



Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)

Report

National Workshop on “Women Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy”

Tunis, Tunisia 22-23 October 2019

Summary

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with the National Agency for Conservation (ANME) and the General Commissariat of Regional Development (CGDR) in Tunisia, organized a National Workshop on “Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy” in Tunis, Tunisia on 22 and 23 October 2019. The main objective of the workshop was to highlight the role of renewable energy in gender equality and women empowerment, and to formulate actionable recommendations for mainstreaming gender and human rights in policy planning, capacity building, and awareness raising for rural areas.

The workshop allowed the sharing of women empowerment experiences and initiatives both from a national perspective and a regional one while the discussions covered the challenges currently being faced, the lessons learned from previous experiences and projects, and the recommended solutions and suggestions going forward.

The workshop concluded with a series of recommendations that address national collaboration on data collection and sharing, stakeholder cooperation and coordination, and capacity-building and awareness-raising opportunities.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), in partnership with The National Agency for Energy Conservation (ANME) and the General Commissariat of Regional Development (CGDR), organized a National Workshop on “Gender Empowerment and Entrepreneurial Development in the Rural Context: The Role of Renewable Energy” in Tunis, Tunisia on 22 and 23 October 2019.
2. The main objective of the workshop was to highlight the role of renewable energy in gender equality and women empowerment in rural areas, and to formulate actionable recommendations for mainstreaming gender and human rights in policy planning, capacity building, and awareness raising for rural areas.
3. Thirty-four (34) participants representing local, regional, and international gender and energy experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, research institutions, and academia attended the workshop.
4. The workshop spanned over two days and consisted of five 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, participants and a summary of the participants’ evaluation outcome. The full documentation of the workshop is available at the following address:

<https://www.unescwa.org/events/gender-empowerment-and-entrepreneurial-development-rural-context-role-renewable-energy>

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

5. This national workshop concluded with the following findings and recommendations:
 - a) Continue and support efforts to enhance communication and collaboration between ministries and governmental entities at central and local levels, financial institutions and the private sector. Further, support synergetic work and collaboration on joint objectives between the locally present national and international organizations to ensure minimal overlap and increased efficiency of reaching development goals mainly related to SDG 5 and SDG 7.
 - b) Evolve nationally determined contributions (NDCs) and national development plans to become gender responsive. This should be initiated during the planning phase by national institutions and international organizations with local presence and activities (UNDP, GIZ, FAO and others).
 - c) Increase the weight associated with the need of socio-economic indicators related to gender disparity and gender mainstreaming. This should be reinforced by developing and incorporating relevant metrics and proven statistical methods into the work of the involved public bodies (ministries and institutions). Further, these indicators should be developed on a national axis and should involve rural women and targeted population during the inception and design phase.
 - d) Bring to the surface the issue of language and integrate gender mainstreaming into the language, terms and concepts used in the different sectors.
 - e) Increase awareness on the relationship between access to finance and micro finance and the impact on gender mainstreaming and socio-economic development in Arab rural areas. Further, support the development of low-cost financial instruments for the rural population to uptake renewable energy.
 - f) Develop capacity-building activities and curricula at the vocational training level on renewable energy operation and maintenance for both men and women and ensure that the activities are gendered.
 - g) Build a network with practitioners to share best practices between countries and regions. Further, continue collaboration between REGEND’s Local Facilitating Teams (LFTs), experts and stakeholders for the development of the gender-based advisory network.

III. MAIN TOPICS OF DISCUSSIONS

6. Presentations and discussions are summarized in the following sections which are organized according to the substantive sessions of the workshop.

A. SETTING THE STAGE: RENEWABLE ENERGY AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

7. The session opened with a presentation by ANME on its activities in renewable energy (RE) and energy efficiency (EE) in Tunisia while focusing on the participatory approach adopted when it comes to international cooperation on RE programmes and gender mainstreaming topics. Afterwards, bilateral and multilateral cooperation and projects implemented by ANME were presented. The gender aspect was highlighted by sharing the male/female ratio in the different energy-related activities of ANME.

8. A presentation by ESCWA's REGEND Project started by discussing the Arab region's energy challenges. Then, the Project was introduced along with its objectives, expected accomplishments, approach, ownership, and governance. The projects' focus on Arab rural communities and the infusion of the gender aspect were highlighted when conveying the objectives related to socio-economic development in rural areas, gender empowerment, social integration, job creation and using RE technologies in productive sectors.

9. Ensuing discussions highlighted the importance of accounting for equity and not only quantitative equality when integrating the gender aspect, particularly in employment. Key messages:

- a) A main argument presented was the need to consider and incorporate the competence metric and how to enhance it without solely considering simple qualitative statistics such as male/female ratios in the workforce.

B. THE TUNISIAN CONTEXT AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT: REGEND PERSPECTIVES AND RESULTS OF ASSESSMENT

10. A presentation by ESCWA on REGEND's assessment of prevailing situations in the rural areas of Tunisia started by going through Tunisia's socio-economic indicators and then moved on to cover rural indicators along with a stakeholders' mapping. The economic activities prevalent in the rural areas were then presented including the various challenges faced. Access to electricity and the potential applications of renewable energies were also covered such as solar photovoltaic (PV), solar PV pumping, and biogas. Finally, the participative and integrated aspects of rural development were stressed with gender and the water-energy-food nexus being at its core.

11. A presentation by ESCWA on REGEND's gender mainstreaming, social inclusion, and human rights processes study in Tunisia provided an overview on Tunisia covering economic, social, and gender indicators. The agriculture sector in Tunisia was also covered with a focus on its challenges including those specific to rural women and the role that RE can play to alleviate these challenges in addition to the study's main recommendations to address these challenges.

12. The participants discussed and agreed that for capacity building to be effective for women, it needs to be planned and implemented in close collaboration with gender networks to ensure high outreach and participation. The importance of developing national policies by involving the stakeholders at the local level was stressed so that the developed policies effectively address the gaps and challenges actually faced on the ground. The strength of the Tunisian legal framework when it comes to gender equality was also highlighted with the existing equal pay law at its forefront. The discussion then shifted to focus on REGEND's approach and plans where it was emphasized that REGEND is using a participative bottom-up approach which had its team visit every rural area assessed and go door-to-door to collect the needed information and data for evaluation and planning. Moreover, the importance of recording the project activities' positive impacts on people was highlighted so that awareness can spread and can result in replication of the successful cases.

13. The participants then discussed the various successful RE applications in rural Tunisia. It was agreed that funding mechanisms need to be developed to replicate the successful applications implemented and raise awareness about them. Payback periods of four years were reported for solar PV pumping systems that are replacing grid and diesel-generator electricity. Key Messages:

- a) A participative approach that considers local networks and contexts is needed to ensure high efficacy of capacity-building programs.
- b) New and targeted funding mechanisms are important to support the replicability of the pilot projects implemented by REGEND and ensure proper diffusion of the project objectives.

C. THE TUNISIAN CONTEXT AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT: NATIONAL INITIATIVES

14. National initiatives on gender empowerment were presented during this session. The representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Tunisia conveyed that gender equality and women empowerment are treated as crosscutting issues within the UNDP Strategic Plan 2018-2021, in particular, in the fields of energy and climate change. UNDP's experience in supporting countries in mainstreaming gender in climate change policies was also highlighted.

15. The representative of the German International Development Cooperation (GIZ) presented the feedback experience from the project "Promoting the Role of Women in the Energy Sector". The project aims at integrating the gender dimension into the energy Sector in Tunisia by improving the role of active women in the energy sector, strengthening the role of women by raising awareness in energy management and climate change and raising awareness among key institutional players in the RE and EE sectors on areas related to the gender aspect.

16. The representative and Gender Focal Point of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Tunisia highlighted the prevalent gender disparities in the agricultural sector and presented gender mainstreaming projects and some examples of normative work carried out by FAO. An adapted and targeted gender methodology was stressed. FAO is currently working on projects related to the development of RE in the value chain of the agricultural sector, which could be managed by women entrepreneurs.

17. The role played by the local coordinator of Chorbane in the supervision of rural women was presented. The presentation encompassed the activities of the Agricultural Development Group (GDA) "El Amal" in Neffatia and those of the Bureau of Support for Rural Women in Mahdia and the obstacles that still hinder the development and growth of rural women in Chorbane.

18. The participants discussed the activities and results of the gender-based projects carried out in Tunisia by international organizations in the energy and agriculture sectors. They recommended within this context to create more synergies between these projects and utilize an integrated Water-Energy-Food nexus and climate change approach. Participants also discussed income-generating agricultural activities carried out by women in rural areas in Mahdia. They stressed within this context the importance of coaching rural women entrepreneurs and providing them with technical assistance in the fields of energy and entrepreneurial development, as well as the financial support needed to develop their activities in an efficient and cost-effective way. Key messages:

- a) Create more synergies between international cooperation gender-based projects at national and regional levels in the energy and agriculture sectors, through an integrated Water-Energy-Food nexus and climate change approach.
- b) Capitalize on lessons learned from international cooperation gender-based projects in the energy and agriculture sectors.
- c) Implement more activities dedicated to rural women, in particular, in terms of capacity building and local assistance in the fields of RE applications and entrepreneurial development.
- d) Ensure the coaching of rural women entrepreneurs and provide them with technical assistance in the fields of energy and entrepreneurial development, as well as the financial support necessary to help them develop their activities, in an efficient and cost-effective way.

D. REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL GENDER EMPOWERMENT EXPERIENCES

19. A presentation about the project concerning the role of energy policy in ensuring energy justice for rural women in sub-Saharan Africa was delivered. The project, which is implemented by “ECONOLER”, was described including its objectives, motivation, methodology, and process of implementation having the aim of supporting rural women in sub-Saharan states. The data presented argued that women are noticeably marginalized and that upon internalizing external costs related to unaccounted for daily activities undertaken by the reference women, the energy affordability and accessibility indexes become even more extreme.

20. A presentation delivered by a representative from “Laurus Consulting” on awakening diversity in the energy sector conveyed relevant statistics and data on global figures for women participation in the energy sector. Surveyed data on the disconnect, difference and disparity on gender integration concepts and data between men and women were presented. Gender disparity and inequality in the job market were also highlighted.

21. The GIZ implemented a regional programme titled “Promotion du rôle des Femmes au Maghreb (PFM)” was then introduced with a description of its context related to the role of RE in supporting gender mainstreaming in rural areas. The program argues for the need to contribute to the enhancement of women activities in priority sectors in the Maghreb region. These sectors include integrated water management, climate change, energy, economic development, governance and decentralization. The different projects implemented under the program were presented with testimonies of beneficiaries from the different countries.

22. A solar cooperative initiative named Diyaa run by women university students in Morocco was then brought forth by two members of the cooperative. The activities and products of the cooperative, which include solar cookers and dryers, were presented. Finding financing channels and ensuring sustainability of operation were stated as difficulties being faced.

23. A presentation by the Arab Industrial Development and Mining Organization (AIDMO) followed and discussed the structure of the organization along with its objectives to achieve cooperation and complementarity between Arab countries, develop the industry in the Arab world and support the achievement of the SDGs, including SDG7 and SDG5.

24. Key messages:

- a) The importance to produce relevant indicators based on statistics that will be able to support and guide decision makers.
- b) The importance of collaboration and synergetic work with, but not limited to, research institutes and universities.
- c) The need for a paradigm shift by integrating the human dimension and thinking of equal opportunities between men and women.
- d) Energy justice is directly linked to social justice.

E. PROMOTING INTEGRATED APPROACHES TO ADDRESS WOMEN EMPOWERMENT AND GENDER EQUALITY IN THE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR IN LEBANON: WAY FORWARD

25. ESCWA invited the participants to discuss and deliberate on means for gender mainstreaming in the energy sector including data sharing and creation of indicators and baselines as well as capacity-building opportunities. Discussions were structured to answer the following questions:

- 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?
- Are there any statistics or data that track the implementation of gender mainstreaming and what are your suggestions or recommendations to develop such baseline and indicators?

- How can the developed renewable energy capacity be leveraged not only for renewable energy entrepreneurship, but also to boost and create current and new productive activities that support women empowerment and improve their lives?
- What gender mainstreaming and human rights action plans and recommendations can be recommended to policy makers, government and local institutions for the energy sector?
- What are the recommended main themes to develop capacity building programs around to be implemented by the REGEND Project?

26. Based on the discussions, it was agreed that the main challenges facing women empowerment in the energy sector in Tunisia are gender data collection, availability, and analysis; the weak cooperation and coordination between all the stakeholders working on women empowerment in Tunisia along with the potential to synergise efforts to produce more effective results; the lack of education and awareness on RE technologies and entrepreneurship in rural areas for both men and women; and the absence of access to low-cost financial instruments for the rural population to uptake RE.

27. Key recommendations and suggested action plans include:

- a) Bring to the surface the issue of language and integrate gender mainstreaming into the language and terms and concepts used in the different sectors.
- b) Work on effective methods to develop specific indicators that will support in addressing the unique questions and issues related to rural women. Currently, estimations are utilized rather than real-life metrics, statistics and indicators. Further, these indicators should be developed on a national axis and should involve rural women and targeted population during the inception and design phase.
- c) Work on ensuring that the gender aspect becomes part and parcel of all policies relevant to rural development and social justice.
- d) Ensure proper and high-calibre capacity-building activities are designed to cover RE topics that target rural populations starting with academic and vocational training institutes.
- e) From a RE adoption perspective, high-level political decisions and incentives are needed to tackle the issue of bankability of RE systems and the high energy costs that may be associated with such systems.
- f) Enhance efforts that support the implementation of practical, context-based solutions and projects that tackle women empowerment without stopping at high-level ministerial policies and decisions.
- g) Decentralization at the municipal and sub-national level should simultaneously infuse and account for the gender aspect.
- h) National initiatives should capitalize on completed and ongoing experiences and activities from the different local and international players while ensuring an environment of collaboration when it comes to the subject matters of capacity building, women empowerment and gender equality.

F. CLOSING SESSION

28. The closing statement emphasized the workshop's fruitful discussions and the intention to continue coordination and collaboration with the represented stakeholders. A summary of the key recommendations and discussion points was conveyed along with REGEND's upcoming activities that include the RE pilot projects to be implemented in Chorbane, Mahdia, capacity-building activities and the dissemination of the accrued knowledge and policy recommendations.

IV. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

A. DATE AND VENUE

29. The workshop was held at the Novotel Hotel, Tunis, Tunisia on 22 and 23 October 2019.

B. OPENING

30. The workshop was formally opened by Ms. Radia Sedaoui, Chief of the Energy Section, Sustainable Development Policies Division, ESCWA and Mr. Riadh Berjab, General Director, National Agency for Energy Conservation.

C. PARTICIPANTS

31. The workshop was attended by 34 participants representing local, regional, and international gender and energy experts, NGOs, government ministries and entities, UN organizations, research institutions, and academia. The list of participants is shown in Annex II.

D. AGENDA

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

- a) Opening Session and Introduction
- b) Setting the stage: Renewable energy and women empowerment
- c) The Tunisian context and gender empowerment: REGEND perspectives and results of assessment
- d) The Tunisian context and gender empowerment: national initiatives
- e) Regional and international gender empowerment experiences
- f) Promoting integrated approaches to address women empowerment and gender equality in the renewable energy sector in Tunisia: Way Forward
- g) Closing Statement

E. EVALUATION

33. An evaluation questionnaire was distributed to the participants to assess the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the workshop. The feedback received from 21 respondents was positive with 95% of the respondents confirming that the overall quality of the workshop met their expectations and 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 95% of the respondents and 90% thought that the time allocated for the workshop and each session was appropriate. 84% of the 19 people that filled in the survey's organizational questions stated that their role was clearly communicated and that ESCWA supported them in preparing their inputs. and Finally, 81% expressed their interest in introducing and/or implementing gender-mainstreaming activities in the energy sector in Tunisia with the highest interests being in (1) institutional and policy strengthening and (2) gender mainstreaming and human right strategy and action plans in the RE sector in rural areas.

34. A shared suggestion received was to allow more time for interactions and discussions to further enhance the sharing of best practices and experiences. Furthermore, it was suggested to focus more on field activities and initiatives and to complete field visits to enable the sharing of knowledge and exposure to different rural activities.

ANNEX I: AGENDA

F

NATIONS UNIES



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22-23 Octobre 2019
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Commission Economique et Sociale pour l'Asie Occidentale (CESAO)

Atelier de Travail National sur « L'Autonomisation des Genres et le Développement Entrepreneurial dans le Contexte Rural : Le Rôle des Energies Renouvelables »

Hôtel Novotel - Tunis, Tunisie, 22-23 Octobre 2019.

AGENDA

Mardi, 22 Octobre 2019	
08:30 - 09:00	Accueil et inscription des participants. <i>Les participants parrainés sont priés d'apporter leur passeport, leur cachet de visa d'entrée et leur talon de billet d'avion, avec eux à l'évènement.</i>
	Ouverture de l'atelier et introduction
09:00 - 09:20	Mots d'ouverture : <ul style="list-style-type: none">- M. Riadh Berjab, Directeur Général de l'ANME.- Mme. Radia Sedaoui, Chef de la Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
09:20 - 09:50	Tour de table.
09:50 - 10:00	Rappel du programme, des objectifs et des résultats attendus de l'atelier. M. Mohamed Zied Gannar, Cadre en Affaires Economiques, Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
Session I	Préparation du terrain : Energies Renouvelables & Autonomisation des Genres

Modérateur :	M. Nafaa BACCARI, Chargé de la Direction des Energies Renouvelables, ANME.
Rapporteur :	Mme. Maya Mansour, Assistante de Recherche, Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
10:00 - 10:20	Programmes de coopération internationale dans le domaine des Energies Renouvelables et l'intégration de la Dimension Genre en Tunisie. M. Hassen Agrebi, Chargé du Département de la Coopération Internationale, ANME.
10:20 - 10:40	Présentation du projet de l'Initiative Régionale pour la Promotion des Applications d'Energie Renouvelable de Petite Taille dans les zones rurales de la Région Arabe (REGEND) Mme. Radia Sedaoui, Chef de la Section Energie, Direction des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
10:40 - 11:00	Débat.
11:00 - 11:30	Pause-café.
Session II	Le contexte tunisien et l'autonomisation des genres : Résultats de l'évaluation et perspectives du projet « REGEND ».
Modérateur :	Mme. Hélène Ben Khemis, Chef de service, Direction des Energies Renouvelables, ANME.
Rapporteur :	M. Jil Amine, Cadre en Développement Durable, Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
11:30 - 11:50	Situation en Tunisie dans le domaine du développement régional - Secteurs de l'agriculture et des énergies renouvelables : Résultats de l'étude de base du projet « REGEND ». M. Khaled Bedoui, Consultant ONU-CESAO.
11:50 - 12:10	L'intégration de la Dimension Genre, l'Inclusion Sociale, les processus des Droit de l'Homme et l'Accès à l'Energie dans les communautés locales ciblées en Tunisie : Résultats de l'étude réalisée par le projet « REGEND ». M. Hatem Mliki, Consultant ONU-CESAO.
12:10 - 13:00	Débat.
13:00 - 14:00	Photo de groupe et déjeuner.
Session III	Le Contexte Tunisien et l'Autonomisation des Genres : Initiatives nationales.
Modérateur :	Mme. Chiraz Skhiri, Responsable développement de programme – Région MENA, HIVOS
Rapporteur :	M. Mohamed Zied Gannar, Responsable Affaires Economiques, Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
14:00 - 14:20	Appui à l'Egalité entre les Genres dans le Secteur des Energies Renouvelables. M. Mohamed Aymen Khaldi, Associé de projet, PNUD-Tunisie.

14:20 - 14:40	Appui à l'Autonomisation de la Femme dans le Secteur des Energies Renouvelables. M. Amin Chtioui, Chef de Projet, GIZ-Tunisie
14:40 - 15:00	Appui aux Coopératives et Associations des Femmes dans les Chaines de Valeurs. Mme. Faten Aouadi, Point Focal Genre, FAO-Tunisie
15:00 - 15:20	Quel rôle pour la Femme à Chorbane ? Mme. Radhia Bel Haj Mohamed, Coordinatrice Locale de la Femme Rurale à Chorbane, Mahdia.
15:20 - 15:50	Débat.
15:50 - 16:00	Clôture des travaux de la 1^{ère} journée.

Mercredi, 23 Octobre 2019	
Session IV	Expériences Régionales et Internationales d'Autonomisation du Genre
Modérateur :	Mme Nadia Bchini, Chef de service, Département de la Coopération Internationale, ANME
Rapporteur :	M. Ahmed Diab, Assistant de Recherche, Section Energie, Division des Politiques de Développement Durable, ONU-CESAO.
09:00 - 09:15	La Justice énergétique au profit des femmes des zones rurales de l'Afrique Subsaharienne : Rôle des politiques énergétiques. Mme. Kawther Lihidheb, Spécialiste Senior en Efficacité Energétique, Econoler, Tunisie.
09:15 - 09:30	Encourager la diversité dans le secteur de l'énergie : Une clé pour la croissance et le développement. Mme. Fatma M'Selmi, Experte, Laur'us Consulting, Tunisie.
09:30 - 09:45	Le programme régional de promotion du rôle des femmes au Maghreb "PFM". Mme. Zoubida Reghay, Conseillère Technique, GIZ, Maroc.
09:45 - 10:00	Contexte et retour d'expérience du Maroc en matière d'utilisation des énergies vertes et renouvelables et d'intégration de la dimension genre au niveau des activités productives dans le milieu rural. Mme. Meriem Houzir, Consultante en Changement Climatique et Développement Durable, Cabinet de Conseil AlliaDev, Maroc.
10:00 - 10:15	Réalisations de l'Organisation Arabe pour le Développement Industriel et les Ressources Minières dans les domaines liés à la femme rurale et au développement des énergies renouvelables. M. Ala Ladeed, Expert, Organisation de développement industriel et Minier (AIDMO) League des Pays Arabes, Maroc.
10:15 - 10:45	Débat.

ANNEX II: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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