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| **Interviewer name** | INTERVIEWER |
| **Sub-contractor organisation** | XXXX |
| **Interview date** | XXXX |
| **Duration of interview audio recording** | 1 hour 46 minutes 06 seconds |
| **Face-to-face or virtual interview** | Virtual |
| **Interview participant** | |
| **Code** | I16 |
| **Participant name** | XXXX |
| **Organisation name** | **XXXX** |
| **Gender** | Female |
| **Stakeholder category** | Development professional working in the food, energy and water nexus in south Asian region |
| **Country** | India |

**Introduction**

**INTERVIEWER** 00:06

Good afternoon XXXX. I'm very glad that you could find the time to participate in our study that aims to obtain a better understanding of energy access and gender equity in India. Thank you very much.

**Consent**

Before we start, I would like to check certain mandatory format, and restate some points. Have you completed and returned the consent form?

**XXXX** 00:28

Yes, I have been.

**INTERVIEWER** 00:31

Yeah, thank you so much. So this interview, we would request you to share your experience and expertise as someone working in the energy sector, as well as your views and opinions on gender equity in energy access. Is it okay, if we record the interview for our documentation purposes?

**XXXX** 00:49

Yes,

**INTERVIEWER** 00:51

The recorded interview will be transcribed for analysis and a copy of the transcript will be shared with you for your approval. All the information we obtain serves the sole purpose of study, and will be seen only by the research team, your name and any other identifying features will not be used anywhere in reports and other publications emerging from the study. And the interview should take about an hour. So if all that is here, can we proceed with the interview?

**XXXX** 01:17

Yes.

**Part 1:**

**INTERVIEWER** 01:19

Okay, so would you start by briefly telling me a bit about your current role and position and the organization? The work that you do right now and your organization?

**XXXX** 01:31

Right. So yeah, currently, I'm working as a XXXX on a XXXX XXXX project. I am I work with XXXX, who's actually a XXXX, they implement XXXX projects. And this project is going to support innovators in XXXX. And my job will be to XXXX. So the idea is to mainstream gender as a lens as a economic and social lens into all the functions of businesses. And yeah, and then obviously, as a result of that the businesses are supposed to gain and so will the people that they they are looking to serve in terms of as customers or workers.

**INTERVIEWER** 02:33

Right? And could you tell me a bit about your background and your involvement with energy issues.

**XXXX** 02:39

Um, so my background is in XXXX

**INTERVIEWER** 04:30

Right. So to what extent does energy access feature in this?

**XXXX** 04:37

So in the last five years or so my work at XXXX on XXXX, which is a think tank, based out of Delhi has focused on energy, and my current project looks at water - energy - food nexus. So again, it's an extension of the Energy Access work that I was doing at XXXX. My initial interest in this space came from my interest in environment. When I was working in my previous jobs, I would evaluate corporations that are largely into mining, into all these energy utilities who are supposedly the ones which are largest contributors to the carbon emissions, to global climate change. So that's how the entire conversation on energy started for me through my job at XXXX, where I was looking at ESG issues, but XXXX. All looking at energy access.

**INTERVIEWER** 05:47

Right? And how have you have you noticed differential access for energy in your work? differential access for energy?

**XXXX** 05:57

I didn't understand that question.

**INTERVIEWER** 05:58

Yeah, like, for example, in specific energy access areas that you've worked on, maybe electrification programs, policies, tech projects? Have you seen a differential access? Have you seen different groups of people having different levels of access for it?

**XXXX** 06:17

Yeah, I mean, my work has focused on energy in three ways. One is energy in at the household level, where you're talking about access to energy for cooking, access to energy for as electricity. And then the second category is access to energy for healthcare, education, Street, lighting, any of these community users. And then the final one is access to energy for livelihoods and more productive applications. And in all of these, there is a disparity in access, there is difference in access, and that that difference can come from gaps in like say income, but also other factors like geography, location, gender, caste, class, and the combination of these factors. So yes, across all these areas, there is a differential access.

**INTERVIEWER** 07:17

Right? So we will get into more details about the differential access, but first, I would like to understand within the policy context shaping your work, what current issues or developments in policies or maybe state or national level, influence your work? And what do you think are the key policy challenges?

**XXXX** 07:39

Okay, if you think of energy, it's always been a means to an end, energy in itself doesn't make things happen. Energy combined with something else is is actually leading to a certain outcome. For example, you need energy for irrigating the fields. So in that case, you're looking at the policies of the agriculture ministry, or you're looking at the policies on irrigation, and making sense of how energy has either been considered or not being considered or if considered, how has it been like... how has the policy been designed or scheme been designed in a way that it is more accessible to the ones who need it most? So. So if you are an energy access researcher, I would say, of course, you engage with the energy ministry, but at the same time, we are engaging with multiple other ministries or engaging with policies of many other sectors like agriculture, or healthcare or education, and trying to see how energy fits into all this. So most of our work, whether it's whether it's my current organization, or the older one has, has tried to do that, of course, focused on work with the key energy ministries, which is Ministry of power, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, Ministry of New and Renewable energy. But beyond that, the work has also focused on engagement with other ministries like agriculture, rural development, and so on.

**INTERVIEWER** 09:15

What do you consider are the key policy challenges that you face in your work?

**XXXX** 09:20

Um, I think just like the mainstreaming, to begin with, I think, just mainstreaming of the idea of energy access being an important factor in itself is new to other ministries, like if I'm talking to a health ministry, and I'm kind of trying to tell them how your health care centers are not able to perform optimally because of lack of electricity, or lack of 24X7 electricity, that in itself is not something they have thought about and that's been that's primarily because every ministry is struggling with their own issues. So probably they're focusing more on like, how do we make the equipment available? How do we make doctors available. But all of that doesn't work if your equipment can't function, or if there are blackouts, and the doctors are not willing to stay in your healthcare centers. So that mainstreaming of that idea that energy is a fuel that runs your system is something that a lot of ministries have still not thought about very strongly. And that is because I think as a developing country, we just have so many competing needs that these ministries are not able to prioritize this. And it's not be coded into their KPI as well, right? Like, nobody is being evaluated for functionality of a cold storage, they are being evaluated for whether the health center has a cold storage or not. So it's also about how we think about, like functionality of these products or the services. So that is one barrier....

**INTERVIEWER** 10:56

What checks we do...

**XXXX** 10:58

Sorry?

**INTERVIEWER** 11:01

What, like what checks we do to evaluate whether something is successful?

**XXXX** 11:06

Right, exactly, exactly. So how do you kind of.... how do you evaluate whether something is working or not? And secondly, how, like, when you do these evaluations, how do you kind of account for these disparities, right? It's not about just checking whether a certain health center is functional versus another one. But also like, Is it a factor of geography? Is at a factor of like, what area it's located in? And like, what kind of budgets these health centers get? So yeah, like a multitude of factors. But definitely, if I want to focus on energy, it will be how energy is coded into the deliverables of these other ministries. It's not. So it's the same thing, right? Like you can you can use the same lens for climate change and gender, like gender as a concept is not. Climate change as a concept is not mainstream. So none of these interventions are building that horizontal lens, in how they design or evaluate solutions.

**INTERVIEWER** 12:11

Right. So what does equitable energy access mean to you?

**XXXX** 12:17

Um, I mean, this is something I've kind of read so many definitions of equitable energy access now that this has been something that I think this is going to be a constant question and like a, like an answer in making, because I think if you asked me this question, five years back, I would say it is everybody getting access to 24x7 electricity, right, or everybody getting access to enough... enough energy to cook their food through cleaner... through without getting exposed to pollution. But today, I would say it is also about access to heating, it's about access to cooling. It's also about access to 24xy electricity, but good quality and reliable electricity. So I would say equitable access is to sum it up easily is like if the world's richest has a certain quality of access, in terms of energy needs you the idea is not to replicate the same for the world's poorest, but not have barriers for the world's poorest to be able to access the same quality of electricity. It's not the quality of energy, it's not to say that all of us can replicate that live, because I think that's a bigger discussion we need to have as a society if, if that's the model we can emulate. I don't think we can. But I think the barriers that the world's poorest face in accessing these energy sources, whether it's clean energy access, or even fossil fuel based access, I think those barriers not being there would be would be equitable access, like barriers to affordability, barriers to accessibility, barriers to awareness, all of those not being there.

**INTERVIEWER** 14:11

But don't you think actually that because the rich have access to any amount of energy is the reason why the poor does not have access to basic energy for their essential needs?

**XXXX** 14:25

I don't think so.... I don't think so. I don't think so. I think if if, if governments and the population at large demanded it, then the rich.... the poor can still gain access without the rich having to necessarily give up all the access... because the entire like we've India is still in a developing phase, but all the countries in the developed world have access to energy, Right. And that might be fossil fuel based, but it's not that there aren't poorer people in that country or there aren't richer people in that country. But everybody's got access to energy. It's because access to energy was a basis of the civilization and governments at some point realized that you cannot expect development to happen without fueling that developmental growth without giving lights to people to study without giving electricity to them to run a water pump. So it turns it, it kind of boils down to those tangibles, right. And currently, the expansion that's happening in India, the kind of additional capacity that's... that's being built is, is not dependent on you or I reducing our ... consumption, it is just about expanding that capacity. The what is happening, the problem with rich, continuously consuming and consuming more is leading to climate change. It's leading to other kinds of impacts. But I don't think that that's necessarily a reason that can take away from the right of like the others to gain access. India has been able to electrify all households, despite the rich having access to it, I think it's a matter of resource. Obviously, not all countries have the money to invest in the infrastructure, because electricity infrastructure or energy infrastructure, whether it's gas, or cooking energy, or any of this is expensive. So it's a problem of resource. And it's a problem of willing will, will power. It's not a problem of like somebody's taking away the .... And it's also the lack of demand, like because the poor again, has been struggling with multiple things. They probably expect a better healthcare system before they get 24x7 electricity.

**INTERVIEWER** 16:53

Right. Right.

**XXXX** 16:54

So it's also that like, if your constituents are not demanding it in the same way, then you're probably not motivated.

**INTERVIEWER** 17:02

And they probably don't see the connections. Right?

**XXXX** 17:05

Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. But I mean, if you think of it, Indian politics has always been played on at least I can speak for India has always been played on (hindi) electricity, water.... Ration.... Ration, power, water..... So it's been there. But I think it's not been in a way that ... that narrative has been today, it was about electricity. It was about light. It was never about clean energy. It was never about 24x7 energy. So I think those are the new dimensions that the conversation has moved into.

**Part 2:**

**INTERVIEWER** 17:46

So within this question of energy access, what does gender equity mean to you?

**XXXX** 17:52

Um, yeah, so I think gender, things like gender, class race, any of these disparities and gender in particular, they exist in the society. So no matter what model you build around it, whether it's a developed, whether it's a healthcare model, whether it's whether it's an education model, or an energy model, it tends to just, instead of disrupting the iniquity, what it does is it just perpetuates, because you're thinking of the way these policies are designed, or the way these products and services are designed, do not apply like a targeted gender lens to eliminate that gender inequity. Right. What we have done is in the development space, or in the policy space, what we've done is we've put together these five schemes, which are targeted at women. And we say, and I'm not saying gender lens is about women, I think I'm just saying the basic thing that these governments have been able to do is just target like a few schemes, at moment. But then the rest of the scheme, which is about 95% of the schemes have no gender, have no focus on women, or it's just assumed that focus on poor includes focus on women. And that is the problem. How will you eliminate the disparity in gender or access to energy for men and woman, if you're not even applied that lens to understand these as two different categories of consumers, and they are different categories of consumers, because there is a gendered dimension to the to the workload are the kind of work that men and women do, right? Women, if women are doing certain parts of the work in an everyday life, then they need access to energy for those activities versus the activities that men do and they need access to energy for those activities. Now, if we were living in a world that did not have labor codes defined by gender, then probably things would have been different, but unfortunately, we live In a world where that's very much the case. So if you're not applying the gender lens to 95% of the programs or policies or business models, and just having like 5% of these, which are absolutely just targeting women, and that's it, and most of them are, obviously, they are in health and education, and they are, obviously in livelihoods. But what about all these other sectors, including energy, which have bearing for men and women alike? So yeah, so I think that gender equity is coming from there, like it exists, it's not like energy sector has created this inequity, but it exists. But the energy sector has not probably applied a lens to disrupt it, it's just building on the same model, which is why it's perpetuating it. Which is why a Ujjwala scheme doesn't have a provision that one of the light bulbs definitely has to be in the kitchen. It doesn't have a provision like that it just says household is allowed to pick two points for lightning. Now, who decides who's going to where those two lights are going to go? In? How many houses would women have decided? And areas like say the veranda or the cattle shed or the kitchen, which are spaces that women occupy more frequently may not have access to lighting. And it might just be in rooms where men have presence.... just giving an example men or other members of the family whose voices are stronger... like exactly similarly, access to clean cooking energy. Now, LPG penetration in India has come after such a long time like, but yes, at least Ujjwala what it did was it centered the voice of like, woman and the needs of women, and therefore the focus has come on cooking energy. But again, it's become very stereotypically feminine, right? Like, it's been marketed as it's a scheme for women. But nobody understands that access to clean cooking energy is also improving the health of the child who is near the mother and the family overall, because you're all exposed to that smoke. Yeah, but it's pitched as like a scheme only for women, which kind of leads to other kinds of barriers, because who cares about a woman's health in a certain household context when you're struggling for resources? So yeah....

**INTERVIEWER** 22:24

So who cares about making a woman's life easier?

**XXXX** 22:28

Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. Right. So yeah, so then it is not prioritized. So that's why Allah has now run into the same challenge, which almost everybody could foresee, which is like, you have connections, but people may not be able to use it. Because using it costs money and who's going to make...

**INTERVIEWER** 22:51

and prices are just shooting up anyway. Right?

**XXXX** 22:54

Exactly, exactly. And instead of subsidizing the only, even if, even if you go for a very stereotypically woman scheme, at least subsidize it to a point that women do not have to depend on men for the money to buy this right. This is the one product and if you think cooking, like traditionally you said men will go out and earn and and woman will stay home and cook then at least give us that one thing which is like the fuel to cook. Now there are all these schemes coming up to say how a woman should be able to use LPG so that they can use that free time to go out and earn. But I think that's unfortunate If a woman has to go out and I want to be able to afford or have the right to user clean cooking fuel. Yeah, so I think Yeah, there are a lot lot these narratives are a little problematic in that sense.

**INTERVIEWER** 23:48

Well, I find it problematic that the cooking fuel scheme is even positioned as a benefit benefits to women.

**XXXX** 23:56

Exactly. Yeah. Yeah. And even if you did that, at least then make it cheap in a way that like all women are able to buy it. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER** 24:07

So say, the demand for energy and consumer needs... How does your organization or your work... how do you determine it within your work?

**XXXX** 24:19

Um, so my in my current job what we look at is we look at innovations in the water energy food nexus, right. So when we look at innovations in the water, energy food nexus, these could be these could be products like say solar water pump, to solar dryer, or even like a very energy efficient not necessarily solar powered, but very energy efficient. machines or, or, or like farm equipment, but energy efficient. They do run on fossil fuels, but they are extremely energy efficient so your expenditure on energy is less and the emissions are limited. So we're looking at a lot of these innovations, which will impact the food value chain. And it could be that it affects... it impacts the irrigation, it impacts harvesting, it impacts processing, so depending on which value chain a certain innovation targets. Now, within that, if we want to look at gender, there are two three ways to look at it. We look at of course, how many of these innovations are by woman like woman founded women led companies in this space of energy, water, food nexus, then we look at how many of these companies... in all these innovations, what share of companies have a decent share of women employees, whether it's women,as... in the senior management or woman in... as technicians or field staff like the like the share of women as employees. And then finally, how many of these products and services actually target women as customers, and targeting women as customers, vis- a - vis beneficiaries is a very different lens, then you're not looking at women as like, like this needy, or deprived population who needs your support? No, they are very legitimate customers who can pay for a service, who can make money from that service, and make your company profitable. If you are a smart businessman, or woman, you wouldn't want to limit your pool of customers to only 50% of the global population, you want to tap into 100% of the global population. And, and that's the kind of thinking that we want to bring in and mainstream and codify in every business that we work with. Because even increasingly, businesses are realizing, depending on their product, or the part of the value chain, they target, that investing in women is a great opportunity. And unless you start treating it like one, the way you treated the bottom of the pyramid as an opportunity, say 20 years ago and started creating all these tools and financing mechanisms and products centered around their needs and their preferences, you're not able to tap into that opportunity. Similarly, now we need to look at products and we need to look at financing methods, etc, that meet the needs of woman so that you are able to tap into that market and that operation, while also enabling women to be able to mechanize their activities, to be able to generate better income, move from actually extremely low productive activities and sectors to high productive activities and sectors. So yeah, so that's broadly the work that we do...

**INTERVIEWER** 27:47

So what criteria Have you used to map diversity in energy access? Specifically, if it's, do you have gender as a criteria?

**XXXX** 27:59

yes ...

**INTERVIEWER** 27:59

How do you use it.

**XXXX** 28:01

So in the evaluation process, when you when you have when you decide whether a certain company or a certain innovator gets your grant or not, you look at their their share of woman and senior management. That's the cutoff criteria. Then you look at, if a company has been co-founded by a woman, of course, they get additional points for that. In the application process itself, if a company has mainstream focus on women as customers, and is able to, and has shown or demonstrated interventions for meeting the needs of those customers, whether it's through a financing mechanism, or through trainings, or through other kinds of woman centric interventions, then they get additional points for that, or working with families to change the intra household dynamics and convince families to be supportive towards this new change that women might be adopting, then they get extra points. And finally, the other way is to look at the impact potential like as a company, you may not be able to do a lot of these things today. But if you have the willingness and the motivation to do it, and your product or your business model is such that there is a potential of woman getting impacted by it, then then you get additional points. So using these kind of aspects within the scoring mechanism to shortlist companies is the first way we do this. The second way we do this is by giving these companies technical assistance with a gender lens. So for example, when they do their business planning or if we are helping them with other kinds of technical assistance like HR or or expansion of team or contacts and new geographies, bringing in like a gender lens or a market research. So bringing in an gender lens in that technical assistance itself. And seeing that, look, if you want to do market research, let's target a certain section of the consumers who are woman, or let's, in that same geography, let's look at both men and women and see how your product can can reach both men and women, and what would be the different strategies you'll need to adopt to be able to reach woman customers. So that's built into the technical assistance. Then the third part is you in your monitoring and evaluation, we do look at gender disaggregate... sex disaggregated data, and, and evaluate companies on the basis of that. And then finally, the idea is to make these companies investment ready in a way that if not all of them, at least, most of them will be appealing to a gender lens investor. So those are the four ways in which we look at it.

**INTERVIEWER** 30:56

Okay, so you talked a little about the task differences that the society imposes on men and women, right. So if you could elaborate a little bit on that in terms of what you see within your work, and how that contributes to inequity in energy access, both at household level as well as in community level?

**XXXX** 31:17

Okay. So, for example, I use an example to illustrate this. So in agriculture, if you think... if you see that woman will mostly be.... woman or a very big, they play a big role in agriculture, right. And in every household, you will have woman contributing a significant portion of their time to food production, or management of water or storage, but when the money comes from the proceeds, they have very little say on where that money is being spent, or even deciding on input factors of like, what fertilizer to buy, which process to be mechanized, all of that, they have very limited say, also, if you look at the aspects of work that women do in agriculture, like sowing, or transplanting, or harvesting, these are all going to be mostly manual labor work. So most of the mechanized work is usually done by either contracted workers or male members of the family, whether it's running a tractor, whether it's plowing, etc. So now there is a gender gap there, right? Like if if women are having to do manual work on the field, and then they go back home, and they again, do the double burden of cooking for family members, taking care of the child, taking care of the elderly in the family without access to clean cooking energy, which is say LPG in this case, which can help them cook in one night as opposed to collecting firewood for an hour and then using firewood to cook which again increases the amount of time they need to put into cooking process, then there is a gender then there's a energy access gap, right for women. And then on top of that, there are other aspects of energy access within the household that we tend to ignore. One is piped water, or pumping service for domestic water piping. Now, if you don't have access to pipe water, then you're also having to carry water, if you don't have like a and you have to carry water for bathing, for household consumption for sanitation, etc. And then on top of that, all the utensils you use for cooking, when you when you use biomass for cooking food, the utensils get dirtier. So even washing utensils takes longer time for women than it does if you are cooking on LPG. So there is a strong element of time poverty and energy poverty that is kind of interlinked. Because energy poverty leads to time poverty and time poverty is causing even more energy poverty. So it's kind of linked in that sense. So yeah, so these are some of the ways in which like, how general...

**INTERVIEWER** 34:16

At the community level?

**XXXX** 34:18

At the community level again, the the spaces that are lit, the roads that like say for example, if a community is focused on the well being of woman, they will make sure their health centers are equipped properly because unlike the idea that you need, unlike the main mainstream assumption that you need lights only in the night, or healthcare center needs lights 24 x 7, like a labor room needs light no matter what time of the day the operation is being performed, right. So the delivery is being done. So a 24 x 7 access for the health care center is something that a community will prioritize if you are looking at a gendered need. Similarly, if you are looking you will, you will focus on lighting the streets so that women feel safe and women are safe because research says that lighted places have lesser crime against... reduce the likelihood of crime against woman then places which are not lit. So you would focus on street lighting, you would focus on community lighting spaces, then you will focus on education, you will you lit up, you will light up your schools, you will ensure that your schools have functional toilets, where you don't have to carry water, but there is a water access... easy water access so that women are able to use that facility... that sanitation facility so that they don't have to drop out of school, because we know women need access to toilets a lot more. And again, the days of the month .... the days of the month when they're menstruating, the need for access to water is even greater. So you so you would think about these needs of women and and prioritize your energy planning, so to speak, if you bring in like a gender lens into how energy access is done, and it's not just gender, I think what happens, I think responding to your point that you made in the beginning, where the global north kind of defines a lot of these ways and methods of doing Gender Analysis, the problem with that is the intersectionality of gender with say caste or gender with with class is going to be very different for each country, for each state in a in a diverse country like India. So when you apply a very gender focused lens without including this other intersectional aspect of caste in the context of India in particular, then your approach will be a very blanketed approach. And it may not actually benefit all women in all sections of the society, it might actually create inequity between class of women, like maybe the better off or the higher caste women will get access to something which the lower caste woman would not because you use the blanket approach of gender as opposed to in integrating gender with a caste lens. And this happens a lot, for example, in the sanitation sector. Now you are talking about mechanizing sanitation, you're talking about, about bringing in better, good practices into the sanitation sector, but and creating toilets for better disposal of waste, etc. But the population that works and collects the the wastage from these toilets or the population that is actually servicing the sanitation sector remains a certain coste category, right. And without bringing in that coste lens, what you will do, you will perpetuate the inequity in a way that the same caste of woman will keep on working in the same sector. That social mobility of the next generation moving out of that occupation needs to happen. And that will only happen when you also bring this intersectional lens. Yeah, it's tough. It's not easy. But I think that's why contextualization based on the country or the geography is very important.

**INTERVIEWER** 38:21

Yes. Yeah, I mean, just the simple thing, that of the street lighting that you're talking about, like I've been working with, like urban infrastructure development, and when you intersect it with poverty and caste and economic class, and you have which streets get electrified? Where do the streets go through, because one of the biggest problems women have as they go through streets, say after sundown is how there are spots of vulnerability, right? And the spots of vulnerability is also a part of the intersection of who are the occupants of that space at the same time. You know, so yeah, that's a very interesting point, because I was actually going to the next follow up question I had was about, you know, differential access between women. And that's what you've been telling me about.

**XXXX** 39:16

Yeah. And infrastructure is a highly gendered topic. And in the context of energy, I think it becomes gendered when we look at say heating needs or cooling needs. It's not just about electricity or cooking energy, like, if you have how many houses in India because of poverty are able to access like a heater? Or if they if they're not, then what are the kinds of fallback options they have and then who benefits from it like, what kind of... even infrastructure in terms of like how much research funding goes into designing affordable construction materials or affordable air coolers versus going into AC refrigerant or AC energy efficient ACs is a big equity problem, right? Because who is going to use this. And instead of on on coming out with products, which are far more affordable like coolers, which can be bought for energy efficient coolers, which can help in places like Delhi, a lot more R&D funding is going into changing the refrigerant. Because from climate change, it's important, it helps you meet targets. So I think sometimes the environment debate and energy debate, obviously, the energy debate and environment debate intersect. But sometimes I feel the environment debate affects the energy access debate, in a way that environment is all about that overall number, we need to cut down our carbon emissions by.... to a point where we can reduce the temperature by 1.5 degrees. Now that's a very broad number like a bird's eye view. But where is that emission going to be cut from? Or where is what industries will be shut first? Or what kind of infrastructure decisions will be made? And who will it affect? Who are the people who are going to have to make the sacrifices or pay a price for this so called saving the global world from climate change are also important questions that policymakers need to ask. So, for example, a lot of debate and india...

**INTERVIEWER** 41:30

What costs to them in their daily life...

**XXXX** 41:33

Cost to them exactly. Like if you think about solar, like all these solar companies started selling their products, the most expensive product in the world, to the poorest of the poor. I mean, why aren't you pushing richer people to adopt solar... to transition to rooftops, the current focus... all the donor money, all the government subsidy is going towards converting all these poorer households to, to cleaner energy in the name of obviously, energy access. That's fine. I mean, it has played a big role in providing energy access to the rural population, but it's also not the kind of energy access people may have wanted, they may have wanted the same grid based electricity and and and we instead chose for them. So I think there is there is that conflict in the kind in the way this climate change debate is also evolving. And thereby, it's important to constantly intersect these two discussions, because energy is a big, it's a big part of the climate change emissions debate. More than 70% of the emissions are through energy consumption, energy consumption.

**INTERVIEWER** 42:45

I mean, that's actually what I was talking about before that when the connection to climate change, because when we are, you're absolutely right about the solar solar electrification, most of the schemes kind of target less than one kilowatt. That's the subsidy that's given, which is making it important. I mean, the focus is on the poorer households whose energy consumption is any way less than one kilowatt. Whereas you are leaving out the big sharks, who can probably afford to invest in solar infrastructure to be a much larger consumption...

**XXXX** 43:28

Your delta will be much greater.

**INTERVIEWER** 43:29

Yeah, that's very true. So that's what I was going to ask next. You're actually leading me to the next question. That's great. That I was going to ask you this, only that when you see new energy, infrastructure and technologies are planned or provided. What in your view are the differences between like men and women in terms of who benefits out?

**XXXX** 43:54

I think, increasingly, the energy sector is trying to focus on gender equality. And donors are beginning to invest in gender equality, not just on the consumption side, which is, of course, who are the users of this energy, but also on the production side, like you have projects funded by XXXX and others who look at what share of your utility sector or woman employees, right, what share of your current energy electricity companies are women, what kind of positions they are in. So there is a lot of work happening on that side. And interestingly, and this is something that's based on a study that XXXX and XXXX did together back in 2019, or 18, I think, and basically, we interviewed employees of rooftop solar, solar, decentralized solution providers, and the kind of difference we saw that The clean energy companies have a larger potential to be gender equitable, because unlike fossil fuel companies, you are not looking at an extraction site which is... which is in the middle of nowhere, you're not looking at like distribution systems which are panning up across miles and miles of like areas. So, you have to be stationed in remote locations or you have to go and work out of different geographies. So, clean energy companies actually based out of they do have like an element of installation where you have to travel and set it up at a different place. But a lot of these aspects are also temporary like you go to a certain area you install it and then you can always come back toan urban space or you can come back to a town or the safety aspect of woman traveling and commuting etc as much much relatively much better and therefore, these new age energy companies are able to see a lot more woman as employees, as founders, as like, as as like being on the production side of things. And the kind of investment that is needed to start a solar company is much less compared to if you want to start an oil and gas company. So that in itself is the biggest barrier like how much capital you need to start something. So therefore, you find a lot more women on the energy side and more and more, at least donors are looking to improve equity in the energy sector, which is good. Now on the consumer side again, there, there are certain products so far, I think it was just like cooking energy products like cookstoves or bio gas, the amount of money that has been put into improved cookstoves for women.... And then LPG more recently, are the kind of products that have been targeted towards woman conventionally like cooking energy products. But increasingly now we're seeing other products being targeted woman, whether it's, whether it's in the textile sector, whether it's being.. whether it's an agriculture through solar pumps, because women do a lot of horticulture, so targeting farmers in that category, or targeting women who are in the silk value chain for reeling, etc. So mechanizing. So what is happening in the process is a lot of activities that will man will are also getting mechanized, because these companies are also looking for opportunities to find a market. And in fact, a lot of energy companies in the livelihood space increasingly are becoming these value chain companies where they not only provide the product, they also provide market linkage, because market linkage is the second biggest barrier to woman's enterprises, capital access and then market linkage, like being able to sell their product in a market where they're able to get a good price for the product or service. And thereby scale. So a lot of these companies that have products targeted at women or products that are in the agri value chain, are increasingly becoming like these value chain provider... value chain companies who are able to provide a market linkage or are having to provide a market linkage because government programs usually don't do so well at that. So did they do that?

**INTERVIEWER** 48:20

Yeah, that's what I was actually asking because the sector you're talking about is either working mostly in like alternate fuels alternate, or they are basically non governmental organizations, which are trying to fill the gap that conventional energies, systems and structures leave. Right. So I was asking your opinion about actually the conventional energy infrastructures that we see, especially when we're talking about power gridding, or maybe even the LPG network, or I mean, LPG network, especially, it becomes very critical because it's a woman targeting network. But as you were just saying, it actually has such gaping holes, which makes it inaccessible for women. So I'm, I'm talking about also the like, what you said, right, that the we gave people certain energy, but probably that is not the energy they wanted. So I'm asking more from that angle. Conventional energies, when you see infrastructure and technologies and frameworks being made or investments, major investments into energy portfolios being made by the state, what do you see is the gap in terms of equitable benefits?

**XXXX** 49:47

So conventional energy again, of course, as you rightly say, has big gaps in terms of equity to begin with. Forget about gender equity, like which areas like you get access to electricity made you decide to set up a mine to to get the coal that will power your thermal power plants. Where do you get the water from? Where do you dispose that water back. So all of this has a big equity dimension and coal is probably, that's why a controversial for fuel not just in India but globally. So the thing is that in the conventional energy space, because it was absolutely technical. And we are talking about a generation and age where very few women were educated, forget about technical education, conventionally, a lot of these fossil fuel based production spaces have been male dominated. Energy sector, per se has been very male dominated, because energy sector is is one that requires high investment, and requires extremely high technical skills. Not all parts of it, but most parts of it. So the only two stakeholders who have been able to invest in the energy sector in the historic past have been either governments, again, a very male dominated space, politics being male dominated, and whether it's government through PSU, etc, or all these very rich private players, right? Again, who have access to that kind of capital. So the source of who can invest into these companies, isn't itself so gendered, that these spaces automatically become very masculine spaces...

**INTERVIEWER** 51:42

To wealth ownership also, right?

**XXXX** 51:44

Exactly. Ownership, ownership and inheritance, like how the inheritance, like I might be the daughter of a rich father, but the money will never come to me to start, like, like, so like a thermal power plant, it will go to my brother or my husband. So I think the wealth ownership and inheritance in itself has made some of these sectors inaccessible for women, because these are very high investment and technical skill based sectors, both of which women didn't have access to. Women were not encouraged to go and study technology, women were not encouraged to have access to capital and wealth. So obviously, these sectors became very male dominated, and that is changing. Now you have a lot more women who are studying sciences, who are in STEM, and going into these spaces. But it has been slow because of two reasons again, and this again,...

**INTERVIEWER** 52:39

Wealth equity is still really, really skewed. Right? Yeah, Yeah, I think we are, we are not even talking about it, actually. We are still hovering around income and everything else. We are not even talking about wealth, which is probably going to be the biggest, biggest disparity between men and women and between classes. Wealth and inheritance, both. And obviously an inheritance is just a just another way of acquiring and wealth.... Wealth and inheritance is actually the disparity exists across class.

**XXXX** 53:13

Exactly.

**INTERVIEWER** 53:15

Yeah. Even even in the richest families are probably more in the richest families I find so yeah, essentially, yeah, business communities and all that you'd find that business goes to the son and not to the daughter.

**XXXX** 53:29

So yeah, I think I mean, this is a little like this is digressing a little bit from my research, but I do think the richest in the world and the poorest in the world have very similar motivations. And that's coming from the fact that the richest have everything to lose and the poorest have nothing to lose. And that's why a lot of morality or inheritance or like a preference for a male child comes from there, whatever is happening, the changes that you're seeing is happening predominantly in the middle class, it's not happening in the rich and poor and obviously a part of the poor that is upgrading to a social class which you would broadly put as the lower middle class.

**INTERVIEWER** 54:10

Yeah. So it comes down to again the basically the main issues of equity in decision making about energy access, right?

**XXXX** 54:20

Yeah, Equity in decision making and and then on the other part of this could be that.... So, once you have these male dominated spaces, even if women are today studying STEM and are able to join these companies, it is very difficult for singular people to enter a system and change it unless you have like say 30% or 40% of the employees who are women, you cannot expect four women to go and change a masculine setup. So then the retention of women in these sectors or how, how soon they're able to rise through the ranks and become senior decision making authority. With... exactly... upper management, all of that is becoming a challenge because the entire space is masculine, which is something you can say for all workplaces, because they were never designed for women and women are having to make their space and each of those, but more so in, in in sectors which are extremely male dominated. So again, it goes back to the systemic issue of how basically work has been divided by gender. So anything that's on the professional economic space has become men's domain, and it just keeps getting tougher in some sectors versus the other.

**INTERVIEWER** 55:38

If you could also elaborate a little bit on the gender equity question within energy access between the urban and rural context.

**XXXX** 55:47

Okay. urban and rural content. Okay, so before we go into this, the other part on the point that we were saying before is because you don't have women in decision making places, then or in the in the board meetings that decide how energy system should be designed and distributed, it is not reaching women on the on the consumer side as well. Like if you are a roomful of men, who's deciding how energy should be made relevant for women, it is only likely that nobody has thought through a woman's experience and and figured that could there be a better way to do biogas? Could that be a better way to do LPG? Could there be a better way to do other kinds of electricity access, like grid? Or schemes like Soubhagya. So just wanted to bring that up. Like, how the production side being skewed affects the consumption side as well.

**INTERVIEWER** 56:58

How do you see gender equity, energy access? Is it different between urban and rural?

**XXXX** 57:05

I mean, if I think a very, I would say a very crude difference between urban and poor, because in India, I think there is there are levels of urban and poor, it's not completely urban or completely poor... also rural, you also have like, peri urban, you have small town cities, you have geographies, which are classified as urban, but they're absolutely they're more like villages than cities. And the other way around, there are areas classified as rural, but they're more like towns than they are like villages. So, I mean, not taking all of that into account, if I do a very neat classification of urban and rural, what comes into play is two things, one is income, which is a very straightforward thing to see... the disparity, and in even if you spend more in urban areas, you also earn more So that in itself, earning more in itself gives you some kind of, there is a difference in your, in your propensity to spend and, and, and also like your aspirations to spend on what kind of things and the second part being cultural grip. I mean, again, this is going to sound academic quite a bit. But if you if you read Ambedkar, you would know, while Gandhi was all praises for the Indian villages, Ambedkar said that... villages Indian villages are at the core of every social evil that you're seeing whether it's caste or gender, or any of these inequalities. And that's because in Indian villages, the idea of culture or this is our custom or this our ritual is so rigid, it's not to say, not to say it's not the same in our body, but I'm just saying in villages, it's so rigid, that if you have to cook on a biomass stove, because the roti needs to be that way, it has to be made that way, like nobody is going to adapt the taste and say, okay, fine, let's have let's have a roti, which tastes a little different, but is cooked on gas, which I think changes with aspiration, at least in the middle class. I am not saying it happens everywhere, in the urban space where when your incomes increase, you want to emulate the better. You want to emulate the life of the richer people or Western countries. where cooking on gas.

**INTERVIEWER** 59:31

I wouldn't say only in middle class, i would say even in the lower economic classesYeah, in urban areas, because you are seeing it being around you. If you're a maid servant in a in a richer house, you're seeing that kitchen functioning with LPG, who would want that for yourself, right? Aspirations are mobile, .... Yeah, I think the interest is greater Like, again, we did like a study just like a few months ago in in tier two, tier three urban slums of India or six states in India. And we heard the same responses that stacking is prevalent, like people are using LPG with firewood, and mostly they're using biomass cookstoves because they have to make roti a certain way, because people want their family members want roti in certian way. I think there is there is still that kind of that aspiration to use, LPG is there, even in Indian villages, that is where adoption of Ujjwala was so smooth. Everybody, LPG has been the dream of every Indian household, irrespective of whether they've been like, it's not just the woman, even the men of the household, because it's become associated like a status symbol, right? Somebody who has a gas in the home is is supposed to be well off. So Indian, and for the meanings that LPG has, it has been a desired go to fuel for cooking across urban and rural India, I don't think the aspirations of rural India are very different from the aspirations of urban India, absolutely not, because with the kind of digital penetration that's happened, with the kind of exposure now has that has happened across these segments, everybody's aspirations are similar. Now, what makes the difference, the only difference is that in an urban household, you might have your 100% of cooking happening on on LPG, whereas in rural, it will be say only for special occasions, because some relative comes only then you take it out, or you cook one meal on that, but you make rotis on chullah, because it's it's, it's not being adopted for convenience, it's not being adopted for the health of the woman, or women do not have an agency to say I want to use this fuel only. There is a lot more stacking, than actually urban households where it is being adopted for very different reasons. Because you a you have the money to pay for it, you don't care about like the expenditure. Secondly, convenience is of importance if you have to go to work, the food needs to be made in time, etc, all of these functional factors come in. And I would like to believe that maybe women somewhere have had a better agency to express that they want to just keep cooking on this. So I think it's a combination of a lot of these factors. I can't explicitly like, say that it's because of this versus that because it's, it would be wrong to say that rural women do not exert or use their agency for doing things... they do. But maybe not in this particular aspect. Maybe, because here I think the ability to pay kind of mergers with what you want to use or can use etc. So yeah, I think I have what I've heard is like a lot of zamindar families, women have moved completely to LPG to cook food for the workers who work on their farm. So they are using this agency and wherever money is not a barrier, I think they are able to use LPG. But when it comes to the tastes and preferences of men, probably they are not able to the ability to push back because you are in a very, you're in a joint family, I think I think that might be a big factor. Because you are in a joint family in a in a suburban rural setup versus nuclear families in urban setups where your ability to negotiate with your spouse is very different. And that might have been one of the reasons why you are not able to push back on on using chullah in a village by oil or in a slum but you are able to do that if you are in a middle class setup.... But but it is also about the network, right? Because if you have the urban network for Ujjwala versus the urban network, the rural network for Ujjwala... Well, I mean, the rural net, I mean, what always amazes me is that this is a scheme, which is meant to penetrate and provide LPG cylinders to the rural, most distant woman, but the cylinder doesn't reach her. Now, so she has to go somewhere to get the cylinder and that itself kind of becomes the biggest challenge. Right?

**XXXX** 1:04:25

Definitely. Yeah, I think it is not just affordability or availability of cylinders is a big barrier. And I think that definitely, that definitely pushes people to stack. But that doesn't push them to make only chapathis or use it only for tea...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:04:41

Okay, I understand that point. Because I have seen it happen...

**XXXX** 1:04:45

Availability I mean, availability, to be honest, after Ujjwala, the rate at which they have expanded the distribution network has been commendable like the the access to LPG today to the distribution networks is much, much better than it was before the scheme was launched. So in that sense, the government has done a good job in expanding the network, it can be better. Yes, I'm not saying it can't be, but it is.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:05:14

Is it better than the mobile internet mobile network or is it better than the fuel network for two wheelers?

**XXXX** 1:05:28

It is it is better it is, I would say it is similar to the fuel network for two wheelers. But I think the other thing that we need to take into account your take into account here is the demand factor. Now, the moment you have demand for something like whether it's in internet, or whether it's smartphones, or in or a motorbike, these distribution networks become far more easily available. Now, when we interviewed distributors, what they told us is they're not going to deliver one cylinder in a village because it is too much travel work, and the economics doesn't work out for them, right? They will only be able to deliver to a village if they have five orders. Now, if you look at the urban consumer density, the kind of orders the urban distributor gets, is at least 10 to 20 times more than what a rural distributor is getting right. Whereas the commission per cylinder is similar for urban and rural. Firstly. Secondly, the sales volume that the urban distributor is making is so much more because they're not even having to think that this person needs... so they are able to give... the roads are better the infrastructure is better. So they're able to deliver the next day or in two days or whatever. In rural, the demand for LPG needs to increase for these distribution networks to be better. It's a chicken and egg story. Of course, when the distribution is not as good then people may not want to eat, they may not want to use it as much. But now with a better distribution, network demand is increasing. But once we address this affordability constraint, I have a feeling that the demand will increase even better. And when the demand increases better when a distributor has like 10 orders coming from one village every day, they will go and deliver. Because for them the economics will make sense because currently what is happening is there is no other economic comfort, a cushion that has been given to rural distributors, so that they can cater to rural consumers, even if they have three orders. The economics just would not work.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:07:36

Yeah. So that's what I was going to ask that. Do you think that then there is a scope with the schemes like Ujjwala to be a little more creative in terms of where the subsidy goes, and how much? At least in the beginning in the transition phase? Some of it would actually support the distribution network.

**XXXX** 1:07:56

Distribution network, again, distribution network in a way that, say, for example, your subsidy, the current the way Ujjwula was designed, what they did was they allowed households, they give only 50% subsidy, and they allowed households to take loan on the rest 50%. What that ended up doing is, it made the households pay market price of LPG for the first five or six refills. Now you're talking about the poorest household, who is who did not have the money to take a connection, and you are expecting them to pay market prices for a cylinder right after they've gotten the connection for subsequent use. No household is going to do that. And that's exactly what happened households were not able to do that. And that's why they took one refill, and then after that they did not take a refill. And then obviously then the government had to defer it and say, okay, you don't have to pay it in one go, you can, you can wait and maybe pay after six months. And now they are even contemplating of like not getting that money back. So, I mean, why did you design a scheme without taking this into account that the poorest households will not be able to do?

Part 3

**INTERVIEWER** 1:09:08

So what .... within your work how much does gender equity factor? Like I would ask you to give me some, you know, detailed examples, clear examples of projects or project priorities or internal processes that you implement to focus on the gender equity factors.

**XXXX** 1:09:29

Okay. So basically everything we do gender has an integrated focus and I'm in my new this job that I've started with is only like I've been into this only for a month now. So I will talk about my experience from the previous job, which is which was more policy focused at XXXX... I think you've you also spoke to one of my colleagues there. So at XXXX what we did was we built an gender lens into first All the primary survey is that we did on energy access, right? When you ask questions like, does this household use LPG does this household use.... do you get electricity access 24 seven, what we tried to do was build into the questionnaire aspects like data, basically collecting data, which is gendered basically asking questions like, who orders the refill? Or who decides when when the refill should be ordered? Are you able to get a refill every time you need it? How far do you have to travel to collect firewood or get the LPG delivered? Or get the LPG for your home? Is it delivered at home? Or do you have to travel or commute to get it? So asking these collecting this data through surveys in itself meets a data gap, because you don't currently know about these gendered aspects of what is happening with these energy access issues within a household. A lot of our surveys stop at the household level. And if you think of the way these surveys are done, most of the respondents are going to be men. Because if you go to a household and say I want to speak to any adult member of the household, most of the times it will be men who come and speak with you, unless you are going and on for health surveys where you're targetedly asking questions on on pregnancy and maternal and child health and specifically targeting women, right. So most of these surveys are either not going into the household and even when they're doing a household survey, it is mostly the perspective of men and the knowledge of men that is getting captured, and then presented at household as household level information. So going into first data and understanding the intra household dynamics. We did... a we did a few subsequent studies where we interviewed both men and women in the household on the same questions to see how their responses differ. And you can see there is a level of difference in knowledge on the electricity side, it's very, very limited. When it comes to the kind of payments that are being made, how much would you want to pay for reliable electricity access? Men are answering those questions more confidently than women, whereas on the cooking side, maybe women are more familiar, but men still have a lot more confidence in answering those questions.That that's one way they're doing the data part. And then moving into like, very specific policy level analysis, where you are getting into a policy guide in guideline document where you're getting into a policy design, and commenting on that policy design from a gender lens trying to understand the way this policy was designed, or the way this policy was implemented, what went wrong, where a gender lens could have been brought in? What was right from a gender lens point of view and what was not. And then moving, thirdly, to a very targeted focus, where you're doing studies and research with women themselves, and it could be women in livelihoods women who are using some of these clean energy machines, or women who are using cookstoves or LPG, and trying to understand from them very specific aspects and barriers that they face. Like, are you able to pay for the LPG? Do you have to take money from your spouse? Or when the electricity when there's a power cut, who gets the thing fixed? Or how many days do you have to wait for it to get fixed?... things like that. So basically, then targeting woman, because then it's only then do you realize or understand the needs of women as customers as consumers of energy. And until we start treating women as customers and consumers who in their own right, are contributing to the economy, both economically and socially, we will not be able to fact... we will constantly keep thinking of them as beneficiaries. And as somebody who will benefit from the money we give them, rather than multiplying the money we invest in them. And I think more and more.... I'm not saying that we should completely eliminate the development aspect of it. But we need to change this mindset and this thinking that woman will not be able to repay or be remunerated for investment, it may not always be like a economic transaction that gives you the value back. It can be a lot more social. But we have to see what you're getting back from that investment and that needs to be mainstream because I think otherwise we are completely eliminating the contributions of women in the energy sector. Um, like every most other sectors, I think, at least in health and education, it's a little more established because they are also older sectors. But yeah, in energy, I think that needs to be done. So yeah, these are the things we are doing and then in my new job, like I said, we are looking at a innovations and products and services and supporting innovators from a gender lens. So that's about it.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:15:08

So thinking beyond your specific work, what do you think? Like energy access policies? Are they…. How should they be gender sensitive? What kind of gaps do you see, for women's access to energy within the policy structure?

**XXXX** 1:15:26

I think this is true for the energy, all energy ministries, but also other ministries beyond energy ministry is to really implement a gender budgeting approach for how you look at schemes and policies. Every ministry needs to have that gender specialist or have this training where every time you create a scheme, every time you design a budget, you are able to articulate what will be the impact of this scheme on women. How are you going to capture that impact through data. And how are you going to create a feedback loop so that you are able to improve that, and India has been... India has adopted gender budgeting for a very long time now. But if you think about its implementation, we are extremely poor at it. Yeah, like countries like Nepal and Bangladesh have done a lot more than us. And they I think there are there's a lot to understand and learn from there where the finance minister presents a gender budget.... with the national budget. India needs to start doing that as a populous country, which has such a big female population in absolute numbers, the fact that we do not mention woman, and we do not articulate the kind of impact our government spending has on woman is not fair. So we need to first start building this gender lens into every scheme and every policy. And when we start to build this gender lens, it automatically forces us to go back to the grassroots and start thinking about policies from that angle. Because you can't just put a number on a document without having thought through where that number is coming from. Then it will compel you to go to the grassroots and think about woman farmers and think about, okay, how can I reach women farmers? Is it going to be through a different subsidy mechanism? Or is it going to be the same subsidy amount, but a different way of providing that subsidy? Or... Or how do I change land ownership structures for women to be able to benefit from a scheme? Like why should the scheme mandate ownership to land for somebody to avail a benefit, which is something like the PM Kisaan Scheme is doing right only if you are a landowner, you get the money, like what happens to women who are not landowners, then again, you're putting money back into the hands of men, who you don't know if they are using it for the best interest of the woman in the household, right. So the... so the balance.... this power dynamics, or this, this this gender, gendered power dynamics needs to be resolved first. And you can only do that if you are not thinking of household as a unit, but individually as a unit. And going inside the household, which is I think, a very big cultural barrier for Indians. To go inside the household and say not everybody in the household is equal. There are in justices and inequities happening within the household and the family system that we have designed. And we need to fix it, the state needs to come in and provide support on childcare, provide support on Social Security, social protection to women in particular. Because other than that, if you're not doing that you're leading woman to the mercy of other women or men around and that is not the right way to address the power balance. So yes, so gender budgeting being one big part of how energy ministries can start thinking about gender. Second, will be collecting data on all schemes and trying to... collecting sex disaggregated data and scheme so that you at least know like, okay, I haven't used a gender lens. But without a gender lens, what share of my scheme beneficiaries are women, let me understand that. And, and getting the data will tell you it's only 10% or Oh, it's already 60%. And that in itself is like a learning for you. And then thirdly would be going beyond just schemes and looking at these power dynamics. You know, like I said, going into the household system and, and working with men, because I think we can't keep educating women and making them more powerful without making them more empowered for lack of a better word, whether it's financially or socially or culturally, without teaching men and other family members how to adapt to this changing power dynamics. So what... what that results in in our work, what we've seen is it results in violence because men get insecure, men stop women from going out to work men stop, if you are making money. And if you're making money and men are not able to handle, then they stop you from doing that work. So you end up losing that money and you become like a victim of money.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:20:16

So, there is an impact or negative impact coming out of probably even a successful program, right?

**XXXX** 1:20:21

Exactly, exactly. And that is because these programs are failed to engage men and address those power dynamics, because men are also human beings, and they're obviously absolutely insecure. They think that women earning money, they will leave them many of our studies. In fact, this last study we did was this, this innovate, this entrepreneur had to convince families because most men said that, if our wife starts earning, she will realize I'm not good enough for her and she will leave me and go to someone else. And this insecurity is very human, and this persists in men. So... So obviously, you need to be able to be you need to be able to handle this insecurity and and talk to men and make them enablers of women's empowerment as opposed to barriers to women's empowerment. And and for that I think a lot of schemes and programs need to talk to men... include men...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:21:17

That actually goes to goes on to social policies, not just energy policy....

**XXXX** 1:21:22

No, no, of course, yeah, that's what energy policies are being built on an existing social structure. So they are going to respond to society the same way like any other policy would. Like why isn't our education system looking at gender based violence at home? Why is our education policy not teaching men and women that violence against each other is incorrect? So you have to train kids today for them to become adults, responsible, sensible adults tomorrow. So it has a link with the education policy. Also, like a lot of energy sector practitioners are now planning to incorporate this argument around clean cooking energy, access for households, and addressing intra household dynamics through school students. So they think that okay, maybe if the kids understand, they will be able to influence their parents decisions, or if the kids understand tomorrow, when they grew up to be adults, which is already something that's happening, a lot of young girls now want to only focus on LPG, they will be able to change the perception of the next generation. So I think these things have a very strong link with education. And for for, for a country like India, where a lot of people don't complete beyond primary education, and a lot of our current population has not been to school, you need to start teaching them now. Like, maybe they're adults, but you find out ways and methods of educating them on gender through policies, schemes, interventions, the way you have an Asha worker to teach about health, the way you have anganwadis to that infrastructure was created to bring in a certain kind of awareness education into the system. I think our governments need to be feminist if our governments are feminists, our ministers and ministries are feminists, then automatically you start thinking about these issues more... more importantly. You don't create a fund called Nirbhaya fund and put all the money there and, and just say, okay, we look at the safety of women. You start making it more mainstream, you start bringing in a feminist lens into how you think about foreign policy, how you think about aid structures, how you think about education, health care, all of these very, very important sections. And and I think that that only happens when you have that kind of maturity and capacity building of the ministers themselves. I think all these ministries need to go through a capacity building training. Yeah, themselves, otherwise, they wouldn't be able to, like, appreciate or apply this lens. I mean, I go to these ministry meetings and the kinds of things these people just say, like, as a joke, you wouldn't believe that, It's okay to say these things in 21st century you will be like it coming from you know,

**INTERVIEWER** 1:24:06

You don't surprise me at all.

**XXXX** 1:24:07

Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And then, and then that moment, you're like, Okay, I'm writing reports on, on what should be done through policies. And then you have a policymaker right in front of me, who has a very different kind of perspective, which is why, I think all policies need to focus on both production and consumption side, like a major problem with LPG distribution is that most of your LPG distributors are upper caste rich people, they don't have enough lower caste an LPG distribution. So I have heard from the horse's mouth that LPG distributors don't go to certain villages because they have only scheduled caste population so they don't want to go there. Untouchability is a big factor. Now, how do you address that when you only have enough people in the system... LPG distribution system who belong to different kinds of castes, will that thing get eliminated. You can, you can't literally put everybody behind behind the bars. Because if we look at the kind of biases we have, as a society, all of us will be behind the bars for some reason. So you need to improve diversity and inclusion, focus more on inclusion less on diversity. Inclusion means your diversity happens on its own and focus more both on production side and the consumption side. Because if you only keep addressing the consumption side, without fixing the systemic problems on the production side, which is things like how many of your school teachers are upper class, like a lower caste people barely in all your school teachers or upper caste, people, they're never going to teach against caste politics, very few of them will teach against caste to their students. So then students are not learning about caste and they are not, then you are perpetuating that. So all of these things are so systemic, that we need to just take a step back and as academics, as researchers and politicians, which is supposedly the thinking crowd, need to take a step back and look at these systemic issues and started addressing them, which I think it's happening. I wouldn't say it's not, but probably not at the pace at which we, which we need.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:26:20

So is that your view of best practice solution to achieving gender equity? If, for example, if there is no policy or financial constraints? What would you think would be the way to achieve them?

**XXXX** 1:26:35

First would be mainstreaming like gender sensitization or gender sensitive approach in in policymaking and politics itself. Because once you start mainstreaming that in policymaking, it starts percolating everywhere, it starts populating and business policies start percolating in because the I think business people just respond to what the market has to offer, anything that helps them grow, they will adapt to it, they will, they will go to every progressive idea, they will also go up every regressive idea. So it needs to start changing from politics, it needs to change it needs to start changing among bureaucrats and policy makers. So I think sensitization, bringing an gender lens into the conversations that happens, even at the highest level of the government will basically start and it won't happen overnight. Because it's not like you have that conversation today and things change tomorrow, but at least you will be able to codify some process. Like for example, something like a gender audit of schemes, you can put it in the process, you can start institutionalizing a lot of these things, so that by the end of 10 years, 20 years, it's become part of the culture. And then when it becomes part of the culture, a lot of these things will not have to be pushed for. Automatically people would be starting to think .... How does this translate into a gender equitable outcome, etc. Well, I think doing that, I think is the first step how do we create a political demand for it and and as as citizenry, make sure that this, this is increasingly happening and as, as academics as philanthropists as as researchers, we can, we can make it more mainstream in our writings, in our approach in our discussions, and automatically government, some government or some government policy maker will pick it up. So then that would be the first thing I think, sensitization of policy makers and then moving towards programs and projects, at least start with the donor side of things where it's easier to make an impact. Investor and donors can be probably made more sensitive to start putting a gender element in all projects and all programs. Why should any project on mobility not have a gender lens? I don't... I don't see a reason to not have a gender lens when you're talking about electric vehicles, what is it about electric vehicles that is so exclusive to men? So why would you not add a gender lens? Why would you not have a gender lens in in agriculture projects? Why would you not have a gender lens in in say infrastructure projects or in like, financing studies or in ADB projects now most of them do have like a GESI framework where they look at gender and social inclusion. So there's a list of criteria that they look at in every infrastructure project, whether it's a hydropower project or its thermal plants or even a solar utility, mega project. They they have codified it. So we need to start codifying these things as donors and philanthropists and then obviously an academic and academics and researchers and then this will start percolating into policy because hopefully there'll be enough exchange between this group and the policymakers for these things, make it to the best practices.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:30:07

The purse strings can really dictate terms also, right?

**XXXX** 1:30:11

Exactly, exactly. Yeah. Yeah. I mean, if i the only problem with a country like India, I think a lot more gender work is happening in say so, in I wouldn't say the conversation in India is far more ahead. But I think a lot more work is happening in countries like Africa, in in countries of Africa, because donors have a lot more influence on how things are done, India has reached a stage where the government is not dependent on donor money to make things happen. So they also don't listen to donors the same way. But I think these donors spaces like, barring UN, if you look at the donor spaces, they are also not very equitable to be honest. So, I think what I would love for gender….

Part 4

**INTERVIEWER** 1:30:58

So, that was actually what I was going to ask that why do you think energy access finance processes, whether it is with large funds like Green Climate Fund or any national level finance or local level finance, what why what what stops them from being gender aware?

**XXXX** 1:31:16

Nothing, their own imagination, and the limitation of that imagination and probably at that, when that fund was being designed at that level, there was nobody who thought that this was important, or nobody important thought it was important. Let me put it that way. And so if nobody important things, this is important, it is not going to be at the core of it.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:31:38

It will not be a core deliverable, soit will not happen.

**XXXX** 1:31:42

Exactly, exactly. But I think there is also a ripple effect in the sectors we will be working very, we work in echo chambers. So if say Enough, enough donors, or maybe like a group of seven, eight donors, if they start doing this in every conference, every discussion, every paper, every article, it is only a matter of time that the other donors in the space will pick it up. That happens. I've seen that. In fact, in the last two years, I've seen how the conversations of gender have just increased significantly. Like when I joined the sector, and I was talking about gender, people would look at me and be like, how can energy have a gender lens? Like it's an infrastructure thing? Right. And today, like every other energy project does have a mention of gender. It's not like everybody does it in a sincere way. But there's a lot more discussion conversation around it,

**INTERVIEWER** 1:32:36

Okay. Right. Yeah. So yeah, so you kind of I mean, done, I was actually going to ask you about your role in this thing. But I think you've already addressed that. If you want to add anything, like in your present, work in your present position? How are you? Or what might you be doing, if you had no constraints in achieving gender equity, in energy access?

**XXXX** 1:33:06

In my current program, what I would do is just increase the amount of budget or at least demarcate a certain pool of budget exclusively for compensating and rewarding gender inclusion, which would basically mean that if a company had to spend, spend $10,000, to, to construct, say, a few shelters, or study a few working woman hospitals, or the construction of a few toilets, which actually brings things to very tangible forms of employment for woman, I would, I would be able to give them that grant. And say, you do that. Just increasing that pool of money and the demarcating it as gender money, in itself creates a very different impact on innovators and, and the sector, then if you club it, or merge it with a larger pool, and say, okay, all of this is for your business. And within that you do gender, no, you demarcate a pool of money and show them how big that part is of gender. And then automatically businesses will start moving towards it, because I think a lot of them understand the impact idea and they understand the money part of things. I would do that. And I would make gender a lot more mainstreamed into like conversation. So starting at the top, like, it doesn't have to be something that comes in only in specific aspects of say, oh, let's think about business model in a gendered way, but also like everything, starting from the process, to the recruitment to the team, etc. But I think that's still better because this is a XXXX project and XXXX has been working a lot on gender and again, the XXXX project. So XXXX definitely is is very, very passionate about gender. So I think because of XXXX and XXXX being there, it's still got a very significant gender dimension. But yeah, I think the money part would be something I would focus on.

Part 5 (Closing)

**INTERVIEWER** 1:35:13

So is there anything we have not discussed on this topic that you would like to add?

**XXXX** 1:35:20

Not in my view, like I can talk about this topic in that way for hours, like, there are like a lot...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:35:26

I could feel the passion.

**XXXX** 1:35:30

Right, nothing in terms, I don't think I've missed out anything that is structurally going to be relevant or important. I do think the role of donors, academics, and, and investors are very important in this space to bring in like a gender lens to everything they're doing. And I think you need more organizations who are able to provide tools, and very pragmatic ways of doing gender inclusion, because I think, theoretically, everybody agrees they want to do it.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:36:04

They don't know how to....

**XXXX** 1:36:05

But they don't know how to, like, if you walk into a government ministry, there's like, yes, we want to work with, we want to create an impact on women, but we don't know how. So somebody needs to be like, there has to be organizations who can build those very pragmatic tools, okay, you want to include gender into a skill, this is a checklist, look at this checklist, you will get a very easy, you will get an idea of how to do it. So at least your basics are covered if you follow that checklist. So you need organizations, and those are the organizations we also need to invest in as donors and others and build that capacity to be able to do that. Give very translatable, pragmatic ideas, otherwise, it will never happen. It will just be a theoretical idea. And everybody will be like, yes, yes, we totally want to work with women, we want to create lots of impact on women. And when it comes to doing things, they wouldn't know how how to....

**INTERVIEWER** 1:37:01

I wanted to just at the end, I wanted to I know your work focuses more on women. But I just wanted to expand the concept of gender into non binary people. And I want to know if your work has touched that sector, have you evidenced any differentiated needs? Because this is something I'm finding that that's one sector of gender that we are not really talking about at all, within the energy field, at least in my interviews? I've been trying to push this, but most people have been like, No.

**XXXX** 1:37:30

No, I mean, it's been it's so difficult to just talk about women in this space of energy that people I don't think I've gone beyond that. But some of the work that XXXX is doing on engendering utilities were looking at gender diversity within utilities, energy companies, they definitely look at, they look at orientation, and they do look at I think disability as well. And, obviously, there are multiple dimensions to how you can intersect this. But these two become again, anything that is a barrier for woman obviously becomes a bigger barrier when you intersect these aspects. And when you talk about trans transpeople. Now, recently, there was a news, I think, yesterday that Chattisgarh police has recruited about 15 transwoman as constables in their, in their police force. Now, that's such a big news, because it's such a rare thing. It's not normal for transpeople to get into legitimate jobs. Now, a lot of this, these projects are trying to look at these aspects. But again, the problem is, is the same. For trans people or for... for woman or, or disabled people. I'm not talking about woman, just men or woman, whoever. What happens is like, again, the same problem happens you are a minority entering a majority space. So you end up feeling so uncomfortable because you have to continuously adapt to the way of life of that majority. So until we can think of a way where people are able to enter these processes in groups and not as individuals, I don't think they'll find the kind of confidence and the comfort to change it and it's completely unfair to expect two people to enter the system and change the system and be the spokesperson for that identity because then you are stripping them off every other individuality they have and seeing them you have you are a transport sports spokesperson, or you are so that tokenism happens even with women, right? So it just becomes everything just becomes exacerbated as a challenge. With all these intersections, if you are a woman from a lower caste, it's much more difficult. If you're a woman who doesn't speak English, it's tougher to make it into a space where you have only sophisticated upper caste or upper class women. So projects have not, I would say seriously looked at it. And I think, again, here the problem is on the supply side, most people having these conversations are women and women who are probably privileged. How many of these discussions even in your interviews, how many interviews would you find... like, people who are in the energy sector who are trans, who are working on equity issues, right?

**INTERVIEWER** 1:40:31

I have been searching for one.

**XXXX** 1:40:34

So there is it's such a so, because on the supply side on on on these tables, you don't have those people. Those conversations never happen. It doesn't percolate down there. The same thing that's happened with woman is a is happening with other identities that we talk about whether it's based on social orientation or, or physical abilities, or trans or queer one of those things are going to happen, because on your supply side, you are doing literally nothing to make it inclusive. At least for women, the government policies, to some degree have been programmed. Yeah. But for other aspects, it hasn't been that so. So until we fix the supply side, it's not going to change the demand side. But I'm also thinking like, how long can we keep having this argument that we need to fix the supply side? Because you are there, you understand the problem, then why is a woman or a man... who's stopping you from talking about interests of other people? Right? But you don't. And yeah, because the network's become very different. Again, going back to ....

**INTERVIEWER** 1:41:42

But the problem is, you know, trans people.... talking for trans people is, I mean, we can always advocate equal rights for trans people. But talking for their experience is very difficult. Our lives are so binary, I mean, I've worked in the gender field, but with women mainly. I mean, not I wouldn't say mainly, I've worked with women, for over 15 years now. But I just find, like, I also have as the second level many, many non binary friends, and people who we collaborate with that different activities levels, but I have realized that I can never speak for their experience, because their experience is so drastically different from us binary people. Yeah, yeah, you got the end of the day, my sexuality is accepted by the society that itself just gets major rupture between, you know, my....

**XXXX** 1:42:37

legitimacy of your idea.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:42:40

I mean, just just what you're saying about women, what I find is, like, you know, every time as a single woman, you're entering a masculine domain, and I practice in a masculine domain. So already, you are literally trying to be one of the boys or then somewhere along the line, you decide that you don't want to be one of the boys, and then you have to fight for your space as that feminized space that No, I am not one of you, I have my own different needs. And you need to see me as an equal. And it's a fight, right? It's a fight. And that is happening to us people who are 50% of the population.

**XXXX** 1:43:22

Yeah, right.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:43:24

I mean, I can only project what would happen to the 15%. Right?

**XXXX** 1:43:28

Exactly. But I'm also realizing we don't have to speak for people's experiences, we have to just make space for them to come and speak about their account.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:43:37

So that's what I'm trying to do. But I'm really struggling to find...

**XXXX** 1:43:41

Like, I used to tell my HR at XXXX that like you, because starting from the basic schooling and the education system and the college system, you can see like this groupism. Like, you wouldn't have any blind friends because they all go to blind schools. They don't study in the same school. So obviously, the kind of jobs they would go into the spaces or the circles they will have will be very different. So So then how do you go and tap into those networks, then float your JD's there so that at least enough people apply to your organization, but how many HRs actually make that effort? One of the things we're trying to do with our innovations here is a lot... the pool of woman led companies who actually applied for the program is a miniscule one... and that is entirely because we did not target women's associations. We did not target innovators or investors who work exclusively with... incubators or investors who work exclusively with women led companies. Now, if you don't change the channels, how are you going to get a different outcome? Maybe the... maybe the answer somewhere is to change these channels. First, not speak for other people's experience but just tweak these channels. So then, at least you create some space, but yeah, I mean, it's easier said than done. But, but I think I'm hoping some of us will be able to find that point and move into better positions to be able to do that I think. Being in position of power does give you...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:43:52

That give you does give you a lot of negotiating power.

**XXXX** 1:45:18

Yeah. And it depends on how you use it. You can use that power to be insecure and be like, I have to play by the rules, otherwise, I'm going to lose this power, or be like, I'm finally in power. And let me change the rules of the game. Even if I stay for a year at least I would have made some impact. That's entirely I don't know how that can be changed, because I have come to realize that's just so individual, based on your experience and a lot of these variable factors that if I haven't been able to codify it...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:45:47

And it's, if there are any follow up questions on this, I can get in touch with you, right.

**XXXX** 1:45:54

Yeah, sure. If you have any follow up question? Yes.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:45:56

Okay. So it was great talking to you. I'll switch off the recording. And then we can probably talk further