News

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Introducing ENERGIA

Founded in 1995 by a group of energy practitioners who provided inputs to the Earth Summit in 1992 and Beijing Conference on Women in 1995, ENERGIA sought to address the inadequate recognition of gender issues as a legitimate area of concern in energy policy and practice at that time. ENERGIA works from the standpoint that projects, programmes and policies that explicitly address gender and energy issues will result in better outcomes, in terms of the sustainability of energy services as well as the human development opportunities available to women and men.

The network has grown into a strong, dynamic, and active body, and has become the institutional base from which actions were taken to integrate gender issues into energy access policies, programmes and projects. There now are 22 national gender and energy networks, coordinated by National Focal Point organisations, of which 13 are in Africa and nine in Asia. These two regional networks are led by Regional Network Coordinators, with support and backstopping from the International Secretariat, which is hosted by ETC Foundation in the Netherlands and which is responsible for overall management and coordination of activities of the network.

During the initial years, ENERGIA News, a magazine on gender and energy issues, was the main product and 'backbone' of the network. Later, the network has earned a clear visibility and standing at the international level, through participation and active contributions to international policy events, advice on gender and energy issues to international institutions, and substantive research on the subject. ENERGIA was successful in putting gender and energy issues on the agendas of multilateral and bilateral development agencies in the energy sector such as ESMAP, GTZ and UNDP. ENERGIA has grown in influence through its international policy influencing and advocacy activities at events such as Village Power, and its resource centre on gender and energy.

Since 2007, a change occurred in the direction of ENERGIA's activities. Where until then the majority of activities were directed at the international level, now the majority of activities take place within member countries. This change was led by a strong voice of ENERGIA's membership, who successfully called for more impact within their countries.

The four main strategies along which ENERGIA is currently working are:

1. Capacity building in gender mainstreaming energy projects
2. Gender mainstreaming in energy projects/markets
3. Policy influencing
4. Networking

With these strategies, ENERGIA made another shift: that from mainly showing why gender mainstreaming is crucial, to mainly demonstrating and building capacities of how to mainstream gender into energy projects and policies. The article in this issue of Boiling Point demonstrating the gender tools used in the Lao Biogas Pilot Program is a good example, showing the practical level at which this demonstration and capacity building is taking place.

The remainder of this article will focus on achievements made by the network and its activities.

ENERGIA's Achievements over the years

Capacity Building

This has been an important strategy for ENERGIA for many years. At first, capacity building was intended to bring about changes at the policy and perceptional levels, but since 2005, we have been trying to also target energy practitioners with practical tools and training. Currently, we want to strengthen capabilities of project managers and policymakers to design and implement gender-sensitive rural energy access projects and national energy policies. To be able to achieve this, a generic training programme – including six training modules on gender and energy in English and French – was developed[1].

[1]Under the EU-funded programme 'Turning Information into Empowerment: Strengthening Gender and Energy Networking in Africa'

Gender mainstreaming energy projects/markets

This is a new strategy for ENERGIA, which started in 2007. The strategy aims to produce a body of first-hand experiences that show the positive impacts energy access projects/markets have on the livelihoods of poor men and women.

Another approach that ENERGIA has followed under this strategy is that of publishing a call for the submission of project proposals in May 2008 to mainstream gender approaches into (parts of) existing energy projects.

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Policy Influencing

Like capacity building, policy influencing has been one of ENERGIA's main strategies for many years. In the early years, the main focus was on advocacy at major international fora and meetings, or targeting key international stakeholder organisations. ENERGIA's advocacy work at this level has undoubtedly contributed in putting gender on the energy agenda, as was recognised by ENERGIA's 2006 external evaluation.

Input was also provided on gender into nine programmes of key organisations working on energy access for the poor, including GVEP Partnership Board, IUCN energy program, Sida consultative group, Technical Advisory Group of the WB Energy Trust Funded Programmes, Global Gender and Climate Alliance. This has resulted in the inclusion of gender and energy issues in policy documents of Sida, GVEP, UNDP and ESMAP, after advisory services were provided to these organisations.

Under TIE-ENERGIA, a new approach to policy influencing was taken. One that focused on national energy policies and ministries and that were undertaken by our national network members. The aim is to obtain impacts at the institutional and policy levels, and by working directly with ministries of energy to influence the content as well as the direction of the national energy policies, so as to make them gender-sensitive. The main activities carried out under the policy influencing strategy currently is that of gender audits of national energy policies and/or institutions. So far, seven gender audits of national energy policies have been implemented in Botswana, Kenya, Senegal, The Philippines, India, Nigeria and Ghana. These gender audits result in gender action plans with specific targets and a timeframe that are validated by Ministries of Energy in these countries. As can be seen in the article by Nozipho Wright and Yacine Diagne Gueye, the gender audits in Botswana and Senegal have resulted in the incorporation of gender and energy aspects in national energy policies.

Networking

This strategy wants to strengthen the energy and gender networking and resources at the regional, national and international level. It builds on the ENERGIA network structure that brings together individuals and institutions with diverse backgrounds across a large number of countries into a collective endeavour to work on gender and energy issues.

Networking activities at national level are centred around seed funding contracts with National Focal Points for the implementation of network strengthening activities in the 22 countries of the ENERGIA network. These activities have leveraged other actions on energy access and provided confidence for extra funding from national level donors for some of the networks. At the regional level, six network meetings have been held, two in Africa and four in Asia at which all 22 National Focal Point organisations were present. At these events, network members update priority actions and reaffirm their shared commitment to the objectives and principles of the ENERGIA network.

In addition, the ENERGIA International Secretariat recently hosted the ENERGIA International Network Meeting from 13 to 19 September 2009 in Zandvoort, the Netherlands. It was the first time in ENERGIA's history that the entire network met. During the meeting, the network took a critical look at itself, its activities and the way it is organised and looked forward to the coming five years to give direction to the activities and organisational structure of the network.

The meeting clearly showed that ENERGIA has a very committed, vibrant and dynamic membership. The level of linking and learning between members from different countries, continents and stakeholder groups was continuously ongoing. Poster presentations of the national, regional and international activities helped initiate this, but also the open learning environment that a network can offer to its members and the dedication of the members to jointly work towards the same goal.

Another important element under the networking strategy is that of developing and collecting resources on gender and energy in the only existing gender and energy resource centre.

Resources that have been developed by ENERGIA over the years include:

- ENERGIA News, the printed magazine with case studies on gender and energy, which has recently undergone a change in appearance to make the magazine more visually appealing and easier to read.
- ENERGIANet, an electronic newsletter presenting updates from the network.
- One book, jointly developed with UNDP: Gender and Energy for Sustainable Development: a toolkit and resource guide.
- Three annotated bibliographies on gender and energy from Africa, Asia and the Pacific.
- An online database including 359 online publications on gender and energy.
- Six empirical studies on gender, energy and the MDGs, eight case studies by partners in Africa, Asia and France, one conceptual framework paper and one synthesis report to deepen the understanding of the linkages between gender, energy and poverty.
- Guide to Monitoring and Evaluation in Energy Projects that contains gender sensitive tools and indicators.

Following the change in appearance for ENERGIA News, ENERGIA is also restyling the website with the objective of making the information more easily accessible, interactive and up-to-speed with technological website developments. The website will keep on offering these and more resources on gender and energy for free and easy download.

For more information about ENERGIA, please visit the website: www.energia.org