

REEECH WEBINAR SERIES: EPISODE 2

Towards energy justice: Addressing gender inequalities in energy policies in the HKH

Country context: Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan

22 March 2022 | 15:15–17:30 (Nepal Standard Time, UTC+05:45) | MS Teams

About the webinar series

Our Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Capability for the Hindu Kush Himalaya (REEECH) Initiative and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) are jointly organizing a series of country-specific webinars as part of our commitment to achieve energy justice by addressing the lack of gender mainstreaming in energy policies in the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region.

The webinar series will focus on clarifying the linkages among gender, poverty, and energy and addressing these through related policies and programmes for economic development, women's equality and empowerment, and environmental conservation. We organized the first webinar of this series – which focused on the Nepal and Bhutan country contexts – on 7 October 2021.

About this webinar

The second webinar of the series will focus on the Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan country contexts. The participants will hear from gender and energy experts about the extent to which gender issues have been mainstreamed in relevant policies and programmes as well as the key challenges, constraints, ongoing efforts, and opportunities in addressing the gender dimensions of energy poverty in each country.

Objectives

- Review the extent to which gender issues have been addressed in the energy sector (policy, institutional, and programmatic domains) of the HKH
- Draw on existing good practices in the energy portfolio of HKH countries
- Recommend strategies and approaches for gender mainstreaming and social inclusion in energy sector planning, project design and implementation, operations, and capacity building

The webinar will conclude with recommendations for addressing the policy gaps and gender-related constraints in access to, ways of use, opportunities, and control over energy.

Gender, energy, and poverty linkages

Energy poverty – the absence of adequate modern energy services to meet basic household needs – is one of the most daunting development challenges. Pre-existing social relationships and power hierarchies determine access to reliable and affordable energy between and within countries, urban and rural areas, and households. These factors have led to an energy divide, leading to unequal flow of benefits from energy resources, and placing women, the poor, and people from excluded groups at greater risk of energy poverty.



Communities living in mountain areas are particularly vulnerable to energy poverty as the cold climatic conditions demand more energy but access to power transmission networks and alternative energy sources is limited. Furthermore, women from mountain communities experience energy poverty differently and more severely than men as they are primarily responsible for fulfilling the energy needs of their families.

The potential welfare gain for women and excluded groups from increased access to energy sources, services, and technologies is significant. There is a need to recognize the linkages among gender, poverty, and energy and address them in energy policy.

The country context: Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan

BANGLADESH

Less than one-fourth of the total population in Bangladesh has access to clean cooking fuels and technologies. Women are disproportionately impacted both in terms of time spent on collection and cooking, as well as in being exposed to the harmful effects of indoor air pollution. The disparity increases in rural areas, where about 91% of households rely on firewood and kerosene for cooking. In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, about 80% of the population relies on traditional solid

fuels for cooking. While the government provides subsidy for kerosene to meet the energy needs, this does not effectively serve poor women in Bangladesh. In particular, rural households often end up paying a higher price for kerosene because of corruption along the supply chain. Careful reallocation of kerosene subsidies to on- or off-grid alternatives would help the transition to clean energy particularly in the form of clean cooking solutions, such as solar e-cooks and biogas. Ensuring the affordability and reliability of the solutions require tailored financing programmes to ensure accessibility for all, particularly poor and marginalized groups.

INDIA

About 25% of premature deaths caused by household air pollution globally occur in India. Women are particularly at risk of respiratory diseases and increased risk of pre-natal mortality and post-natal complications due to indoor pollution emitted by inefficient biomass stoves. Woman's lack of agency in household decision making often results in a failure to transition from traditional fuel to clean cooking fuel. Lack of access to clean energy in India not only contributes to women's time poverty, ill health, and increased level of drudgery but also leaves them at the losing end of economic and social development. The energy policies in India are focused on offering clean and modern energy as substitutes to traditional fuel but miss out on the

supply of adequate affordable electricity for generating rural employment and supporting home-based micro-enterprises that generate jobs for women.

PAKISTAN

About 26% of Pakistan's population lives in mountainous regions and lacks access to electricity, 51% lacks access to clean cooking and heating facilities, and 68% of the rural population uses wood for cooking. Expanding

gas grids and delivering LPG to meet the clean energy needs of women in the mountain areas of Pakistan may not be a feasible option. The Pakistan Domestic Biogas Programme has successfully deployed household-based biogas-digestors in provinces such as Punjab. There is a need to consider the replicability potential of this programme and the feasibility of large-scale adoption of biogas-based clean cooking solutions in the mountain areas.

Agenda

Moderator: Suman Bisht, Senior Gender Specialist, ICIMOD

Time	Programme	Speakers
15:15–15:30	Introduction and background	Suman Bisht, Senior Gender Specialist, ICIMOD
15:30–15:45	Welcome remarks	Celia García-Baños, Programme Officer, Policy, Gender and Socioeconomics, IRENA
15:45–16:00	Setting the context: Findings from ICIMOD data analysis	Suman Bisht, Senior Gender Specialist, ICIMOD, and Kosar Banu, Gender Specialist, ICIMOD
Panel presentation: Gender review of national energy policies, programmes, and institutional landscape		
16:00–16:15	The Bangladesh context	Sakib Bin Amin, Associate Professor in Economics/Director, Accreditation Project Team, North South University, Bangladesh
16:15–16:25	Q&A	
16:25–16:40	The India context	Mini Govindan, Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute
16:40–16:50	Q&A	
16:50–17:05	The Pakistan context	Yasmin Karim, Development practitioner/policy and advocacy advisor
17:05–17:15	Q&A	
17:15–17:20	Summary of key policy recommendations	Suman Bisht, Senior Gender Specialist, ICIMOD
17:20–17:30	Closing remarks	Basanta Raj Shrestha, Director Strategic Cooperation, ICIMOD

Organized by

International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

For further information

Suman Bisht suman.bisht@icimod.org
Ujala Rajbhandari ujala.rajbhandari@icimod.org
Barsha Rani Gurung bagurung@icimod.org

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