**Transcript 16**

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| **Interviewer name** | **XXXX** |
| **Sub-contractor organisation** | **ARU** |
| **Interview date** | **xxxx** |
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| **Face-to-face or virtual interview** | **Virtual** |
| **Interview participant** |
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 | **P16** |
| * **Participant name**
 | **XXXX** |
| * **Organisation name**
 | **XXXX** |
| * **Gender**
 | **Female** |
| * **Stakeholder category**
 | **Development Authority / Planners**  |
| * **Country**
 | **Pakistan** |

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much XXXX for joining us today and agreeing to participate in the interview. First for five minutes I will read you a checklist. Just say yes or no.

So have you completed and returned the consent form?

RESPONDENT: Yes, I did.

INTERVIEWER: 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.

RESPONDENT: Jee

INTERVIEWER: Is it OK if we record the interview for our documentation purposes?

RESPONDENT: Yes. That is ok. No problem.

INTERVIEWER: The recorded interview will be transcribed for analysis and a copy of the transcript will be shared with you for your approval.

RESPONDENT: Great, thank you.

INTERVIEWER: 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.

RESPONDENT: Okay.

INTERVIEWER: The interview will take more or less 1 hour.

RESPONDENT: Alright.

**Part 1: Introduction**

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let’s start. So part 1 is introduction. Can you start by briefly telling me a bit about your current role and the organization that you work for?

RESPONDENT: Umm okay, just let me know that um is it, is it, the interview is supposed to be in english only or can be bilingual?

INTERVIEWER: It can be bilingual. However, you are comfotable, because XXXX has to translate and trasncribe this. So we had already told them that whichever language our interview participants are comfortable in, they will respond in that.

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, so um okay. So, the thing is that right now I am working as a XXXXof newly formed private organisation which is called ‘XXXX.’ Umm this company is wholly on XXXX and this company is focusing on the IT infrastructure, IT and critical power infrastructure of um this organizations projects. Um these projects includes motorways um and these projects also includes the other um developmental projects that any um XXXX takes up in future. So primarily right now our focus is motorways IT infrastructure… the complete IT and critical power infrastructure, we are focused on that plus on communication infrastructure which includes deployment of fiber optic cables and um you know establishing network um from remote areas to the headquarter so this is what um my role right now is um and it’s, it’s expanded allover Pakistan because we are working on um from XXXX which is XXXX um so just a couple of motorways are out of our ambit, most of the motorways we are working on it.

INTERVIEWER: OK. Excellent. So, in brief, can you tell me a bit about your background and how and why you got into this line of work?

FA: So basically I am a XXXX

INTERVIEWER: so for your own business, who was your customer base?

RESPONDENT: Our customer base was organizatioan, it was not the individual um people, individual were not our customers, organizations were our customers. We were working in the B2B and B2G, sectors so we used to provide system upgradation and system development for and deployment for organizations.

INTERVIEWER: And all this work you have done, to what extent were you involved with energy issues, particularly with regards power and what projects or programs have you done with regards energy access?

RESPONDENT: So it’s exactly like this. Actually, what used to happen was that because primary focus was of course IT systems or transformation of systems, but like I said that whenever you are talking about you know IT systems incorporation in any organization so power is the critical thing to work on. So we started working on power and energy um for that matter um we started working on that. And like I said when we are doing energy access or energy management for systems, then we need to identify multipple power sources that can be simultaneously provided.

So one, we are getting power from our general distribution, which is commonly called XXXX but it is like any DISCO that is providing you, selling you power. This power is not available everywhere, that’s a thing we cannot change and you know we cannot do anything about it but then your second source of power or third source of power to provide the redundancy and to provide the stability to the system, that we needed to design. For that you have battery banks, that we manage with inverters or UPS. In addition, we worked on solar power.

So energy access is a critical part of that. Whenever, wherever you have to do an IT transformation, energy access is the prerequisite, if you don’t have the energy um in any form, you cannot do any you know you cannot install any system over there because that cannot work anyway so energy access has always become the primarily and prerequisite of any of our system that we are supposed to work on. Similarly when we talk about our motorway’s business here, so because our motorways are connecting remote areas for example XXXX, for example XXXX so in between there are many locations where power or stable grid was not available. Ok.

So we had to um design and we had to work on access of energy for the, for those areas um yes we applied it for and we had worked upon that transformers should be installed there which is a part of our general distribution. Let me give you a small example. There were some locations on XXXX where power was not available and all the villages around that location did not have electricity, so for the sake of the motorway, we installed transformers and created grid access, so automatically those villages on site also got access to electricity then.

So, so whenever we work on any system we have to you know work on this thing. Similarly, um there was a problem of stable power so we started working on and establishing and develop um providing solar pv systems. And now when we install a solar PV for the motorway, and run our systems on it, then the community in the surrounding areas around the XXXX.. they start believing in it, so automtaically there is an indirect effect for energy access. It is not a direct effect, it is an indirect effect. So I remember that um motor, on Islamabad-Lahore motorway there is a place called um I am sure you know that, ‘XXXX. A solar PV system was installed for our toll XXXX. Due to some issues, there was a problem and it was not working. So when we took over, we started fixing it and reinstalled it. It become a common norm, people who are from the allied areas, when they pass by they ask is your solar pv system, it’s a general question they asked and then you tell them, that yes absolutely, it is working, and our system is running on it. So they started believing that the system is working, otherwise when you try to start an awareness campaign, and try to make people realize that solar PV works, so they think this is some kind of marketing. So a working system becomes our indirect marketing.

Um similar thing is going to happen in XXXX because we are installing solar systems at a couple of XXXX, um exactly same that we have done in XXXX. In XXXX our new toll plaza has been developed so the solar pv installation is currently happening right. And now when the installation is happening, so the allied small businesses like hotels and shops near by have also converted their systems to the solar pv system. The only reason is they see that if this big organization or this organization is investing on it, that their toll plaza will run on it for 24 hours, is working then that means we should go for it as well. And the police come and ask us that do the people still have the misconception about solar… so the thing is these things improve energy access.

If you say that we are specifically focusing on providing a community with energy access, then that is our CSR wing, that works on energy access for schools, particularly in remote areas. The main reason for getting in to solar was because there are XXXXschools there and solarizing them was to reduce the electricity bills and also to curtail loadshedding. Anyway, since I have recently joined, I may not have a lot of information about these things but the organization is already working on a lot of things.

INTERVIEWER: One more thing you said…

RESPONDENT: One more thing, um XXXX XXXX which is our parent organization for XXXX, is a XXXX so um as the XXXX um our focus is on XXXXand energy access projects are a part of that. For example we are working on the XXXX, the ones who are developing it, so energy access .. I mean energy access XXXX. This is a joint consortium with XXXX and a XXXXX company that is going on right now.. So this is our parent company, parent organizations um contribution to energy access.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, tell us, which policies influence your organization or your work or dictate your activities at the national or provincial level?

RESPONDENT: Energy policies?

INTERVIEWER: Yes.

RESPONDENT: Can you just give me 2 minutes, I need to look at something urgently. So in the national polices, there are two things. So our parent company’s XXXXfor example XXXX and things like that, so these ofcourse align with national polices. Because these are projects that the government has made an investment on or given a loan or financed in any way. So these things work along those policies.

As far as energy policy is concerned, we haven’t put this in writing any where but when we need energy access for our systems, these policies hinder us for example, if the energy policy had a provision for mini-grids, then instead of making all the effort of bringing the distributive generation to a remote location, which takes years of efforts and a huge amount of money is spent on it – so we can save time and money and effort and invest and develop a local mini-grid for our use.

Similarly, when our XXXXare also happening, or any other work, for that matter if the motorway is being built, so where the motorway is being built, we need to organize temporary settlements for people working on the motorways. For these temporary settlements you can’t install a fixed transformer, so energy always becomes problematic for us in that way and it doesn’t remain cost effective. Meaning, we pay a huge cost for something that is not for a fixed time so we need to withdraw it so if the energy policy gave us the liberty so maybe we would use that cost for mini-grids. So when our project ends, we can’t pick up that mini-grid and leave. So we can handover and transfer that to the local communities as well.

So local communities can also you know become part of that um and its our policy to involve and facilitate the local community whenever we have our setups um for you know for, for building better um you know coordination and communication. All our work is not possible without the local communities so our policies, especially the energy policy and the renewable energy policy, if this could be eased out so it becomes easier for us.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so I wanted to ask that how is it decided that where the motorway will go from, and which local communities will benefit or provided access? Who takes these decisions?

FA: where it will go is decided by the planning commissions in the National Action plans. And the technical leg work, in terms of what will be the route, which areas or province or cities it will connect or run through, and how many villages or towns are enroute, will they all be connected… This is all technically the task of the NHA, National Highway Authority. The NHA does the feasibility of all this. NHA has all the data and information of what work has been done or not, or what needs to be done. So at the national level, when the policy is being developed at the planning commission, or any planning is being done, for example this year, we need to initiate this XXXX project, which is like XYZ motorway or highway so they take the feasibility from there and at max, upgrade it if its very outdated that what the latest feasibility will be. But identification of routes, and identification of what needs to be connceted is all under NHA’s ambit.

They come to us, when the route planning has already been done and even NHA has already acquired the land as well, where you have to construct the road, that land must be belonging to someone as well so you need to acquire the land… so all these things have already happened so XXXX.

INTERVIEWER: XXXX

RESPONDENT: XXXXX

INTERVIEWER: Please explain CSR a bit.

RESPONDENT: See, this organization, all organizations do CSR or corporate social responsibility under which they make some spend for community development. So in this organization as well, every time depending upon the financial health of the organization, CSR activities are planned and that includes demand and other things. Because we have a lot of elements on ground, so demands are generated from there. It can be identified that if for example there are schools, so our priority is that schools are made and communities are provided with these facilities.

Other than schools, dispensaries in villages, because, like I said, we are working in areas that are the remotest areas for example, we are working on this project in which we are building infrastructure in XXXX, where all the communities in which we are working don’t have schools, don’t have dispensaries so when we have to work there, its not something that we work there for 2 days or 2 months and then it is ended. When we have to work there for the development of so many years so automatically, we need to in a harmonius relationship with the local community, so that they don’t have problems when we are working there.

CSR activities are essential for the development of this harmonious relationship so based on needs assessment of that location, somewhere they may need dispensaries, somewhere they may need schools, somewhere some other kinds of investmenst may be needed. So we work accordingly and whatever we are working on, either it’s school or dispensaries or anything else so energy access becomes part and parcel of it.

Because if you are making a school there, you will need energy access. If you are making a dispensary, you will need energy access. If you open a technical institute, because we have opened technical institutes as well in some places, we need energy access.

And we need to work ourselves as well so automatically we need power energy for that. So Energy access becomes part and parcel of that so whatever work we are doing, along with that, our feasibility is incomplete without adding energy access.

**Part 2: Understanding of the Issues**

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let’s go to part two. So the first question is that what does equitable energy access mean to you and what would it look like?

RESPONDENT: Equitable? Um with regards to gender?

INTERVIEWER: This you will tell us. But first tell us generally what you you thing equitable energy is and then the next question is on gender.

RESPONDENT: So I personally believe that when we talk about equitable energy access then everyone living in Pakistan irregardless where he or she is living, irregardless what is his or her economic condition um irregardless of what is his or her health condition and gender of course um he or she or anyone has um should have access to basic electricity. Which includes light particularly after sunset, and includes fans and heating systems, depending upon the weather. I also include the energy we require for cooking and food so I believe that everyone is, is um what shall we say, um should have at least um this, this much of energy for everyone so this is what energy access, equitable energy access to me is.

Yes, because no competition exists in the national policy, so distribution particularly is a national subject. So, when distribution is a national subject, so then for distribution there is a mechanism. They have to see how much population is there, what is the requirement there, how is this investment going to contribute to the GDP or whatever. So they extend the grid up till there and make the investment accordingly. So, if I don’t live in an industrial state and I live in some small village, and my village does not have any large agricultural produce either, but my village is a small… is sort of self sufficient but if I live in a place where I don’t get energy because my village doesn’t contribute to the GDP directly, then it is unfair for me.

INTERVIEWER: And what does gender equity in energy access mean to you?

RESPONDENT: Okay so when we are talking about energy like I already said that equitable energy is I think irregardless that it is male or it is female or it is unidentified gender… that person has needs for example need to shelter from cold, need to shelter from heat, need for light in the dark, need to eat food, so for all these needs energy access is required for him and we are not living in you some you know um stone age era that we tell him that he should burn fire wood. I don’t even consider burning firewood environmentally friendly because we are cutting trees, and then the smoke and gasses we are emitting in the environment, are also dangerous. If we begin to add up these small small things then we will be able to realise the environmental impact of not providing energy, clean energy to such a remote location. There may be an economical impact of not providing energy that may not be visible but the environmental impact is going to affect the economy of the country as well so this is what I believe but that’s an ideal situation that I believe should have.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, tell us do you think gender equity should be a priority for policy and interventions?

RESPONDENT: See, I will say the same thing again that gender... Although I am one of the pioneers of the um women in energy or women in renewable energy and all these things are there but the context is different. When we talk about energy access, so I think gender is irrelevant. Human is relevant, so in the policy as well, human is relevant, gender is irrelevant unless otherwise if you mention a specific gender in the policy, then you will have to mention the second gender and the third gender but in my opinion policy needs to be genderless, it has to be genderless. It should only be human oriented but it should not be gender oriented.

INTERVIEWER: Okay. Tell us, like you mentioned CSR in between, CSR takes into account demand so tell us that how does your organization determine energy demand and how does it identify consumer needs?

RESPONDENT: Like I told you, whenever we talk about demand we are considering it from the point of view of the community we are working around. So we conduct a general survey and we find out what their needs are for example there is no light or water or schools or hospital, dispensary, so we identify all these needs like this. Plus all our decision makers in that area, they meet some members of the local community to ask them as well that if we want to do something, what do you want us to do. So people’s demands are there that you make us a school or do this or do that. I don’t think so, but then again, I only joined recently, and may not be able to provide you some information accurately, but I don’t think that any community has ever said that provide us with electricity in our village. But they definitely say there is no school, make a school, there is no hospital, there is no dispensary, there is no doctor, there is no water.. so electricity becomes for them … probably there are two reasons for this: first, they think that providing them electricity is not our job so they don’t demand for it and the sceond reason could be that it is not their priority. Their priority is other things but when we begin to invest in other things, then we realize that energy is a pre-requisite of this particular thing, so then we find a way that how can we provide this prerequisite.

INTERVIEWER: So these surveys that you mentioned, is there any gender consideration in this specifcally do you talk to women to identify their needs?

RESPONDENT: The nature of every location is different .. if you are in XXXX, working in KP and if you try that they make you talk to the women, so you will find out that they will make you talk to the women later, first they will bring out their guns. So we, we also have to understand the, the local culture, community culture what is that like. So normally, we try to guage by observation and in places dispensaries or hospitals are demanded, then lady doctors are as well.

INTERVIEWER: Your voice cut a little bit, can you please repeat the last line?

FA: Yes, I was saying that normally in communities where dispensaries are demanded, they make an additional demand for lady doctors. So it’s not just that they want dispensaries and doctors, they also want lady doctors. So I think this is something they consider their own family, you know cultural requirement as well. So, gender is not explicitly a focus but everything we do has a gender focus. Although we have less women in the field and in the work force, we do have women.. it’s not like women are not there, yes the ratio would be very low but we still have females working in, in different you know setups for the field.

INTERVIEWER: Next question is, how equitable is energy access at community and household level in terms of gender equity do you think.

RESPONDENT: at the household level, energy access.. if some household has energy then that energy is with both female and male. I don’t see… it can’t happen that a man has it and a woman does not. But, yes, it’s impact on females and males can be different, for examples males might only need it for you know um reading or for some entertainment purposes or something like that but females would definitely need it for you know making all, a lot of their chores easier. For example, if they do any work at night and they can’t do any work after sunset otherwise and now they have light so they can work. So impact and usability utility for females and ames can be different but if there is energy access, then it is accesible to both. If there is no then it is not accessible to anyone.

INTERVIEWER: You have also answered the next one, but tell us a little bit how does gender relate to energy access in specific domain challenges such as clean cooking?

RESPONDENT: Again, like I said, if there is electricity, then there is. Another important thing is that in many areas in Pakistan, there is electricity but no gas. So in terms of clean cooking, if we don’t have electricity and if we don’t have gas, then we don’t have any other option of clean cooking. So we use kerosene oil based or wood for cooking so this is another challenge for the organizations that should be working on it.

In many communities and many places, electricity is there, right… but clean cooking facilities are not there and people don’t even understand how can they provide clean cooking um facility to you know… over there … this is something that needs to be addressed and this is something that can only be addressed by understanding the um the requirement by the females. The people who are working generally on energy access, they need to talk to women so they can understand… if they genuinely understand what things are there.

So when we are talking about energy access I personally feel and again the equitable energy access like I already said that does not only limit to electricity, ok. It goes beyond electricity which includes um the heating system and that heating system might be solar based and it can also be um the you know the gas. And when we talk about the community level, so biogas is another thing for which we can say that if we go for clean cooking. Even today in our rural setup, women use cow dung for energy, but they are using it in a raw form. So if we installed biogas planta there and create those setups, then the same cow dung will be used for cooking but it won’t emit methane in the environment and it won’t be harmful um for all the skin diseases that females have because of you know um working with cow dung with bare hands.

So if the cow dung will go there, then this element of energy access excluding electricity this is something which is mostly neglected and people donot and the biggest reason for this is that in energy access, electricty distribution is with a different company and gas distribution is with a different company and when we take about alternate energy, then that is another organization … and I don’t think that organization has any discretion… they only talk. I am sorry you are recording but that’s a fact that I can say.

INTERVIEWER: These are the realities we want to understand. Like you mentioned, then there is some gendered aspect when we talk about clean cooking?

RESPONDENT: Yes, exactly.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, tell us, do different groups of women benefit from access to energy differently; for example, does energy use or access differ among older and younger women, income groups or where they are based in the community, or religious, ethnic or cultural groups?

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, absolutely. Umm I won’t say religious, I mean I won’t comment on the religious, because I have never focused on that. But one thing is important on the religious element as well. If tthere are Muslims and they have got the energy access then they would be able to maybe wakeup for Tahajjud prayers and they would be able to you know ease out their early morning and late night prayers.. because of because now they’ve got the energy and they can do it.

That is one thing, but I I won’t comment on anything related to religion particularly, because again, maybe there are some rituals that can be performed more easily if energy access is there, but energy is not a pre-requisite for religion. So let’s leave that, but for the other segments..

For example they’re, they are from different income groups, yes they utility their um is very different. Let me give you a small example, one of my friend is based in Multan and she has um she has her own business which is related to um traditional craft. She works with craftsmen who make traditional craft. So they have these women who work from home. So she develops and design these crafts and then teaches them and then the women make it which includes embroidery, and other kind of traditional stuff. So she has provided solar lamps to the women who come to work with her because she had one order, which was a large order on a short deadline and when she asked these women to rush the work, they said that after sunset we can’t work. We have only 2 to 3 hours to work on this because before that we need to do our house chores, look after the livestock and all these things. So she has provided them solar lamps or solar lights and after that their efficiency increased because then those women started working after sunset as well. And whenever they find time they started working on it so they are no longer timebound that we can only do this work before the sun sets, so of course energy access has utilization for them.

Now if you give someone in an urban center a solar lamp and if there is loadshedding then maybe they will use it, otherwise they will have no use of it. But if you gave the same thing in a location like that, the utilization will increase. Similarly solar lights…, you must have seen this program liter of light at some places which was done by Pepsi. So when they put up these lamps made of plastic bottles in some locations, their benefit was that in those communities, there was no in-house toilet access, people had to go to the fields to relieve themselves. So females used to go for their own purpose when the sun sets so when they used to go in the fields in the dark, snakes and scorpions were a constant threat and they had a lot of issues because of it. Now they still go after sun sent but now, on the way they have a light which in which they can you know make access easier um so this is another learning that I have seen… This was shared with me by Waqas who was managing this project.

In 2015 – 2016, I had initiated a project called XXXX. The purpose of this was to educate women in the rural communities about the utilization of solar for cooking and lighting purposes and for water heating purposes as well so we planned a training for that. We arranged a three-day training at the XXXX. Women from different rural setups participated, which included women from XXXX whose focus was not on lighting at all, their focus was only on water heating systems because for them light is not a problem, water heating is a problem. It’s a cold area and in winters heating the water, if gas is not there, heating the water is a problem. So their focus was on solar water heating. Similarly, we had women from xxxx and they were focused on cooking. They said that we burn wood, we have to go out and collect firewood. So we want to learn how we can use solar for cooking. So they really appreciated and liked the parabolic solar cookers. They said our kitchens are open air anyway because we cook on wood.. so we can always uses these as well instead of wood. They also liked the box solar cookers and they would ask questions that what would be cooked in it or not so they could learn if it would be useful for them or not. So they were having questions that we didn’t think of. And when we told them that it is not difficult to make these and we could teach them to make it themselves, so there level of interest increased much more.

It was very unfortunate that we did not have enough resources to provide them with technical training, so we could only deliver the awareness campaign. But if we had more resources, then we would have definitely gone into those areas and taught them how to make solar parabolic cookers or solar box cookers that is not at all difficult and does not require any sophisticated technology. It doesn’t involve anything that is not available to us locally. If that had happened, their lives would have become much simpler. When we told them that whatever they are cooking in the solar box, the interesting guarantee of that is that it will not burn. So they were so happy to know and asked that if they would be tending their livestock and left something to cook in the stove, it would not burn? So we said, it wouldn’t burn, it would only stay warm. So they were also happy that they wouldn’t have to reheat the food.

So, so we have to reach out to them to understand their requirements, similarly we had a participant from XXXX and she said that we have ample sunshine. Bascially she was interested in the parabolic plate and she said that we have so much sunshine, we can cook so many things on this, including fish… so these things were important to them so that is something.

And the most interesting thing, in Pakistan XXXX has this technology and they are working on it since the 80’s. Unfortunatley, the technology has not been mass commercialized because XXXX is a government institution. If we can mass commercialize these technologies… if someone has to make a solar parabolic cooker, it would cost Rs 40-50,000 or or may be Rs 30-40,000, for a good one.. if it is mass commercialized then cost would be even less than Rs 5,000 so when cost reduces with mass commercializtion, automatically access increases.

INTERVIEWER: Ok next question.. no no continue..

RESPONDENT: Similarly, biogas plants, XXXX or Government of Punjab did the same thing that they implemented them with government funding. These also need to be mass commercialized. Unfortunatley, people are now importing these from China which does not make any sense. If it can be made locally, it should be mass commercialized and we start creating awareness about it. If you have one buffalo or cow in your home and your family comprises of 8 to 10 members, so the dung produced by that animal is enough for you to run your kitchen. And people still do that even today. But they use it raw due to which health hazards increase.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you so much. No, you have given really interesting examples, that will be very useful for use. So, you mentioned that your own organization provides energy infratrsucture and technologies… and maybe you can’t relate this directly, but what in your view are the differences between men and women in terms of who benefits? Are there any benefits?

RESPONDENT: In our systems, there are no gender based benefits, we cannot identify any. If we talk about CSR activities, then maybe there is an impact. For example if we made a dispensary, is it only for females or males or for both. If there is a school, is it a girl’s school or boy’s school or for both. So that makes a difference, but indirectly. But directly, our project is equitable to both genders and there is no problem like this. And like I said, we don’t work directly with communites, we work indirectly with the, so that is why there is a difference.

INTERVIEWER: So, the decision making about various technologies and appliances that are used is the homes, or purchased, is there any difference in decision making or in financial decisions?

FA: Definitely there are. The reason for this is that mostly our households revolve around the males of the house, be it father or brother or anyone male. And they also control the finances. So naturally, whenever there is a decision like this, so priorotizing that at the time… for example, you need a washing machine and an airconditioner for the house. Both are mega investments, right… but now tell me, if you only have money for one thing, what will the decision be based on?

It all depends upon, it all depends upon every households… what should we say.. it depends on the structure or culture and their preferences. So, what happens is that families that are well educated or urbanized, females play a vital role in decision making there. In rural communities, because my experience is not in the rural communities, I have never lived there and my experience is very limited with them. So I can’t comment on their decision making. But in urban, this depends on… I think these things are more related to your financial priorities at that point in time and need comparison is based on that. I don’t think this is based on gender, but then again, I am not the authority, maybe people’s decision is based on it.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, and if this decision making is done on larger scale, at city scale or even provincial scale, then are their any gender differences in decision-making?

RESPONDENT: Definitely there are, but unfortunately, we … okay so in our communities’ decisions or our cities decisions, unfortunatley amongst our decision makers, or the positions for making the decisions, there is no gender parity in that. It’s not part of the you know the system, gender parity is not the part of the system um so it happened that if you are discussing a similar topic or you want to take a decision that directly concerns the female population of the city or the community or the province. But your decision making committees or the people sitting there in the bureaucracy, there is not a single women there.

This is unfortunate, but I think this is not by system design, I mean these people don’t even realize… let me give you a small example, a short time back, there was a discussion going on about women businesses at a mega round table at which representatives from XXXXwere present; people from business fraternity were there, representatives from the XXXX as well. There was also a representative from XXXX, but it was very unfortunate that I was the only female sitting there. And I raised that question when we are talking about female business, I mean businesses led by females and their access to finance and debt financing but it was so surprising that you do not have the stakeholder for whome you are having this discussion, you haven’t invited them to participate. And if you have invited them, then you have not ensured their participation. So the whole hall which was comprising more than 100 people and I was the ony female and the other female was from XXXX who was representing XXXX. But she was there in the observer capacity so I mean for me it was very surprising. At that point in time, I was having my own business so I was representing this, but this happens. And till the time I raised it, that we are talking about women entrepreneurs and female led business but they are not even present here in the audience, so how can you talk about it. Then it was very interesting that they were talking about tax break for women, and I was the only one who oppoesed a female.. gender based tax break and all the other male members in that committee have been saying that no, you should give females tax break. And I was the only one saying don’t give it, we don’t need it.

INTERVIEWER: why were opposed to do that?

RESPONDENT: So I was opposing it because, first, I don’t believe in subsidies. So if they give me a tax subsidy or any other subsidy, I know the impact it is creating on the overall economy. But more than that you feel it to be a privilege given to you or you feel lesser being… the whole community gives you an impression that that you are a lesser being and that is why we are giving you this compensation. So we did not want that.

Second thing was which was more important, a lot of men are running the business and they register it on the names of their mothers or wives and they are taking the tax breaks. So my point was and, and then the question that you you have asked me, it was the question that was asked to me by the XXXX representative, he said that you are the only female here and you are the only one who is opposing this um you know um the recommendation not to give females tax break. And then I said that just think about it, females do not need the tax break, they need the break throughs, you don’t let us have the break throughs but you give us the tax break, we don’t need that so the, the people who are so endorsing tax breaks are the people who are going to take benefit from it and their wives won’t even know about it. Their mothers won’t even know that the business is registered on their name. and this happens, so that ws one reason why I opposed it. So I simply said that don’t make any policy which can be misused, make the policies which are equitable.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so the last question in this, is gender equity in energy access different between urban and rural contexts?

RESPONDENT: Absolutely, absolutely agree. I think I have spoken about this before but I would just add on to it. In urban areas, energy access is genderless, or it is not very gender oriented. It doesn’t make a difference on gender. Either there is access or no access. It doesn’t matter if there is a female or a male. It is not like a daughter’s room will not get electricity and son’s room will get electricity. But yes, the difference can be in running the air conditioner. That is not related to energy access. There may be a possibility that an AC is installed in the son’s room and not in the daughter’s room. But there is no glaring difference in the urban sector, like energy is there for males and not females. Similarly, whether there is gas or not, whether there is a heater there or not, whether there is a geyser there or not, it’s not limited to being available for men and not women.

But when we talk about the rural setup then there is a totally different culture and living style, everything is different. Energy access and distribution is different because rural communities are different. There homes are located in a separate area and the commercial activities will be totally outside of that community. Their socializing places, what we call a “*dera*” is also completely different. So if you say that electricity will be provided to the village for only commercial activity or the “*dera*” but not for the houses, then this is something that can be a problem for gender equity that there is no electricity for home. For example when installing solar, in Sindh, it is common that if some one has a commercial activity like a hotel or restaurant, he will install solar for it. But he doesn’t install solar at home. It isn’t like he doesn’t want to give his wife and children electricity but for him, it is a utlity or benefit for his business but a luxury for home. If there is no electricity, they are still able to make through so if there is electricity, it wouldn’t make a difference any way.. so this may be a difference from gender point of view.

Plus, there is no difference from utility, in urban people would be using energy access primarily for um for creating more luxuries for their access at home um and in rural setup people would be using energy access to actually you know um performing their basic chores so this can be a difference.

**Part 3: Policies and Interventions**

INTERVIEWER: Okay, let’s move to the third section. To what extent does gender equity factor in your work on energy access?

RESPONDENT: Okay, so for us, when we talk about gender equity for energy access or in any other thing, we think that we should have female staff involved, or people from both genders should be part of the organization. But when we are hiring, our focus is not gender, it is the expertise and qualifications that we require. If the shortlisted candidates based on qualifications and expertise are all male, then we make additional effort to keep one or two slots for females, that for a particular role, we will only hire a female candidate. We always try but we can’t bring the gender parity unfortunately, but we do try to have a percentage of our staff that is hired is female. Definitely, there are other challenges with this as females require some extra favors in terms of working hours, in terms of workplace requirements, so wherever we can facilitate for workplace requirements for example, at our XXXX there are no women. And in small / remote locations, we can’t even hire female staff becase we will not be able to facilitate them there as they won’t have washrooms, or separate places for rest or prayer or anything. And then they are remote locations, so even if we are monitoring, there security is at risk. Wherever there is a possibility, wherever we can control we do, but for the sake of gender equity we can’t put their life or security at risk or their health at risk. So our decision is based on this. Primarly our focus is on expertise and qualifications that is required, it is on experience, in which we don’t limit that we will hire male or female but in some locations there are jobs, we are compelled to not recruit / place females. And maybe that is our predicament now but after 2 years or so maybe some facilities develop in thos locations, that we can hire women there as well.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, so tell us about the projects, like you told us about CSR projects, do you do any work specifically for women or are any projects defined keeping women’s needs in mind? Are there any polices?

RESPONDENT: Yes, so whenever we are making schools, we try that we make girls schools as well and not just boys school at the primary, or secondary or higher secondary levels. And automatically, when we are making a school, that is primarily for girls, and maybe up to primary level, boys also attend it, our priority and preference is to higher female teachers.

Similarly, when we create health facilities, we ensure that doctors and nurses comprise of female staff, maybe not full time but in shifts because we understand that there are children and women in communities so we cannot hire males everywhere. So inducting females is mandatory.

There are many facilities that we are making and when we design them, hiring females is a part of the design. The recent developments we are making on our main XXXX is construction of better administrative buildings. This construction hast started at the XXXX toll plaza. As I mentioned, we try not to hire female staff at XXXX but the same time, the construction design we have created at this point in time, after the conceptual design, the design will include facilities for females like washroom, rest room. They are part of the designs so in future if we make a customer care center there, or if we make something else, where we need to hire females, or if we employ femles as booth operators in the morning and day shifts so in that case, these facilities will be available to them. So now whatever construction we are designing, we are putting this as a part and parcel.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, the next question is that beyond your specific work, do you think energy access policies in Pakistan, in your region should be gender sensitive? And in what ways?

RESPONDENT: I answered this right at the beginning that they should be genderless, they should be human sensitive. The focus should be on humans not on gender. If you try to make it gender sensitive, it means you are creating a lot of problems. For example, how can you make it that a grid in a certain area or for a mini-grid, permission is given but only for males. It is not possible. Or you construct a biogas plant but that is only for females. I mean it’s not possible. So you need to keep it genderless and you need to keep the policy human specific. Yes, the areas that are being completely neglected like we spoke about clean cooking, which is completely neglected; so those areas should be incorporated. This does not relate to females, when you are putting clean cooking there, you don’t know that you are talking about energy access, so you have to add clean cooking. So the areas that are being neglected should be added, regardless that they are related to females or male.

INTERVIEWER: So related to this, tell us, are there any policy gaps around women’s access to energy at local or national levels?

RESPONDENT: These are the gaps that I am telling you. I don’t see any gaps in electricity, but from clean cooking point of view and alternate energy point of view, there are definitely gaps in the policy.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, do you think there are any social policies that you feel have an impact on energy equity that need to be worked on?

RESPONDENT: Social policies of what nature, what social policies are you talking about?

INTERVIEWER: Any social policies that you think directly or indirectly influence energy equity. Like you said, if there is access, there is no awareness. So similarly, which social policies go hand in hand and need to be developed?

F16: I am unable to figure out that which are our social polices, so I will not be able to comment very well on this. I mean I can’t remember which is the social policy, so if I remember, I will be able to comment. However, if we consider overall, I think that if you don’t address gender in the development of any city, state or province, then gender gets neglected in all the other polices that are there.

So if you.. for example, the DC, deputy commissioner of any location has the reponsibility to manage everything… so if the deputy commissioner for that area, neglects gender, then everything after that, whether it is energy access, water access, power access, food access, everything will have gender neglected. So the example I was giving, they were working on some markets here and they said that you will have to specify allocations for females at the weekly markets for example Sunday markets. Otherwise, females do not have the capacity to compete directly and come ahead as they don’t have the information. So you need to make the information available to them.

Similarly, parks were being constructed. So we said that the parks that are being constructed or the old parks that are being rehabilitated, you will have to focus on gender. Exclusive walking tracks need to be made for female, maybe even separate entrances because if they are not constructed, these problems will continue. If you don’t address these problems right now in the planning phase then it will not happen. So I think that if you have to focus on gender, then it has to be at the policy level, where the primary decision has to be made. Once those decisions have been made, then you can’t pick and choose that this does not include gender, this does not include gender.

INTERVIEWER: Ok, the next question is that imagine an ideal situation, where there are no policy and financial constraints, so in your opinion, what can be the best practices for achieving gender equity in energy access?

RESPONDENT: There could be 2 or 3 things. In any local community, regardless of male or female, you need to equip them technically and operationally to access the energy and to create the energy access for them. And for this whether you use alternative energy sources or conventional sources, or you go towards energy efficiency – when you have told them, taught them, equiped them then you will be surprised to know, they will save electricity as well, they will create a positive environmental impact as well and they will make their own lives easier and they will help the economy as well. So if all these things are there, and there is no issue, then the most important thing is to provide them the information and equipping them technically is essential.

INTERVIEWER: And in your current position, what role can you play in this?

RESPONDENT: This is one thing we are working on. We are giving technical training to people and making them aware. So to upgrade them if we need to send them for any sponsored training, I am talking about our employees and staff here, then to upgrade them, we send them so that they learn. People who were focusing on their routine jobs for many many years, we have now mobilized them to focus on new technologies and start working on them. So there is a common practice that we have, if some one comes in with a solution or suggestion for something, then I ask them “why”? so I ask a lot of why’s. they get very irritated as well but the reason I ask a lot of why’s is so that they start thinking beyond their usual thinking pattern and come up with the answers to that. If they are recommending something, why are they recommending something and why not something else. So we are trying to induce an element of critical thinking in them, and I hope we would be able to do that, so they will be able to do that.

**Part 4: Topical Questions**

INTERVIEWER: Okay, you had already answered this question that how balanced is gender representation in various decision-making bodies within energy governance structures? So the next question is do you think renewable energy access finance programs and processes are gender aware or gender sensitive?

RESPONDENT: No. Not at all.

INTERVIEWER: What are the key challenges in this for gender equity in terms of energy acces finance?

RESPONDENT: See, this renewable energy finance… so up till now all the renewable energy finance programs and tools and associated elemente are all very complicated. Since they are complicated in nature… one they are complicated and a bigger problem is that their awareness and information is not available.. it is not widely available. The information is so technical and complex that if you do not have a technical background in finance, you will not be able to understand. So when you make something like this so complicated then it means you can’t do mass information circulation. You can’t tell people about it. When you can’t tell people, people don’t know about it, they don’t have access to it. And this is unfortunately more for females because the information is not available and then there is an assumption that they will not understand so they are not even told.

Our financial institutions, that are running schemes for energy finance, the employees of that institution are unaware of the actual policies. Unless one or two people who are actually dealing with those one or two schemes, barring them, rest of the staff does not know. So you walk into a bank for example I can take the names now, I guess,… for example you walk into JS Bank or Bank Alfalah that are providing the solar home financing, if you walk in to any branch of it and mostly people walk into their own respective branch. so if you walk into any branch and ask them that are you doing solar finance. They will say no. then you tell them it was mentioned in your website. They will be like okay, we have to find out. And if they say that they are doing it and you ask them one or two questions that what is the rate or return, how much would it cost, how will it happen… if you ask them a few things, they will not have the information. So they will either misguide you, or they will try that they tell you about someone else who will give you the details. So you don’t get the information you are going over there for. So the biggest challenge of the financial institutions is that their staff that has to be interfacing with the customer, the client, they don’t train them on their entire product line, primarly the renewable energy portfolio. When they are not trained, automatically they are not able to share information. And when they are not able to share information then there is no access.

This is also a common practice I have seen that if I am a female and I am entering into a branch, I’d rather not go to a branch manager who is a male, but I’d rather go to a female who is sitting maybe sitting at the reception desk to ask or seek the information. We have to understand that this is a comfort level. Now the female at the reception desk does not know anything. Or if she is in relationship marketing, she will not know anything. So she would either misguide or she would want you to go to somebody else. And every female is not confident enough to speak to males. Or every male is not god enough in making females understand the complex financing schemes. So this is the problem. The biggest challenge is the information access problem and then after that…. In fact I think information acces is the most significant challenge and the complexity nature of the information.

INTERVIEWER: Okay, to some extent you mentioned that both these aspects would affect females more. What about purchasing decisions related to finance, do females have to face any more challenges there?

FA: The same problem is there of information access. If somebody has the information, then his/her decision will not be a problem. But if there is no information or less of information, then decisions are affected. And then because somebody who has the information needs to be consulted. For example, a lot of my female contacts reach out to me to ask if they want to install a solar system at home, what should they do? Which company should they purchase from, which bank should they get finance from, what should be the capacity of the system installed, they are asking about battery what does that mean? So you know a lot of these things. And then their needs assessment is not done properly by the installer, that why do they need the system – ready made solutions are being imposed. So these things are definitely…

And then when we talk about this, our commercial companies, when they bring gender parity in their staff, then it will be easier for them to communicate with households and women. In every household, there are not only men. Some households are female led for any reason, if for instance the male head has passed away or for any reason. So their staff needs to comprise of females as well, female employees need to be hired. These are the things…

When we talk about gender, then the most glaring thing I see, whether it is policy or anything else, that gender is considered.. or females are considered … like there is an assumption, they are dealt according to perception, not according to reality. So the problem is there. The decision is not wrong because she is a female and has taken the wrong decision or she can’t take a decision alone. The decision is normally wrong or she is unable to take the decision alone because the information she is provided with… the person providing the information has provided incomplete information or has not tried to provide her the complete information.

**Part 5: Closing**

INTERVIEWER: Okay, thank you so much. All the questions are complete, if there is any follow up question should we email you?

RESPONDENT: Yes absolutely, you are most welcome to send me an email.

INTERVIEWER: and do you want to make any final comment in the end? Generally?

RESPONDENT: Again, my comment will be same. Policy needs to be gender less. It needs to be human focused um… implementation needs to involve the genders, all the genders. Policy needs to be genderless. When you make the policy gender based then you will have problems.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much for your time.