**Transcript 21**

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| **Interviewer name** | **XXXX** |
| **Sub-contractor organisation** | **ARU** |
| **Interview date** | **04 February 2021** |
| **Duration of interview audio recording** | **101 mins 27 secs** |
| **Face-to-face or virtual interview** | **Virtual** |
| **Interview participant** | |
| * **Code** | **P21** |
| * **Participant name** | **XXXX** |
| * **Organisation name** | **XXXX** |
| * **Gender** | **Female** |
| * **Stakeholder category** | **Engineers and others responsible for putting those vision-led plans into action** |
| * **Country** | **Pakistan** |

INTERVIEWER: XXXX , thank you so much for making time and participating in our study. Before we begin, I want to go through a brief checklist. First, you have seen the consent form.

RESPONDENT: Yes

INTERVIEWER: And you will sign it soon and return it to us.

RESPONDENT: I will send it immediately after this interview.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, through 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. Can we record the interview for our documentation purposes?

RESPONDENT: Yes

INTERVIEWER: Okay, 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 this study. Roughly, it will take us one hour depending on how short or long your answers are. So let’s begin.

**Part 1:**

INTERVIEWER: The first part is basically the introduction. Can you start by briefly telling me a bit about your current role, your position and the organization that you work for?

RESPONDENT: So my role is such that currently I am working for XXXX , and another UK based company, XXXXas a lead. There are XXXX

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us a little bit about your background, your educational background, your professional background and how did you get into this line of work?

RESPONDENT: My education, I can’t say I have completed by education. When I had just completed XXXX, so I started working with an NGO, XXXX. Maybe you know them, they are a microfinance organization. I started my career with that NGO, and because they are a foundation that goes in these kind of areas that do not have access to banks. People need loans to improve their business or make their lifestyle slightly better, so they go to NGOs like this and fulfill their needs. So I started with them and then I felt that I need to pursue my education. During this time my father passed away so I had become a little disturbed. So I quit my job and completed my graduation. After graduation, I did an internship with another microfinance company, Jinnah welfare society. After 1 month of internship, I applied for a job to XXXX.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay, you mentioned about your education, so did you finally pursue your education afterwards?

RESPONDENT: No, I wasn’t able to. XXXX

INTERVIEWER: nice. Okay, when did you come to XXXX and tell us a little bit about the organization, it’s background and how did it start working?

RESPONDENT: I started XXXX in XXXX… so my XXXXand his friend XXXX, who is my current boss. They both had this idea that cutting wood for fuel fire should be ceased in Pakistan as day by day forests were being cut and our environment is being affected significantly. Secondly, the smoke how people were doing it.. they did a research in which they introduced a solar cook stove in Pakistan.. it was a concave cook stove and another was an evacuated tube in which you could bake food. Normally, you don’t cook like this in our homes, so we tested this in XXXX. We tried to apply it and do a demo that what feedback we get on it. So when we went there, we got a lot of feedback on it, which was quite negative. The first point was that you need to stand in the sun to cook on it, and then you had to wear special glasses to use that stove. So in rural areas you know the culture is not like that and people were making fun that what are you wearing and cooking food. *Chapati* (flat bread) is not being made right. In other countries, food is normally liquid like soup or noodles, so they cook easily at 50 degrees Celsius. So if you have to make *Chapati* you need temperature at 450 or 550 Celsius… then only you can make good food, the kind that is cooked in our homes normally. Then you could only cook food as long as there was sun, if it became cloudy, or at night you can’t cook.

Then looking at all these disadvantages of the product, we started studying what they were using at the moment and how that could be modified. So when we saw a u-shaped stove and the fire around it and then the smoke, so looking at all these things, we changed the style of our product. So instead of importing the solar cook stove, we should design a product within our country that could replace the existing stoves, and address the health and environment issues. Then we designed a product with our engineers help and then took it back to test in XXXX, and got people’s feedback. Then we kept getting feedback and more feedback, so we designed 25 or 26 models, after which we got the current design, in which we do not need any more modification. Then we launched the product, and then from XXXX to XXXX, we started marketing the product. Then we went into XXXX, now we are dealing them at home. We have finished our groundwork before Corona.

So this is our small journey, in which we faced many challenges in the beginning but we are now almost ready to take this further, to a higher level.

INTERVIEWER: Right, very nice. So you have mentioned cook stoves, so does XXXX focus only on cook stoves technology or something else as well?

RESPONDENT: No, No, I also told you about the solar light. We have a collaboration with XXXXso that solar light is also a part of our project. But our main focus remains cookstove which includes cooking and heating both. People want a separate thing in Punjab, a separate thing in Kashmir, a separate thing in Gilgit Baltistan, a separate thing in XXXX… so we look at those designs and then bring variety in that accordingly, so that the design is provided as per the regional requirement.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you told us you have been working in energy issues since almost 14 years, but when was XXXX established?

RESPONDENT: XXXX started its activities in 2015, they did research work and testing. I joined them in 2017. You know if you have to do any work in our country, especially in the off-grid areas, because you only get to see the energy crisis in those areas. So over there it is very important for you to have females included in your team. In these areas only a female can interact with another female and a male can only interact with a male. This is a separate thing that our women who are working on the field, can talk with the males but their females will not talk to our males. So this is a separate issue when you are working on-ground.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Okay, so you said that XXXX has its own engineers, and they do their own technology development, you do campaigning like you spoke about information awareness and then you are developing and selling this technology as well or selling it to the communities? Right, you are involved in all these things and processes.

Ok, so in your work with XXXX , are there any national or provincial level policies that influence you, or you have to work according them for technology development or maybe deployment?

RESPONDENT: No, I don’t think so. We have our own internal policies that we have to work in specific areas, we have decided that before hand and we have developed our sales channel as well. We have a criteria defined for women entrepreneurs as well as our male retailer, so we identify people based on that and then work accordingly.

INTERVIEWER: any national policy, or energy policies that influence your work?

RESPONDENT: No, I don’t have any idea about this.

**Part 2:**

INTERVIEWER: in your opinion, what does equitable energy access mean, and what would it look like in practice?

RESPONDENT: See, wherever we talk about equality in energy, so whatever I have, I think every woman should have, whether she is sitting in the mountains and fields of DI Khan or in the village of XXXX, where they don’t have access to basic amenities, meaning electricity, water, gas are not available. So if these things are not equitable, if there is no equality, then there are a lot of problems for those people who live in that area.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you mentioned a little bit about women, so in your opinion what does gender equity in energy access mean to you, what would it look like? And do you think it should be considered at the policy level?

RESPONDENT: It should absolutely be considered because I think that the challenge women face related to energy, meaning if they do not get access… firstly in the areas where this crisis exists, there is a very low rate of education. They have no awareness about what the basic needs of life are and how they can fulfill them. If I give you a small example here, when we went to a small village in XXXX, it is about 25 km away from the road, where you can only see mud holes on the way. If it rains, you will get stuck and won’t be able to come back. It is that kind of a mud road. And if your car tyre gets punctured, you will not be able to find any mechanic or shop. So if you go in an area like this, and you see that the person you are going to meet is wearing a *Maya* suit, which is very well pressed and in our mind the question arises that if there is no electricity, how is this person so well dressed? His shoes are polished… and at the same time if I see his wife, whose clothes have a thousand dirt stains that you don’t know since when she is wearing this dress. So, when we saw this over there… that you are not ensuring equity and equality in your homes… that if it is a man, his personality is like this… if he has a son, he will also be well dress in jeans and pants but if he has a daughter, her situation will be such that I can’t even begin to describe.

So, when we see things like this, we feel that at this end it is the responsibility of our government, our politicians who collect the votes from that area, they should provide them the basic amenities of life. Some of their men travel to the cities, their business is in the cities, so they have fixed themselves. But they have left their women behind, if I say they treat them like animals, … but they treat them like that, the women have access to the same food and water that the animals eat and drink. So if you see the environment like this, you feel that some policies should be there, and our needs.. the 3 basic needs, everyone should have access. Everyone who is alive, whether it is me, or you or any one else.

I have worked on two of them, like I worked with XXXX, in which we installed water filtration plants so people have access to clean drinking water. The other was with XXXX. Other than this, there is XXXX an Indian company, when we collaborated with them, so we donated some solar lamps there. When we went into the off-grid areas so we had a lot of experiences that if we start narrating, shivers run down our spine, at all that we have seen and observed. The area I was telling you about XXXX, it is area of the Taliban, where we were working.

INTERVIEWER: So, like you have mentioned, you go to these communities yourself and you speak to them so can you tell us how energy demand is determined? And how does your organization determine the need of the communities and what should be provided to them, what do they require? Are there any surveys for this? Basically, tell us what your entire process is and how it works?

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, so how we do it… first we identify the village, and our team, which is a separate team, goes and checks the village… because the criteria is that we select a village if it has minimum 500 households at least. So in XXXX, we had setup in a way that we used to select a *Roshna Bibi* (literal translation Light Woman – a female selected to be a rural solar entrepreneur) and we gave it a business model as well. We arranged a community meeting in the village and we introduced ourselves to them there, and told them about our plan. There would be 10 groups of 50 50 each and for each group of 50 there would be one *Roshna Bibi*, in whose home we would install the solar plant. If she charged 50 lights, each person would pay her Rs 2 daily as rent, because she is the one charging the light and she is ensuring the safety and security while charging and then handing back to you in the evening. So the Rs 2 … Rs 3 they would give her as rent, from that Rs 2 would be for the *Roshna Bibi* and Rs 1 she would keep separate for after sales. So if an issue arises in any plant, there is a technical fault so any one from our team goes for after sales service, the Rs 1 collected would be enough to compensate that person’s travel to and from the location.

INTERVIEWER: Can you please elaborate who and what is *Roshna Bibi*?

RESPONDENT: These are women from the community, who people think is reliable, may be they have also studied up to grade 2 or grade 4. They know basic book keeping and people trust them. We select them from the community and in mutual agreement with people there. So we were doing it like that….

INTERVIEWER: Okay, sorry one more thing, is it mandatory that she is female?

RESPONDENT: Yes, they were females because we did this for gender, based on women empowerment element. And the idea was to create awareness that women can also do something. So, they started this business and contribute their Rs 2 to their daily wage at home, along with the men. So this was one model. And the other… so this was about XXXX that I told you… after that because we have worked in different locations, we have done a project with the XXXX.

For our program there as well we did the same thing. When we select *Roshna* then we need to visit the other houses physically as well ourself. So for that, we have designed a survey form that we fill with all the household information, in which we document each and everything of the house and keep with us. After that we distribute the lights at a distribution ceremony, and if everything is okay, then we come back. Meaning, if we have a plan for DI Khan, so we need at least 20 – 22 days to stay there and work, in which our team comprises of 3 girls and 3 boys. Then we make teams of 2 each and go out in the area because… if you are going in that area from Punjab specially … there are challenges that you face in implementing any project, let me tell you a little bit about that as well.

Men don’t face them so much, but women do face them, especially if you go outside of the Punjab province. So you will find a different dress code and language… both these things you will find different, and it will take you at least 1 or 2 days to understand. Because in these areas, they speak a different language and they understand Urdu slightly less… their dialect is slightly Punjabi and then you need to speak to them in that tone. If they are doing *pardah* then their values need to be adhered when you visit them so you need to be prepared for this from before. So this picturization is already done from before for a project, that how it will be implemented and then everything is explained, in terms of the direction and the performance required on ground.

Then we need one or two local people there, so if we don’t understand *Pashto* or if we have a problem with *Saraiki* they act as our translator. After one or two days you learn yourself as well that these words mean this… so you learn something new. And second, you know that the world around you is not as easy as it seems, there are many challenges so when you see them, then you get a small satisfaction that a small change has happened here because of me, because of the solution you have provided. When I used to get this satisfaction, it used to feel good. Because the work itself was quite dangerous, going to remote locations but when I saw the impact, I enjoy talking about the experience that we were able to help people out.

INTERVIEWER: So based on what you have seen in your projects and your professional experience and personal experience, please tell us how equitable is energy access at community and household level in terms of gender in Pakistan?

RESPONDENT: Which question are you on?

INTERVIEWER: This is question 4 in part 2.

RESPONDENT: I think I might have covered this a bit in my earlier response. So, energy access at community and household level consists of different things. If we look at the community, so if a male is earning or he has a good source of income, so then energy for him would be for example, he has a mobile phone and he has to charge the mobile, or he has to use it or he needs access to the internet. So, he has gotten a small solar panel for himself through which he charges his mobile phone and he is busy in his life.

At the same time, at night, after sunset, women and children have to eat food or cook food, so they have to light a clay lamp and then use that to cook food. So this is a divide we have created that if we are earning, we will get the access to things that make life easy for us. And the rest of the people at home can go to hell, it doesn’t make a difference to us. You see these things in the households as well that if it is a girl, then our values for her different and if it is a boy, then our values are different. For education and for energy as well.

So I will share an experience of a clean cookstove. There is a village XXXX where we went to do a demo. So there was a XXXX year old girl who was very active. They saw this new kind of stove – normally they cooked on fire – when we did a live demo there. We collected the community members, cooked food and showed them how stove is fuel efficient and smokeless. So in villages, people either have money or they don’t. If they have money, then the same thing with decision making, that if there is a man, then the man will be the decision maker and if he is there then they (women) can do that thing otherwise they can’t. So they (women) used to say that keep our stove on hold, we will come back and tell you tomorrow or day after, after consulting the man or when we get the money, then we can tell you. So this was the kind of conversation there. So when some people bought it, that girl was insisting to her mother… we had a variety of stoves made in concrete or made in 16-18 gauge… so their prices were different as well. So she expressed her desire to her mother that she wanted to get the expensive one because it looks nice, so her mother said that no, we only have to cook food so we can get the concrete stove for Rs 500. I was listening to their conversation, that the child wanted that stove and the mother was saying that she only had limited funds so I thought how could I make it possible. Our cook stove is also sold on a commission based model, so the women who work with us, we give them a commission of Rs 200 to Rs 250 per stove if they bring customers or sell a stove. So because of that girl, the women who came to the demo, 8 or 10 of them purchased the stove on the spot. They gave me half payment upfront and said that when you come next time, we will make the balance payment. So I calculated at that time, that based on the revenue generated, if I take out the commission, I can compensate the girl with a stove. So instead of giving a gift or doing a favor, and knowing that her mother isn’t allowing her to purchase, that her father is not going to give permission to spend Rs 2000 – Rs 2500 on a stove. So I used this trick and gave them the stove.

So now I am sharing this experience, because if there is male decision making, it will never go towards something that is giving the woman at his home relief. If there is no smoke, the eyes will be relieved, she can cook peacefully. Because the man doesn’t have to cook, he doesn’t care about this issue. So I gave her the stove, and she was very happy and brought me another 8-10 customers. And she even told others that this is an amazing thing, you should use it too. So this is the difference in our community when we look at gender, that what is right for us and what is right for others.

INTERVIEWER: So in this context, are there gender differences in how energy is used in homes, and what are the differences in responsibilities at home between men and women in our community?

RESPONDENT: So there is a very long discussion in this. So if a woman is working, she is working at home or outside, it is her duty because she is a woman. But if a man is working outside and earning money, then he will not come home and do any chores because he is a man. So we have seen that women in rural areas even cook food in energy crisis. So if they are burning wood for cooking, along with that they start working since morning, they have to look after the livestock, they have to go towards the fields, they have to send the children to school, and if her husband has to go, then they have to press his clothes as well. So this duty starts from the morning for a female. And the male, just has his breakfast, picks up his lunch and leaves. So if you consider, they are both working, whether at home or outside, it is work. But in this, if a woman is going to the fields, she will walk, if a man is going he has a cycle or motorbike. Or he asks a friend to drop him there. So in this even our females have to face some challenges. So this is rural life.

And if talk about the cities, even there we have to depend on males, whether they are your father, brother or husband. So if they have to go anywhere, they have a bike and if we even have to go to the bus stop, it is a 15 – 20 min commute by walk. Then we have to take the bus to get to our destination. So these are the things. I have observed that a lot of girls have started riding scooties and bikes which is a great thing. Otherwise, you have to manage with difficulty and there is a lot of disturbance, sometimes you are late and sometimes you are on time. Sometimes you are getting scolded at home and sometimes outside. Nobody considers why we are getting late. Women who are going outside usually don’t even have a mobile phone, since the men have the phones. So if they face any issue, women don’t even know how to use it.

Now we have become so digital that you can be anywhere and call a cab using uber or careem. You can use anything but mostly women don’t know, if there is a mobile then is there credit in it so issues like this are common. If there is an emergency at home, they don’t have money, because the men have money, so all of these things, somewhere, effect women more negatively. They have to struggle and find it difficult to move forward because of these issues.

So, somewhere or the other, if I talk about myself, in the beginning I had to face many such issues, but then after that I saw I had to fight my own war. So however I will fight it, lets see what happens, at the most, people will behave rudely. So it started like that but then if you are rude to people, then people start giving you respect, so it became easier, but at the start I faced many challenges. It was difficult for me to commute, people used to hoot and harass me… so then I saw how other people were working and observed and learnt. In the beginning I used to wear a scarf, I thought that if I have covered myself, people won’t harass me, I would be safe. But the funny thing is, the day I stopped taking the *hijab*, nobody has dared to say anything. I think they can tell by the expressions that you shouldn’t say anything to her. So I think it was interesting for me that when I used to go to the field wearing the *hijab*, the reaction was different and now the reaction is different, but I am more comfortable compared to before.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you mentioned a little bit about the difference in access between urban and rural women. So, tell us about difference in access between different women or to what extent do they benefit from energy access if the difference is in age or income group? Like you have already mentioned the difference between urban and rural, are there any religious, ethnic and cultural difference between different women?

RESPONDENT: Yes absolutely, in this as well as age.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us from energy access perspective?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I will tell you from energy point of view. So in our minority groups there are Christians, living in different locations. You find them in rural locations as well as cities. And if we talk about Gilgit Baltistan, they are Shia and Balti, so you know that whenever there is a discussion of different sects, these people don’t like to make groups together. So we have to bear a lot of things in this and the community also has to bear some things. For example, if someone is Christian, you can’t make a group for them, or if they want that thing, so to add them in a group, you need to really struggle how to make them a part of it. Being a Christian is perhaps the biggest challenge for them. Now if we are distributing that lamp, they will not be able to get it, because the community will not agree.

There are no policies from our end or the organization because for us everyone is equal, if you are taking something to the market, so you will provide it to everyone who needs it. But within the communities they are organized in a way that their is discussion of the beliefs and religion and they don’t let us work. There are fights and then they restrict us as well that maybe we are not allowed to enter the community again. So we need to consider these things and then our policies have been made flexible this way… so we make a small group for the minorities and separate them so that there are no challenges once we leave. Then we also need to take some on the spot internal decisions, how can we solve this. So if we don’t make policies like this or change them as required then that lone household will be at risk and the community will not let them benefit from the service.

Even in Gligit Baltistan, if we are giving a product to a retailer, he will only ensure his community and his people benefit from it. He will tell other customers that he doesn’t have that product. So then the other people ask that we need this product of yours, how can we get access to it. Then I send it to them from here, from Lahore via online sales channel or we entertain that request in any other way so these things are quite evident in the communities still.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so when you give these new technologies at the community level, so is there a difference between men and women in terms of who benefits?

RESPONDENT: Benefit… yes because we are giving benefit to both, if we are giving them a product in which their consumption of fuel wood reduces so it is a big thing for men. In their mind, if they are spending Rs 100 on wood, and there is a saving of Rs 40, and only Rs 60 for wood is required for the stove, so his money is being saved. We try to influence the men into buying like this, by saying that if you spend Rs 3000 per month on wood, so this stove will save you Rs 400 – Rs 500. We tell males from this point of view.

And for the women we say that this product is very good for your health as your eyes are getting weak because of the smoke, your BP remains high – if you use this, you will feel relief. You and your children will feel relief. The walls of you home have become black, with this stove the paint will not spoil. So in different ways we try to capture the community and address it. First we will ask them what issues they face with what they use currently, and then we select from that… what point can we play on, what should we address that they can benefit from.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you already spoke about whether men and women participate equally in decision making about energy access? Please elaborate a bit more on this as well as financial decision making. You had indicated clearly that men make the financial decisions so who makes the overall decisions with regards technology?

RESPONDENT: In our communities also, males are doing it and if we see in our organizations, usually men are on the decision-making seats where the policies are devised and implemented. But still, at XXXX I would say we had the discretion that if we brought something, or wanted to introduce something new, or something new is coming in the company… although I was the only female there, I was still consulted for my input that this is the product, what do you think about it.

So if I had to go alone to the market and if there was any problem I could face because I would be alone with the driver, then there would be policies developed for that as well. Once a man misbehaved with me in a village, so I came back and discussed with my team what happened. I was alone and the driver was in the car. So the policy was designed there and then, that next time, I would go only if accompanied by a team member, otherwise I would not go.

So these are the things in our organization, Alhamdulillah. If I face any problems like this, I discuss them, we have an open discussion. In XXXX it has never happened that if you have a problem, you don’t share it and if you share it, there is no solution provided for it. So I have never felt that I am alone here and no one else is there to support me here. The rest of the team supports me completely because they know that she is the one who has to go on the ground and work so they have to support me. Although there was no gender balance, I used to feel that they are all women I am working with and they thought that I was a male so in this way, we used to share the decision making.

INTERVIEWER: so in terms of urban and rural contexts, what difference do you feel in gender equity in our society and in our country?

RESPONDENT: there is no equity, we educate boys, we don’t educate girls.

INTERVIEWER: any difference in urban and rural?

RESPONDENT: Yes, why not. In urban we are still educating them, giving them opportunities to some extent. Now they even get the opportunities for jobs, but to some extent, that you can work at a bank, or in an office but not go out for field work. Even after so much education our society has these wrong concepts that doing field work or exploring off-grid or rural areas is looked down upon. Let me make this easier, that any job that requires travel and roaming around is taken negatively as if she is doing something wrong. In reality there is nothing like that, the more you explore, the more you learn. You get knowledge about how people are around you, how you can keep yourself better, and how you can help others get better. So here the thing is if we give opportunities, we give them to men, that they will go abroad to study; if they are getting a job there, they will do it; even if they have to do a paper marriage to live there, they can do it because they are male, they have permission to. We don’t give any such permissions to females, so even to get education and then work in a job, and then marriage after job, decisions for all these things for women are made by men. Men also take decisions for men. And this is the same in rural villages and urban cities, even after education, we are stuck to our old ways.

INTERVIEWER: so are these differences with respect to energy as well?

RESPONDENT: Yes absolutely, so imagine a child is in grade 9 or 10 and we give him a mobile, we give him pocket money, we give him a bike if he asks for it. But if it is a girl then why does she need it – if she has a phone, she will get wrong calls, she will get in a relationship with someone, you get to hear things like this. Even we get upset how we take everything so negatively, so we won’t even hire a rickshaw to take her… if she has to go the brother will go to drop her, we don’t trust her. And when these things happen, we have to take them forward and not able to ensure equality from any angle.

**Part 3:**

INTERVIEWER: Let’s move to part 3 which is about policies and interventions. You have mentioned a bit, but please share some more details that to what extent does gender equity factor in your own work on energy access? Tell us about your projects and work experience?

RESPONDENT: Gender equity factor in your work. If I go back 8-10 years, because our projects were like this, where we used to go to work… can you repeat the question, I am not sure which direction to take my answer in.

INTERVIEWER: So you told us that your work is related to clean cook stoves. So, to what extent do you involve women in your projects and do you consider gender equity a priority. Because you had said that you consider both men and women in the community and speak to both of them since your technology is such that both need to be involved. Then to what extent do you involve women and speak to them during the project? Second, please also tell us that in your work environment, how is gender equity factored in where you are working, in your organization, in terms of projects as well as your job role?

RESPONDENT: So in our work, specially with females, when we had to go towards XXXX. And second, when we reached there, there were new people, it was a new world, new discussions, new dialect. In all 4 provinces, 5 provinces of Pakistan we have observed that if a male team member is accompanying me to the community, then he cannot interact with the women, only I can interact with the women. However, the men from the community can sit in front of me, because they don’t have a problem seeing me, but if my male team members saw their women, it was a problem for them. Then you get this feeling, because the men are in larger number, and they know how to read and write a little bit. So they behave as if they can respond to our questions more authentically and their women are completely useless. And they keep surrounding you so your comfort level is compromised. When you are not comfortable, your work begins to look like a burden, because it all comes on you, as nobody lets your male team member work. They are sitting outside comfortably in the *dera* and inside, you end up doing all the work, even that which is your male team members responsibility like setting up the tent, setting up the stove, organizing the community. So everything that needs to be done within the community ends up on you because women do *pardah* so the men are not allowed, but it is okay for us because we don’t do *pardah* to be among the men.

so this was most evident in XXXX, it was completely different, women covered themselves till the feet and they were not at all giving the permission even though we requested to allow them to just do the setup and leave. They said our men will do it with you… you tell them what to do. So I put my foot down and said sorry, to say, if my team members can’t come then your men can’t come inside either, I do pardah too and have a problem with them being here. So the whole discussion comes down to culture and your values and you feel it a lot negatively.

So let me give you another example, we do online sales as well, we have a page on facebook, people see the ad and call. And I feel that sometimes if they call and a female receives the phone, they enjoy talking even if they don’t want to buy a product. But if a male picks up the phone, then the call either drops or the caller speaks very rudely with the male and disconnects the phone. We monitored this with our online campaign because 1 person can’t receive the calls 24 hours continuously. So we took turns, and the day it was my turn, sales happened. And the day XXXXreceived the calls, the customer would say ok we will think and get back. We have daily morning meetings to review what happened the previous day or discuss something new we learnt. I am the sort of person who discusses everything openly. So we discussed this with my boss that these problems are coming, that when XXXX picks up the phone, the customers want to talk for 10 10 minutes and even give orders, and when the male colleagues are picking up, the customers say wrong number and disconnect. So either we should give this duty to XXXX or we should change our voices. Even when you talk to your vendors, if you want to get a good rate, then you need a female because females bargain well.

Now, even when we divide our work, I have more workload. I have to speak with the suppliers, I have to look at the admin work sometime, if there is some problem at the customer end then I need to sort that out as well, because the customers trust me a lot. They have been hearing my voice on this number for the last 4 years. So the relationship that has developed is so strong that if there is any issue then XXXX has to sort it out.

When we are travelling on the road, going to Kashmir and there is some problem or police checking on the road, then the investigation is that are you married or not? These 4 men with you, who are they, show us your visiting cards. I mean as a female you even have to hear that if you are working then why aren’t you married until now. I mean where is this written that during an investigation or checking on the road, you ask someone if they are married and if you are going somewhere to do a project with the team, what is your relationship with the colleagues. When these questions come up in the community, I would like to respond very straight forwardly that they are colleagues, we are not siblings. But in the community you need to justify that you are siblings otherwise the community members look down upon you, they perceive a very negative image about you. If you want to portray a positive image to them, then you need to indicate that colleagues are brother and sister. We learned this on the field as well.

If you say you are the sister of your male colleague, they respect you. If you tell them you are a single professional woman, so they feel that a single girl is doing a job, why is she doing it, and these are also problems.

INTERVIEWER: Your firm clearly needs more female staff, specially in communities when only females can deal with females, then why doesn’t your organization hire more females and why are you all alone?

RESPONDENT: They conducted interviews, but as a I mentioned, usually we don’t get permission from home to work in sales in off-grid areas because you have to travel out of station. Like I told you that if it is a son, he will get permission that he can go to Rawalapindi and study because he has a career, but if a daughter is getting opportunity, she will never be allowed to avail it. We will never allow her to live in a hostel, or go to another city to study. The problem is, families don’t give permission, even though many girls were willing to work with me. People from our own community say that you are doing great work and when they find out that we are going here and there, staying in different locations for 20 days or more, and then they don’t trust their daughters. If they trusted, then how I am doing it, anybody else could as well.

INTERVIEWER: So basically, you have no problem from the company, it is the females that are not coming forward?

P: Yes, that is the case. Females are not coming forward for this work. And if one or two did join, they had issues with traveling. They couldn’t travel 24 hours at a stretch going from one city to the other. And you know that whoever has to do a job, has his/her own criteria, that they want comfort or they want to do something a certain way. I have become stubborn after working for so long and traveling so much and as it is I have a passion for travelling, so it is easier if you enjoy it. If you don’t enjoy it then it is very difficult to do this job, especially if you are coming from an off-grid area.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, then tell is that in addition to your work, generally speaking do you think energy access policies Pakistan should be gender sensitive? And if yes, then how?

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, it should be. Energy should be equal for everyone, whether it is female or male. I think it should be equal, and how it should be equal, what else should I say. I mean if you give similar opportunities for progress, then everyone can fulfill what they don’t have without any burden. For example, if I am earning then I need a mobile phone for communication. For keeping a mobile, for being in communication with the world, I need credit balance. So if I need both these things, and if I am earning, I will not ask for these things from anyone. I will have my own money, I will purchase these things from there and if I am not earning, and I stay at home, I don’t even know what is going on in the world outside. I am just sitting like a frog within my four walls, and I don’t know what is happening, so then if I ask for a mobile phone then there will be 100 questions, like what do you have to do with this? You stay at home, just cook and clean and leave everything else.

So if we can develop something like this, which doesn’t exist at the moment – there are some factories, and some NGOs who have started some projects in which they involve women like this, who stay at home and work on stitching and embroidery or they do handicrafts or they have a beauty parlor… so when they engage themselves like this, when they connect with people, then definitely they will need energy in the sense of mobile phone, or for machinery, or for anything related to their business. If they need something, they will purchase it themselves and fulfill the need. At the end, the thing is NGOs are working on this, and the Government is working on making education common, that there is no age limit for getting education. If you will give them education, you give them basic awareness of what their rights are, even if we tell them this much, they will at least be able to raise their voice for themselves. And they will be able to fill the gaps they face at the moment somehow. And if they don’t know anything, then nobody can tell them anything. So I think awareness is essential in this and companies are working on this, as well as NGOs and the government to some extent.

If I talk about XXXX, the women don’t know about their rights, what are their rights. So I have seen that in the community, women’s rights organizations have made these small committees, that get together after every 15 days or so and guide them on things like right to property, or the rights of a wife that the local women are not even aware off.

Even though our religion is telling us that there are specific rights of women, the men don’t even allow them to have this awareness. They even find such women repulsive who have a little sense of understanding and tell them these things. So they even stop such women from coming and going in the community, on the pretext that they are spoiling our women. In reality, our men don’t want that this equality should happen, and we don’t let it be implemented.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so you have answered many of the questions in between, but I have to ask you as a formality. But you can always indicate that you have given the response previously. So do you think there are policy gaps around this topic of women’s access to energy at local or national level that we can observe? What are the policy gaps and how can they be overcome?

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, like I was discussing this previously as well that we need to work on this, and some organizations are already working on this. They are developing women’s committees that discuss and demand their rights, but they thing is that we don’t let these policies be implemented. We consider them useless, because this is looked down upon in our society. So policies are developed, everybody makes them, but the real job is implementation, which the men in our society don’t allow to happen.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you have answered this one as well somewhat that what related social policies do you feel have an impact on gender equity? I think you have spoken about education and awareness and women’s rights and that they should be aware. You have discussed all this, so I will skip this one.

Okay, imagine there is an ideal scenario, in which there are no policy or financial constraints. So in that case, in your opinion, how can we achieve gender equity in energy access? What are the best practices that will lead us on this direction?

RESPONDENT: best practices… I don’t understand what response I should give you on this.

INTERVIEWER: I mean like you said that the challenges have already been identified because of which there is no equity for women in energy access, as well as other things like transport, communication. So, similarly, tell us, that imagine there is no financial challenge – you have access to unlimited money, and the policies are in place as well. So, what will you do in your role? Where you go in remote areas, so imagine that when you go there, how will you ensure that women are treated fairly, they are given their rights and equal access to energy?

RESPONDENT: They will shoot me directly if I went there to do this work.

Obviously, first of all, I would provide the roads, that will connect them with the main highway so that the transportation activity is initiated. If they want to visit the doctor, they are able to do it easily and make the commute in 20-22 minutes, not in 2-4 hours as they do at the moment.

Then I will tell them about their basic health issues, that they have no ideas about. I should say they don’t even know about their personal health and hygiene. They don’t know when they should bathe, I mean this is a part of our religion that cleanliness is half of faith. But when you look at them, their clothes, their hair, it seems that have not bathed in over 3-4 months. These things are also basics, that you should know, and you have to educate your children about these as well. But the thing is we talk about Islam, that we are Muslim and we pray 5 times but we don’t bring the same practices in our women, and neither do we tell them about all this. We do everything ourselves as men, but we will not pass it on to women because then we will not be able to control them. So I will try to sort this out like this, that if I get the opportunity, I will train them on their health, their education, their behavior. And I will teach them the skills that will enable them to bring themselves to a certain level.

For example, if I talk about my mother, she had only studied up XXXX, but she had the skill of embroidery. She worked hard in every way. My father was a XXXX. My mother had XXXX kids, and the house was rented but by doing all the XXXX work, my mother proved that a single woman could raise XXXX kids. So I have learnt these things from my own home, that you have to show courage and nothing is difficult in the world. Since I have seen all this myself. Now when I look at someone else who is trying to ask other’s for support or trying to prove that they are incapable, then this question arises for me that we are not incapable, this is just a figment in our mind. That this is there somewhere but still needs to click that no, we can do it. Whether it is a male or a female, if they have that drive that they can do it, then no one can stop them. When I saw this in my mother, then no doubt, I definitely have the same trait and I felt that if my brothers are doing something, then I should do it too. If they are earning, then why can’t I earn? Because if I earn, then I am not a liability at home. If I don’t earn, then I am a liability and people will thing that get her married, regardless of what sort of proposal comes. Just get her married because she is a burden, so I didn’t become a burden and I have kept it like this till this day.

And you can say that the decisions regarding what I have said until now, I did not let those decisions be implemented like about my marriage, why should someone else take that decision? I have made myself so strong that if someone needs to discuss this, then they have to ask my choice, because it is my right, it is my life, and I have to live it. So I worked on these things for myself, I made myself strong and I stood at par with my brothers when the need arose to support my family financially. So now I get the opportunity to become involved in decision making in my home. Now, I am asked that this thing needs to be done, tell us what to do. So you get this feeling that you are being given importance, but later you realize that this is all about money. If you have money in your pocket, whether you are female or male, you will get the respect.

**Part 4:**

INTERVIEWER: okay, let’s move on to the last part. Right, tell us that in our decision-making bodies in energy governance, how balanced is gender representation in them, in your opinion?

RESPONDENT: I don’t have any idea about governance. I think that I have never understood that balance because I have never been interested in that.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, next question. Do you know a little bit about energy access finance programs? You had said that you have been associated with XXXX or XXXX. So in that context can you tell us if energy access finance programs or projects in Pakistan have gender sensitive policies or do they consider gender strongly, are these policies gender aware?

RESPONDENT: Yes, it is thought about. As I mentioned to you earlier regarding communities, people who are working in the off-grid segment or working on energy projects, they need to organize their teams in a way that includes gender balance. Wherever there is a problem, if females need to solve it they should take it, and if males need to then they should. And then somewhere a small difference comes in their salary, that men get paid more although both put in the same effort. Females are entertained with tasks in such a way that men are taken in forefront and females are kept in the background. But these are somewhat internal.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so I am asking this in context of energy access finance, like National Bank or if someone else provides microfinancing, are women considered for these programs, for loans given by these programs?

RESPONDENT: Yes absolutely, they are more focused on women and work on women empowerment. They give loans to women, to scale their business, so they are definitely included in these programs. Now even males are a part of the program, initially, they used to be dedicated for females. When we did the program at XXXX, men were not a part of it so the groups of beneficiaries comprised of females only. The men were only told that this thing is happening and the way it is happening in and they had to sign a document that just in case they created an issue in future, they were aware of it. Now, programs are developed for both men and women and both are given loans.

INTERVIEWER: so what are the challenges for women in programs like this, to access microfinance or to make decisions about how to spend the money and specially with regards to what challenges they face in purchasing technologies like this?

RESPONDENT: No, so when these microfinance institutions came, they highlighted women, increased their importance, because they began their work with women. So only women could take the loans and give it to their men. So, if a man had a business and he needed a loan, so the female could take it and give it to him. Then when the men realized, they used to tell the women that we need this money for our work, borrow Rs 20,000 or Rs 30,000 and give it to us. We will grow our business in this way. So the role of the women came in this, that they became involved in taking the decision with men that they have to take the loan. So both were in agreement. So these institutions have increased here importance in the home, so both take the decision together, and then throughout the whole process of the loan and recovery the interaction is with the female and male both. Whoever comes from then NGO, the men have no reservation that you are talking to our female. In Punjab, these things are less, but outside Punjab, it is a big issue that if you are female, talk to females, if you are male, talk to males.

INTERVIEWER: so you are telling me this based on the work you have done at XXXX?

RESPONDENT: Yes, yes, XXXX and XXXX both. In XXXX, we have worked with both males and females. In XXXX, we didn’t make loan disbursement groups. Over there, if a customer came to us himself, even then we collected all the relevant information and then visited him before giving him the loan. The interaction and relationship we had with our client was very strong. Normally, we make policies and say that customer care is our priority, and customer is above all, but our words are different and our practical actions different.

So if I gave you the example of XXXX, when we were trained, we were told that the customer is your boss, is your king… we are running because of them. When I went on the ground, I saw how we are speaking with the customer, as if he has done god knows what. I mean, we spoke with them very rudely, if they are not giving recovery or there is an issue, then the contradiction in words. The whole point was that we were uplifting them, making their living standard better, because they don’t have access to banks so we were providing them with microfinance loans. Instead of boosting them and making their life better, we were pressurizing them that you owe us a favor, we have lent you money so you better give us the recovery on time.

So, this was a lot of disrespect, and this is one reason, I moved away from there. We only learnt that every human has self-respect, and there are some boundaries that you can’t cross. And this was also evident in XXXX. We were doing financing there as well but our level and attitude was much different because the policies there were designed in this way. At XXXX, we were told that you cannot eat at your customer’s house because if you ate, then you couldn’t force them, because you would forge a different kind of relationship with them. In XXXX there were no policies like this that you can’t do this or you can’t do that. In fact, if your customer came so you would serve them water yourself, if they come from outside, you show them respect that “please sit down”, “sir how can I help you”. If you visited them and they offer you water, then you accepted. Based on this, I learnt that the customer doesn’t bother you because your relationship becomes so good, that the customer feels guilty themselves if they think about worrying you or cheating you.

So the thing is people who are making the policies often don’t go and observe the on ground realities and the kind of policies that need to be developed. These things need to be experienced before being documented on paper for others. So in XXXX as well, we made the policies in such a way that we first experience and then devise policy. For example, someone misbehaved with me, so initially, there was no policy that what should be done, but then we made a policy that I will not go alone for the visits. In other NGOs still females go alone and if they face any problem, no body cares. I mean, they should review the problem and see how they can address it and where. We are representing you in the market, but if you do not support us, then how are we expected to go ahead and work.

So the thing is that when polices are developed, before their implementation, they should be observed practically and then enforced.

INTERVIEWER: You had just mentioned that women come to get microfinance loans, so what do you think is the ratio that they are taking it for their own business or they have come to for their husband’s business?

RESPONDENT: Initially we used to require that they have their own business, like stitching / embroidery or a parlor or some academy that they are running in their home. So, two things came up in this: 1) they told us that they need it for their business but it was

taken indirectly for the male. They needed the money so they got it. 2) Sometimes we observed that there was a challenging situation in the home, or a wedding needs to be organized and these things came out later when it was time for recovery.

When the money needs to be returned, there were problems with payment. Then you would find out that this money was not used for business, but it was used for something else like it was spent on a wedding or they bought something like an air conditioner. So you can say that 50% they put in their business and 50% they spent on extravagance, whether for the home or themselves.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, another thing that I wanted to ask you was that initially you had mentioned that in different areas, different locations, there were different requirements for cookstoves. So your approach in each location was different. Can you tell us what were those differences and if you modified the technology accordingly?

RESPONDENT: So when we were in Punjab, people did not know about this technology. But in XXXX, people were familiar because these stoves were being made locally but they were made from a single sheet. So, you know peoples houses are very beautiful and they are painted quite nicely so they are very sensitive that the walls of our home shouldn’t get spoilt. So they were already using a stove with a chimney. They have carpets in their kitchen and other rooms as well so the setup is very clean. This is true for XXXX, Kashmir and XXXX.

But we started in XXXX, so people did not even know what this is and how to use it. So first we made a single top in which you can cook one dish at one time. We took it to XXXX and introduced it through a demo and people were so happy because they could not see the smoke and the cooking pots did not become black. So they thought this was a good thing. So there is an attraction in this that the old women said that we have spent our entire life and nothing happened so what is the need for this new method you have brought that doesn’t blacken the pots and you can’t see smoke. But for the young girls, their mind is that if pots don’t become black that is good because our hands won’t become black while cleaning them. So they think like that. Now, if there is no smoke then the house will also remain clean and no waste from the stove dumped around the house.

So after testing this here we took it straight to XXXX. So people were already using the double top from before. In the double top you can cook two dishes simultaneously on the stove. So, we had a lot of competition there. We had a single stove, they had double. So, people stamped us with rejection. We collaborate with XXX that include XXXX, and they have XXXXX.

And then this came on to behavior change, because you know when you take any product so you have to work the most on behavior change communication, people are not willing to let go of their old habits and they are stuck to their old things. You can’t bring them on to the new thing immediately.

So we made a strategy that we will not only tell but show them as well that we are saying that 40% fuel will be saved. So we organized a competition, first we did a demo on our stove only, that we lit our stove and showed them. Then we told them to bring 4 of their stoves, so we could show and tell what we were talking about.

So there was a college there, where we got access to the ground and they said you do your display here. They also made a public announcement and the students were very active. They went to the market with brochures to call people that something new has come, some people from Punjab have come, so then people came. Then we weighed and provided material to each that this is the wood, this is the quantity of rice, this is chicken and everything was provided equally. We called 5 women from their community, and asked them that they could cook on any stove they wanted. Then we put on our cameras and our commentary was going on as well as we were giving the live demo.

The people were surprised that their stoves required 4.5 to 5 kg of wood and their biryani was not cooked and our wood that we had kept 2.2 kg was still burning and still left. And then we had to explain that our aim is not to sell cookstoves only but also to save our forests from being cut and save the females from smoke. Then we made a comic book along with this, we involved the children to make a story book which included stories on hazards of smoke and on trees. We designed this book and aligned schools and colleges to introduce this book in their curriculum and share the knowledge with students at least once a week. When the children will understand, they will influence their parents to follow the same. So in XXXX, we had a win, we got the stamp of approval for our product.

Then we went to XXXX. In XXXX, they make large flat bread called *mana*. So our stove was of a smaller size. So now this was a problem. We have joint family systems in XXXX, XXXX and XXXX. So when they cook food, they need to cook it in a large quantity. So the size of the pots is also very large, so we showed them that they could also make bread of smaller sizes for the family. So the issue there was also that no one was giving us the entry first, they said that our females will not come outside because they observe *pardah*. Then we requested that I will go in your houses, so if you can arrange somewhere, I will talk to them. Because most of our discussion was happening with the men there then I had to say that is cooking food your job? It is not then you will not understand what we have brought. So you need to let us speak to your female so we can explain this is portable and can be used both indoors and outdoors, in summers and winters. They were just stuck on one thing that either this can be used in the home or is it saving smoke, basically they wanted to make us go away. So then I had to jump in and explain how it works to them. So then we said to them that you can take this stove for a 3 day free trial and have your wife use it. If she returns it after three days, we will take it no questions asked, if she wishes to keep it, then you can make the payment for it. So we got this compliment from XXXX that you have made the people users of your product by giving a free trial and we got more sales.

Then after coming back to Punjab, we developed our double top stove because it was needed in XXXX and XXXX. So we increased the size, made the double top. And then another thing over there, they needed heating more than cooking so they needed fireplaces in different rooms that did not consume large quantities of firewood. So then we designed 2 heaters for this purpose. One was XXXX and XXXX.

Then when we went to Kashmir, and there was a different thing there that they had a small kiln which did not have a base. They used to bury it in the sand and it had 3 walls. So in Kashmir, Rawalakot people were not at all willing to look at our stove. So, the strategy we used here was that we introduced color in our cook stoves. When women go out for shopping, they have a preference for black color, whether it is clothes, shoes or something else. So we introduced black colored cook stoves, which gave them a non-sticky look. Then we introduced green, to bring the concept of clean and green. Then we added a blue color, also linked to the context of clean, related to the sky. After that we added silver, just for beautification, to explore which color men and women select and can color also contribute to sales. This was also another strategy for us. What was surprising that maximum sales were of the black stove. We did the road side demo for these stoves, and the product was also slightly advanced one. Mostly, the men from that region are based in UK or USA for business and their females are living at home so they don’t have any issue of money. But they want a good product. So we put up the stove outside a market mall and made tea. And as people left the mall, we stopped them and gave them tea. While they spent 2-4 minutes drinking tea, we gave them our pitch. Some old men passing by were also laughing that you have found a unique way of talking to us, we can’t even refuse you. Instead of us offering you tea, you have come to our home and are offering us tea. We didn’t have much success in Kashmir so we came back and modified our product and then went back. The modified product had better sales for us. We also worked on the behavior change, giving free trials etc.

So, whenever you bring in a new technology related to energy, I think the most important thing is the strategy you deploy. One part is the live demo and the second the free trial. Both these things enable the customer to trust you. Then they think that the product might spoil but they are willing to take that risk so we can experience the product, so there must be something in it. Then after they have used it, they feel that they have gotten the benefit and if they return it, it will seem inappropriate. So, they keep it.

INTERVIEWER: So, the feedback you got, did you get it from women or men?

RESPONDENT: From both, but mostly from females. However, men also used to participate in this. Because they have also seen the local / indigenous stoves in their locations and the people making these stoves are also men, so they used to guide as well, that there is an issue in the product, please fix it or improve it. Females told us in their own way, what issue they faced practically. They used to even make videos and share their feedback, on how we could improve. People even send voice notes to complain, you know how easy it is these days. If there is an issue in any product, then just take a picture and send it or make a video and send it. We also give a 1 year warranty so we claim that and give them a new stove or repair the old one for them free of cost.