

GENDER AND RENEWABLE ENERGY

Releasing the energies of women

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES ON MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE SADC RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR

INTRODUCTION

Mainstreaming gender in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Renewable Energy sector has the capacity to promote sustainable development and ensure that citizens who are not linked to the national electricity grids can have access to affordable power that is less polluting to the environment. Mainstreaming gender in the Renewable Energy (RE) sector is motivated by the growing global evidence which shows that the integration of gender in development projects brings more benefits for women and men.

An increase in RE projects can lead to economic opportunities which can potentially improve the socio-economic status of women and men, such as improved health, safety, and quality of life. While these projects have

the potential for broad and far-reaching benefits, they are found to be more effective when gender equality is incorporated throughout the project cycle. Women and men need to participate and benefit from the projects and there is need for the identification and assessment of project potential for both. This requires identifying the roles that women and men can play and the activities they undertake in their households and communities in order to identify specific needs.

This policy brief is aimed at guiding project designers and implementers in government ministries and institutions responsible for energy in SADC Member States, and also outlines the processes which can be used in ensuring that gender is mainstreamed in the RE sector.

BUILDING A GENDER AND RENEWABLE ENERGY STAKEHOLDERS' NETWORK

The Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) held a virtual Regional Workshop on Mainstreaming Gender in the SADC Renewable Energy Sector which was attended by gender focal persons representing the Ministries of Energy and Gender/Women Affairs from nine Member States — Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Representatives from regional and national energy regulatory bodies also attended.

The purpose of the workshop was to strengthen the capacity of gender focal persons from SADC Member States and regional energy regulatory bodies to mainstream gender in the formulation and implementation of programmes and projects in the SADC RE sector. The main objective was to build a critical mass of gender and energy stakeholders into a network with increased capacity to ensure meaningful gender mainstreaming to promote gender equality in the key programmes in the sector.

The gender focal persons were invited as they are strategically positioned to influence and guide gender mainstreaming in the RE

programmes and projects under formulation and in implementation in their respective Ministries or institutions. The capacity-building initiative was held against the backdrop that the region is facing specific challenges in the area of energy development and that women are disproportionately affected by the challenges associated with the lack of access to modern sources of energy compared to men.

Women and girls are largely responsible for household and community activities including energy provision and without access to modern energy services they often spend most of their time performing basic tasks. This can be relieved through the use of modern forms of energy production. The necessity of doing such tasks limits the time for participation in decent wage employment, or accessing educational opportunities, and enhancing their standard of living.

EXPERIENCES FROM SELECTED SADC MEMBER STATES

Member States that were represented at the workshop shared their national experiences on efforts to mainstream gender in the RE sector. The Ministry of Nationality, Immigration and Gender Affairs in Botswana, for example, has developed a

programme to support institutions to establish sectoral gender committees to help to mainstream gender across all facets of development, including energy. The Botswana Power Company (BPC) has also taken steps towards mainstreaming gender in the power utility. BPC launched a gender mainstreaming process with the aim of ensuring that gender issues were considered during planning and implementation of energy projects and programmes. This project was conceived after an audit of energy policies and programmes conducted by the Gender and Energy Network of Botswana (GENBO) revealed that the energy sector in Botswana was not gender-sensitive or gender-responsive. Since then, the Draft National Energy Policy has been developed, recognising gender as an integral factor and has included a specific gender objective, which calls for the inclusion and consideration of gender differences in energy planning.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, Energy and Mining in Malawi has been working with the Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare to train women on the productive uses of RE especially in the rural areas. As a result of the training programmes, more women in the

communities have been able to establish businesses using power from RE-powered mini-grids. They oversee most of the day-to-day operations, planning and management of the mini-grids. These initiatives have empowered women economically to engage in income-generating activities.

In Mozambique, the Ministry of Mineral Resources and Energy, in collaboration with technicians from the areas of renewable energy, energy efficiency, energy planning, planning and budgeting, and mining (artisanal mining) have developed activity plans which incorporate gender. This process was extended to the implementation of the National Rural Electrification Strategy.

There have been various initiatives in South Africa, including skills development in schools, where communities are being trained and sensitized on the benefits of RE and its technologies. The initiatives have reduced gender inequality, unemployment and poverty in the communities, with more women and girls participating in the renewable energy sector. The energy sector has a policy document that carries an implementation plan with specific targets for the government to meet in mainstreaming gender in the energy

sector. The policy document and others were developed after a consultative process with the utilities and the end users of RE, including women and children.

The Biogas Digester Programme in Zimbabwe is being rolled out in the country to improve the uptake of clean energy. The programme is targeted at the rural populations and encourages active participation by women. The government is also working on legal instruments to reduce the price of renewable energy technologies for ease of access to the majority of the population, especially by women in the rural areas.

EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN RE

Gender equality is a critical pathway for a successful transition to sustainable energy for all by 2030 (UN DESA, 2015), as seen in the positive developments in the RE sector in most SADC Member States. These efforts need to be intensified to promote an inclusive programme of energy policy planning and implementation. Barriers such as a lack of capacity and education among key personnel responsible for policy formulation and implementation can limit the

opportunities for women to engage in renewable energy activities.

In this regard, SARDC shared effective strategies that gender focal persons and other stakeholders can use to ensure the equal inclusion and benefit of women and men in the RE sector. Mainstreaming gender in the energy sector requires tools that can help to identify and address gender gaps. These tools can be used by energy gender experts who are responsible for mainstreaming gender in organisations where they provide guidance on how to integrate gender concerns in RE projects.

❖ Gender Sensitive Analysis

Gender-sensitive analysis is a systematic attempt to identify key issues contributing to gender inequalities so these can be addressed accurately. Gender analysis provides the basis for gender mainstreaming and is defined as the study of differences in the conditions, needs, participation rates, access to resources and development, control of assets, decision-making powers, etc., between women and men (TGNP, 2017). Gender analysis should be conducted at all levels, from the micro level through intermediate levels such as service delivery systems, to the highest political levels, and

across all sectors and programmes of development cooperation. Gender analysis must be based on an examination of gender disaggregated data. A gender analysis provides information on the different roles of women and men at various levels; their respective access to and control over the material and non-material benefits of society; and their priorities, needs and responsibilities.

❖ **Gender Sensitive Indicators**

Gender sensitive indicators reveal the gender-related changes in society over time. They point to changes in the status and roles of women and men over time, and therefore measure whether gender equity is being achieved. The use of indicators and other relevant evaluation techniques will lead to a better understanding of how results can be achieved, and the use of gender-sensitive indicators will feed into more effective future planning and programme delivery. The indicators are used in project formulation through to monitoring and evaluation. Gender responsive indicators assist in the collection of gender disaggregated data, which is the collection and separation of data and statistical information by gender to enable comparative analysis. Indicators can be closely linked to the project objectives.

❖ **Gender Sensitive Planning**

A planning approach that recognizes the different roles that women and men play in society and the fact that they often have different needs. This approach is informed by gender-sensitive analysis and informs the designing and implementation of policies, programmes, or projects from a gender perspective and the structural gender inequalities that need to be tackled in a given context. Gender planning stems from the recognition that different groups of women and men have different needs, different levels of access and control over resources, and different opportunities and constraints. Gender planning pays particular attention to unequal gender relations and aims to transform unequal gender relations by responding to the needs of women and men and through a more balanced distribution of resources, actions and responsibilities. Gender-sensitive planning should include consultations with different stakeholders and intended beneficiaries as this can contribute to increasing transparency and the accountability of those in charge of implementation, and avoid conflicts in the implementation phase.

❖ **Gender Responsive Budgeting**

Gender responsive budgeting is a process of integrating gender per-

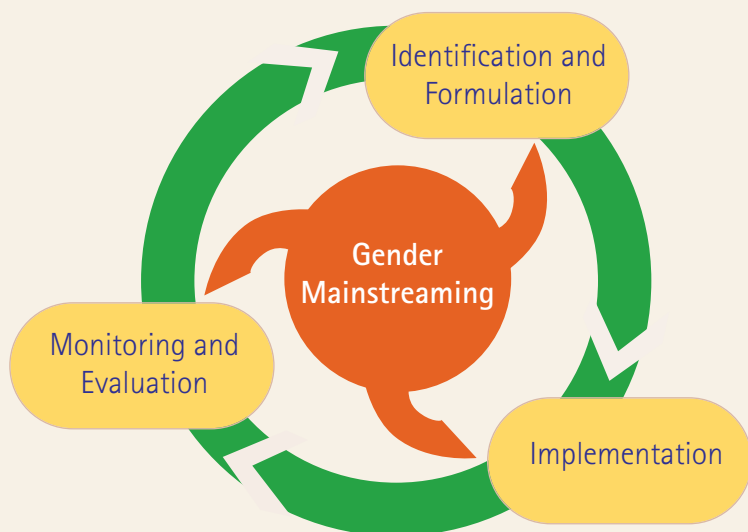
spectives into the overall context of the collection and allocation of public resources (SADC and SARDC, 2018). It entails the development of a budget from a gender perspective. Gender responsive budgeting is one of the most effective tools to mainstream gender in policies and plans, to redress inequalities and to promote the economic, social and political rights of women and

men. Gender responsive budgeting incorporates a gender perspective at all levels of budgetary processes to ensure that the needs and interests of women and men from different groups are addressed. Effective Gender responsive budgeting is an enabling factor towards improving the results of budgets in general, and gender equality and women empowerment in particular.

Mainstreaming Gender in the Project Cycle

As part of gender mainstreaming, project development should consider formulating and integrating specific gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes, outputs and indicators to the project in order to enhance gender equality related results, hence there is need for a project cycle. The Project Cycle involves identifying, developing and implementing a project and during these stages, there is need to implement appropriate gender mainstreaming strategies to understand the situation of women and men in any given context and ensure project design addresses the practical and strategic needs and priorities of women and men. These stages are:

- **Project identification and formulation** – This is the initial phase which identifies the problem and generates project ideas and identification of appropriate interventions designed and targeted for the concerned groups.
- **Project implementation** – The phase when the project is implemented signals the operational phase of the project where tasks and activities are carried out in sequence based on timeframes and project implementation plans.
- **Project monitoring and evaluation** – This is the continuous observation and documentation of the project based on the initial plan, and is often conducted from project inception through to closure. This process assesses if the project is going according to plan and whether interventions are required. At the end of the project the process assesses whether the objectives of the project were achieved based on the baselines, and recommends further interventions as necessary.



CONCLUSION

The engagement and participation of all relevant stakeholders contributes to the implementation of strategies and action plans on how to take gender mainstreaming forward in the RE sector. There is need to mainstream gender in energy programming and policy, not just to ensure that these are good social interventions but to promote efficiency.

Incorporating gender perspectives into energy projects, policy and planning is critical to

ensuring the effectiveness of all development activities that involve renewable energy use. Addressing gender-related challenges in the sector is key to addressing the energy poverty that southern Africa is facing, thus the gender issues should be prioritised in the sectoral development discourse and programmes. Mainstreaming gender in energy should be supported by appropriate policies and structures that take into account gender realities in southern Africa. As Member States strive to work towards

gender equality and access to energy for all, the following points should be considered.

- Governments need to prioritize the creation of gender portfolios in the structures responsible for energy development and strengthen focal point capacities to implement the national energy strategies with a gender lens.
- There is need for more capacity-building programmes on gender mainstreaming, especially in the ministries responsible for energy, targeting all levels including the leadership, as the input by staff such as gender focal persons is often not fully considered as they are generally low and mid-level staff.
- Member States should promote women-centric business models for expanding energy access to all through facilitating partnerships with local stakeholders, expanding women's access to finance and building a conducive and enabling environment for women entrepreneurs.
- Member States should collect systematic, gender-disaggregated data as part of programming to support policy implementation.

This policy brief is produced by the Beyond Inequalities Gender Institute (BI) of the Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC) through a project on Mainstreaming Gender in the SADC Renewable Energy Sector funded by the Austrian Development Agency. The information is drawn from related knowledge materials from this project. The policy brief and related information are available on www.sardc.net. Responsibility for the content of this publication lies entirely with the authors. The information and analysis do not reflect the official opinion of the Austrian Development Agency. *October 2021*