Women’s empowerment in energy projects: What is the meaning?

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EFEWEE (2015-2018)
Exploring Factors that Enhance and restrict Women’s Empowerment through Electrification

- Comparing grid and decentralised systems
- Kenya, India and Nepal
- Mixed methods
Consortium Members EFEWEE

- Tanja Winther, University of Oslo, Norway
- Kirsten Ulsrud
- Karina Standal
- Debajit Palit, TERI, India
- Mini Govindan
- Anjali Saini, Seacrester Consulting, Kenya
- Henry Gichungi
- Magi Matinga, Dunamai Energy, Malawi
- Raju Laudari, AEPC, Nepal (collab. partner)
Motivation 1: social change is complex

Invest in a lamp and let a girl read...

Invest in a cow ....('girl effect')
Typical gender goals in energy projects/programmes

- Women’s increased welfare
- Women’s economic empowerment
- Women’s political empowerment

Skutsch 2006
Clancy et al. 2007
IEG 2008
Motivation 2: risk of more inequality

Men tend to be recruited in management/operation

Electricity and appliances: desired, high status
Meaning of empowerment from below

- “To be educated”, “unity”, “political power”
- “No association electricity – empowerment”
  Focus group discussions, Chhattisgarh, India 2016

- “To make somebody able to do something. Light empowers them to read”
  Interview with female staff, Ikisaya Energy Centre, Kenya 2016

- “Nowadays, women have become empowered: they make an income and can just leave”
  Man telling his life story, Homa Bay, Kenya 2016
Meaning of empowerment

- “Achieve agency” (choice → action)
  Measure: agency + material, social, human resources
- Friedman: 1992: Marginalised groups moving out of subordinated position

➢ Energy: How do we conceive women’s empowerment?
EF EWEE Assumptions & definitions
Drawing on Friedman (1992) and Kabeer (1999 and 2001)

• **Women’s empowerment**: A process towards gender equality

• **Gender equality**: Women and men’s equal
  – rights
  – access to and control over resources
  – power to influence matters that concern or affect them
The grid in the village: representation of social organisation

Uroa, Zanzibar
Rural Zanzibar (grid)

Women did obtain improved welfare (‘development’) and more flexibility, but men’s dominance was reinforced

HOW:
• Men controlled houses, electricity and assets
• Discriminating rules for inheritance and divorce
• Women excluded from local electrification process

Winther 2008
Cutwini, South Africa (grid)

Women obtained increased agency and control over resources

HOW:
• Many single female households
• Government grants were given directly to women guardians
• TV: Alternative gender narratives and information about rights

Matinga 2010
Rural Afghanistan (solar engineers)

Women gained increased agency
Changed gender norms

**HOW:**

- Women trained and recruited as solar engineers
- Changed perceptions of what a woman can do
- Fathers-in-law: continued control over household finances

Standal 2008
Reviewing empirical literature I
Qualitatively oriented studies

- Explorations of electrification in local contexts, with focus on ‘who, ‘how’ and ‘why’
- Process
- Design of electricity supply
- Social practices rather than single indicators
- Impact on
  - Organisation of daily life
  - Household finances, formal and informal economy
  - Decision making
  - Gender relations, norms and ideologies

- Different paths to empowerment
Gendered impact of **having access to electricity** on

- Employment rate
- Fuel use and cooking technology
- Welfare indicators
  - Time use (drudgery)
  - Fertility rates
  - Girls’ and boys’ study time and enrolment in school
- Attitudes to norms that discriminate women

**HH electricity access** → **Indicator X**
How to bridge the various approaches so as to accumulate knowledge and understand the mechanisms at work?
### Analysing women’s empowerment through electrification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1 Overarching issues</strong></td>
<td>Women and men’s rights</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gender ideologies and norms</td>
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<td>Women and men’s social positions</td>
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<td><strong>2 Access to and control over resources</strong></td>
<td>Material opportunities (short term)</td>
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<td>Material endowments (long term)</td>
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<td>Social resources (e.g. social networks)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Human resources (education, drudgery, health)</td>
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<td><strong>3 Power to influence decisions (Agency)</strong></td>
<td>Life decisions (incl. political power)</td>
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<td>Everyday decisions</td>
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<td>Decisions on electricity’s uses at home</td>
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<td>Involvement in system of supply</td>
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<td><strong>4 Impact of women’s involvement in supply</strong></td>
<td>The impact of women’s involvement in supply on the empowerment of women in the wider community</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5 Negative effects</strong></td>
<td>Signs of negative impact of electrification on any of the above dimensions</td>
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Kitui, Kenya (energy centre)
Endau, Kenya (grid)
Available results, EFEWEE
From the scoping phase (literature review and review of policies)

- EFEWEE Web and Blog http://www.efewee.org
- ENERGIA http://energia.org/research/
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In progress (academic journals):
- Winther, T., M.Matinga and K.Ulsrud: “Electrification and women’s empowerment: Proposal of a framework of analysis”
Thank you