

A POWERFUL CONNECTION: GENDER & RENEWABLES

GENDER PERSPECTIVES IN INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES

Gender issues in renewable energies

- Renewable energy is an employment sector that is as male dominated as the conventional energy production industry. In contrast to the conventional energy market, no gender-disaggregated data is available for the renewable energy sector. In terms of gender relations, it can be assumed that the differences between the various types of energy production are not really that great: in most industrialised countries, the proportion of women in the energy sector amounts to about 20% of the workforce – although the number of women in management positions is less than 5%.
- Men and women perceive risk differently. This has been illustrated in issues like the use of nuclear energy. Women's greater awareness of risk is partly to do with their basic rejection of (purely) technological solutions, especially largescale technologies, and has a lot to do with their preference for technologies that can be used in a decentralised system.
- Support for renewable energy is not restricted to political and economic decisions: it is also a factor in funding renewables expansion and in individual decisions on energy use. While no data is available on the numbers of women who invest in, say, wind farms, or on the actual amounts they invest, it can be assumed that their investment options are limited by their lesser financial freedom – on average, women's incomes in the European Union are 80 per cent of men's. Operating companies often hinder women's investment because their preferred tax deduction models favour higher incomes. Women's lower incomes also narrow their choice in deciding whether to switch energy pro-

viders and use green electricity. Be that as it may, in surveys, women respondents demonstrate greater willingness to use electricity that is generated from renewable energy sources.

- With gender-specific role assignment so ingrained in society, educational materials and other information on renewable energy often address men – either consciously or subconsciously – in their preconceived role as the sole decisionmaker in technology-related issues. If women are to be better informed and have more freedom to make their own choices, promoters of renewable energy must consciously address women as a key target group.

What we are doing?

Bringing the issue of (renewable) energy home to women by:

- Capacity building with a focus on gender and energy/renewables
- Inviting women to join and become active in an online discussion forum
- Disseminating research results and data on gender and renewables

Heightening men's (and women's) awareness of gender equity. This involves:

- Sensitising to issues of gender equity
- Our participation in renewables working groups and networks
- Collecting well-founded arguments and useful examples

What needs to be done?

Demands on policymakers, industry, and renewable energy associations

- In principle, the gender equity dimension must be better integrated into the energy policy debate. Gender analyses can widen perspectives and so put destructive production methods and resource-intensive consumer behaviour back in the spotlight.
- In promoting renewable energy, policy measures and instruments must consider gender relations and take account of differing gender needs. This should include a mandatory Gender Impact Assessment, especially in cases where public funding is involved.
- In the short-term, it must be ensured that both women and men can participate equally in energy policy decisions and planning. For the longer term, they must be afforded equal opportunities to enjoy the positive outcomes in the jobs market. This can be served by targeted projects and campaigns.
- Funding instruments for environmentally sound energy production must be designed to take account of the differing situations and monetary options available to women and men, and neither give preference to nor discriminate against any one gender.
- Information on renewable energies and on green electricity must address the different target groups and take account of the different interests, areas of concern and levels of access when it comes to women and men.
- Targeted workshops are needed to assist capacity building for women and to sensitise people to genderrelated sub-issues in the renewables sector.
- Overall, availability of gender-disaggregated data on renewables must be ensured. This means that research projects should collect and evaluate data in a gender-differentiated way. It should also mean that, for example, industry associations that promote renewables and the renewables sector itself categorise data on their members and staffing structures according to gender and so contribute to alleviating the problem of data availability.

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