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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

National Workshop on “Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy”
Sheraton Hotel, Amman, Jordan, 20-21 November 2019

INFORMATION NOTE

Within the framework of the “Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab Region (REGEND)” Project, the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources (MEMR), is organizing a National Workshop on “Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy” with the aim of sharing experiences and formulating gender mainstreaming and human rights strategy and action plans to support policy makers, government and local institutions in operationalizing a gender equality and human rights approach in the energy sector in Arab countries. The National Workshop will be held at Sheraton Hotel, Amman, Jordan, on 20-21 November 2019.

1. Background Information

Progress in sustainable energy lies at the heart of socio-economic growth and sustainable development. Accelerating progress on Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development is a key condition for reducing inequalities, poverty eradication, advances in health and education, sustainable economic growth, and the principle of “Leaving no one behind”, in addition to climate action. Mainstreaming sustainable energy also presents significant opportunities for achieving a greater gender balance, including through improved energy access for women, access to medical services and education, and job opportunities.

In this context, gender disparity in economic and social sectors is a critical issue that needs to be addressed towards achieving social and economic equity. Equally important, energy affects women and men differently as men and women have different roles and responsibilities in households, markets and social spheres, which makes their access, use, and impact of energy services also different. Improving gender equality and social inclusion is essential to fully realize the development impact of many energy programs. The path to achieving SDG 5 and SDG 7 therefore indeed interlinks gender equality and energy access.

Moreover, the negative impacts of climate change weigh more heavily on women, aggravating already existing gender imbalances. Women are often impeded in their access to resources to adapt to climate change, while, in many cases, they are also excluded, or severely underrepresented, in decision-making that affects climate-change adaptation and mitigation efforts, the distribution of resources and ultimately their and their families’ livelihoods.

Therefore, better access to modern energy and climate-change adaptation and mitigation efforts all benefit women and their access to education and health facilities. In the context of income poverty, women and girls are often traditionally responsible for securing water and biomass for cooking and washing, which, in turn, affects their ability to attend school or engage in paid work. Women are highly vulnerable to the further negative effects of natural disasters, economic decline and conflict over resources as a result of climate change in the coming decades. Ensuring universal access to sustainable, clean energy and water for all while helping rural communities adapt to the negative effects of climate change are hence policies that go hand in hand in

ensuring viable livelihoods for this and future generations.

In the context of the Arab region, the fragile natural resource balance in many parts of it, coupled with rapid and rising economic expectations by the region's young and increasingly educated populations, means that managing the natural assets of Arab countries takes centre stage in ensuring that future generations can lead stable and successful lives.

To contribute to address the above challenges, ESCWA and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) are implementing the "Regional Initiative for Promoting Small-Scale Renewable Energy Applications in rural areas of the Arab region (REGEND)". This regional initiative includes several partners in implementation such as the League of Arab States (LAS), line ministries, local authorities, various regional organizations and Arab Women associations, UN organizations, local and regional NGOs, research institutions and academia.

Gender empowerment and equality constitute an integral part of REGEND's activities and expected outputs and are considered a cross-cutting priority along the various phases of its implementation.

By using appropriate small-scale renewable energy technologies for productive activities and entrepreneurial development, REGEND aims to:

- Improve the livelihood, economic benefits, social inclusion and gender equality of Arab rural communities, particularly marginalized groups. Utilize a bottom-up approach by addressing energy poverty, water scarcity and vulnerability to climate change and other natural resource challenges in three targeted countries, namely: Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia.
- Establish a gender-based advisory network with expertise in developing energy entrepreneurial skills in rural areas to bring together practitioners from around the world and the Arab region to share experiences, emerging tools, available resources, and knowledge on gender and energy.

In this framework, ESCWA in partnership with MEMR, are organizing this National Workshop on "Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy" by building on REGEND's ongoing activities, and the expertise of MEMR, UN agencies, international organizations, and the valued stakeholders and participants. The workshop will feature presentations and experience-sharing discussion panels that will cover gender empowerment, entrepreneurial development, and renewable energy, and means of implementations in the rural context.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

Based on the country gender assessment study that was launched within the framework of REGEND in early 2019 to evaluate gender mainstreaming, social inclusion and human rights processes and outcomes of access to energy in targeted rural communities, the National Workshop is organized by ESCWA in partnership with MEMR, to convene key partners, energy entities and local rural communities to:

- Review the findings and outcomes of the referenced study,
- Create synergies between key sectors (energy, water, agricultural, craft, services, industries, etc.) and identify areas of potential joint collaboration and mutual support between national and international agencies,
- Share experiences and foster learning between stakeholders and participants on the challenges and opportunities facing gender empowerment and entrepreneurial development in the energy sector and opportunities that renewable energy could offer,
- Identify key experts and practitioners to be part of the gender-based advisory network on energy and entrepreneurial skills in rural development at the national and Arab regional level,
- Share and build on completed projects and initiatives underway in Jordan that directly or indirectly support the operationalization of Gender Mainstreaming concepts,
- Highlight the importance of socio-economic gender based indicators and bring to the surface

existing and required statistical needs,

- Shed the light on access to finance channels, shortcomings and disparities,
- Formulate actionable recommendations for mainstreaming gender and human rights in policy planning, capacity building, and awareness raising for rural areas.

The key messages and recommendations of the workshop will serve as the basis for suggesting a gender mainstreaming and human rights strategy and action plans to support policy makers, government and local institutions in operationalizing a gender equality and human rights approach in the energy sector in Arab countries. These elements will serve in developing the capacity building programs and awareness-raising campaigns to be undertaken within the framework of REGEND and to be suggested for local/public institutions for follow-up after the project completion to ensure sustainability.

The National Workshop will also feed into the process of establishing the gender-based advisory network on energy and entrepreneurial skills in rural development that will support in applying the aforementioned gender mainstreaming and human rights strategy and action plans.

3. Participants

The National Workshop will bring together various local, regional, and international gender equality and energy experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, and research institutions and academia.

4. Date and Venue

The National Workshop on “Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy” will be held at the **Sheraton Hotel – Amman, Jordan, on 20-21 November 2019.**

Registration is scheduled for 08:30 A.M. on Wednesday, 20 November 2019. The National Workshop will conclude by 03:30 P.M. on Thursday, 21 November 2019. The draft agenda will be circulated to registered participants.

5. Language

The workshop will be conducted in the Arabic and English languages. Simultaneous interpretation from and into the Arabic and English languages will be provided.

6. Correspondence

All correspondence related to the workshop is to be sent to either one of the below addresses:

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