to prove that empowering women to sell simple, affordable clean energy technologies in remote communities is an extraordinarily effective way of reducing poverty and achieving transformational change.

Kopernik will use this experience and evidence to position gender considerations as a core component of Indonesia's SE4ALL Country Action Agenda, processes and activities. Kopernik will develop alliances with influential CSOs, international agencies and private sector allies in order to engage with targeted government ministries and funding bodies. Kopernik will coordinate a national campaign involving their clean energy microsocial-entrepreneurs to raise awareness of the role of women in expanding energy access. Beyond Indonesia, Kopernik will feed evidence and success stories into global gender and sustainable energy advocacy efforts.

The progress and success of these advocacy efforts will be measured using Kopernik's robust monitoring and evaluation framework. Advocacy approaches will be adjusted as required to respond to challenges and capitalise on new opportunities, to ensure the overarching objectives are fully met by 2017.