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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

**Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment”,
in the framework of the Tenth International Forum
on Energy for Sustainable Development
United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand
7-8 October 2019**

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in partnership with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Women, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) and UN Environment organized a Workshop on “**Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment**” that was held on 8 October 2019, at the UN Conference Centre – Bangkok, Thailand, within the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development. The main objective of the workshop was to highlight the importance of enhancing gender equality and diversifying the involvement of women across the sustainable energy value chain built on a human right based approach.

The topics discussed highlighted the relationship between gender, energy and climate change in different regions within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement and the potential benefits of realizing gender equity and human rights. Furthermore, the workshop allowed sharing of case studies on gender empowerment challenges and lessons learned both from a national and international perspectives while the discussions covered the women needs and challenges they face in participating in the energy sector, specifically in the rural context. The key means of implementation for accelerating progress on SDG7 and SDG5 while addressing the challenges and difficulties for women entrepreneurs in accessing finance, information and markets, technology, access to education and training.

The workshop concluded with a series of recommendations that address empowering women across the energy value chain, promoting women leadership in rural areas, including gender-disaggregated data collection and analyses to support policy formulation, and enhancing sharing of case studies and experiences.

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I. Introduction

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) in partnership with the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), UN Women, UN Environment, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA), the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) organized a Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment” within the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development (IFESD) that was held during 7 – 8 October 2019 at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand.

The workshop was concluded on 8 October 2019 and involved 26 participants representing various international, regional and national energy practitioners, gender experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, research institutions and academia.

The workshop consisted of four sessions. Section II of this report summarizes the workshop’s recommendations while Section III provides a summary of the presentations and the main topics of discussions held during each session. Section IV reviews the organization of work, including information regarding the workshop agenda, list of participants and a summary of the workshop’ evaluation outcome. The full documentation of the workshop is available at the following address:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/sustainable-energy-and-gender-empowerment-within-framework-tenth-international-forum-energy>

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This Workshop concluded with the following findings and recommendations:

- a) Put gender at a priority level in all stages of the policy planning, development and, implementation process.
- b) Empowering women along the energy value chain to shape energy solutions responding to the needs of everybody. Women must not only access energy but also access finance and entrepreneurship opportunities as well as positions of leadership.
- c) Developing a proper regulatory system which give incentives for the private sector to step-in. Guarantee, blended finance, grouping of small projects can encourage private companies by making an investment financially viable.
- d) Include gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis of gender statistics as part of programming to address structural constraints, to demonstrate the added value of integrating gender into energy and climate frameworks and to support policy formulation.
- e) Scaling-up women’s energy entrepreneurship as an appropriate business model and building inclusive supply chain and gender focused financing, capacity building and skills training, as well as engagement in participatory methods and networking for better communication between women entrepreneurs in rural areas.
- f) Enhancing sharing of case studies and experiences to demonstrate that Renewable Energy is a lever to improve productivity, to provide technologies for supply and sales and to enhance livelihood benefits and thus a tool to empower women in rural areas.
- g) Developing capacity-building activities and curricula at the vocational training level on renewable energy operation and maintenance for both men and women and ensuring that the activities are gendered.
- h) Increasing the understanding of the importance of why gender equity and the inclusion of women in energy value chains through education. Primary schools are a channel to build knowledge on gender equity and sustainable energy at an early stage. Then, technical trainings on installing and repairing technologies and collaboration between industries and universities are a few ways to ensure that women have the skills to integrate the energy value chains.
- i) Involving people of all genders and cultural backgrounds as well as an appropriate format of discussion to disclose the needs of each actor are essential for inclusive planning and decision making processes

- j) Changing social norms by having women organized in groups and collectives and creating networks where they can come together, share their experiences and challenge these norms.

III. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS

2. Presentations and panel discussions are summarized in the following sections which are organized according to the substantive sessions of the Workshop.

A. GENDER EMPOWERMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND PARIS AGREEMENT

3. The panel discussion began by addressing the vision of the 2030 Agenda where renewable, clean energy and gender equality are preconditions for sustainable development and tackling climate change while emphasizing on the global conflicts that it could create. However, this also opens up the opportunity to applying cross-sectoral approach to gender, energy and climate policy and programming.

4. An energy system that delivers equality in quality of life and health will need new business models, new players and high performance buildings where energy services can be met by low carbon energy sources. The transformation will need the involvement of full and non-discriminatory engagement of men and women and further actions from all the UN entities to deal with these challenges.

5. The panel discussion highlighted that gender issues are not just about women. They also concern men. Empowerment must be addressed for both women and men, especially marginalized groups such as in the rural context.

6. The panel discussion highlighted also that Climate Change and Renewable Energy are opportunities that can reduce the gap in terms of entrepreneurial development led by women in rural areas and that can help women improve their income through the utilization of Renewable Energy applications.

7. Other topics addressed during the panel are the traditional cultural norms, social context and particularly the gender division of labor which mean that women and men are differently impacted by energy access. Women can devote up to 11 times more of their time to unpaid work which include resource collection and cooking with un-clean fuels. These tasks expose women not only to physical and health risks but they take away time they could use for other productive activities.

8. The discussions also brought attention to challenges of the limited energy access which exposes women to increasing risks of violence; for instance when bus stops are not lighted or when deforestation and drought increased by the impacts of climate change lead women to go further in their search of energy sources.

B. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT: CASE STUDIES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

9. This session identified the potential of synergies between key sectors such as energy, water, agriculture, tourism, services, industries, etc., provided sharing of experiences from different regions and

fostered learning between stakeholders and experts on the challenges and opportunities for gender equality in the energy sector.

10. The session opened with a presentation from ESCWA's consultant that worked on REGEND's gender mainstreaming, social inclusion, and human rights processes study in **Lebanon**. During the presentation, it was indicated that the existing gap in statistics and the lack of gender disaggregated data are disablers to accurately identify if the activities being done in regard of gender mainstreaming activities are actually effective.

11. Despite a vast array of challenges facing rural women in Lebanon, like the absence of laws that support women in labour force and limited access to financial resources influenced by the inheritance law which in most case denies women the right to own a land and the eminent informal agriculture sector which impacts women's access to finance, it was mentioned that there's still a window of opportunity for these women through renewable energy. In fact, renewable energy projects and their Corporate Social Initiatives and the integration of renewable energy in the agriculture and food production sectors are perfect examples of the opportunities for women to be included in the energy sector.

12. The presentation from UN Environment on the project EmPower in **Asia** addressed the role of Renewable energy in promoting alternate climate resilience livelihoods for women and enhancing their economic opportunities. A large share of women in agriculture, fishing, handcraft, forestry, horticulture, all which are affected by climate change. The main opportunity of renewable energy in context of climate resilience is being an enabler that strengthens the ability to bounce back from climate disasters and shocks since energy is provided from natural resources. However, women encounter several barriers for leadership in this sector but can be addressed by adopting an approach that includes capacity development and knowledge sharing and tailoring appropriate business models that attract private financing.

13. Emphasizing on the social impact of energy poverty, an interesting linkage between modern forms of slavery and abuse was illustrated by demonstrating the linkages of human trafficking and energy poverty in the **Greater Mekong subregion**. Energy poverty affects the communities in terms of health, social exclusion, disempowerment which will help increasing the vulnerabilities in communities and pave the way for human trafficking where most of victims are women and girls who are poor, uneducated and suffer from economic vulnerability creating the linkage between the two subjects. An example of projects dealing with these two problems is the "Power to Empower" initiative of the World Bank where women's inclusion and empowerment against human trafficking is made possible through providing loans to increase affordability of the women-headed households.

14. A presentation on the situation in **Georgia** showed that legislation and practice of gender mainstreaming are well implemented. The following discussions highlighted the efficacy of the enforcement of gender sensitive norms and legislation for empowering women and increasing their participation in the economic sectors where they are contributing to the economic growth of the country.

15. Based on the ensuing discussions, it was agreed that gender stereotypes impede the empowerment of women in the energy sector. The lack of awareness of opportunities provided by the renewable energy sector contributes to the prevailing perception that the energy sector is not appropriate for women. Nonetheless, it has been demonstrated throughout the case studies and shared experiences that Renewable Energy is an empowerment tool for women. It is a lever to improve productivity, to provide technologies for supply and sales and to enhance livelihood benefits.

C. PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION FOR ACCELERATING PROGRESS ON SDG7 AND SDG5

16. This session focused on the challenges to access to finance, technology and capacity building in addition to the opportunities that help accelerate reduction in gender imbalances and promote women empowerment in the Renewable energy sector.

17. The first means of implementation that the discussions focused on is the access to finance which constitutes a major obstacle for women. It was noted that for achieving advancement in SDG5 and SDG7, the business as usual model of classical financial model needs to be avoided. In order to overcome this hindrance, a proper regulatory system which give incentives for the private sector to step-in is required. Guarantee, blended finance, grouping of small projects can encourage private companies by making an investment financially viable.

18. As an example of how solutions for access to finance can be applied, two solutions were provided that can be adopted by the private sector. First one is to help women by providing technical support for projects judged ready to be commercialized by women entrepreneurs. Another solution which can benefit the rural women is the incubator programme which looks for innovative solutions as ideas for businesses that are at early stage and provide the necessary information and guidance to meet the criteria set by venture funds for obtaining financing for their projects and increasing business profitability.

19. Another key area for implementation of gender empowerment that was mentioned is through education which is an enabler for decision-making and raising awareness for choosing sustainable energy technologies. This also concerns the primary role that women occupy in relation to the education of children in regard of energy. Moreover, the importance of behavioral change campaigns through success stories and knowledge products that showcase the challenges faced and the sustainability of solutions and best practices of renewable energy in rural areas was highlighted.

20. Monitoring indicators also took an important part of the discussions where it was recommended that they should target different audiences because inside rural areas, women not organized in homogenous groups. Indicators should consider the challenges faced by women such as the socio-economic abilities, early marriage, peer pressure and the limitations to choice of studies. The aim is to create for women new opportunities through renewable energy such as digitalization far from the stereotypes and the traditional activities.

21. Further interventions from the panellists tackled capacity building that has to be complemented by the sharing of knowledge and information in the renewable energy technologies in the rural context. It was highlighted that women need to understand the benefits of using renewable energy in their productive activities such as agriculture which for instance needs to be addressed in an integrated approach to consider the water-energy-food nexus.

22. It was also highlighted that while policy for energy access may include gender considerations at macro level, the outcomes at micro level are often diminished by socio-economic gendered norms. If an enabling environment for women is to be created it will be done through building knowledge and skills. One efficient way to change social norms is to have women organized in groups and collectives where they can come together and challenge these norms.

23. The case of rural areas of **Jordan** was later discussed focusing on the need for a radical transformation in the mind-sets of policy-makers so that policies be engendered. Although a free market for investment exists,

the barrier for women's participation resides in the organization of women and their involvement in cooperatives which if more encouraged, it can retaliate in better access to finance for women.

D. PANEL DISCUSSION ON PROMOTING INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO ADDRESS GENDER EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABLE ENERGY: WAY FORWARD

24. The fourth and final panel discussion of the workshop addressed sustainable energy policy gaps in gender mainstreaming and women empowerment. It started off with a presentation of the ways that each of the represented organizations in the panel is playing in terms of advancing gender mainstreaming within the sustainable energy sector. Among the different ways enumerated from the representatives, it is worth mentioning the collaborative approach between UN organizations, international organizations like ECREEE and international networks on gender as ENERGIA advocated for providing institutional and governmental support by providing evidence-based policies through gender-disaggregated data, capacity buildings, programmes and toolkits that include a gender lens, tracking the progress on SDG7, working with development banks and in some cases applying national plans on gender and energy.

25. Some of the persisting challenges were later on set forth with some priority actions and recommendations to help deal with them. For instance, it was mentioned that SDG7 does not include gender indicators against which progress can be tracked. Identified institutions should have the responsibility to report and evaluate progress against targets. The regulatory framework and the promotion of investment are essential to achieve targets.

26. Another equally important priority action that was deliberated is to include gender-disaggregated data collection and analysis of gender statistics as part of programming to address structural constraints and to demonstrate the added value of integrating gender into energy and climate frameworks. Achieving equal access to energy for men and women is still impeded by the lack of gender-disaggregated data and gender statistics, without which the extent of unequal access cannot be grasped. More gender-responsive programmes and policies are essential to achieving universal energy access which in turn, require better data collection, gender-sensitive indicators and gender analyses.

27. Moreover, discussions again addressed the application of the integrated and global approach for ensuring that integration starts at the planning stage and includes not only governments but also stakeholders and civil society organization to enhance the bottom up approach and also enhance the monitoring. The role of the private sector should also be integrated from the planning phases.

28. Also, raising awareness about gender equality is an important component of the integrated approach to address gender empowerment and sustainable energy, and must begin at the earliest stages of education, in addition to vocational training and all other forms of capacity building.

29. From the interactions with participants, it was agreed that an improved energy access can redistribute roles in unintended ways. For instance, biogas alternative to the gathering of resources in rural communities can lead to the loss of social ties for women and while women were attributed the role to gather the waste, men managed the system. It was also stressed that evaluations of programs are essential to inform which policies lead to lasting impacts and have the more impact on gender equality.

E. CLOSING SESSION

The workshop sessions were closed by Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief of the Energy Section, Sustainable Development Policies Division at ESCWA. The closing statement included a summary of the outcomes from the workshop and emphasized the fruitful discussions and the intention to continue coordination and collaborating with the represented stakeholders.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

30. The workshop was held at the United Nations Conference Center in Bangkok, Thailand on 8 October 2019.

B. OPENING

31. The workshop was formally opened by Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief of the Energy Section, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA.

C. PARTICIPANTS

32. The workshop was attended by 26 participants representing various international, regional and national energy practitioners, gender experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, and research institutions and academia. The list of participants is shown in Annex II.

D. AGENDA

33. Presentations and discussions were made over four sessions. The agenda of the workshop is summarized below:

- a) Welcoming and Introductory remarks
- b) Panel discussion: Gender empowerment within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement
- c) Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment: Case Studies and Lessons learned from regional and international perspectives
- d) Panel discussion on the Means of implementation for accelerating progress on SDG7 and SDG5
- e) Panel Discussion on promoting integrated approaches to address Gender Empowerment and Sustainable Energy: Way Forward
- f) Closing Statement

E. EVALUATION

34. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to the participants to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the workshop. The feedback received from 31 respondents was positive with 94% of the respondents confirming that the overall quality of the seminar met their expectations and 81% affirming that the workshop achieved its objectives. The quality of the presentations provided, and the facilitation of the discussions were rated as good or excellent by 79% of the respondents and 81% thought that the time allocated for the seminar and each session was appropriate. A suggestion was made to limit the number of panellists to allow for a more engaging conversation with the attended audience. Many of whom were pleased with the overall objectives of the seminar and asked for more men in leadership positions to be involved as well. Conclusively, 90% of the attendees have shown interest in supporting the operationalizing of gender equality and human rights approach to accelerate progress towards sustainable energy.

ANNEX I: AGENDA



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Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Workshop on “Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment”, in the framework of the Tenth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development

United Nations Conference Center, Bangkok, Thailand, 8 October 2019

Agenda

Tuesday, 8 th October 2019	
08:30 – 09:00	Registration <i>Sponsored participants are kindly asked to bring their passport, visa stamp and airline ticket stub to the meeting.</i>
09:00 – 09:05	Welcoming and Introductory remarks Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief Energy Section, Sustainable Development Policies Division, UN-ESCWA
09:05 – 10:15	Session I: Panel discussion: Gender empowerment within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Paris Agreement
Chairperson:	Ms. Linda Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Giraffe Bioenergy Ltd, ENERGIA representative
Members of the Panel discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Anna-Karin Jafors Deputy Regional Director UN-Women, Thailand - Mr. Scott Foster, Director, Sustainable Energy Division, UNECE - Ms. Parimita Mohanty, Programme Management Officer, Renewable Energy Asia and the Pacific Office, UN Environment, Thailand - Ms. Lana Zaman, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, UNESCAP - Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief Energy Section, ESCWA - Ms. Monica Maduekwe, Programme Coordinator, ECOW-GEN (ECREEE)
09:05 – 10:00	

10:00 – 10:15	Guiding Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the relationship between gender, energy and climate change in your respective region and context? - Although energy is recognised as an input for development, what specific role or advantages does RE bring compared to other energy sources? - What are the potential benefits of realizing gender equality and achieving SDG7? - What does it mean gender empowerment in a context where traditional cultural roles and norms dictate a lack of societal value and rights for women?
10:15 – 10:30	Q &A and Discussion Coffee Break
10:30-12:00	Session II: Sustainable Energy and Gender Empowerment: Case Studies and Lessons Learned From Regional and International Perspectives
Moderator:	Ms. Sawsan Gharaibeh, Chair, Transparency International Jordan
10:30 – 11:45	Presenters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Hania Chahal, Lebanon, ESCWA Consultant - Ms Annette Wallgren, Programme management officer, gender and climate change, UN-Environment - Ms. Yunxiao He, Senior Social Specialist, Asia Program Advisor, Four Corners Management Consulting, - Ms. Margalita Arabidze, Deputy Head, Energy Policy Department, Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia
11:45 – 12:00	Guiding Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What factors account for gender-specific problems that women face in relation to their roles in the production and utilization of energy services? - What are the women needs and challenges they face in participating in the energy sector, specifically in rural context? - What potential for synergies between key sectors (energy, water, agriculture, tourism, services, industries, etc.) and gender empowerment especially in the rural context? - Where do you identify the most potential for introducing and implementing gender mainstreaming in the energy sector and what are the main challenges and barriers?
12:00 – 13:30	Q&A and Discussion Lunch Break/Group Photo Partners' side-events (1 hour): Asia Pacific Renewable Energy Status (ESCAP/REN21/ADB) Electric vehicles (ESCAP/Ministry of Energy, Thailand) REGEND Steering Committee meeting (close meeting for ESCWA national Partners)

13:30– 15:15	Session III: Panel Discussion on the Means of Implementation for Accelerating Progress on SDG7 And SDG5
Moderator:	Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief Energy Section, ESCWA
Members of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Syham Bentouati, Executive Director NAFAS, Oman.LTD - Mr. Khaled Bedoui, Chief Executive Officer KB. Consulting, Tunisia - Ms. Govind Kelkar, Executive Director, GenDev Centre for Research and Innovation, Gurgaon, India
13:30 – 15:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Harleen Kaur Sindhu, Renewable Energy Lead, Shell Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan - Ms. Nadine Saba, Board President and Project Director, Akkar Network for Development (AND), Lebanon - Mr. Zeyad Alsaaydeh, Director of Rural Electrification Department, Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Director Ministry of Energy and Mines, Jordan <p>Key guiding questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What challenges and difficulties exist in accessing finance, information and markets, technology, education and training especially for women entrepreneurs? - What are the SDG & Corporate-centered benchmarks to help accelerate reduction in gender imbalances and women empowerment in the Renewable energy sector? - How can the developed sustainable energy capacity be leveraged to boost productive activities that support gender empowerment? - Are there any statistics or data that track the implementation of gender mainstreaming and what are your suggestions or recommendations to develop such indicators?
15:00 – 15:15	Q&A and Discussion
15:15 – 15:30	Coffee Break
15:30 – 17:15	Session IV: Panel Discussion on promoting integrated approaches to address Gender Empowerment and Sustainable Energy: Way Forward
Moderator:	Ms. Jessica Obeid, Expert Renewable Energy, Lebanon
Members of the Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Banashri SINHA, Gender, Environment and Climate Change Specialist, UN-Women, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Thailand - Ms. Monica Maduekwe, Programme Coordinator, ECOW-GEN, ECREEE - Ms. Lana Zaman, Associate Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Division, UNESCAP
15:30– 16:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief Energy Section, UN-ESCWA - Ms. Linda Davis, Chief Executive Officer, Giraffe Bioenergy Ltd, ENERGIA - Ms. Harleen Kaur Sindhu, Renewable Energy Lead, Shell Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan <p>Key guiding questions:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What your respective organisation is doing in terms of gender mainstreaming within the sustainable energy sector and what are your planned programs? - What gender mainstreaming and human rights action plans can be recommended to policy makers, government and local institutions for the energy sector? - What are the priority actions over the medium and long term to accelerate progress on gender equality and women's empowerment in the energy sector? - How can an integrated approach to gender empowerment capture the full breadth of the value chain in sustainable energy?
16:30– 17:00	Summary of Key Messages and Recommendations for the Way Forward Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief Energy Section, Sustainable Development Policies Division (SDPD), UN-ESCWA
17:00 - 17:15	Closing Remarks

ANNEX II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

A. Experts

Ms. Harleen Kaur Sindhu

Renewable Energy Lead
Shell Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan

Ms. Margalita Arabidze

Deputy Head of Energy Policy Department
Ministry of Economy and Sustainable
Development of Georgia
Associate Professor of the Power Engineering
And Telecommunication Faculty
Georgian Technical University
Georgia

Ms. Yunxiao He

Senior Social Specialist
Asia Program Advisor
Four Corners Management Consulting

Ms. Syham Bentouati

Consultant
NAFAS
Muscat, Oman

Ms. Govind Kelkar

Executive Director, GenDev Centre for Research
and Innovation, Gurgaon, India.
Senior Adviser, LANDESA, Seattle, USA.

Visiting Professor, Council for Social
Development,
New Delhi, India

Ms. Nadine Saba

Board President and Project Director
Akkar Network for Development (AND)
Akkar, Lebanon

B. Ministries and Government Entities

Lebanon

Ms. Patil Mesrobian

Programmes Development Officer Environmental
Specialist
Lebanese Centre for Energy Conservation
Beirut, Lebanon

Jordan

Mr. Zeyad Alsaaydeh

Director of Rural Electrification Department
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources
Amman, Jordan

Ms. Lama Alshamaileh

Head of Economic Empowerment of Rural
Women
Ministry of Agriculture- Rural Development and
Women Empowerment Department
Amman, Jordan

Ms. Shorouq Abdel Ghani
Organizational Development Department
Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources
Amman, Jordan

Tunisia

Mr. Mohamed Abdessalem
Central Director
General Commissary for Regional Development
Tunis, Tunisia

Mr. Nafaa Baccari
Director of Renewable Energy
National Energy Management Agency
Tunis, Tunisia

Ms. Elena Ben Khemis
Senior Engineer Renewable Department
National Energy Management Agency
Tunis, Tunisia

Ms. Amira Klibi
Engineer
Ministry of industry small and medium enterprise
Tunis, Tunisia

B. ENERGIA

Ms. Linda Davis
Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Giraffe Bioenergy Ltd
Nairobi, Kenya

C. ECREEE

Ms. Monica Maduekwe
Resource Mobilization Specialist
ECREEE- ECOWAS Centre for Renewable
Energy and Energy Efficiency
Praia, Cape Verde

D. UN Organizations

UN Women

Ms. Anna-Karin Jatifors
Deputy Regional Director
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
and Representative in Thailand
UN Women
Bangkok, Thailand

Ms. Banashri SINHA

Gender, Environment and Climate Change
Specialist
Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
UN Women
Bangkok, Thailand

UNECE

Mr. Scott Foster
Director
Sustainable Energy Division
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
(UNECE)
Geneva, Switzerland

UN ESCAP

Ms. Lana Zaman
Associate Economic Affairs Officer
Energy Division
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP)
Bangkok, Thailand

UN Environment

Ms. Annette Wallgren
Programme Management Officer, Gender &
Climate Change
Asia and the Pacific Office
UN Environment
Bangkok, Thailand

Ms. Parimita Mohanty
Programme Management Officer, Renewable
Energy
Asia and the Pacific Office
UN Environment
Bangkok, Thailand

E. ESCWA Consultants

Ms. Sawsan Gharaibeh
Consultant
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Amman, Jordan

Ms. Hania Chahal
Consultant
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA),
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Jessica Obeid
Consultant,

United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Khaled Bedoui

Consultant
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Tunis, Tunisia

F. ESCWA

Ms. Radia Sedaoui

Chief of Energy Section (ES), Sustainable
Development Policies Division (SDPD)
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Beirut, Lebanon

Mr. Mohamed Zied Gannar

Economic Affairs Officer, Energy Section (ES),
Sustainable Development Policies Division
(SDPD)
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Noha Ziade

Administrative Assistant
United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (ESCWA)
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Sophie Chlela

Research Assistant
Energy Section (ES), Sustainable Development
Policies Division (SDPD)
Beirut, Lebanon

Ms. Rima Hourani

Interpreter
Amman, Jordan

Ms. Rana Abou – Raad

Interpreter
Beirut, Lebanon

ESCWA Mailing Address:

United Nations Economic and Social Commission
for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA)
UN House
P.O. Box: 11-8575
Riad El-Solh 1107 2812
Beirut, Lebanon
Tel.: (+961-1) 981501/2
Fax: (+961-1) 981510