

# Gender, Energy Access, and Women's Agency

1

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# Research Question and Sites

- **Research Question:** Does a gender responsive approach provide a greater empowerment to women and girls than traditional approaches ( based on the household) in the energy sector?
- **Countries of Research:** India and Nepal, 10 rural sites
- **Methods:** Feminist political economy analysis of data collected through quantitative and qualitative methods at micro, meso and macro levels.
- **Focused Attention in conducting research:** Particular attention to social norms and attitudes in access to energy and to voices of women and men with regard to energy policies and practices.

# Drivers having most effect on gender and energy policies

- **Electoral politics:** rural women as voters.
- **The state speaks to simultaneously to two groups :** the elites with male forms of power having access to governance, and the political constituency of organized groups of women and men who will influence through their voting rights
- **Enabling environment:** Institutional structures to support an enabling environment that recognizes the need to address gender specific barriers and tries to address gendered social norms , with policies and effective implementation
- **Women as economic agents:** as producers, income earners, and bread winners, not dependent on the heads of the household or subsumed in the household.
- 57% of women who were the breadwinners of the home , used LPG as their primary cooking fuel, compared to 29% of women who did not earn an income.
- **Women's movements and feminist research:** research based advocacy and power of ideas.

# Institutional Structures for Enabling Environment through Knowledge and Skills

- Gendered social norms and changes in social norms for equality and inclusion of women in gender specific areas of work and resource control.
- Constraint of gendered social norms are well known. We deal here with challenges to social norms.
- At the meso and micro levels, gendered social norms are being challenged.
- When women become independent income earners, rather than unpaid family workers, social norms change in favour of women
- When women are owners of agricultural land, and thus recognised as farmers, their asset ownership increases (as against 12.8% of women having operational holdings, the recent national family & health survey 4 , 2015-16 shows 38.6% women own land and house in either single or joint names)
- Social norms also change when women are organised/self –organised in groups such as self-help groups & other collectives where many women come together to challenge social norms, they seem to be stronger and more likely to succeed.
- Two-way relationship between energy and agency:
  - What the study demonstrates is that the linkage between energy and agency is two-way. “If women’s agency enables them to turn access to clean energy into use, their use of modern energy in production, in turn, also increases women’s agency or empowers them.”



# Building an Enabling Environment: Key Messages

- While Policy for energy access may include gender considerations at macro level, the outcomes at micro level are often diminished socio-economic gendered norms. Hence bringing gender-responsive change is needed through:
  - Unmediated ( not through marriage relationship) asset ownership (land, house, energy & new technology),
  - Delinking land ownership with the status of farmer so that women have access to government schemes meant for farmers
  - Training and capacity development in new knowledge and financial skills as well as technology use and operations.
  - Evidence shows that the valuation of women's work is needed for subsidized LPG programs to result in fuel switching to clean cooking energy
  - Attention to women's collectives: In both India and Nepal, rural women's organisations are active agents in promoting women's greater use of clean cooking energy and agricultural appliances based on modern energy services. " We will never go back to cooking with wood"
- Any energy efficiency programme has to aim at two things simultaneously:
  - Assessing project/programme results in increased agency of women
  - Increasing the efficient use of clean energy both for home and outside in agriculture.

# Strategy for Women's Agency, Health, and Wellness Ecosystem

6

