



SECTORAL BRIEF

GENDER AND RENEWABLE ENERGY IN KENYA



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Introduction

This policy brief is part of the Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP), which assesses the status of gender equality and women's empowerment in Kenya based on recently produced reports and resources. The assessment aims to strengthen national understanding and data on advancing international, regional and national commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE). As the primary source of evidence-driven advocacy and programming, the CGEP provides insights to county and national stakeholders, development partners, the European Union, and the UN System to advance gains and overcome challenges at the county and national levels.

Furthermore, the gender analysis is guided by the transformative and rights-based gender equality and women's empowerment approach embodied in the core European Union values on human rights and reinforced by the new EU Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III). The framework recognises that gender equality is crucial in promoting democracy, good governance and sustainable development. As a

result, all EU policies and actions in Kenya contribute to the dual goal of advancing gender equality and accelerating progress toward Kenya's SDG goals and targets. Gender analysis is a starting point for gender mainstreaming and integrating gender equality and inclusion perspectives into the EU programming processes, policies, actions and dialogues.

This policy brief serves as a strategic guide for programmes and policies aimed at advancing and strengthening Kenya's integration of gender equality and women's empowerment across key stakeholders: The Government of Kenya (Ministries, Departments, Agencies [MDAs] and structures of governance: national, county and communities); development partners including the private sector and the United Nations (UN) agencies. This ensures that actions aimed at closing gender gaps and ending discrimination are informed by context-specific analysis that reflects the different realities, needs and challenges of men, women, boys and girls in all their diversity.

Background and Context

The primary sources of energy in Kenya are renewable energy and fossil fuels.¹ Urban and rural areas vary in access to electricity, with 78 per cent of the population accessing electricity in urban areas compared to 39 per cent in rural areas. According to 2022 KDHS, more than half of the households

87%
OF THE POPULATION USES
FUEL WOOD FOR COOKING;



58%
HAVE ELECTRICITY,
WITH



in urban areas,

82%
USE CHARCOAL



90%
IN URBAN AREAS AND



36%
RURAL AREAS



Kenya's overreliance on hydropower as renewable energy makes the country's energy supply vulnerable to impacts of climate change, such as droughts. These challenges impact domestic and economic activities differently for women and men.

Over 80%
OF KENYANS RELY ON THE TRADITIONAL
USE OF BIOMASS AS THEIR PRIMARY ENERGY
SOURCE AND HEATING -FUEL WOOD ACCOUNTS
FOR 68.7 PER CENT AND CHARCOAL 13.3 PER
CENT.²

In rural areas,

In many countries, women and children are responsible for fuel wood collection, exposing them to health risks due to household pollution from using fuel wood. It is estimated that shifting to cost-effective renewable energy solutions, such as small solar panels, would save women an hour a day by not having to collect fuel wood, increasing time for girls' schooling and women's engagement in productive work. Access to clean and efficient cooking improves and enhances women's health and well-being while protecting the environment.

Significant efforts have been made to improve Kenya's gender parity in energy employment and decision-making structures. At the Ministry of Energy headquarters, about 35 per cent of the total staff and 15 per cent of the technical leadership positions are occupied by women (MoE, 2019). Furthermore, the Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) is a woman. Despite these gains, gender data on the energy sector and value chain remain minimal.

The energy sector is essential as the infrastructure enabler for sustained economic growth. However, gender disparities and location remain barriers to equal access to energy. More than half of the population in urban areas (78 per cent) has access to

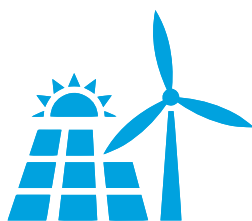
1 International Renewable Energy Agency (2021). Energy Profile in Kenya. https://www.irena.org/IRENADocuments/Statistical_Profiles/Africa/Kenya_Africa_RE_SP.pdf

2 GIZ (2019). Promotion of Climate-Friendly Cooking: Kenya and Senegal. www.giz.de

electricity compared to the rural population (39 per cent).³ Kenya's overreliance on hydropower energy as renewable energy makes the country vulnerable to climate change impacts, such as droughts. This can lead to electrical disturbances, higher electricity prices, and connection costs, thus impacting domestic and economic activities and affecting women and men differently. High connection costs can make connectivity unaffordable, especially for female-headed and child-headed rural households.

78%

OF THE TOTAL ENERGY IN KENYA COMES FROM RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES,



with over 80 per cent of Kenyans relying on the traditional use of biomass as their primary energy and heating source - with fuel wood contributing 68.7 per cent and charcoal, 13.3 per cent.⁴ About 87

Findings and Current Situation

The Ministry of Energy has paved the way for a sector and a government ministry to commit to and ensure compliance with the gender equality principles and directives in Kenya's Constitution and development agenda. The guiding framework for mainstreaming gender in policies, programmes and projects in the energy sector in Kenya is embodied in the Gender Policy on Energy (2019). The policy endeavors to:

- Integrate gender in programming and monitoring and evaluation.
- Ensure compliance with the Constitution of Kenya, particularly concerning gender, by ensuring gender inclusion in all energy policies, strategies, budgets and programmes.
- Promote environmental sustainability and clean cooking alternatives.

per cent of the rural population uses fuel wood for cooking and 82 per cent of the urban population uses charcoal. As in many countries, women and children are responsible for fuel wood collection. Women are also more exposed to health risks due to household pollution from using fuel wood. As such, the burden of lack of access to clean cooking fuels falls heavily on women.

Improved access to renewable and clean energy can save time and labour, potentially reducing the overwhelming digital divide between women and men. It has been estimated that adopting cost-effective renewable energy solutions, such as small solar panels, can save women an hour a day by doing away with fuel wood collection. Access to clean and efficient cooking techniques will dramatically improve women's health and enhance their lives while protecting the environment. Recognising women's and men's unique energy needs and income generation is essential in decision-making and policy-making. More opportunities in the energy sector should be provided for women to achieve gender equality.

- Strengthening institutional frameworks for women employment in the energy sector.
- Enhancing gender awareness in the energy sector.

Kenya's Vision 2030 also identifies energy as an enabler of fighting poverty and a driver of the SDGs.⁵ The Ministry of Energy has officially incorporated gender into its structure through a Gender Unit, a Gender Officer, and a Ministerial Gender Committee. The Ministry also allocates funds annually to support gender mainstreaming. In the 2020/2021 financial year, a budget was allocated to implement gender activities that include actions for gender policy implementation and capacity building of staff within the Ministry and State Power Agencies. However, the resources are insufficient to support the full implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy.

³ World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/>

⁴ GIZ (2019). Promotion of Climate-Friendly Cooking: Kenya and Senegal. www.giz.de

⁵ Energia. 2021. Gender and energy country briefs: Kenya. Accessed https://www.energia.org/assets/2021/02/Country-brief-Kenya_Nov2020_final.pdf

Credit photo : Acumen



The Ministry of Energy has made a good effort to integrate gender in projects such as the Kenya Off-grid Solar Access Programme, the Last Mile Programme, and the Biogas Programme. Building women’s capacity as energy entrepreneurs and technicians, as demonstrated in a solar project in Homabay in western Kenya, effectively illustrated that adopting a gender and women’s empowerment approach not only enabled women’s active involvement in the energy supply and contributed to sales but also proved to have positive effects on increased self-esteem, helped to overcome traditional gender and social barriers as well as changing men’s stereotypical and biased perceptions on women’s roles and capabilities. The ‘Solar Mama project in Homabay actively recruited and trained women as technicians. Some community members were initially sceptical about targeting women for the project. However, the women performed so well that they transformed men’s attitudes to what women can do and achieve when given equal opportunities.

Noteworthy, efforts have been made to improve gender parity in Kenya’s energy employment and decision-making structures in the sector.

About

35% OF THE STAFF AND



15% OF THE TECHNICAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS



in the Ministry of Energy headquarters are women.⁶ A woman is the managing director and chief executive officer (CEO) of the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen).

However, gender-disaggregated energy sector and value chain data are still minimal. Data is critical in closing gender gaps in energy access in Kenya. Therefore, well-informed gender analysis on differentiated markets is needed to understand gendered experiences and dynamics in the energy sector.

Climate change impacts forest resources, the ecosystem and people’s livelihoods through flooding, landslides, drought and, in some cases, wildfires, which expose both men and women to risk vulnerability.⁷ Women and girls, more so, are particularly vulnerable to climate change due to their dependency on local resources for their livelihood. Additionally, they are primarily responsible for fetching water and firewood, farming, cooking, and heating. Therefore, whenever these disasters strike, they are significantly disadvantaged.⁸ Among men and boys, climate change triggers out-migration, especially in ASAL areas, thus leaving women with a lot of responsibilities at home. Equally, over 80 per cent of Kenyans, among them women and girls, rely on wood biomass for their energy requirements due to their roles in cooking - this exposes them to health risks resulting from the gas emitted from the firewood. Also, in cases where they have to move further away in search of firewood and water, women and girls are at risk of being exposed to SGBV.

⁶ Ministry of Education. 2019.

⁷ Government of the Republic of Kenya. 2015. Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources. Draft National Forest Policy.

⁸ Asenath Maobe and Joanes Atela. 2021. Gender Intersectionality and Disaster Risk Reduction - Context Analysis. Tomorrow’s Cities Working Paper 006. <https://tomorrowcities.org/sites/default/files/resources/2021-03/Gender%20Intersectionality%20and%20Disaster%20Risk%20Reduction.pdf>

Conclusions

Access to clean energy in Kenya is primarily impacted by gender disparities, with women bearing the burden of lack of access to clean energy and the resulting health effects. The Government has to work with development partners to ensure the implementation of regulations and guidelines to increase equal access to clean energy resources, particularly for women in rural areas, through increased financing and economic opportunities for women.

Policies that advance gender inclusion in programming are also needed, particularly in the energy sector. By monitoring the implementation of energy-related projects, the Government can generate gender-disaggregated data showing women's gaps and barriers to equal energy access.

Recommendations

1. Increase economic opportunities for women

- The two levels of Government and development partners to promote equal opportunities for women to participate and support the clean and renewable energy sector and supply chains as entrepreneurs, technicians and employees.
- The Government should work with development partners to facilitate access to financing (e.g., through the Women Empowerment Fund and Youth Enterprise Development Fund) for women-led businesses to strengthen their contribution to the energy sector and enhance innovation.

2. Include women in decision-making

- The Government to adopt affirmative measures to promote gender parity and ensure women's meaningful participation in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of strategies and policies for transitioning to clean and renewable energy at all levels, including local communities.
- The Government to implement gender policies and regulations to ensure equal participation for women.

3. Awareness and capacity strengthening

- The Government to work with development partners to promote awareness of clean energy and strengthen the capacity of women to adopt

modern technologies in the energy sector through regular training.⁹

- Incorporate local community-based training and capacity strengthening to create awareness of gender and energy and create opportunities for community engagement through feedback.

4. Strengthen implementation of institutional frameworks on gender inclusion

- The Government to implement policies aimed at addressing gender disparities in the energy sector and implementing gender-sensitive energy projects.¹⁰
- Conduct gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation to track gender issues in energy projects. The Government should also conduct gender assessments to generate gender-disaggregated data for evaluating energy-related projects. The data should be used to inform policy changes and gender action plans.¹¹
- Allocate more resources for full implementation of gender-responsive programmes.¹²

5. Enhance access to clean energy

- The Government to implement policies and regulations to ensure equitable access to clean energy resources particularly for women.

9 World Bank Group. 2020. Gender Equality and Energy. M06: Tools and Guidance for Integrating Gender Issues into the Energy Sector. Accessed https://www.esmap.org/sites/esmap.org/files/DocumentLibrary/Gender_Energy_M06.pdf

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Gender Policy. 2021. Ministry of Energy. Accessed https://www.energia.org/assets/2021/02/Country-brief-Kenya_Nov2020_final.pdf

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