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| **Interviewer name** | INTERVIEWER |
| **Sub-contractor organisation** | ARU |
| **Interview date** | xxxx |
| **Duration of interview audio recording** | 1 hour 41 minutes 41 seconds |
| **Face-to-face or virtual interview** | Virtual |
| **Interview participant** | |
| **Code** | I10 |
| **Participant name** | INTERVIEWER |
| **Organisation name** | **XXXX** |
| **Gender** | Female |
| **Stakeholder category** | Development professional working on government programs related to clean cooking fuel delivery for women. |
| **Country** | India |

**Introduction**

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I think we are already recording. Yeah, so a very good afternoon to you. And thank you so much for taking time out to participate in this program. This is a study where we aim to obtain a better understanding of energy access and gender equity within energy access in India. And your work, especially with XXXX makes it very important for us to understand how gender equity is playing out within the energy access question. This comes from the Sustainable Development Goals - targets which have been put up where, probably for the first time, energy access and development and personal development and rights of personal development was kind of equated. And the connection between having access to energy was understood as the principal ingredient for your personal development and for a life of- life of equality.

**Consent**

So, before we start, I would like to check a few mandatory things. Number one is, have you completed and returned the consent form?

RESPONDENT: Yes, good afternoon, XXXX. Yeah, sure. And I'm also looking forward to talking to you.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much. Through this interview, we will 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 within energy access. Is it okay, if we record the interview for your - for our documentation purposes?

RESPONDENT: Perfectly okay. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much. 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 this 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 will take more or less one hour.

**Part 1:**

So, to proceed forward with the formal part of the interview... Can you start briefly by telling me a bit about your current role and position and the organization that you work for?

RESPONDENT: So, I work as a XXXX with the XXXX. So, I'm in a consultant role, okay. And my key focus is on the XXXX program.

INTERVIEWER: Okay and can you tell me-

RESPONDENT: I started this role in xxxx, in the middle of xxxx.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, can you tell me a bit also about your background and how you got into this line of work?

RESPONDENT: So, I am a xxxx, and I passed out from the XXXX, Anand- the institute set up by xxxx, right. Also, a Malayali. Yeah. So, I passed out from there in 2001. And the initial- I - and I started my career with the XXXX. So initial part of my career was, was there. I was working with XXXX for three and a half years, based out of XXXX. And I also have been part of XXXX

INTERVIEWER: What is your role exactly within XXXX?

RESPONDENT: Okay, so I'm like, okay, so I'm an advisor, or a consultant. So, I directly look at the policies and also design and sometimes take them to field also. So, there was one program within XXXX, which was called XXXX. So, I designed it, of course, we- I work with the oil marketing companies who rolled this out, and the ministry, and then we roped in various partners to conduct it across the country. We did more than 100,000 such LPG panchayats. There is another program within XXXX, it's called the XXXX XXXX. So how can XXXX be deepened further, you know, how can we sort of realize the full benefits that XXXX can have for a woman and our family? So, I design interventions within the government for that. And then we -then I roll it out also? And then so I'm like a link between the field and, like, between the field and the policy? Like, currently, we are running a program with the three OMCs on promoting LPG adoption... And I do work closely with the XXXX on this.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And how long have you been involved with energy issues?

RESPONDENT: I would say only with XXXX did I start with the energy issues.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, right. And-

RESPONDENT: But I do have some- I could say that I've worked on policy for longer. So, there is that element of linkage that I bring.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. And so, the specific energy related program that you have worked with would be XXXX.

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: And of course, XXXX is all about energy access, right, the entire program is about energy access. How do you see a differential- differentiality in this energy access that you're working? I mean, it could be based on regions or I mean in any which way do you see the differentiality, I mean, we all know about the urban rural differentiality already, and the remoter you go the connectivity is less and less but any other differential access, you have noticed within the work that you're doing right now?

RESPONDENT: Okay, I mean, there is the other differentiality within energy access, which is off the forest, how close you are to the forest, and how far away, right and the level of access to forest like places like Bihar and UP XXXX refills, I mean, the adoption is much higher or West Bengal because those places - highly dense population density is pretty high. And there isn't that much biomass available. You know, if you look at Bihar, the land size XXXX is primarily rural. So, the access to land which can generate some kind of biomass for you is also very limited in many of these places particularly Bihar. And overall if you look at the XXXX percentages about 45% is - the connections have gone to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes also. So, within that scheduled class anyway have lower access to land right. So, so it's in this belt, West Bengal, UP, Bihar, I think they were just waiting for something like that it was a really strong need that XXXX fulfilled, fulfilled. But if you look at Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, parts of Odisha, there- population density is also lower. And there is a certain amount of access to biomass because the forests are much richer and better. Land- landholding is also I think bigger, you know, so that also plays a big role.

INTERVIEWER: So, accessibility to firewood?

RESPONDENT: Yes, accessibility to firewood is an issue. Yeah, that one. Another thing that one sees is that if you have cattle, if you have cows or buffaloes at home, and then- then you use then the people make cow dung cakes or something that also comes in the sort of comes in the way to switching to LPG fully.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Right. So, do you see more as people get the connection, but you were saying that the refilling gets - process gets disturbed because they fall back on what they still consider their primary fuel sources?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, so the way I've understood it and last- for four years or so is that people do fuel stacking what you guys call in, in your lingo, right. And it's nobody sort of fully switches right away particularly. And if I also reflect on my own family or families that we've seen in switching all I mean 40 years back, when gas connection, when we got the gas connection, then also I remember for a- for a while, we used to have the kerosene stove and now also in our homes, we have a backup right, we have a microwave, or somebody will have an oven or an induction or something or the other. So in rural families also, I've seen families whose- which sometimes have four options, there would be a gas connection, there would be a fuel wood chullah, there will be a kerosene stove, there will be an electric heater or an induction, all sort of put together and they keep switching depending on the monetary concerns as well as some convenience concerns also, you want to cook something quickly and sometimes the whole family is not there only the woman is at home she wants to make only for herself. And she will go for something, some shorter version. something quick, you know, so I do see the fuel stacking going for a longish time it will be there. Yeah. People like induction also and also, I've seen, it's also linked to the exposure that in my, in my understanding almost 50% of the XXXX people who've benefited from XXXX, XXXX customers are often labourers, casual laborers. And that's also a migrating population. So, they've also been exposed to urban centres, where at least the husband has gone and you know, come back or sometimes the wife has also gone with him. So, there is also that exposure to modern means of cooking because when you go to a city, you may- you may have to use maybe a smaller cylinder or something, but you may have already been exposed to gas. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. So, it's also I think, partly reliability of the- of the supply, does that make people go for this fuel stacking?

RESPONDENT: Yes, to some extent, yes. Because in the rural pockets, particularly, I would say okay. They are most of them are still on single cylinders, you know, they are not on double cylinders. But within XXXX also there is a demand for double cylinders. I remember going to a village in XXXX. And this was a village- I think the name will come to me- about 50 kilometres from XXXX, I think the name of the village was XXXX. So, it was a fishing community. So, the women are also- I mean, they have to really get up early in the morning. Men and women both go, both have a role in the fishing work. And they really wanted to, they totally switched to gas cylinders, and they totally wanted the double cylinders. And, and many of them, many of them had gone ahead and gotten the double cylinder because they wanted to ensure a reliability for themselves. So once the double cylinder is there, of course there is that reliability. Secondly, where there are, wherever the distances are more between the distributor and the village.

INTERVIEWER: Hello?

RESPONDENT: Yeah?

INTERVIEWER: Hello?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I can hear you XXXX.

INTERVIEWER: Hello?

RESPONDENT: I can-

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I just lost you for a bit. I’m- I’m-

RESPONDENT: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: Now it’s fine, now it’s fine.

RESPONDENT: Now, can you hear me?

INTERVIEWER: Yes, I can. I can. Just lost you for a bit. So, if you could just repeat what you were saying?

RESPONDENT: Okay, so what I was saying is that a double, I mean, the XXXX customers who have understood the value of having a gas, gas cylinder at home, and the value is particularly in terms of how it releases productive time for them- productive or leisure or whatever their priorities are in life, but quite often the productive time, okay. So, then they're going for double cylinders. However, there are villages which are far off from LPG distributors. And maybe the, more often than not, the LPG distributor sends the vehicle once in a week. So, when this - when the vehicle once in a week, obviously there is that gap. We are trying to come up with some more solutions for these situations. One is that we've roped in common service centres to give, where the common Service Center can keep up to seven cylinders. The second option is that we are trying is to have a grassroot woman called XXXX XXXX also be there. So, she can also stock, she can also facilitate in booking and or in sort of handling some kind of a grievance related to repair of the stove or something or the other, you know, something or the other, which sort of breaks their journey to switching to LPG, you know. So, there are these things that are being tried out to make it easier for women to stick to continuing - sort of stick to LPG.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Right. So, within the polit- policy context that you're working, what are the current issues that you see which influence your work?

RESPONDENT: The current issues, okay-

INTERVIEWER: Issues or if there are some key policy challenges for the work that you're doing.

RESPONDENT: One challenge is obviously the level of subsidy that is there- one is able to offer these people, particularly the poorer customers within LPG, you know, so, in India there are close to 27 crores so I'm going to stick to crores and lakhs, then maybe you can convert them, right?

INTERVIEWER: That's fine, that's fine.

RESPONDENT: So, there are close to 27 crore LPG customers, and about 25 - a little over 25 crore customers take the LPG subsidy. Okay, so the subsidy burden is high. So one is, one is, you know there is need for restructuring the subsidy in favour of the poorer customers so that they can get more, you know. So, that's- that is a, that's a challenge on which TERI is also - has come up with some ideas. But that's something that needs to be done so that for a longer term, we're able to secure affordability for these poorer customers, so they're able to afford and switch, because price is indeed a factor. You know, they value convenience. And more often than not poor, poor people pay more for convenience than richer people. Yeah, that happens. So, they do value the convenience, I've met several of women XXXX customers who say this, that because they have gas, they're able to do so many other things. Somebody's gotten into tailoring, somebody is able to do vegetable farming so much more, you know, they can devote more time to it. It's- it's the time poverty that they were experiencing, somebody's gotten into a snack business or something or the other. So many of these are working women also. There's a - there's the caste angle anyway, right? I mean, since most of these women, anyway, were working, so they can see the trade-off. And I was quite surprised that sometimes I mean, Anganwaadi workers, Asha workers, even sarpanches, women sarpanches, who did not have a gas connection before XXXX. So, these are working women who have so much, you know, they need to devote so much time for their work. And yet they were not able to invest in a gas connection. Of course, it's not just availability of money. It's also sort of a prioritization within the house. whether this was important or not. Yeah.

**Part 2:**

INTERVIEWER: Exactly. So, what does equitable energy access mean to you?

RESPONDENT: (laughs) Yeah, yeah. So okay, so if I look at it from the experience of XXXX, okay, so some of the responsibilities which for, I mean, for whatever reason, they seem to be with women, you know, there is that argument that they shouldn't be having so much of the cooking and take- and care responsibilities. But they do have it, you know, that's, that's how I see it. That's what I see happening all around. So, if they are doing the cooking, then whatever energy that is required, that is something they should be able to get without hassle. And easily something that takes less time, it's convenient, and it's not burdensome. So, it's not just the physical drudgery of collecting the firewood, it's also the mental drudgery. There is the mental burden of, there are women who say this, that if I don't have fuel wood at home, and I have an opportunity to go for labour that day, obviously, I'm not going to go, I'm going to first get the fuel wood. That's the priority of the household, you have to have food. So.. that's what I'm saying. So, the activities or the responsibilities, that's for some reason or the other, are with women, if they can be simplified, made more convenient and comfortable because of access to energy. Energy can make it simpler for them, then, if they have access to that, that is equitable, I mean, that's what equitable access would be for me.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely, yeah. Right. So, I mean, of course, XXXX itself is a policy for - which prioritizes this gender equity within energy access, but what on a larger energy framework just from an overview, what do you think, how do you think policies should- policies and interventions or intervention programs should prioritize gender equity?

RESPONDENT: How should I- policies?

INTERVIEWER: Within the- within the question of energy access.

RESPONDENT: Right. So, one needs to look at it from the eyes of I mean, is there a difference between how women use energy or how men use energy? And the moment we ask that question, we do see those differences, right? Where is the woman going to use the energy and where the man is, I mean, the man is going to use energy, right? So, it impacts their productivity, like, there are, there are people, there are women who use sewing machines. Now, they might be using something which does not have any motor or any, they are not using external power, they're working it only through their manual work, right. And a lot of other work that they do. If they're making *papads*, or *badis* (various food items) or something or the other, now they are more or less not using any energy, they're doing it in the traditional way, even when they're trying to sell it, you know, so many of these women make something or the other by hand. Right, they run the household, they do something, but they, they may not even be consumers of energy. In the modern sense, I mean, the way we use energy, they may not have any vehicle of their own, which they are running. And they might just be using some lighting energy, because of course, electricity access has gone up - some energy in cooking, and some entertainment, you know, there they might be using some energy- TV or mobile or whatever, you know, so energy can, I mean, literally energize them, you know, make them more productive, make them more, give them more time for leisure, and thinking and, you know, just- just some more free time. So, for water, you know, the water that they draw or for all that, I think more often than not, they're using their own energy. That needs to be… I think once we look at this question that are women using it differently, and can where, where all they can use, I think they'll find the answer.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, actually, I mean, like I was just a previous interview I was doing with the Chief Engineer of West Bengal Power Distribution company.

RESPONDENT: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: And what I realized is that this understanding of the different tasks that men and women do, and how energy is not even looked at as a priority for the work that women do is, like, it's not I mean, he was a very nice and very interesting man. And when I was talking to him, he was like, okay, I've never thought of these things. But when you tell me it's like, these are these little germs, which are being planted in my head, because I've never looked at it. So, I think that's, that's one of the major policy gaps where this kind of a thought of, you know, what is, of course, I mean, cooking fuel becomes because of the gender defined role of cooking being a woman's domain, it kind of becomes an immediate thing for women, but in other policies, I think that understanding is missing that, like, for example, electricity, and how, what he was saying how women use electricity very differently within the homes. So how do you-

RESPONDENT: Just to add this thing, just to add one point here, even for cooking, okay, even - before XXXX if you look back, even the LPG connections were never in the name of women, they were mostly in the name of men, in my house the gas connection was in my father's name. So, so it looks a pretty small intervention, but just to have the gas connection in the name of woman, which is what XXXX brought in, that the connection will be given out in the name of the woman that created such a huge shift, that suddenly they've become a constituency that you're thinking about?

INTERVIEWER: Right. So, it just changes the way policymakers are looking at?

RESPONDENT: Yes, they were not a constituency before that. They were not all a constituency. Like the, the gas -

INTERVIEWER: I had a fundamental problem with the whole understanding, I mean, whole thing of the cooking fuel connection, being in the name of the woman-

RESPONDENT: Yes, I get that.

INTERVIEWER: Because again you know kind of bangs on the thing that cooking for the family is the woman's job.

RESPONDENT: For reaffirming that? I get that. But having- but they've suddenly emerged as a constituency. And you see the kind of political impact XXXX has had in the last, last seven, eight years. But they were not a constituency. In fact, the LPG distributors, through which the LPG is distributed. They were a primarily male kind of a setup, they never talked to women before this. Before XXXX, they had no business talking to women. Now, suddenly they've transformed, many of them are recruiting women workers, because the- they have to deal with so many women, you know. So that is, I think, to that extent, XXXX has really contributed because suddenly you realize, okay, my consumer is a woman. My consumer is not a man. So, then you treat the customer differently, right? The moment you know that bulk of my consumer is woman. And one more thing I've observed, just to add to the gender thing?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah, go ahead.

RESPONDENT: In many villages, I've seen that younger boys, and even men, cook lot more when they have gas connections. It's so much more convenient. Now, you might start with the boy wanting to cook a chicken or Maggie, you know, just doing something or the other, because he wants to make something special for himself or for the family. But the openness to cook has gone up because there is gas.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting, that is very, very interesting.

RESPONDENT: And I've seen this in Bihar, in Odisha, in UP. I've seen this across the board. I mean, sometimes women tell me that now we are not pestered to come back from our mother's home that that quickly because the man can-

INTERVIEWER: Because the men can manage.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, he can cook on the gas.

INTERVIEWER: The men can manage. Interesting, interesting, this actually goes back to one more thing that you know that the electricity connection, because that's also the other thing that has happened, which the electricity penetration has gone much higher over the last decade or decade and a half. And there also what was interesting was that, you know, the weaving kind of work. Usually, men used to do it during the daytime, and women used to do it, do it after daylight hours, but as those same places got electrified. Now, men don't have a problem working into the night.

RESPONDENT: Oh, okay. Okay.

INTERVIEWER: (laughs) So as it becomes easier, I think men then don’t mind.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, it- I do, yes, I do see that, that women tend to get stuff that is boring and tedious, and you know, repetitive and a little inconvenient, you know, something that's inconvenient, may not be- may not be - require that much of physical strength, but it's inconvenient, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So, how do you do data collection for your work? I mean, do you do any data collection? Do you depend on secondary sources of data? If so, what are those sources?

RESPONDENT: So, we do a lot of data collection also. So, it depends on activity to activity, okay. So, this LPG Panchayat that I was talking about, for example, so LPG Panchayat is designed as a community meeting, during Corona it got stopped. So, about 100 XXXX customers, they are invited, and in which the ones who are regularly using LPG, they do some sharing, there is an LPG safety - there is - we talk about safety, and we also explain how subsidy comes in and if they have any grievances related to that, then we also tell them how to do booking etc. and all that. So, these meetings, we were collecting data on an app for these meetings, like there were all kinds of other questions also like what- what is the other primary fuel that you use? How- what do they value in LPG? You know, those kinds of things. That's one way. The other is we have lot of a - lot of data gets captured by the distributors, which is about the customer buying, how much are they buying, when are they buying and you know, so, a lot of that data is there. First-hand also there are many research groups that have come and done some primary data collection thing, Indian Statistical Institute recently did a study, so on XXXX, many kinds of groups come and do some or the other study some the Ministry also once in a while - once in a while commissions to understand certain factors etc.

INTERVIEWER: So, in the data collection process, is there - have you seen any diversity mapping happening? Diversity of access, I mean.

RESPONDENT: Diversity of?

INTERVIEWER: As in, diversity map- mapping to understand differential access.

RESPONDENT: I haven't come across the no, maybe no, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, because one of the things that I mean, like we are supposed to be looking at gender equity, but we have only been within this country, all the conversations that I've had in India, I've only been able to look at gender equity - defined as women's equity, but not really looking at even other groups, other gender groups also, you know,

RESPONDENT: Ah, okay, correct, correct, correct.

INTERVIEWER: So, I was just wondering-

RESPONDENT: So, like transgenders and others, right?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, any processes where some form of diversity, especially, you know, groups who break the so-called family understanding that we have, you know, like, the LPG connection goes to the woman because she is, like heading the household ….

RESPONDENT: Okay, okay, okay, so-

INTERVIEWER: But what are we doing for people who don't fit into that kind of pattern?

RESPONDENT: So, I can, I can say a few things here. Okay. So, I don't think transgender is included, okay, I- as far as I know, okay. But the way the initial connections happened, were from the list of socio-economic caste census. So, some five crore names were taken from there, in the initial five crores came from there. So, in those five crores, there were daughter's names also. And there have been many cases where the daughter got the connection - an unmarried daughter, so it wasn't- these connections were not linked to the status of marriage in any way. It created a lot of confusion also on the ground, okay, like the - in a family daughter got it, mother didn't get it for some reason, you know. And so, then when daughter gets married, she takes it away, or she leaves it here or one daughter in law got - the other one didn't get all those things also happen. But it wasn't linked to - if your name is in the socio-economic caste census the- and you meet certain deprivation criteria, you get it. So, there was no linkage to the marital status. In that sense, it was freeing and sometimes people used to complain, why did you use the name of the women, it's so difficult to trace them in a village because people may not know their names, you know they're known as somebody's wife or somebody's-

INTERVIEWER: *(Hindi) Someone’s wife, someone’s mother*… Right.

RESPONDENT: So sometimes distributors used to complain, how do we trace these people? But this is -suddenly made them- have given them an identity. So, to that extent, yes. They were also complaints that what do we do with men whose wives are dead, and there is no other woman in the family like single men? So single, older men, older single men, you know that kinds. So, some minor provisions here and there were made for them. Some, in some cases, you know.

INTERVIEWER: You were also telling that the first group of beneficiaries were largely from the scheduled SC/ST groups, right. So that was also-

RESPONDENT: Not the first - no, okay, no, no, no, no. Overall, it's about 45%. So, the- you might remember in 2000 - 2011, there was a socio-economic caste census done. Okay, in - on the basis of that caste cens- I mean socio economic caste census, five crore were taken from their five crore names were taken from there. Okay. Bulk, again, the numbers would be broadly 40 - 50% will be SC/ST.

INTERVIEWER: Right. So, how was that selection made? Since it was from the caste census. So, there was a certain-

RESPONDENT: So that was on the basis of deprivation criteria, the socio-economic caste census has deprivation criteria, so it was selected on the basis of that, I mean, the most deprived right, of course, in the gas connection, there is a catch that you have to have a proper dwelling.

INTERVIEWER: Right, you have to have an address.

RESPONDENT: You have to have an address also and not if you have like a thatched roof, a very small dwelling. So, it's unsafe for gas, you know, keeping a gasket? So that there is a physical verification that's done. So sometimes that can be a concern, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Okay. So, did the socio-economic caste census also map- when you say deprivation criteria, did it map whether you have an LPG connection to your name or to your household? Did it map that?

RESPONDENT: So okay, so now, you might recall the initiative called *XXXX* which is when the direct benefit transfer - the whole linkages were done, okay. So, there is a fair relatively fail- failproof system, fail proof system that the three oil marketing companies have- in which they capture your Aadhar and- like if I have a gas connection, and I apply under XXXX then it will throw up that you already have a connection. Okay. So, there is something called a deduplication exercise they do when your name is- when you register for XXXX, of course now- right now it's closed. But had you had your name be there in XXXXand you had a LPG connection, then it will throw up that you already have an LPG connection? And in which case you won't get it?

INTERVIEWER: Right. So okay, so you've kind of- now we're switching to the gender side of the discussion.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Right. So okay, so you've kind of- now we're switching to the gender side of the discussion. Sure. And what I would like to understand is, you've already talked about at household level how men and women use energy differently and the gender equity part - part of that, but how equitable do you see is energy access at household level? And at community level? Do you see men and women being able to access energy equally?

RESPONDENT: No, I don't think they're able to access it equally. I mean, like, within the household XXXX enabled the access, but for regular refilling of it, the household funds have to prioritize this, right? And in which, of course, men, women, everybody has a role, whoever, whoever is deciding that where the money will go, so that decides whether they refill regularly or not. Right. So, I don't see that being prioritized all the time. And I also occasionally meet women who say that *(hindi) we both eat food…*right, both of us eat food, right? So, it's not just my, it's not just only I'm having, enjoying the benefits of gas connection, right? So, I see both kinds of things, but I wouldn't say that it's equitable. Again, at the community level also, if you mean energy, at the community level, there, again, women use it much lesser, right. And the more household bound they are, the less they are going out and experiencing the benefits of whatever public amenities are there, which are using energy or not using energy. I mean, the way I see it, the lesser time they are putting in the household related stuff, the freer they are to do other things. That I see in the lives of many XXXX customers, they've sort of freed themselves. Now they have localized this work, no? It used to fill a major part of their day. Now they have sort of shortened it. I've met younger girls, I mean, often it's the younger girls who are doing the cooking. Now, the burden has gone if the, if the girl is like 14,15. And she might be doing the cooking and not the mother,

INTERVIEWER: Right? Because it's easier, more comfortable to do it today.

RESPONDENT: That's also there, no but even if there was fuel wood, often the responsibility is transferred to the adolescent girls. In rural pockets, I mean, it's the adolescent girl who will be doing the cooking and not the mother, the mother might be working in the farm or somewhere else.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Right. So, if the girl is also studying-

RESPONDENT: So, if the girl is also- yeah, so if the girl is also studying, then obviously it conflicts with how much time she's able to put for the studies. Lot of younger girls appreciate LPG in that sense.

INTERVIEWER: Right, right. I mean, I always think of this, you know, the cooking aspect. Because in our lives, like you and I, also, we have families, and we do end up cooking for our families. But it takes a very little part of our day, because we have so many mechanized helps. And you know, even when we are doing the cooking, there are appliances, and there are- there is gas stove, and things which we take for granted. Whereas it kind of takes up the whole day for some other people, right? So..

RESPONDENT: So many women have told me this thing that we had to get up at 3 am in the morning, just to get the chullah started and the whole thing ready for kids to leave school at 7am in the morning, if the kid has to leave that early, they have to start cooking at three or four. So, they're able to sleep for much later now. So, this, this, this I mean, there's so many ways in which women's life is impacted by having more convenience in cooking.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right. So other than, I mean, cooking is one of course that women use energy in large quantums within the household. What other tasks within the home do you see that men do which consume energy and women do which consume energy?

RESPONDENT: Within the household?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

RESPONDENT: Okay. I mean, if they're- it's an agri, if it's an agri family, then there are all those things of post-harvest, lot of stuff is done right. In the eastern India belt, there is this tradition of having parboiled rice. So that boiling, all of that is mostly done on fuel wood. And the- all those activities are mostly done by women. So, and of course, some of the threshing and some of those activities are motor driven also, there is electricity. So, I do see many of those things requiring energy. And that depends on the kind of mechanization that has happened in agriculture in that area.

INTERVIEWER: And how are these tasks gender separated? Are they gender separated?

RESPONDENT: They are gender separated, yes, yeah, they are gender separated. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: These are mostly done by women.

RESPONDENT: So, I mean, most of the stuff they are gender separated, yes, yeah, they are gender separated. Yeah. these are mostly done by women. That goes to the market and all that the man will be far more involved in it. And it's for the household. Something that you're keeping for your food security through the years, then it's the woman who would be doing it. When it's cleaning and all of that work, it's often the woman who is doing it.

INTERVIEWER: And within the household, where else do you see energy getting consumed? Just from your experience, observation. In the communities, you've worked in?

RESPONDENT: In the communities, there is some energy spent on entertainment needs, right? Speakers also, occasionally DJs and all that people use it in their community functions or weddings, this that. So, I think a lot of young… youth also drives that. More so, like not so much men and women, but even youth drive that consumption. Right. So other than what else? Yeah, other than agri- related stuff. And if they are running, there are some people who run these spices making, powder making you know, they've turned-, some people run small machines, some machines or do some snack business at the household level.

INTERVIEWER: Again, men or women?

RESPONDENT: I've seen both doing them. You know, I've seen both of them do that. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, right, right. So, you were actually talking about how the younger women or younger people are consuming. are more energy savvy and they're using? So, do you actually see this differential also play out in terms of energy access or energy utility between women in the age differential?

RESPONDENT: Definitely. So, it's the younger women who have driven the adoption of LPG more than it's the older woman, right? Of course, older women also benefit but is the younger daughter in law you have a new daughter in law coming into your household in Bihar, particularly many villages tell this that now that we have a daughter in law coming in, we have to have a gas connection. Not going to cook on the fuelwood chullah, you know, so or it's the younger girl now. And there is I mean, there is also linkage with the beauty and cleanliness, you know, so your face is not going to be turned black and your hands are not going to be black and when you're washing the utensils, your nails and hands and are not going to be dirtied and roughened. And because when you cook on gas, it's easier to even clean the utensils because there isn't that much carbon soot and all that on your utensils, so a lot of that is driven by younger, younger women. And people get this also right, right.. they say this also *(hindi) daughter in law or daughter…*. So, I'll tell you a line in Hindi you know, somebody told this to me in Bihar. *(hindi)daughter in law and daughter became beautiful… became high standard..* Their standard is gone up… so, it's also an aspirational product. I mean, pretty aspirational. *(hindi) never thought that gas will come all the way to our home…* you know… So they really value it like that. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and is it also like my neighbour has gotten it, so I should get it?

RESPONDENT: Yes, of course. Totally. Totally. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Any other differential access, you see diversity in terms of, of course, income groups, most probably, but also in terms of any community or caste or anything you see?

RESPONDENT: So interestingly, what I see that LPG adoption is higher for people who don't have land, are laborers, are on cash income. So, if you work as a labourer, either in agriculture or in an urban construction labour or something, but you don't have your own farmland, so you have cash income, but you don't have access to biomass. More often than not, when you, when you are not landed, you are likely to be lower caste. I mean, I'm not saying all the time you will be- they this group adopts fastest.

INTERVIEWER: Because they don't have the fallback.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, they don't have that, and they needed it, they have small piece of land, the house will be small, they don't have that kind of space to keep all the fuel wood that you need to keep, you know, you need space for keeping the fuelwood also right, or cow dung cakes, whatever, you need quite a lot of space for that. So, they, they are the quickest. It's the farm households who have cattle, therefore cow dung at home and some farm residue at home, they never fully adopt, you know, because they, there is always something that they're generating within the household that they want to make use of. Either the dung-

INTERVIEWER: It’s there, it’s there for free. So-

RESPONDENT: It’s there for free, that kind of a feeling is there. So, and we don't have too many alternative uses of the biomass and the residue as yet. They're not that easy and convenient. If they were there, then probably they'll divert them there and then use gas, you know, and of course, some of, some of it is also taste and cuisine and culture related things.. like *Bajra Rotla*, you know, you don't want to- you want to eat it from the fuel wood stuff.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, really? Okay.

RESPONDENT: Some of the items, particularly the coarse cereal, they want to eat it from, they're communities that prefer eating it from the fuelwood stuff, because it just tastes different. Some of that is also there.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, right. So, other than XXXX, which is the energy infrastructure you've worked with?

RESPONDENT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you worked with any other energy infrastructure?

RESPONDENT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Have you worked with any other infrastructure as a part of a delivery process or whatever?

RESPONDENT: So, I've been part of the earthquake rehabilitation where a lot of infrastructure was there. A lot of housing reconstruction, a lot of community infrastructure. And I will tell you an interesting thing. I mean, this- the Kutch earthquake just completed 20 years. So we were, we were having a get together on that, I mean, commemorate that event. So, in the, in the Gujarat, earthquake reconstruction, also, all the newly built houses had to be in the joint name of woman and man. So, we were just making that connection. That's how, you know, now that we've continued in Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana also, the name is joint name, and then in XXXX again, the name is, it's in the woman's name. So that's, that's the, that is the only infrastructure I think I've done. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so when you see new infrastructure, I mean, and it doesn't have to be just XXXX. It could be just your overview and observation, when you see new infrastructure and technologies that are being provided, what in your view are the differences between men and women in terms of who benefits out of it?

RESPONDENT: Well, ah, I mean, the newer technology, I think it's the young people who adapt to it faster, right? And... who benefits- some of them - some of the emerging technology is also sort of neutral in a sense if you do have the time to explore it and whatever, you can also be, I mean, as a woman also you can benefit as much as you- you would like. But I think I will just go back to that question of between man and women, how much of the household stuff who is doing, and how much time does one have for doing these extra stuff? Y’know. So, I think in that women are a little behind.

INTERVIEWER: I mean, basically, it was also what you were talking about, right? That, you know, men and women have differential energy needs, probably because of the gendered nature of our society.

RESPONDENT: Roles and all that, right.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so, as such, unless programs or infrastructure- if they're designed gender blind, they would-

RESPONDENT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: - probably be designed for what is perceived as masculine - general needs, but they are actually masculine needs, right?

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes, yes. Quite possible, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Same thing that we were discussing with the West Bengal electricity board person. And so, I was asking about, you know, like electricity. What are the first priority? Where does the - if you're electrifying a village, a community centre, a community amenity, what is the first priority? So, the first priority became the community halls, the panchayat office, etc. The second priority was agriculture. And when I asked what about pumping of water, so that was immediately thought of as oh, but that is not a productive thing.

RESPONDENT: Look at that… (laughs). Yeah, I get that.

INTERVIEWER: So, I had to get down to him that, you know, women are spending hours doing this job, if you free them up, they will be economically productive, which they don't have the time to. So, a lot of the times the policies themselves probably the way we think they are neutral, but they are actually blind, really right? So that's what I was-

RESPONDENT: I mean, it's just the more men are thinking about it, I mean, at the helm of affairs, or whoever's running that show, just that more men minds are there, right? Like this water thing is like, pretty stark? Yes. And how if you- if you had to put a woman there, she would immediately think of water, right?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, exactly. Because it takes up half a day. So, it's a- it's a huge thing for her. So that was actually my next question, really, that who do you think makes the decisions in terms of at the community level as well as at policy level as well as at household levels? Who, who do you think are the main people taking the decisions?

RESPONDENT: Like between man and women? (laughs) Yeah. I, I see, you know, I mean, I could give a stereotypical answer, but I do see women having a lot of influence, you know, okay. I see them, beginning to… Yes, and see them beginning to talk. And the whole movement of self-help groups, has really helped women in being able to talk. They know how to conduct meetings, and when they conduct meetings, they are so much more democratic.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, sure.

RESPONDENT: You know, if you've ever seen a self- yeah. So, and they let everyone talk, you know, so women have experienced, women have sort of begun to get a hang of-

INTERVIEWER: This is something I have also-

RESPONDENT: -how to participate in the social and political space.

INTERVIEWER: This is something I have also experienced, because we work a lot with Kudumbashree. And I find that the women's meetings are so much more democratic, because everybody is allowed to speak, everybody is allowed to participate. And there might be arguments and disagreements, but everybody's heard, you know?

RESPONDENT: Correct. Correct. Like Kudumbashree is a perfect example. Right? I mean, the way in any proper self-help group meeting, everybody will say their name. They'll sit in a circle. And, you know, often when you're meeting men, it may not be - only one or two guys may speak. So, I think this whole thing of SHG movement has really helped women in being articulate in learning how to participate in thinking and meetings. And of course, the Panchayat level reservation for women leaders., That has also helped, so and more often than not, particularly in the poorer belt, I would say UP, Bihar and many of these belts, men are migrating for work. So, it's the woman who's taking many decisions. Because she is running the household now. The man is not there for eight to nine months. She is deciding how to vote, where to vote, she's deciding how to access government benefits. And a lot of government benefits are now targeting women in some way or the other. And they are emerging as a constituency of voters that many people want to court. So, I think women may not have a very overt kind of an influence, but they are there is like from the ground below, like a subterranean influence is definitely rising.

INTERVIEWER: Right. That's very interesting. I mean, I was also looking at it like from the household level now. So, if you have - for example, if you have 1000 rupees of additional income, what do you see that 1000 rupees getting used for?

RESPONDENT: So, in the poorer households I see them putting the money first for the tuition of the kids.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay.

RESPONDENT: There that I see them this immediately comes up. They just want to put - put it for private tuitions for the kids. Okay, so they are spending money on education. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And that’s a joint decision?

RESPONDENT: And- yeah. Another observation, I will tell you from Bihar, so I did a, I did a study on the impact assessment of prohibition. That was 2016. Yes. So, this was done after six months of prohibition. Okay. And then women started telling where the money was going, now that they were saving that 50 rupees or 100 rupees. So, what they said was, and they was like, really poor communities. They said, now, we eat colourful vegetables. Like earlier, they were eating only rice, and salt. So, the first, first, the firstest money went for food, you know, I'm making it clear- getting more vegetables? Or getting non veg, once in a while, yeah. So, first thing went to this, then it went to tuitions, then it went to clothes or slippers, you know, things like that. So, really the needs of the kids after the food it's, basically, the kids whose needs were getting prioritized, yeah,

INTERVIEWER: Right, right. So, but what about the bigger scale, say, the community or panchayat level? Or even as we go up the scales? Who do you think are making do you- do you see men and women participate equally in decision making? In the structures you're working?

RESPONDENT: I wouldn't say it's equal. Yeah, I wouldn't say of course, it's, it's not equal. It's, it's encouraging is what I would say that I mean, more women are coming in-

INTERVIEWER: Are coming up.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, correct, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, there was quite a few responses, which other participants gave where they were saying that it's yes, it is male dominated the decision-making processes, but it is also because there are not enough women, do you agree with that?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, I mean, the higher we go, there one finds like fewer women, you know, that's, that's there. There are fewer women, I mean, in meetings and whatever, the higher you go, at the lower levels, supposing you're doing a community meeting, you will find more women.

INTERVIEWER: Right. But if you have a joint community meeting of men and women, do the women participate equally in that do they voice their opinions in equal terms?

RESPONDENT: Now what I've seen on the ground is now, I mean, unless you have like the equal numbers of men and women then obviously men will speak more, you know, they may not speak up if there is some older relatives of their - older male relatives sitting there then they may not speak up right? But now it is if you're doing only an all women meeting, you're calling it an all women meeting like our LPG Panchayats are all women meeting, okay. But men do come. But they get it that it's a women's meeting, so they are on the fringes, right? Women are in the centre and they are on the fringes and then there women speak. So, if you call it a mixed meeting, then men, men may assume it is their meeting. And then particularly women are deferential to some of the older relatives, male relatives who are there, then they don't want to speak up in front of them. But if you call an all women meeting, men will also come, young boys and kids will also come, but they will remain at the fringe. And ….

INTERVIEWER: So, the - so platforms then have to be targeting the women?

RESPONDENT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: But in mixed platforms-

RESPONDENT:

Yeah. You have to if you want the woman to speak up, you have to target the woman. And so that- it, it becomes clear that it's a woman's meeting... I think you- I've lost you.

INTERVIEWER: So sorry, can you hear me?... Hallo?

RESPONDENT: I can hear you. Hi, XXXX.

INTERVIEWER: Hi, hi, hi.

RESPONDENT: Just give me one minute. One minute.

INTERVIEWER: No problem. No problem.

RESPONDENT: Okay, yes.

INTERVIEWER: So sorry about that. My- for some reason my phone decided to restart in the middle of everything.

RESPONDENT: That’s okay, that’s okay.

Part 3

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Right. So, coming back to the questions. This is - to what extent does I mean, you answer how you want to answer this question… To what extent does gender equity factor in your work on energy access in terms of-

RESPONDENT: I think to a very large extent.

INTERVIEWER: Could you elaborate? I would rather ask you to elaborate in terms of you know, priorities and internal processes-

RESPONDENT: So, okay I’ll- So it's, it's a large extent, because very clearly the Ministry, the Minister, and all the officials, which are working on XXXX program, they identify the woman as the key beneficiary of this work. Right, so we look at her reactions, her responses, her, I mean, we just look at her, she's the, we look at her as the customer. So, in fact, once in a while, you know, this comes up there, why don't we target men? Because men influence the decision for buying refills. So, can you hear me?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, I can hear you.

RESPONDENT: Your video seems to be still. Yeah. So once in a while it comes up that why don't we target men? I mean, like, why don't we invite men in our meetings? And this that, so we do that occasionally. But very clearly, we look at women as the, as the target - targeted beneficiary, in our conversations, in our public meetings, in everything we - we'll, in our advertisements on XXXX, everything has been around women. In fact, even in our communication, people have said that why are we doing it only women? Why shouldn't we say that the family is benefiting? So, which is also true, like you were saying in the beginning, right, that it's not just the woman who's benefiting, right, if you have quicker cooking and easier and more convenient cooking… So, I see that totally informing the work that I currently do.

INTERVIEWER: But to expand the definition of gender as we were talking about it before?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I- correct. Please do.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. I think I want to keep my video off. Because it just keeps on…

RESPONDENT: Yeah, sure.

INTERVIEWER: Like, in terms of like, we, it's, it's great when it is looking as women as the definition of gender, but you were talking about how far- like how has your work reached out for the other genders? So, to say?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, so I would make a request to you XXXX. That, can you tell us how should we do it? Okay. And we've missed out that sector… I mean, we've missed that out. I mean, then we'll make an effort to include them in this work…

INTERVIEWER: Right, we can have a discussion, post this interview.

RESPONDENT: Sure, sure, you can give me a short note, if, if it's okay for you which I can … as to, because I can now clearly see, right, that they may not be you know, we have to create some space for them right, to benefit from the scheme. So, I think it never sort of came up or brought up. So, if you give me a note or something on it, I will be able to take this further.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, sure. Sure. I'll do that. And so, within the women's paradigm of gender equity, how effective do you feel your access strategies have been? Have they really worked with reaching out to the remotest woman?

RESPONDENT: I think so they have been very effective. I think the access strategy has been very effective, in fact, that sometimes people say that why wasn't this thought of before, you know, just giving out LPG connections and making the initial capital cost zero. You know, why wasn't this thought of before? So, I think they've been very effective. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Any challenges?

RESPONDENT: So, the challenges I've been saying Is this - I see two challenges. One is, one is that most of the women that that are XXXX customers and otherwise, also I see them, they are from lower income groups. Now, often there aren't enough opportunities for work, they would like to work and make some additional income. But often the opportunities are limited. So, if they have those opportunities, they would make the money and happily buy their own refills. Yeah. So that's, one is to have those opportunities. I mean, we need to work for those opportunities where women can sometimes even want, they want to work flexibly, like half an hour, a half- a half the day or work nearby. And they don't want to relocate to some new place and then work, right, live within their villages or Gram Panchayats maybe travel out four, five kilometres, but around their villages and Gram Panchayats women want opportunities for working maybe sometimes working for half a day. Some are okay to work full day, and not necessarily just physical labour work, no?

RESPONDENT: Little better than that, right? Something in which they can make 4 to 5 to 6000, depending on how much they're working. So that's one, second is just the price of LPG, that's a challenge. Because half of it is imported. So, it is linked to the oil prices and all the uncertainties around it. That's, that's a challenge. Third is the challenge of our own service level. I mean, how frequently we are able to -how easily and frequently we are able to provide refills, how easy it is for a woman to book and get it, you know, like that. So, it's not so often that I meet women who say they do- they book their cylinders. It's often the man though, so because often the phone might be man's or they just think it's complicated, you know? So, it is often the man who does the booking or the young boy in the family or somebody. So, our level of service, how our delivery, our supply chain, you know, so there are some challenges there. That we have to - we have to still work on. Yeah. So, what I would say that in terms of you know, there is this thing that many of us think about it that there should be a renewable source of energy, even for cooking like solar, or even biomass based. So, because LPG end of the day is cleaner, but it's not like very green. Right? So yeah. So, we should have greener sources of energy. There, I think. I mean, this is my personal thought that it's the poor woman who also need convenience. You know, it's sometimes our all these other sources are not that convenient, you know? So why not have the richer people move to the greener sources, you know, and let the poor have some convenience, for some time, at least, like the first- for the next 20 years or so. And till then, when our models for bio gas and other stuff, they, if they've stabilized, and they're simpler, and they're easier and convenient, then people can switch. But I do see most of the rural LPG consumers sticking to LPG for next 20, 30 years. You know, that's, that's what I see.

INTERVIEWER: And if the richer people start using all these more complicated things, maybe they'll be more R&D and they will actually become more convenient.

RESPONDENT: Yes. Correct. I think it's the richer people who need to take lead.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, so I wanted to ask-

RESPONDENT: Because we also have backups. Yeah, yes XXXX?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, no go ahead. Go ahead.

RESPONDENT: No, no, that's, that's all I was saying that I think I was - I was saying the burden of being green also, let's not put it on them, like an additional thing..

INTERVIEWER: Right, so what I wanted to ask you is like you were talking about the employment opportunity, like lack of employment opportunity for the women right? Make- to just have that disposable income which they can spend on buying the refill, within your work structure, are there any thoughts about how you can help achieve something like that?

RESPONDENT: So, okay, so there are two things. One is, we have this program called XXXX XXXX- the program is basically, we have these grassroot educators, women, they facilitate in refilling. And- they facilitate in refilling, and they get a commission for that. Now, if they, they sort of persuade a dormant or an intermittent user of LPG to buy a refill, then they get a commission from the distributor. Okay. So, we are building on that program, and we want to expand that program. And what has worked there for us is, that this is like a portfolio model, like just LPG doesn't generate enough income for them. But when we have two, three items together, then they are able to make anywhere between 6 to 8000. You know I'll send a video I have, we've done this program in Odisha quite systematically, and we want to take this to other parts of India now, which we think will do two things. One is of course, it will promote LPG adoption. And secondly, it will generate income for right now we're looking at about 10,000 women. Okay, that's one thing. Second is. Second is the ministry is doing many things on the biomass based energy. So, so some of, some of them are large scale plants, like really big plants that, that produce what is called 2G Ethanol, that is then mixed with petrol and diesel. But there are some smaller, smaller models also. Okay. So, we see a role, we don't have a working model as yet. But we see a role for women in aggregation of all this bio, bio residues and crop residues and various kinds of biomass that our rural economies produce. So that's another space in which we see their role. So, they're like, so they will be in the space of energy. So, but we don't have as yet a working model, yeah. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Now, shifting to your policy experiences. Outside your specific work right now with, with XXXX, do you see energy access policies in your region, or even at the national level- do you see them as gender sensitive?

RESPONDENT: Well, I can't make a very, what should I say? It's not a studied response. But-

INTERVIEWER: No, that's fine. That's okay.

RESPONDENT: Yeah, yeah. So, but I, as I, I in general, I'm, what I'm saying is that I see women becoming a bigger voice in the political space. And if women get it, that they need energy, they can definitely sort of influence policy. If they don't get it... If you, if you look at it, I mean, there are places, there are women I still see around Uttarakhand and UP, women carrying head loads of fuelwood. So, they have the gas connection at home, but they are the ones who are carrying those head loads, right, they're going to the forest and cutting the- so they have- they haven't prioritized their own need also, in some ways, because maybe the family doesn't have enough money. You know, that's the reason they're doing it. Or if they have the money, they haven't prioritized their own convenience, over other expenses in the family. So, I do see, I do see there's a little bit more prosperity that's needed. At the village level. Where women do-

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, but more at a policy level how do you think- so how do you think the policy level, and doesn't have to be just for the LPG connection- for other energy access policies also, how do you think they should be a little more gender sensitive? Which-

RESPONDENT: I think okay, so one big thing I would say is that you have to pay for the electricity, you have to pay for LPG, your pay for often now for water and other things also. And in a household budget, I think women are the ones who, who feel the pinch for it, you know? So, we've got to, for women to really enjoy the energy, we've got to keep it affordable. That's, that's what I think. Because it's the poorer women who are very frugal, and they wouldn't want to spend too much money consuming energy or other things. So, none of that is free. Right. So, yeah, I mean, there are, there are now electricity meters in even the poor households, right? So, it pinches them. And I think it pinches women more than it pinches men. So, whoever is handling the budget, that's the only thing that I'm able to think of.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so do you see these as policy gaps?

RESPONDENT: Not really, I don't think I've applied myself to it. I've not - now that you tell me, I will maybe think about it. But I haven't really thought of it in that depth. But yes, as a rural, rural consumer of energy, I do see women being far more sensitive to the price changes, you know, than I see men, you know. So, I do see that.

INTERVIEWER: Right. So, also, I mean, I don't know whether what you're talking about is already that, but what related social policies do you have, do you feel will have an impact on energy equity?

RESPONDENT: What are the other social policies?

INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

RESPONDENT: Okay, so I would say the employment, livelihoods they have an immediate impact on energy. Because end of the day, we are all buying energy. Right. So, household income, anything that impacts the household income will impact the energy, energy consumption, energy usage.

INTERVIEWER: So, policies which enable women to bring in the very essential second income into the family is an immediate thing right?

RESPONDENT: Yeah. Yeah, I totally see that, yes. Yeah. And their skilling, their education, all that is also connected with that.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Like when you say about, you know, how, even if the LPG connection is in the woman's name, but it's the man who's always placing the order and all that, that also shows a certain I don't know, lack of what I don't know what to call it, some kind of a lack of empowerment is there right at that point?

RESPONDENT: Yes. Yes. Yeah. Because it’s-

INTERVIEWER: Enablement, some kind of a lack of enablement.

RESPONDENT: Correct. Correct. There is some hesitation, she's not taking it on. She's experienced - you talk to any, anyone who's cooking on gas. They immediately say that it's very convenient. We can finish cooking quickly, they want to use it. You know, it's, it's only those who don't do daily cooking, they are the ones who might say- in women answering. Sometimes the older woman or the mother in law, or somebody who's no longer doing the full responsibility of cooking, they might have some concerns about that it causes gastric or that food doesn't taste all that well. But anybody who's doing daily cooking, totally appreciates the gas connection. Okay. Now, if somebody appreciates so much, they should be able to put the money, right, the household money. Yeah. So, but they are a little hesitant. Right. Some of them save up money for it, and some try to do something. But they don't see what should I say in the priority list, they may not give it the first priority, they would rather put it for the kids tuition. Because cash is, of course, I mean cash is cash, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: So, if we imagine for a moment that there is no policy or financial constraint for your work, what would be your way of achieving gender equity in energy access?

RESPONDENT: Okay (laughs). Is this our last question?

INTERVIEWER: Almost towards the end, but yeah, we are moving towards the end….

RESPONDENT: All right. So okay, so if there isn't a budget constraint, I think I'll begin with cooking, which I understand the most. Okay. So, in cooking, what I would do is that I would have six cylinders, the 14.2 kg cylinders that we have, I would have six cylinders, for a year, earmarked for a family for half the price. Okay. So, whatever they're paying right now, right now, it is about 750 rupees for a cylinder. So about 350 to 400 is what they should effectively pay. And it's assured that six cylinders for a family of four or five in a year, they're going to get at this price - 350 rupees or 400. So that's the first thing I will do for XXXX customers and a few more rural customers, not for urban customers, etc. And not for those who have been using LPG for like 30, 40 years and it really makes no difference to their budget- whether they're spending 700, or they're spending 500, you know, that way. So, it's the newer consumers in the rural belt and all of the XXXX customers for them, I would roll this out that- let them get six refills at half the price, not for free. But at half the price, you know, that's the first thing I will do. For cooking energy. For the other key source of energy that I see is energy - is electricity and to some extent solar energy or solar elec- solar based energy appliances also. So, in the field of agri, etc, there is lot of talk of solar drying. Of course, solar water pumping is anyway there, all that I do see, I mean, coming up, and I see a lot of programs are there. I think, if somebody has already done it, I don't know. But let's look at the whole energy scene from the perspective of how can it lead to more employment opportunities for women, and then do whatever is the gap. You know, so I see having more opportunities for work and income generation for women particularly as the key thing. Because it really- it will free them up, you know, to do whatever they want to do. I'll give you an example of this one lady in Odisha, XXXXnow she.. they didn't have LPG connection. Now she got the connection in XXXX. And she had- she was very, I mean, they lived in a joint family. She, after getting XXXX, the kind of changes that happened in her family, in her work was, first is that she was able to put in more time for her vegetable farming. And vegetable farming is remunerative. And if you do it well, you, you make a lot of cash income. So that's one thing she did. The- there were- there used to be a lot of clashes within her family about food. So, they reduced. And thirdly, she not only started making more income, she also became a ward member in her Panchayat. So, so she just, I mean, I'm just saying the mind is freed up to do other things. Whether it's making income or contributing to the politics or the social stuff in your, in your immediate community, or at larger scale. So that's the potential I see in, in access to energy for women, they can express themselves, many of them value just having more leisure time. And that's also very important. Otherwise, the women are forever, you know, into some or the other activity. So, leisure is equally important- so for them to experience some peace of mind and some calm and some rest. Not just running from this work to that work.

INTERVIEWER: Sit down for a bit.

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes. Yeah. Just sit down for a bit. Yes. Yeah. So that's- that's where I would put my money. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: So, six cylinders at -per year at

RESPONDENT: Half the price. 350 rupees.

INTERVIEWER: At half the price. Yeah. So, what might you in your current position be able to do in achieving this?

RESPONDENT: (laughs) It looks like this year, I may not be able to do anything on this. On the first one. It just happens. It's, I mean, it's the corona year.

INTERVIEWER: I know.

RESPONDENT: Yeah.

Part 4

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Just a couple of questions now on the finances, and then we are kind of done. In terms of finance processes, for energy access? Do you see finance processes being gender aware or gender sensitive?

RESPONDENT: Okay. Ah, maybe no.

INTERVIEWER: Banking and all…

RESPONDENT: I can say no but then you would ask me why. (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: (laughs) Is that why you're not saying no to me?

RESPONDENT: (laughs) Yeah, no, I, again, I, it's not a studied response, you know, I never thought of it..

INTERVIEWER: That’s fine. That’s fine. I would like you to share your experiences.

RESPONDENT: So, most of the finance- Correct. Yeah. So, most of the finance processes are, I would say, what to say, not gender friendly, they are also very, they're difficult to understand for common people. And more than that, they, the processes seem to forget the objective of that exercise, you know, why are we putting that money? So, where the money is going? And what is the benefit that we intend to achieve out of that? So, I don't think the finance processes are I mean, first of all, they're not transparent. We don't get them. We don't understand that. So, off the cuff, I can't say how much money is going in our general budget for energy. As much as I am pretty exposed to Parliament and budget processes, and yeah, I can't say that. So, I'm, my sense is that it's not, it's not equitable, either gender or otherwise, also, like in general. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Yeah. Right. And especially when you go down the ladder of say literacy, and all of these things also-

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes.

INTERVIEWER: -it can become this. So, one of the things that has cropped up many times in our discussion is how, you know, all kinds of loans, loan mechanisms and funding mechanisms kind of ask for collateral. And that's especially difficult for women because women don't own assets. So that's always been a kind of a burden that women have. Further, like, if you look at also renewable energy access, finance. Do you think there is gender equity? Or do you, what do you think why can't renewable energy access finance be gender sensitive? For women to buy their own fund and buy their own power source to run a micro enterprise from their home or whatever they want to do?

RESPONDENT: So, I don't know - do is, is there a program that's targeted at women in the renewable energy space?

INTERVIEWER: Not as far as I know, I'm asking you if you know anything?

RESPONDENT: I don't know. I mean, I was, I was aware of this. I did a study of the solar pumping, solar water pump. But that was targeted at - I think only men benefited from it because it was for farmers.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, that was for agriculture- for more agriculture based. Whereas there’s so much of-

RESPONDENT: Yeah, it was used for agriculture, right.

INTERVIEWER: Because there's so much of pumping of water that women end up having to do, right. And the same thing could be just modified for household activities, and it changes a woman's life. But-

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes, yes. No, this was for farming. Yeah. These were irrigation pumps. Yeah. But I don't - no, I haven't. I haven't heard of it. No.

INTERVIEWER: I know of NGOs which are working on, you know, water pumps for household level for women, but that's more at the-

RESPONDENT: Correct, yeah.

INTERVIEWER: -nongovernmental side of things…

RESPONDENT: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Right, right. Because that's the other thing that we are seeing that, you know, it's not just about energy access, it's also about the funds for energy access, which is also not accessible to women, you know?

RESPONDENT: Yeah, of course. Yeah.

Part 5 (Closing)

INTERVIEWER: For many reasons. So, is there anything else you think we have not discussed on this topic? Let me try putting on my video if my-

RESPONDENT: (laughs)

INTERVIEWER: What’s up with my devices- fully charged but still.

RESPONDENT: I think, I think we have covered it all. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. And would you be available for any follow up questions should they arise?

RESPONDENT: Sure, sure, yeah, let me know. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: And do let me know if you think there are other people I should be talking to about this topic?

RESPONDENT: So, talking to bo-, you're talking to professionals, right?

INTERVIEWER: We're talking to professionals involved with the energy sector, mainly electricity and cooking fuel.

RESPONDENT: So, would you be talking -have you spoken to anybody in, in the Indian Oil or Bharat Petroleum or this one?

INTERVIEWER: No, not yet. No, not yet. I would be very keen to speak with somebody. If you know?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I can- I'll connect you to one person XXXX. Okay. He's been involved with XXXX since the beginning. He's the XXXX. Okay. So, I can now, forward a request. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: That would be great. That would be perfect. And so, thank you so much for this.

RESPONDENT: Welcome.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, and I'll just switch off the recording.

RESPONDENT: Sure.

INTERVIEWER: And maybe then we can also discuss?