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GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE OFF-GRID SECTOR

What measures should we take to support vulnerable population segments are affected by lack of electricity access in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic?





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Speakers



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Agenda/Topic-Women's empowerment through electricity Access

- I. Introduction
- II. Social inclusion
 - Access to and control over resources
 - Drivers of gender inequality in energy access-Case Study
- III. Main challenges
 - Financial, Policy, Marketing barriers & compliance to traditional norms
- IV. Recommendations
- V. Conclusion



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Topic:

**Women's empowerment through
Electricity Access**





Introduction

Gendered access to and control over resources

- Policymakers should be thinking—and worried—about how COVID-19 is expected to disproportionately affect women and girls. Gender inequality can come into even starker focus in the context of electricity access. With COVID-19 continuing to spread, what do we see so far—and what can we expect in the future—in terms of the impacts on women and girls?
- Current trends on gender and energy interventions have called for a need to move away from gender-blind approaches towards addressing women and their interests in electrification policy and practice. The challenge encountered for this presentation, highlights the need for deeper thoughts to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of the nexus between gender and electricity access as ECOWAS member countries accelerates their responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Overarching issues tend to heavily influence the second dimension, which is the gendered access to and control over resources. This is a broad category divided into **MATERIAL**, **SOCIAL** AND **HUMAN RESOURCES**. Material resources include money, property including appliances, and other physical assets. Access to material resources such as income does not necessarily mean control over such assets.

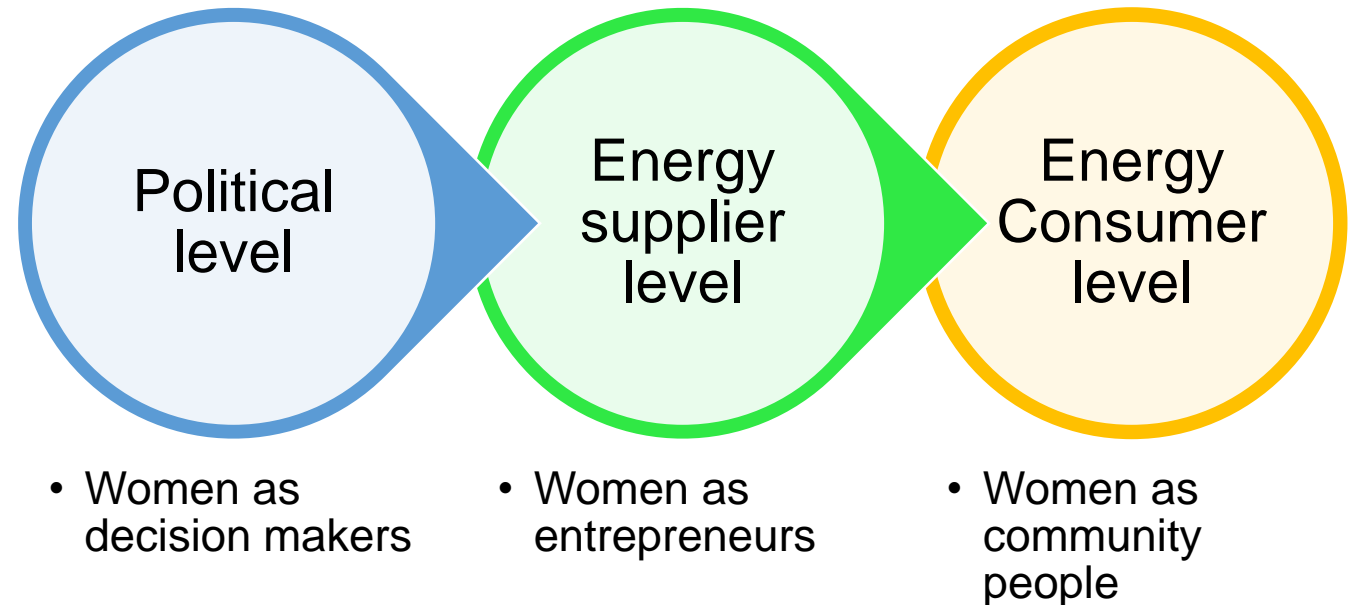


- Similarly, when people start using electric light, this constitutes increased access to material resources particularly to women who tend to spend more time at home than men. However, without accumulation and control over material assets, this shift does not denote material endowments. We therefore separate between material opportunities such as income on the one hand and long-term control over finances and assets, also referred to as material endowments, on the other.
- ***Social resources*** are important for sustaining a good living, and the associated notion of social capital includes the 'ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures'. Social resources may increase through access to using light, television and mobile phones.
- ***Human resources*** include common welfare indicators such as knowledge and education, health, safety and psychological power as well as reduction in time spent on physically demanding and repetitive tasks (that is, drudgery). We consider reduced drudgery as a sign of a person's increased human resources and empowerment if the previous practice were detrimental to people's health, restricted them from having enough time for rest and leisure and/or if the time saved led to new choices.
- The **third dimension** is ***agency***, which is crucial and heavily informed by overarching issues (**dimension 1**) such as social norms, as these often constrain women's ability to speak and act to the same extent as men in various realms. Women's degree of agency also impacts their access to resources of various kinds (**dimension 2**). For reasons accounted for above, our framework includes two general modalities of agency: influence over life decisions (**including political power**) and influence over everyday decisions.



Drivers of gender inequality in energy access

The main challenges and constraints for gender equality in off-grid electricity access exists at three levels:





Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to enter and succeed in energy-related fields in the private sector

Activities

- Profile and showcase energy businesses led by women
- Build the capacity of existing women entrepreneurs on energy businesses/technologies and energy-finance
- Create gender-sensitive financing mechanisms
- Sensitize the private sector to reach out to women candidates for employment and contracting opportunities
- Promote vocational training in energy

ECOWAS Regional Targets

- At least 25 percent women participation in energy-related fields in the private sector by 2020 and an equal (50-50) gender balance by 2030



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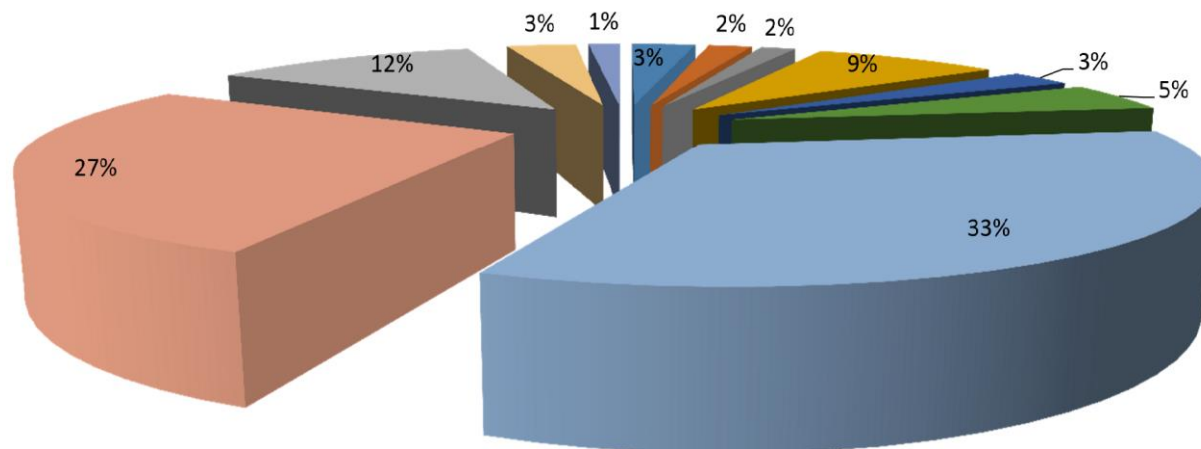


Case Study

- In Sierra Leone, a Solar Engineering Training Centre (The Barefoot College) has been established for rural electrification and to provide training facilities to other illiterate women in the following areas.
- To date the institution is made up of women who has never been to school. It started with five women but today they have trained more than hundreds of women.
- These women now has the ability of carrying out the rural electrification of solar home PV system in various communities across the country.

Districts with installed system

■ Kenema ■ Kailahun ■ Kono ■ Western Area ■ Koinadugo ■ Tonkolili ■ Port Loko ■ Bombali ■ Kambia ■ BSE ■ Pujehun





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Women Demonstrating to Solar helpers how to do series, parallel, series-parallel for Off-Grid connection





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RECOMMENDATIONS

The global spread of COVID-19 has caused thousands of deaths and alarmed individuals, communities, businesses and society around the world. Conceptual elements and methodological suggestions for how to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of the nexus between gender and electricity access in the decentralised renewable energy sector is no exception.

What is at stake is no less than the survival of this sector and the resulting delivery of power to rural communities.

The halt in activity directly jeopardises not only energy access investments to date, but most importantly the well-being of rural populations and the pursuit of opportunities created by a reliable and sustainable power supply.

FINANCIAL MEASURES

- Creation of a Decentralised Off-Grid renewable Energy (DORE) Relief Fund
- Pooling of resources for a 'Rural Electrification Stimulus Plan' to achieve the SDGs

POLICY MEASURES

- Recognition of DORE sector as an 'essential service'

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- Step up technical assistance for DRE companies



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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the COVID-19 crisis represents a grave threat to women working in the off-grid electricity sector, but also an immense opportunity. The presenter and partners stand ready to work together with governments, funders, philanthropies and other stakeholders to implement the above recommendations and hence enable the sector to not only survive this crisis, but flourish in its aftermath.



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Thank You
Any Questions?

