

Energy & Gender in Africa

Presentation @ AREA conference, June 2011

Slide 1 - title

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is part of the Green movement and is affiliated to the Green Party in Germany. We have been working in Nigeria since the 1990s.

Slide 2

- The energy landscape of millions of Nigerian women: no access to energy at all, besides her own physical power and the battery inside her torch. No electricity, no gas, mostly no kerosene. Millions of women fetch water by walking far and pulling buckets from wells, they grind millet by hand, they cook on wood fire and that's all besides the farm or other work they are doing. A low carbon footprint with a low life expectancy.
- So, whilst the energy debate in industrialised countries is about intelligent electricity networks, smarter transport and passive housing, countries like Nigeria just want energy – any energy from any source. You could be tempted to say that GENDER is not important at this stage of extreme energy poverty, but that would be a grave mistake. Women and men have distinct roles, capacities and responsibilities where energy is in question, that is in agriculture, housing, in domestic and industrial production – so the response to the energy crisis has to be gender sensitive.
- Millions of women cook with firewood in Nigeria with about 70% of households in both semi-urban and urban areas using firewood as a primary cooking fuel.

The energy crisis is of special concern to poor women because they are in charge of domestic energy consumption. They manage the energy that is needed for the whole family.

- Few women in Nigeria have access to electricity from the grid, much fewer again have electrical appliances for grinding, cooking, food processing, fetching of water, for small businesses like mills and food sales.

- No energy, no power?

Slide 3

- Nigeria's electricity grid covers 40% of the country. I've borrowed this map from the Nigerian electricity regulatory agency, thanks! It shows energy consumption spots, and the sketchy spread of it across the country. Please consider that the red blobs are only part-time, as power outages are regular and can last for up to 3 days.

This energy poverty encourages the use of wood as a prime source of energy. There are very few independent producers of electricity, a handful of wind and small hydro schemes, but the scale is insignificant given the challenge.

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- The energy scarcity is not only affecting economic growth, but the wood consumption threatens the remaining 5% of Nigeria's original forests. Nigeria is the biggest charcoal exporter in the WA region. Already, desertification forces large scale migration in the north of the country. Before the national grid reaches the majority of Nigerian women, it is possible that the remaining forests will have disappeared.
- Obviously, many Nigerian women need small scale, decentralised energy solutions. Availability is very limited at the moment.

Slide 4

(picture of woman cooking on solar cooker without much smoke inhalation and of a solar powered water pump, snack making with solar ovens, grinding machine and solar dryer)

- With access to energy, several MDGs can be achieved:
 - Reducing poverty and hunger through small scale businesses run by women and powered by RE
 - Less time spent on firewood collection and food preparation means more girls in school

- Maternal and child health improves with cleaner cook stoves and absence of indoor air pollution: currently, cooking with firewood contributes about two million deaths each year around the globe, with approximately 400.000 in Africa – and about 30 per cent of these deaths are in children under the age of five.
- Saving the remaining forests is essential for sustainability

Slide 5

- Policy: many African countries need implementation rather than policy. Nigeria had a Renewable Energy Masterplan since 2005, and the author now needs to bid for the Review of the document because the plan has been lingering in drawers...
- The Heinrich Boell Foundation has undertaken 7 country studies across Africa, looking at Climate Governance on Adaptation, and the findings were rather similar: Policies exist but are not implemented.

Feed-in-Tariffs are very much needed, as they aim to enlarge the national grid. But beyond the grid, policies need to foster the up-scaling of small scale, decentralised energy solutions – by market or any other means.

- Markets need a legal framework to flourish, and this legal framework needs to be gender sensitive. The Nigerian policy makers, for example, should consult the powerful market women association to assess the conditions under which women can enter the RE market. Women have carried the micro finance transformation of poverty into sustainable livelihoods. Women can carry the transformation towards Sustainable Energy from Renewable Sources – Mr Dipal Barua is here, and we can learn from his experience in promoting RE in Bangladesh.

The call on this conference then is: To open up the electricity market in a democratic and gender sensitive manner, for big and small investors, and to create business conditions that will allow male and female investors to shoulder a minimal risk.