|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Interviewer name** | INTERVIEWER |
| **Sub-contractor organisation** | ARU |
| **Interview date** | XXXX |
| **Duration of interview audio recording** | 1 hr 16 mins 08 sec |
| **Face-to-face or virtual interview** | Virtual |
| **Interview participant** |
| **Code** | I11 |
| **Participant name** | RESPONDENT |
| **Organisation name** | **XXXX** |
| **Gender** | Female |
| **Stakeholder category** | **Freelance Consultant on energy, poverty and gender** |
| **Country** | India |

**Introduction**

**INTERVIEWER** 00:18

So good morning.

**RESPONDENT** 00:50

Good Morning.

**INTERVIEWER** 00:51

It's great to meet you, after talking to you several times. And I'm really glad that you could take time out to participate in this research project of ours, which is it which aims to obtain a better understanding of energy access, and gender equity in India.

**Consent**

Before we start, I would like to check that you have completed and returned the consent form and restate some points from that.

**RESPONDENT** 01:18

Yes, I have completed and returned it to you.

**INTERVIEWER** 01:24

Thank you. 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 within energy access. So is it okay, if we record the interview for our documentation purposes?

**RESPONDENT** 01:39

Yeah, that's fine.

**INTERVIEWER** 01:42

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 the study, and will be seen only by the research team. Your name and any other identifying feature will not be used anywhere in reports and other publications emerging from the study. And the interview will take more or less about an hour. So can we proceed?

**RESPONDENT** 02:06

Yes, thank you. That's clear.

**Part 1**

**INTERVIEWER** 02:11

So can you start by briefly telling me a bit about your current role and position and the organization that you're working for?

**RESPONDENT** 02:20

Okay, so there's no current role, no current position, in the sense that I'm not attached with a single organization, I work as an independent consultant. So I'm actually attached to several organizations at the moment, I can briefly tell you about maybe one or two of those assignments that I'm working on that relate to energy access. So one is, and this is probably a position I am, I am a XXXX of XXXX, which is the XXXXX, and also a XXXX with them. So in that capacity of the XXXX, I'm supporting right now, a program called XXXX of the XXXX

**INTERVIEWER** 05:13

Could you also briefly tell me about your background?

**RESPONDENT** 05:16

Yeah. So I have a Bachelor's in XXXX XXXX.

**INTERVIEWER** 05:43

How long have you been involved with energy issues?

**RESPONDENT** 05:45

Oh, forever. Since since XXXX,

**INTERVIEWER** 05:53

okay. Yeah, like what kind of projects have you been involved with? I mean, just briefly, yeah,

**RESPONDENT** 05:59

So I worked… actually, I worked with an organization… I worked with XXXXtoXXXX

**INTERVIEWER** 07:29

Looking at livelihood enhancement?

**RESPONDENT** 07:33

Looking at livelihood enhancement... I mean, that's what micro and SMEs do. But more from a policy angle. So more from in Vietnam looking at they have what is called an SME law, which has provisions for women. But to see how it but it is it's been there for now four years, and the app... its application on the ground has been a bit dodgy. So trying to find out how to strengthen that the policy implementation link as far as the SME policy is concerned. Yeah. And in Sri Lanka. So in Sri Lanka, in Sri Lanka, and working with the couple of government agencies, I mean, in Sri Lanka, and in many other places, the main one of the very important bottlenecks in SME development is access to finance. But there are also other non financial factors like the quality of the business development services, the training, the market linkages, the socio economic constraints that women face, and so on. So working with a couple of government agencies, supporting them to develop better business development services for women. So that's, that's what I'm doing in Sri Lanka.

**INTERVIEWER** 09:16

Right. And so this is kind of a lot of it is about energy access, right?

**RESPONDENT** 09:24

Yes, yes, indeed.

**INTERVIEWER** 09:27

Yeah. And any, like, how do you look at energy access within your programs? I mean, how do you gauge the parameters of that?

**RESPONDENT** 09:38

Well, I mean, my programs are centered on energy access. So I'm not sure what you mean by how do I look at energy access, they're all energy access in the sense.

**INTERVIEWER** 09:47

I understand.... what I wanted to ask was that within this, how do you kind of gauge a differential access?

**RESPONDENT** 09:59

Like I said, Access you can define as access is just in terms of being able to reach it, use it. And you can also define access as something that empowers you. Or that helps you to take to I mean, you know, energy is at the end of the day service, nobody wants energy for energy, you want energy for lighting, for cooking, or for whatever else for powering, you're drinking water for health, energizing your health facilities, and so on. So access, the different access lies in all of these, and you can decide where you want to target. So to me, even if you can get a wonderful LPG program going, that meets the needs of the women, which is well aligned with their affordability, which is well aligned with in terms of the distribution system itself, that it goes, it actually reaches the villages it is in the sizes that they want. All of that is good enough, but you can also look at access that how do you do a cookstoves program in a way that empowers women? Can you get women in the supply chains? Can you have a role for them? When you do a productive use of energy? Can you see that they not only use energy, but they also manage it, but they also become owners of energy, you know, energy assets, let's say.So access to me would be all of these. And you can decide where you want to peg your expectations and in you know, work accordingly.

**INTERVIEWER** 11:23

Right. So what are the issues that you see then in the access, like when you're talking about, for example, or any of the electrification programs that you're talking about at policy level? Or like even infrastructure planning? What do you see are the main issues, considering access?

**RESPONDENT** 11:44

Each of these has, each of the applications has a very different set of issues. But let me take an example of what is called mini grids. Okay, so you have these small grid systems where it's an standalone system, which would be supplying electricity to probably, you know, a village or a set of villages, that's a mini grid. So in mini grid systems, one of the sort of basic foundations of a mini grid system is productive use of energy. So if you can use the energy that is applying for income generation, it could be leaflet making, it could be you know, any such... such application, because that increases the load, it increases the demand on the one hand, and it increases incomes. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER** 12:37

Could you just repeat that last bit?

**RESPONDENT** 12:44

So I was talking about productive use of energy. And I said that you could use the electricity generated from a mini grid for increasing incomes in in multiple ways. Right? Now, because you're talking I'm giving you an example of a differential access. So because of the kind of societies we have, and the fact that women are mostly in the informal sector, the kind of businesses that they are engaged in, are mostly based on thermal applications, heat, fuel, LPG, and not even LPG, fuel, wood, mostly kerosene and that sort of thing. The moment it comes to electricity applications, whether it is lathe machines, power looms, any of that it's usually the men who are or who own it. So naturally, the minigrid program or any electrification program would find it much easier to target the men because they have the wherewithal and the necessary resources to make it work. So there is an inherent bias. I would say, that doesn't automatically I mean, if you had a gender, gender neutral, productive use of energy program, it would just go for the low hanging fruits, and those low hanging fruits are absolutely never women. So that's the kind of differentials are less happy unless a manipulate program actually targets women that know I'm going to go and look out for what applications they are in? Are they involved in some agricultural processes, which will benefit from electricity? In order to for them to benefit from electricity? What are the additional things I need, they may need bank loans, they may need market linkages, they may need better products, they may need just discussing with the families to make sure that they have mobility and they're able to engage, they may need confidence skills. So the program has to be willing to invest in all of these to make it a level playing field even for women to enter the field and benefit from you know from the intervention. So there's an automatic there's an inherent bias in like you said before yourself that if it's neutral, it's already biased.

**INTERVIEWER** 14:58

Yeah, yeah. It's not gender neutral, then it's basically gender blind. Yeah. The differential needs that women have....

**RESPONDENT** 15:08

Yeah, needs, opportunities, all of that. Opportunities also, because in many areas, you know, women and their networks are really very well positioned to reach the last mile in terms of energy access, so they are living in villages, they have great networks. So in XXXX, for example, in a project that I was working, we were working with, with a private company, and the private company was, you know, they had their ... let's say, sales points. The last point for the sales points was the petrol pumps on the highways, the market is never beyond that. They just never reached. But these women's groups are actually able to reach the reach the last mile, reach the village areas, which, which was completely out of circuit for the private company. So it's a complementarity, complementarity thing. So it's differential access, but it's also opportunities. It's also missed opportunities.

**INTERVIEWER** 16:09

Right. So I really like the potential of these women to actually network into the really the, like, the gaps, and the holes are sometimes I mean, it's probably similar to like the way Asha workers penetrate into the smallest household levels over here, right? I mean....

**RESPONDENT** 16:29

Absolutely Yeah. And it took us a COVID to realize how important they are....

**INTERVIEWER** 16:41

Yeah. Yeah. But even then they're like, so ill paid and really not supported. So from if you look at it from the policy level, what kind of issues or challenges do you see or also good things that you see, in terms of the state and national level policies?

**RESPONDENT** 17:11

See, you know, I haven't worked in India for many years now. It just not out of choice. It just so happened. So I mean, though I know what's happening. But I can talk, I think more generally. So in terms of policy, the issue is that, and I've seen this in multiple countries that you tend to take the easy way out, and you have a big narrative on them in the, let's say, in a policy in the baseline situation, but you know, so you identify them as victims and all of that, but you never go beyond them and actually have a role for them in the action. You don't have and you don't include them in the results framework. And until now, what if you don't have something in results framework, it doesn't get monitored, if it doesn't get monitored, it doesn't get done. So the shift then added the shift of narrative from victim to a change maker, is something that's really mostly not done. And secondly, because of the sectoral nature of policies that we have,... so there is the energy sector, and there's a power ministry, and there is the new and renewable energy ministry and all of that. And each of them has a very siloed approach to work, which is natural. But if you want to work with women and support them to, you know, say build and energy enterprises, then you are going to have to look at finance, for example, you are going to have to engage with microfinance institutions, you are going to have to make sure if you're working on productive use of energy you will have to make and you're working with the horticulture sector, not enough to give let's say poultry, it's not enough to give just energy for the incubators, right, you also make have to make sure that the quality is good, they're disease free and all of this so all those linkages typically fall outside of the energy sector. And so if you have, you know, MNRE or, or an agency that's very focused on energy, and not looking at these are not willing to look at these outside things, and there's a problem, then these things are sort of considered outside my boundary. And that I that I think is the biggest issue in doing gender in energy access.

**INTERVIEWER** 19:39

The fact that specific departments don't interact each other...,

**RESPONDENT** 19:46

yeah, don't just not interact, but also they don't really consider their mandate. You know, their mandate is to provide energy (hindi) that's all..

**Part 2**

**INTERVIEWER** 20:03

So what does equitable energy access mean to you? What should it look like?

**RESPONDENT** 20:09

It should look like all of this, it should look like it should Firstly, look at women as a separate target groups, separate, specific and important target group. So this means that energy access program should not only provide lighting, it should also work on on street lighting to make the streets safer for women, it should ensure that the primary health clinics have maternity and you know, whatever delivery energised facilities for that, that that women need. So that's one. So separate and target. Water lifting is another area that often electrification programs leave out. And why they leave out is that it's just difficult to manage. That's all. It's a bit, it's a, you know, a facility that just goes into a house and provides electricity is just so much easier to handle than a community based facility, but it has huge impacts on women. So one first point is to identify them as separate and target, you know, separate target group and recognize that they may have different needs. The second I think, is that all energy access programs should focus on economically empowering women, as employees, as entrepreneurs, as managers of services, as owners of energy assets, in productive use of energy, all of that. Yeah, actually, if you do these two, then everything gets falls in place, you would, of course, when you're doing the second, then you'd also invest in building women's skills and capacities. Now, a lot of programs, projects and agencies are working on skills and capacity building, but what happens it just remains there. How much of it actually gets used to actually translate into income generation or strengthening livelihoods that is really not a metric that anybody bothers to track. So one, to treat them as a separate and specific target group that requires attention, they may have different needs. The second is to invest in their capacity, invest in skill building. And the third is to take it a level higher and economically and economically empower them through through everything else that's required.

**INTERVIEWER** 22:32

Yeah, so even the programs that target women, you feel that one of the major gaps is that they are not seen as people who can probably have jobs within that program, they are just looked at as like, for example, XXXX they are just looked at as people who would just receive the cylinder, but not really people manage the network of delivery.

**RESPONDENT** 22:57

So they do have these what they call XXXX or something. Ah, so XXXX , I think did a good attempt, it did not really foresee, I mean, we've had a lot of sort of fall back during the COVID time when a lot of people were actually not able to use the cylinders. And even but even before that, the usage of cylinders was much lower. So I thought so what was your question about XXXX ?

**INTERVIEWER** 23:34

Yeah, I was saying that. I mean, how to like any of the energy programs ... how do they actually include women as participants of the program, and especially participants from a livelihood or an economic point of view, rather than just users of the program or the beneficiaries of the program?

**RESPONDENT** 23:55

Yeah, well, in case of XXXX , I think even as users there are some gaps. I mean, you We all know that the cylinder usage has been less than, less than optimal. And there has been a lot of slip back during the COVID time, in any case, so but as user as as in other roles. Yeah, but mostly in these other roles, you know, other than a couple of organizations like SEWA it's mostly tokenism. You'd have one or two people here and one or two success stories but not really at a large scale that we can you know, write home about

**INTERVIEWER** 24:54

Systemic level, not at a systemic level?

**RESPONDENT** 24:57

Nah, no.

**INTERVIEWER** 24:59

Yeah. I just want you to also expand the definition of gender to include non binary people's access. And tell me your understanding of that and or do you? How do you think I mean, at least women today, we are talking about women's access... But what about non binary people? Same things fit them? Or do we also need to really look at their differentiated needs? Because there is simply and I'll just tell you the background of this question, because I was interviewing people within the XXXX scheme. And, for example, the XXXX scheme is very standardly formatted on a very typical definition of a family. Right, which is, and the household connection comes to the name of the woman. But within that policy framework, so then after that they made one addendum where they had widowed men also as a beneficiary beneficiaries of the system, but they still haven't identified as a separate group - people who live outside this traditional definition of family.

**RESPONDENT** 26:19

I think they have single women, they have

**INTERVIEWER** 26:24

single women households, yes, they have, but they don't really have a structure, which involves understanding non binary, say men, a group of men living together. Yeah. Have understandings of those within that. Yeah. When we talk about gender equity in energy access, we do also want to think of the non binary genders and what, in your opinion would equity and access mean for them?

**RESPONDENT** 26:57

See, I mean, I think at the end of the day, the question is about inclusion and exclusion, and gender is just one form of exclusion. So all of these things that you mentioned, are different forms of exclusion. And of course, they should be looked at how their effect how they impact energy access, I am, I think I just don't have enough data on it, to say anything in a concrete manner, but I'm sure there would be, there would be issues that we have not even looked at it. And we very conveniently don't look at it, because the numbers we assume are very small, and they you know, kind of, you know, (hindi) its okay, it doesn't matter. It's not so big kind of thing, which is absolutely not true. And the other thing I want to say is that even within women, there are categories and categories and categories. And we know that. So we tend to lump it all together into one. But I mean, if you see Nepal, then the sole exclusion, social and exclusion disadvantaged communities, they have some 150 categories of disadvantaged communities, and each of them has, like a different has has another layer of gender on it. So yeah, so there's a lot of gender across the social communities as well, which, which, which should be looked at.

**INTERVIEWER** 28:23

So looking at data, I just wanted to understand how within your work, how do you actually - what's the process you employ to understand energy needs and demands?

**RESPONDENT** 28:36

See, this is this is I mean, it's not rocket science, it's actually very simple. I mean, you can have all kinds of tools and Harvard matrix, and, you know, access and control profile and all of that. But honestly speaking, all it needs is to have some sensitivity to the fact that everybody's not the same, and identify, I mean, there are questionnaires and questionnaires and tools and tools, I really don't want to get into that. But all it takes is if you say if you're building a power plant, and all it takes is three days of going around and talking to different kinds of people, and finding out what their challenges are, what their needs are, what their opportunities are, and what the feasibility is, you know, I mean, we talk about when we do a power plant, we there's a lot of employment on the on a, you know, on site employment happening. So in that onsite employment, what is the feasibility of, say, employing women in different tasks? Now, if you have to do that, if you want to involve women in some construction related tasks, and you have to start working with them a lot before to prepare them for it, because they're just not at the same level as men. So basically, yeah, I mean, it's basically I think, you just need to go and talk to them.

**INTERVIEWER** 29:58

On ground user feedback?

**RESPONDENT** 30:04

I wouldn't even call it if it's a pre project or pre activity thing. It's not even a user feedback. But it's not a user feedback. But it's a, it's just a sort of assessment of what their needs are, what their priorities are, whether they're going to may be able to, you know, what is feasible, what is not feasible, given limited resources, which is the one thing that would really make a difference, I think that's the most important thing, given limited resources, what is the one or two things that would really make a difference, and we have to be open to the reality that in many cases, it's not the energy intervention, it will be something else. So and I've seen this so much in productive use of energy, that it's something else that that will clinch the deal. We often times that, it may be something else, like I gave you the example of poultry, it may be just something else in the scene, not the energy intervention, but it may be some other input, some other complementary input, that may make a bigger difference than energy, we have to be open to that when you're doing your assessments,

**INTERVIEWER** 31:17

okay, yeah. So, this kind of direct interaction would already map the diversity in energy access is what you feel that it will be automatically captured?

**RESPONDENT** 31:28

No, it never automatically gets captured, because it has to, you have to be open, and you have to look, look, look out for it. Because this is a thing that always will get hidden, in fact, very easily. And even when you go to a village and you start talking to women, there are only certain kinds of women, they will they will come come You know, if you have your meeting in a in a in a, you think you want to have it in a community place, or a (hindi) temple or in a central location in a village then only certain kinds of women will come, you will have to seek out the various communities, you'll have to see whether they will come here or you may have to go to them. They would be migrant laborers who will absolutely never come unless you actually go to them and talk to them. So these different categories, they will have to be sought out. Then that also the other thing is also that there's a lot of informal activity going on, you know, like wastelands, for example, there's in India, and in many developing countries, we call it wasteland. But there's really nothing as wasteland ... somebody is using it for something. And if you if you don't look at it, because it's not owned by anybody, then you're going to miss out on all this invisible kind of linkages that exists. So when you build a power plant or a transmission line, and you take away a part of the wasteland, and the people who are going to get affected are of course the people who own the land, but also who don't own the land, but to use it and using it for something or the other. So they'll have to actually be sought out.

**INTERVIEWER** 33:03

Do you depend on any kind of government data statistics, statistics? Do you have adequate data regarding the work you do? Or...

**RESPONDENT** 33:17

Depends, you know, where we are working, but mostly this kind of disaggregated data? Of going what …do we have in energy sector data? we have... what percentage of households have electricity - don't have electricity? we have what percentage of households have LPG and not LPG. That's about it? No, no, you don't have anything more than that. Now, within these within electricity, for example, what is it getting used for? Is it are women being able to use it for productive use? Are they using it only for lighting? Are they using it for something else? What kind of electricity devices do they have? Do they have labor, labor saving devices? Are they able to use electricity for cooking? If they're not able to use it for cooking, what are the bottlenecks there? Do they have access to finance that will help them buy them electricity.. Let's say, you know, induction cookers? So all of that data is not there. Absolutely not there at the government level.

**INTERVIEWER** 34:20

So then it has to be that interaction with people to really understand and map their needs...

**RESPONDENT** 34:26

Yeah, and … frankly, I mean, you do need some amount of data if you're trying to convince the policymakers But beyond that, it's .... It's like, you know, when I find it funny when people want to see how much emissions you know, traditional cookstove emits. I mean, it takes 30 seconds of standing next to the cookstove to know that it's bad for you. So, you know, data sometimes I feel we go overboard with the state data requirements. Some of these things are just really intuitive, and they are as good a basis for an intervention as, you know, 10,000 sample size data is.

**INTERVIEWER** 35:21

Right. How equitable do you think is energy access at household and community level in terms of gender equity?

**RESPONDENT** 35:31

Where?

**INTERVIEWER** 35:35

Community level and household level?

**RESPONDENT** 35:38

No, I mean, this is this is this really varies a lot on the community, on the country and all of that. So, but if you are looking for the common general kind of thing, I will say in electricity, there's very,

**INTERVIEWER** 35:56

from it's fine from, like, wherever you have worked. So, um, again it depends on the, if you're looking at cooking, or if you are looking at electricity, there is very, very little equity, I think... I think women's needs are just not taken, taken on board. Whether it is, you know, mini grid programs, or whether it is rural electrification, all of that, but things are changing. I mean, you know, there's a huge change, even in India from, say, 20 years back, when you went to a village and people households had to electric points, you'd never see one in the kitchen. Now, that's not the case. Now, you do always see a light point in the kitchen as well. So things are changing. But if you look at... if you look at what enterprises there they are women and men are engaged, and then it's almost always the men's enterprises have electricity and are better energized than than the ones that women use. So it's very difficult to give a, you know, black and white answer to this. Because it is just far too many variations. But overall, like, for example, that water lifting was one of the points that we're talking about.

**RESPONDENT** 37:22

(hindi) Yes...

**INTERVIEWER** 37:26

Even when we are talking about point in the kitchen, will it be the first point which comes into the household?

**RESPONDENT** 37:35

See nowadays, again, I'm talking about the last five to six years with this huge expansion after XXXX then, yeah, it's coming together with the rest of the households. But that wasn't the case earlier. And when you spoke about water lifting, then water lifting (hindi) in.... I mean, I've been working on a lot of water projects, which country was that? XXXX .... So there was a huge electrical irrigation, but it's called it's XXXX XXXX. Now, in water, they just didn't look at drinking water. While it could have been done with very little additional investment, in fact, zero additional investments, it is just a question of organizing it. So there is a definite bias in you don't think about it. Okay. They're they're traveling for 4 hours to get water.... But XXXX is because it's income generation, because it's livelihoods. That's the focus. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER** 38:40

Yeah. This is something actually I have talked to people in electricity distribution companies. And I find that this understanding that these four hours that the woman wastes, going and standing in line and getting water and then coming back home, how that can actually have an economic value. But still not an overt understanding is what I found.

**RESPONDENT** 39:12

Yeah, definitely. And the economic value, but at the same time, I think even if they, even if they just didn't have to work those four us and just rested, I think that's when you have an 18 hour working day anyway, if you can get one hour of less work. I think it's a it's a great deal.

**INTERVIEWER** 39:33

That's what I meant. Like, the moment I pointed it out, it was like oh, okay, yeah, that is idle time.

**RESPONDENT** 39:40

No ...Sorry (laughs). No, and also I also find this absolutely, I think, absolutely, what shall I say? sacrilegious. I think argument that you know, when they go for collecting water then they They chitchat and they have a nice time and it's a social time. I mean, come on, come on, it's like you have to do it, you may as well make the most of it. If I had zero social time, and I didn't have to lift water, that's what I would do.

**INTERVIEWER** 40:15

And you and I are women with piped water at home...

**RESPONDENT** 40:21

We would very happily give up on social time, right? If we had to go and collect... and people dont realise, you know how difficult it's becoming to get water now. It's just me that it does matter at one hour, whether it's the hills, it's just so difficult to get water now.

**INTERVIEWER** 40:48

So I mean, this is kind of a basic question, but I would like your, like your knowledge on this, in terms of how you see gender effect the way energy is used in households, like, different tasks?

**RESPONDENT** 41:12

I am not sure I understand the question.

**INTERVIEWER** 41:16

Like, for example, who has responsibility for what kind of tasks within a household? How do... Do men and women use different energy within a household? And how do we see energy decisions being made with the household... if they are...

**RESPONDENT** 41:37

see, I mean, it's a very, there's a huge differentiation between urban and rural here, and there is a huge differentiation between urban rich and urban area. So if you look at Urban rich, of course, is nothing. There is no differentiation, we all get to use as much energy we want for whatever we want, as long as we can afford the appliances. In slightly lower income households in urban areas, I find that the kitchen appliances come towards the end, you buy everything else, and then you'd buy the kitchen appliances. So there's a bit of a thing here. If you look at the urban slums, then it's a big, big, big, big issue because the urban slums I mean, they do they really want to make very small investments in cooking energy. And, you know, it's like, make it go for another 10 days, and then make it go for another 10 days. As a result, a lot of them end up using kerosene, the final total, sum total cost may be higher, but they end up using that and the implications of using kerosene and bad fuels in urban slums with the extremely ill ventilated spaces is very, very high. And that's so that's the urban urban scene. If you look at the rural area, and the other differentiation, I think now it's becoming very clear in urban areas, is this whole COVID related thing, you know, the digital education for children. It's, I mean, even among the people I know, if there are three children. It's a girl who gets the phone the last... for, attending classes.

**INTERVIEWER** 43:21

So if there is one phone, the first claim to that for online education will be for the boy.

**RESPONDENT** 43:26

Yeah. Always. I mean, sadly so, but yes, always. Hmm. And I'm seeing this in multiples large, if the if there are three, I mean, I know families where the three girls and they're all sort of sharing two phones so that it's highly suboptimal. Some is attending two classes, its three by two, basically, you know, the father cannot afford three phones. And in another family where there's a son and a daughter, then the days the son uses ... the daughter doesn't attend in those days, and sooner or later, this girl, this girl or any other girl, like that is going to slip out. You know. And I also know a number of people yesterday, only I had somebody repair my computer and he was telling me that he's having to pull his daughter out of school for one session to bank the son to ensure that the son doesn't lose it. Yeah, because the schools haven't reduced the fee. They're still paying that much. His phone bill is... he told me some amount I don't remember now but big amount every month for you know, he's had to and yeah, so. So definitely there's there's a, there's a inequity there. In rural areas. Of course, the biggest inequity is because of cooking. So, women, girl, child, all of that. Not just In terms of cooking, but also in terms of the time they're having to spend to collect wood, which is going on becoming more and more difficult. So I was in Munsiyari, two years back, and the girls are studying, but they spend their entire weekend, Saturday, Sunday, the days they don't have school, they spend the entire days going and fetching wood. But they're going to have to go further and further and further, they always go in groups, because it's not safe for them to go alone. And it's the older girls who go older girls (hindi) meaning, you know, 11 - 12 standard, because the younger guys cannot carry so much load back. So yeah, I mean, so what can I say to you?

**INTERVIEWER** 45:47

Where was this?

**RESPONDENT** 45:48

This was XXXX

**INTERVIEWER** 45:58

Yeah. Okay, so before, so I like touching upon how even different groups of women there is a lot of difference in access basedon where you are. Do you also see a difference in age groups? Like older women, younger women? Access to energy?

**RESPONDENT** 46:27

Not so much. I mean, it's really, it really depends on the kind of tasks you're involved in. But I do find that the younger girls to have access to they have phones, and they're using the phones, I don't find the phones being used for anything other than WhatsApp, and, you know, music videos and that sort of thing. But nonetheless, I mean, everybody needs that bit of entertainment in life.

**INTERVIEWER** 46:53

Yeah. Do you see any other difference in terms of like, community or ethical?

**RESPONDENT** 47:06

No, I find I see better equity in tribal communities. Where the, I think the tasks are shared much better. So if you look at connection as not, not just women's tasks. And the another differentiation I see is that in some, I mean, I can't really tell you where exactly, but in some communities when it's a question of getting a lot of wood, so all this, you know, (hindi) small small cutting, would be done by the women, lopping and all that would be done, and then when it comes to bring it home in a cart does something that the men would step in.

**INTERVIEWER** 47:51

So there is a sharing of work load...

**RESPONDENT** 47:55

Well, yeah,yeah. So I mean, I don't know if it's good or bad or whatever. But that is what I see. Another thing I've been seeing, especially in.... two trends, I mean, I am not sure which question they're answering. But one is that as land bases are becoming smaller, it's becoming very difficult for tractors to operate for these big labor savings. So, you know, we've sort of gone from a situation of manual to mechanized, but coming back a bit to manual because the land pieces have... many land pieces have become very small and then the land pieces are small then a lot of the physical labor is actually done by the women. Okay, because it's also

**INTERVIEWER** 48:48

Yeah, so, it also immediately becomes like, when it has to be difficult manual labor it becomes the job of the woman

**RESPONDENT** 48:57

Yeah, I mean, that has been seen in the agriculture sector for you know, centuries that the the parts in agricultural mechanization where it has which have sort of progress the most are to have no no overlap with with what the men do and with what the women do. So the ones which are predominantly women tasks are the ones which have had which have seen least mechanization.

**INTERVIEWER** 49:30

and more time consuming and drudgery oriented So Key energy infrastructure...which your work is involved with? You mentioned a few at the beginning.... power grids and...?

**RESPONDENT** 49:53

Hello, yes, I

**INTERVIEWER** 49:55

couldn't get

**RESPONDENT** 49:57

in I couldn't get the question...

**INTERVIEWER** 49:59

yeah. Just wanted to like you, I wanted you to specify which key energy infrastructure you have worked with what all I mean, like you mentioned power grids, anything else you would like to add...

**RESPONDENT** 50:11

Yeah, so grid electrification, grid electrification off grid solar, mini grids, and then cookstoves bio gas... Yeah. All

**INTERVIEWER** 50:26

Right. Oh, when you see new energy, infrastructure and technologies being planned, and provided, I'm not talking about your work, I'm talking about like generally at a governmental level or in a large infrastructure plan. Do you see that there is a differential benefits, benefits that happens between men and women? Do you observe anything like that? Does it come back to the point of gender blind?

**RESPONDENT** 50:58

Yeah, so I think a lot of what we discussed till now was that only you know, so, what are the kind of very see differential access? What are the policy barriers that we see is essentially that only, no?

**INTERVIEWER** 51:14

So in terms of decision making, now, decision making, I would break it up both at household level, as well as community level and then at, you know, policy structures and larger governance, energy governance level. Do you see an any inequity in participation between men and women?

**RESPONDENT** 51:41

Yeah, definitely. I mean, it is, you know, it who holds the purse strings. I mean, who holds the purse strings basically decides where the investment goes. And so I've seen I mean, this is an old example. But I've seen that in cookstoves, for example, and adoption of improved cookstoves or improved devices. As far as long as it didn't involve much money, the woman had the decision making power, but it... when it becomes a question of a certain amount of investment that has to go from the family kitty, then it is not her decision,

**INTERVIEWER** 52:24

then it's a decision. That's also been a major problem with LPG itself, right?

**RESPONDENT** 52:32

Yeah, with anything. Yes. Yes.

**INTERVIEWER** 52:37

So at a household level, I mean, like, actually, what we were discussing right about, you know, the urban rich family who have energy for whatever they want. But even over there, I mean, I have been seeing certain differences, especially when conducting these interviews about how certain mechanized labor saving devices like for example, a washing machine or dishwasher; the investment decisions are not entirely in the hands of the women who manage or handle the jobs. It kind of goes across the economic scale.

**RESPONDENT** 53:24

Yeah. Totally. And I mean, the community the reflection of the household. So it's the same. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER** 53:33

But then at how do you see women's participation in decision making at the bigger scales like governance structures.

**RESPONDENT** 53:44

Same, yeah. Same.

**INTERVIEWER** 53:48

I mean, same thing. You see a lot of women's organizations being involved in consultations, but it's on the consultations. I can't hear you.

**RESPONDENT** 53:58

Yeah, so I said, you see a lot of organization being involved in consultation. But it's only in consultations, not in decision making. So And sadly, so far, most of the decision making for women and in government systems, not in India, or maybe even in India, you see a lot of the gender focal points. Which is..

**INTERVIEWER** 54:37

Hello. Hello. Yeah. Yeah, I can hear you.

**RESPONDENT** 54:47

So in a number of ministries, in various countries, there are these gender focal points. But these are very toothless sort of what shall I say? Very low decision making power via young women given an additional responsibility, which nobody takes seriously. And mostly it is thought that if you have a gender focal point, you know, you've done it, you're gender work is done,

**INTERVIEWER** 55:21

More like ticking a box.

**RESPONDENT** 55:23

Yeah, totally. Okay.

**Part 3**

**INTERVIEWER** 55:29

So, I mean, like your work actually focuses on gender equity within energy access. So could you just kind of elaborate some, like priorities, project priorities, or like internal policies or processes that you employ to focus on this gender equity within your work.

**RESPONDENT** 55:53

So the institutional structure is very, very important. That's definitely the case in XXXX , what they've done is that they have a man looking after this aspect. Not a woman. XXXX. So that is, that is that is one thing. Another good practice has been in some country, in many countries, we've been able to design projects in a way that that take several XXXX together. So all these complimentary inputs that I was talking about, so that that is, you know, they're able to arrange that. Yeah, that's basically it.

**INTERVIEWER** 57:28

Any specific internal processes within your work?

**RESPONDENT** 57:36

Yeah, so these are internal processes. These these some of the things that I mentioned were institutional processes. You do need to build the strengths of the of the gender focal points, or the gender teams definitely. Another thing, I've found that in many organizations, you know, the gender specialists are actually the specialists in gender, all right, but they don't have any domain knowledge of SME or of the particular sector that they're providing inputs into. So that is also very important. So if you have a person working on gender and energy, that person has to have an in depth understanding of how micro hydro works or whatever, you know, energy, people are not interested in gender constructs and gender relations and those sorts of things. So they are interested in gender to the end.... multidisciplinary, yeah, but domain knowledge of the sector that you're supporting is very, very important. That that's the only way they will take you seriously.

**INTERVIEWER** 58:53

Okay, so you feel that the feedback that gender specialist gives what you were saying about often does not get the actual value, because it does not come from an experience of the sector itself.

**RESPONDENT** 59:06

So there's no point telling a person, there's no point telling an energy sector person that you know, do gender equity, or in improve access to improve, empower women, that sort of thing. Or, you know, you need to have transformative changes. These sorts of things don't make much sense to people know, that you need to look at gender relations, you need to tell them that look, when you're doing your baseline study, add these three additional questions if the answer is this do this, the answer is that do that and you built a power plant in a manner that in this manner, which is gender responsive, or your employment... are include these three additional points in your contracts with contractors, let's say who are building the power plants. So that kind of specific, very specific on the ground, I think knowing from project experience is very important. That's an that's an internal thing.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:00:17

So, where you have done these kinds of interventions to close the gaps that you see, how do you see an onground effect? Have you tracked that effect within your projects?

**RESPONDENT** 1:00:33

So, yeah, definitely, it is it is, it is tracked. I was leading XXXX's XXXX . And so what is tracked is, of course, and this is an enterprise development program, working XXXX. So there, what is trapped is, of course, income, productivity, all of that, but growth is important. What is also important is numbers of years in business, you know, you can, I mean, I can track how many businesses I set up. But unless I track that 70% of my businesses have gone through and completed the critical period of three years, might give you a completely different picture. Then decision making is something that you should be tracking, then profits are important, but what is more important is that they don't collapse, right? Because these are normally very vulnerable kind of enterprises, and they collapse at the smallest reason? What is the income being used for? Do they have control over this control over investments and their business? Are they are they are they are they now confident enough to access formal financing, beyond family, friends and money lenders. So those are the sorts of things that differences that that you see.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:02:15

So this vulnerability of the businesses that you're talking about. You also talked about how you know, energy often is not the main reason that for this vulnerability, also, that it could be, I don't know, social issues or other issues.

**RESPONDENT** 1:02:35

So the vulnerabilities of all kinds of vulnerabilities, because he, I mean, these are the sorts of businesses that gonna collapse because a child is sick and has to be admitted, and the shooter got all the money from a business and take the child to the doctor. Right. So that, that is a vulnerability I'm talking about. This is these are in XXXX , I was working with businesses where one season, they didn't have mushroom cultivation, and the shops just closed. The guy who was coming to collect, in a collective sort of thing, it just stopped coming. So that's what I mean by vulnerability. So in that sense, it's less important that they make a huge amount of profit, but it's more important that they're sustainable, and they make a marginal, they make a 10% profit is okay, but they should stay. So that's what I mean by vulnerability. And linking it to the question of complimentary inputs, like I said, that you can give or you can go on making your energy service better in a poultry farm. But if the chicks are dying, because of a disease, that's the thing you need to need to sort the energy can come later. So programs have to be agile enough to incorporate such things.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:04:02

If we talk about policies, do you? I mean, how do you think energy access policies can be more gender sensitive?

**RESPONDENT** 1:04:14

Again, like I said, Those three four things, we should start looking at women as a target group, economic empowerment, skill building, all of those things.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:04:27

These are basically the gaps that you see within ...what about, say national international level policy structures? Do you see there are some gaps there?

**RESPONDENT** 1:04:40

international level policies? What do you mean by international policy structures?

**INTERVIEWER** 1:04:47

Like for example, when we talk about you know, United Nations policies or sustainable development goals, and all these countries sign up for it. So then, a lot of national level implementation programs become tuned to those international level policies. Right? So I mean, from the very top down kind of a thing there, are there corrections required at? I don't know, United Nations policies level or other South Asian policy?

**RESPONDENT** 1:05:18

Yeah. So I would just say you know that the action is where the money is. And so the two things in this, international processes, planning and engagement processes do highlight now the importance of these issues they do. And what is also happening is that some of the global financing mechanisms like the GCF, and Jeff, and, you know, there's been a recent, some I dont know how many million dollar clean cooking fund. So these have started to highlight gender, and hence the organ that the countries that are applying for funds to these institutions are forced to do it. So that's, that's a welcome change. So many of the GEF projects that I see in UNDP, now are, are looking at gender, but even there, you normally find that they would do the minimum requirement and get away with it. So they'd include a target on 30% women participating in training programs, which is the easiest thing to do, and leave it at that. So but yeah, it's I think it's a it's a it's a good start, that has definitely happened. These international climate financing initiatives are looking at gender more seriously than before...

**INTERVIEWER** 1:06:44

what about other policies like social policies? What impact policies have on energy?

**RESPONDENT** 1:06:55

Dont know, what is social policies?

**INTERVIEWER** 1:06:59

I mean, like, for example, well, like if you look at XXXX - that itself is, can be considered even a social policy. policy. Also a social program, targets, women exiting harmful polluting environment?

**RESPONDENT** 1:07:28

So can you explain that question to me again, I didn't quite understand what the question was,

**INTERVIEWER** 1:07:32

I just want to understand if you see relevant social policies, which have impact on energy equity. So I can tell you that, you know, when I was talking to XXXX , she was talking about how, even like a lot of social justice from domestic violence, how it also impacts energy equity, because it frees up the women, once those issues, they feel empowered to free up the women to actually think of economic productivity. And so actually, trying to access any kind of saw that interlinking between a lot of social programs and energy. Right, just asking if such overlaps? I mean, it's fine.

**RESPONDENT** 1:08:23

I would just say thanks, XXXX . Yes, correct.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:08:28

Very interesting. Because they started working on a lot of these issues coming from the energy side, because they found that those issues were impeding the women to actually participate in energy equity. Yes.

**RESPONDENT** 1:08:43

Question? Absolutely.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:08:45

So. So imagining that there is no policy or financial constraints for a moment... what in your view would be like a best practice solution for achieving gender equity within energy access?

**RESPONDENT** 1:08:59

Tell me the problem and tell you the solution. What are you trying to address?

**INTERVIEWER** 1:09:07

Equal access to energy ... that being the problem? ...

**RESPONDENT** 1:09:15

no, no, what I mean is that if they should tell me a particular country or particular sector, you know, then it's easy to say,

**INTERVIEWER** 1:09:22

you can talk about any context you are familiar with. I'm just looking at you. What is the best practice you think should be employed for gender equity...

**RESPONDENT** 1:09:36

if I had unlimited money, and global platform, I would make (a) I would make adherence to the minimum conditions of gender mandatory for every single development project. I would also give extra power.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:09:55

What do you mean by this one? What do you mean by minimum conditions agenda?

**RESPONDENT** 1:10:00

Yeah, so minimum conditions is to ensure that you look at their needs, you treat them as a separate target group and you address their needs in a full and complete manner. So that's what I would say. And then I would give extra points for looking at empowerment. Economic Empowerment, I think is a very big thing. So all these international funds should aim higher, they have money, they should aim higher, they should give money only when these higher order objectives are met, they should start tracking the higher order objectives and not just a number of women participating in training programs. These would be contingent. We would also link energy access, money, rural electrification, make mandatory things like energizing health clinics. You know, ... domestic water supply, make all of these mandatory for large electrification programs. So yeah, do those.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:11:10

And what do you think would be the challenges in achieving this?

**RESPONDENT** 1:11:15

No, I don't think any of this is particularly challenging. It's, if it is enforced, it will happen. I don't see any technical challenges. Yeah,

**INTERVIEWER** 1:11:26

There are no technical. No, in fact, that's, that's what's crazy that it actually does not require too much of financial outlay also.

**RESPONDENT** 1:11:35

Yeah. Correct.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:11:39

And in your work, how are you working towards achieving?

**RESPONDENT** 1:11:48

Just the things that I have been mentioning, I don't know what additional I can say.

**Part 4**

**INTERVIEWER** 1:11:56

Right, we did talk about decision making bodies and gender representation, I would again, expand this concept of gender into including non binary gender. Do you see non binary people participating within the energy structures?

**RESPONDENT** 1:12:13

I don't see. But I like I said, I don't know enough about the topic. I'm sure there must be issues, but I don't know what they are.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:12:24

So you have talked about global finance processes. And how do you think they I mean, you have talked about what how they should be more gender aware? Is there anything else you would like to add in terms of finance processes for, especially for renewable energy?

**RESPONDENT** 1:12:47

No, just just just for them to aim for economic empowerment and not just participation. Yeah.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:12:58

How do you think they can aim for empowerment?

**RESPONDENT** 1:13:07

So the empowerment piece would be to ensure I mean, enterpreneurship development, if you're doing it through that, it's a basically a very comprehensive package, which is technical training, but it's also leadership trading. It's regular mentoring and coaching. It's linking with other sectors. So all of these are good practices, it's access to financing access to markets, all of these will have to be built into the programming itself, which a typical hardcore energy access program doesn't want to look at mostly. So these will have to be built into a comprehensive back.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:13:41

Why is it not done?

**RESPONDENT** 1:13:43

Because it's complex, because it's complex, it takes time. It's a very slow and painstaking process. That's all cost money. So XXXX should have a timeframe of at least 10 years. Yeah. Hey....

**Part 5**

**INTERVIEWER** 1:14:05

yep, you're done. Okay, yeah. Anything else you think we have not discussed in this topic you would like to ask?

**RESPONDENT** 1:14:23

Not really, you know, nowadays, there are a lot of organizations working in this sector. So that's a good thing, which is hugely different from, you know, even a decade back. So, no, I don't think there's anything we've missed.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:14:42

Any follow up questions that may come up, would you be available to answer them over an email or conversation?

**RESPONDENT** 1:14:52

conversation is better than email or take very long.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:14:56

Yeah, either. Either. Whatever is convenient for you. Yeah, and yeah, you will have already told me given me a lot of leads on... I should talk about talk to so I have actually managed to start off with that...

**RESPONDENT** 1:15:20

You spoke to XXXX ?

**INTERVIEWER** 1:15:26

Yeah. Quite an amazing career and knowledge base. Yes.So thank you very much for your time, Soma. This was fantastic.

**RESPONDENT** 1:15:42

No problem.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:15:43

I really wanted to talk to you. Thanks so much for your time. I should get back to you with the transcript.

**RESPONDENT** 1:15:54

Yeah. Thanks. most welcome.

**INTERVIEWER** 1:15:57

Thanks a lot. Thank you.