0:00:00.6 Speaker 1: There's actually a study on energy access in the Global South, so a number of countries are involved, but in Africa, there are two countries that are involved, that is Ghana and Nigeria. So in Ghana, we're assessing the situation of energy access in the context of gender. So we're looking at gender involvement, gender-related issues, in terms of energy access. So it is the study that we are doing in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University in the UK, University of Cambridge, Leeds University, and Wageningen University. So briefly, that's a brief about the study. It's likely to take not more than 45 minutes, maybe between 30 and 45 minutes, we should be done.

0:01:04.8 RESPONDENT: Okay. I'm here, so let's go ahead.

0:01:08.7 Speaker 1: Thank you very much, sir. So by way of starting, I would like if you could tell me a bit about your background, in the context of your energy work in Ghana so far.

0:01:32.8 RESPONDENT: Okay. My name is Xxxx. And I work for the XXXX. My background is, I did agriculture for my first degree, and then, for M , XXX, but then I also have a master's degree in policy, also majoring in environmental policy. And I'm currently also a student pursuing another higher degree XXXX. Yeah, so that's my background. And XXXX have been working on sustainable development, generally. That is how the organisation calls itself, a XXXX. And therefore, if you look at the issue of sustainable development, we are involved in nature conservation, we are involved in sustainable economic development activities in communities, so that is about livelihoods, and we are also involved in social development, cohesion, culture, historical issues, and how community can become more stable and to focus on pulling themselves up from poverty to development.

0:03:21.6 RESPONDENT: And there, we have one popular phrase we call, that poverty, the kind of degradation we have in our environment today is poverty-driven. And so, if you extrapolate that on every degradation of the environment, you realise that people are doing this because they are poor. People are cutting their forest because they don't have any alternative. That is why they have been depending on... And so, they have no support to move to next level. And so, if you come in terms of... So that's about product... They are normal livelihoods. They have to eat, and so they have to find ways to do those. And now, if you extrapolate it to energy, energy's everything, right?

0:04:22.4 S1: Yeah.

0:04:22.9 RESPONDENT: From our homes and then all the way to the industries, and then up to the way we move around. So energy drives the economy, or energy drives what we do. And then, the easier access, or the more you have access to various forms of energy, that will enhance your economic life. So what we have been doing as energy is about advocacy on sustainable energy [0:04:58.5] \_\_\_\_, but more importantly, we are looking at how energy could be derived from nature. Because our philosophy is, if we work with nature, it's easier not to degrade it. We'll value it, and therefore, we would be more interested in conserving nature for the services it gives.

0:05:21.8 RESPONDENT: So we encourage solar, we encourage wind in particular for some of the communities we are working. And then, we are also encouraging... What do you call it? Biomass. Biomass, we're largest, and it's mainly about waste, agriculture waste. And we are working now on doing some studies on sugarcane husk because one of the communities we are working in have also been... They do, they grow sugarcane, and then therefore, use it for distillation of local gin. But then the waste is that, how can we use that. We are also looking into... I think some of these things are really already traditional. We are looking at the coconut shells and husk, which the people have been using for centuries. We are also looking at palm kernal husk, which have also been used by communities over the period. So these are the traditional level that we are working because it's also easier and accessible to women, in fact, comparing that to wind energy and also solar. So in effect, these are the things we are working in to be able to make sure that communities, based on their economics, they will be able to access energy to be able to live their lives the way they want it.

0:07:15.7 S1: Okay, okay. Alright, thank you very much, sir. So in that context, what does equitable energy access mean to you? And if you can speak to the gender-specific issues, what does equitable energy access mean and what does gender equity, in terms of energy access, mean for your work?

0:07:47.2 RESPONDENT: Okay. For us, if we are talking about energy access or equity, it's mainly about affordability and control, affordability and control. And then that goes for the number of women groups that we work with. By and large, most of the rural communities do not really have access to affordable, access to the kind of energy that is environmentally-friendly. Now, most homes in Ghana, and even to a large extent, in some of the communities, they... At least where we are, the landscape we are working, have access to electricity to some large extent. Yes, because of the government of Ghana has make it a policy to do that. So that is ongoing, so we could say that at least the communities we work in, apart from those who are very, very far away in the mountains and those who are living on some kind of islands, either in the water, river, or in the [0:09:17.8] \_\_\_\_ area, those are the areas that energy has... The electricity grid has not reached all because it's difficult to pull... To give them access. It's difficult to set the grid there. So in those areas is where we encouraging solar and then the biomass that I was talking to you about earlier.

0:09:44.9 RESPONDENT: So by and large, I would say that, if you talk about equity, access, that in Ghana, there is a large... It doesn't depend whether you're a man or a woman to have access to energy. But then, when you translate it to the community-level, when the woman is a single-parent and he hasn't inherited a house from parents or from husband's family and they have to build their own house, she has to labour to build her own house, then access to this national grid is difficult, they find it difficult. I'm having one experience with one woman, one single mother now, which she's very active and one of our facilitators. She's now building her house and then how to get source of energy is a problem. So I would say there have not been any policy to be able to get to people like this. Energy in terms of access, in terms those who are really vulnerable economically and they can access it, especially some of our women, some of our sisters, and yes, our sisters and all that. It's difficult for them. I would say that.

0:11:25.4 S1: Would you say this difficulty is gender-specific or is general to all the rural community?

0:11:32.4 RESPONDENT: Yes, so I'm saying that for them, because they are, to a large extent, very low in terms of economic skill. A mother of four but the husband... A single mother of four and she has not inherited a house. Normally, if you have a house, then it's easy to get energy and to get [0:11:57.7] \_\_\_\_ now struggle get a place for themselves. And now, the place have to be wired and all that. So for them, they are... Men can still struggle to get something, but a woman of four...

0:12:14.4 S1: Yeah, it's very difficult.

0:12:16.1 RESPONDENT: That's a difficulty. So I don't know whether we would say that is gender-specific or more of a general [0:12:25.3] \_\_\_\_ context.

0:12:28.3 S1: Okay, okay. Also, still in that context of the gender access, would you say when energy infrastructure, like you mentioned the rural electrification, if the infrastructure is provided, does it benefit men more or it benefit women more?

0:12:55.7 RESPONDENT: It benefit men more because, one, our society is very patriarchal, so the men will always have the edge. They are the ones who have the houses. And so it will benefit them more than women who are always always either migrating from one community to the other because she has to marry or because she did not inherit any of these things from her parents. And it's more critical if she is a single parent.

0:13:35.3 S1: Okay. Okay. But how about...

0:13:37.6 RESPONDENT: And then, as a country, we do not have any gender-specific policy to say... I may be wrong, but I don't think I have seen one that is more gender-sensitive. I've not seen any of any policy saying that the energy policies we have, this is what we should do for women. I don't think so, it's just general. Or if you have any... If you differ from me...

0:14:10.7 S1: No. [chuckle] No, actually, that's one of the questions that I was about to ask maybe later, but I think you have already addressed it. [chuckle] Yeah. So in a later part of the questions, I would be asking about the gender sensitivity of our energy policies, but I think you've already addressed it, so maybe I'll skip that particular question when I get there. But in terms of decision-making, whether it's at the household level, at the community, or at the national level, do you see any... Who do you think is more, should I say, in control of decision-making when it comes to energy access at the household level, at the community, or at the national level.

0:15:04.9 RESPONDENT: At the national level, is all men. I don't think we have any staff for energy who is a woman, so that drive for specific kind of energy can be followed aggressively, I don't think... It's all men. And the men are more interested in what is there already. So the question continue to focus more on hydrocarbons, and more importantly, oil and gas, is still very, very high on our agenda without recourse to the environment. And if you take LPG, it does... It was introduced, I think, in the '90s, to be able to halt a level of deforestation. And [0:16:05.4] \_\_\_\_ has continued to increase, and this is one energy source that is accessible, but then, it is about affordability. Now that the price is increasing, a lot of women, they use it for their livelihood, they use it for domestic, and to some extent, those of them who are [0:16:38.9] \_\_\_\_ or prepare food to sell, they can't use that again because... And therefore, they resort to going back to charcoal and then the firewood.

0:16:49.2 RESPONDENT: So I would say that decisions on energy, I don't think there's any... It's been totally biased towards men, men are the ones that take that major decisions. We even see it at the household level, in some homes, it's still the men, because they are the ones who buy the [0:17:13.5] \_\_\_\_. If there's electricity, they're the ones who buy them. So by and large, the women are only involved... Still, if they can't buy gas, they have to move straight away to charcoal. [0:17:29.6] \_\_\_\_ implication for the environment, you already know.

0:17:32.3 S1: Yeah, yeah. [chuckle] Okay, alright. So I think you've already talked about the income differences, but do you also think there is a difference in terms of energy access between rural women and urban women?

0:17:53.9 RESPONDENT: Yeah. Most of the... It depends. Even in the urban area, you have to stratify it. In the high bracket, they have all the access and luxury. If you think, there are even women who are politicians, I don't... They are enjoying all the free luxuries of energy. If you come to the middle class, they also have access. Now, even in Accra, in the cities, those who are living in the slums, they don't have... Even the electricity is not there. They don't have access to even the national grid because they say they are living in a non... A place that is not... How do we call it? They are slums, and therefore, the government would not send electricity there. Most of them are living in a very deplorable state. So the only access they have is either firewood or charcoal. Yeah.

0:19:05.5 S1: So that's what they have to depend on.

0:19:09.5 RESPONDENT: Yeah, that's what they have to depend on. So I'm just saying that there's a huge disparity between rural women's access to energy and then that of the city dwellers. In the city dwellers, those in slums, and a majority of them are women who have migrated to Accra to be able to make ends meet. Yeah, and then so if you now even go to the rural area, most of them, our rural area, most of them depend on, especially for cooking, for heating, for any commercial activity, I think it's mainly firewood and charcoal.

0:19:56.5 S1: Okay, okay. So I know your organisation, XXXX, is already leading the gender component of the XXXX, but can you speak to some other gender-specific components of your work? Yeah, and if you could give maybe any examples of projects that...

0:20:20.5 RESPONDENT: Yeah, apart from... The reason why we have been asked to do that is because we have done, since 2016 or earlier then that, we've been working with rural women in our XXXXs, apart from... Even in the XXXX level, if you don't take time, it will be hijacked by men. So consciously, we set up women groups in the XXXXs. And then we also made them more very economical by helping them set up their own small businesses, and by providing, what we call, village savings and loans schemes, and giving them training and startups, so that the women groups can be able to be on their own, they lend money within themselves, those who buy their own products, send it to the markets to sell. So that has bring about a very good, what do you call it, an engine of... We try to oil their economic activities through this access to their own financial resources.

0:21:44.4 RESPONDENT: So, that's one of the major things that we have been doing. Some of them are into organic farming. So, that goes to support themselves recreationally. We also have a group of women doing cocoa, cocoa on our landscape in Awutu. Then we have also trained them, women groups, we've trained them in soap making so that they still can be independent for themselves, but these are all still based on the village savings and loans schemes.

0:22:24.0 S1: Savings schemes, okay.

0:22:25.7 RESPONDENT: Because if they are... When they're financially sustainable, they can do other things. We've also trained them on handicrafts. So in the Volta Delta, there are very old, ancient bag, they call it, [0:22:44.3] \_\_\_\_. And this is... Which they use reeds to weave it. So, we have been helping them to use the reed to make hats, to make bags that we can sell with them, and then you use it to make sandals. And based on that, the women groups have been registered with Ghana Export Promotion Council, to be able to improve that, and can sell. So these are some of the gender-related activities that we have. Currently, we are working with XXXX to be able to support them, also through the same XXXX, to get access to solar lamps, which especially communities that are totally off-grid and because concerning them, electricity on-grid, it's difficult, so we are trying to get that solar thing, the hotspot. So basically, these are some of the...

0:24:03.9 RESPONDENT: They're involved in... They all have their own programs, and they're involved in... We build them up institutionally, financially... Currently, some of the groups in XXXX, they're doing a whole lot of work during this Wetlands Day Celebration, going to the radio station to tell people how they should do things, even educating their own children on nature conservation and the care for wetlands.

0:24:36.5 S1: That's great. Please, you mentioned XXXX, please, could you tell me the full meaning of...

0:24:43.5 RESPONDENT: That is the XXXX.

0:24:46.9 S1: Institute of Cultural Affairs, okay. Okay, so you've already spoken to the gender sensitivity of our policies, but could you talk about maybe some gaps, policy gaps that you have identified and how you think these can be improved, in terms of energy access?

0:25:12.8 RESPONDENT: So, domestic energy...

0:25:15.0 S1: Yes, please.

0:25:15.3 RESPONDENT: To be more specific, is what drives all activity of our women folk in Ghana. Because this is still a patriarchal society, so they're the ones involved in cooking most of the time. And then because they are very much involved in the informal sector, especially cooking and selling and all kinds of things, they need energy to drive all these besides their cooking, but most of the time, would not really consult this number of people, this group of people, when it comes to energy, what kind of energy they prefer, and in what form and all that, would not. Even when you come to the renewable energy, our government has a policy to be giving people [0:26:28.8] \_\_\_\_, which is one of the things the government is doing, but then it is not institutionalised. And therefore, nobody's telling them how... Nobody's involving them, whether that is what they even need or not, but we just assume that is what they will need.

0:26:51.3 RESPONDENT: Then, because we are also working along the coast, there's this issue of energy source for smoking, which is at the commercial level, it's both commercial and domestic. And most of the time, the durable... The one with the high caloric value for their work or for either for smoking of fish or for cooking at home is the mangroves. Now, we are not really involving them in the issues of how that energy source can become more sustainable to be used efficiently. They use... The mangroves, they have been historically... They started helping them to reduce the quantity through improving the stoves or let's say the smoking systems that they use, but by and large, that has also not been influenced by what the women want. Do they really even want that kind of... How do we even call it? There's a name for it, I've just forgotten. There's a... Do you know those ovens? Ovens that historically have been used for...

0:28:25.4 S1: For fish smoking.

0:28:25.5 RESPONDENT: If you go to the community and ask them, they will say they would have preferred if there's no smoke coming to them at all. They inhale a lot of smoke when they are smoking their fish. But they have not been involved in the design of some of these commercial stoves that they could use to do the smoking. So by and large, I would say that those are some of the...

0:29:00.7 S1: Gaps?

0:29:01.3 RESPONDENT: Gaps. They would not consult them and ask for their preference and kind of energy they would need.

0:29:07.4 S1: Okay. Okay. We are just drawing to the concluding section. So will you say that is the ideal or best practice for ensuring gender equity, would be to involve the women in the design of the policies, or are there any other best practices?

0:29:33.0 RESPONDENT: There must be a lot of... I am saying this also because of our background, what we are trying to achieve. We are a XXXX and we also want to conserve our environment and all of that. So there must be a need to do a lot of awareness, involve the women in awareness raising and let them understand they need energy, but then, there are other forms of energy, because the kind of energy they have now, especially for the poor women, that has a lot of footprints, environmental footprints, and therefore is not the best. So from that level, you can start... They will now come up with what kinds of energy they would prefer. Then we would have been doing something more sustainable, other than that, because if you talk about pricing, they don't have any control about pricing, and we don't... The best alternative to choose. So we would need to start educating them. We would need to raise more awareness and involve them in all the policy level of decision-making on the energy, who makes that available for them to use.

0:31:11.6 S1: Okay. Alright. So would you say, in a broader extent or in the national context, would you say Ghana, or the government of Ghana, is committed to energy transition?

[chuckle]

0:31:30.2 RESPONDENT: I don't think so, because people are still talking of coal. In some political circles, people are actually talking of coal. One, I'm not sure we are, maybe we are doing some efforts, but I think those efforts can be... We could enhance that effort better, especially when Ghana is still thinking about hydrocarbons. We are still thinking about oil and gas industry, which within the next 30, 50, 30 years, it will be dead. So I am not too sure, because we know we have been very forceful in advocating with all the other groups to stop onshore oil and gas exploration in the Voltaic and then then Keta Basin, I hope you are aware of that.

0:32:35.0 S1: Yes. Yes. I've heard about it.

0:32:37.7 RESPONDENT: And there, we are finding so many oppositions. So I'm not sure if our government is thinking too clearly, they would even tolerating or accepting that. We have a lot of potential for solar which we are not really using. Because by now, if we are interested in energy transition, we should have a solar-related industry springing up. We don't need to just go and bring any rubbish from China. We don't have that. And secondly, if you talk about wind, we still have not done much about wind, although all the costal communities has a huge potential for wind. We are not... For wind and waves, we are not making any use of that. So I'm not too sure, I have to say I'm not too sure. There are a few attempts but then we could do better. Because all the power plants, as you are aware, they are all being powered by fuel.

0:33:50.2 S1: Yeah. Okay. Yeah, that's true. [chuckle] Okay, so in the last 10 years, have you seen any specific action from government or have you seen any transition, whether it's at a household level, from this fossil fuel dependence towards more renewable energy sources?

0:34:25.9 RESPONDENT: Yeah. I heard these politicians talking, that they're bringing electric cars. I don't know.

0:34:33.2 S1: Electric cars?

0:34:34.3 RESPONDENT: Electric cars, car. Car. Electric vehicle.

0:34:37.5 S1: To Ghana?

0:34:37.9 RESPONDENT: Yeah. To Ghana. I think Masi is experimenting on some. Yes. And then that's... You are talking about the last 10 years, so that's what I saying. And secondly, there has been... VRA is doing some solar now, in the northern region. They have a solar farm in the northern region. Yeah, and they got some places along the coast to also experiment wind which I'm aware of. They have done some studies here and there which I'm aware of. And then now in Accra, if you want solar, I think government, Energy Commission or electricity co-operation or EPA, one of them, will come and do assessment and help you install this at a reduced cost.

0:36:01.6 RESPONDENT: So these are some policies government is putting in place, but my thinking is that we could aggressively pursue this faster, especially where we have comparative advantage. By now, I should have thought that all our secondary schools should have solar or even biogas to use. But this is always being mentioned by politicians but you don't see it being backed with a lot of action. So there has been some little attempts but that can become a huge thing. We could enhance that better than the way it is know.

0:36:50.3 S1: Okay. Okay. Alright. So I think these are the key questions I had to ask. So we've talked about energy access, we've talked about the gender sensitivity of energy policy, we've talked about decision-making, we've talked about the benefits distribution and also energy transition. Are there any other issues in the context of energy access that you think we need to be addressed and which we have not addressed?

0:37:25.4 RESPONDENT: Yeah, so I made mention of the informal sector, where we have a huge number of women. What can we do for them? It's not being discussed at the policy level what we can do for... Because they use all kinds of energy. If you see a truck load of charcoal coming to Accra, majority of them end up in these informal areas and in poor households, which has a huge implication for the destruction we are seeing in the north and the transitional zone generally where a lot of trees are being cut down for making charcoal or firewood. Yeah.

0:38:19.6 S1: Okay. Alright, so I will note that down and then we will use it to revise the next study that we will be... The next interviews that we will be doing.

0:38:36.3 RESPONDENT: Now, this study, what is the ultimate aim?

0:38:43.7 S1: So the ultimate aim is to look at how we can mainstream gender into energy access in the Global South. So we've noted that as you identified, gender has not been so much of a discussion when we are talking about energy access, but we have also seen the critical role that gender could play, or the importance of highlighting gender in the development of energy policies. So we're trying to identify the gaps that exist and what are the barriers so that we would see how we'll be able to make certain recommendations for governments in the Global South to use to improve the gender sensitivity of our policies, the gender sensitivity of our energy development programs. But as part of this, we would also be doing a regional workshop. Initially, it was supposed to be held in Nigeria, maybe middle of this year, but due to the COVID situation, we are still looking around to see if this is likely to be an in-person experience sharing or it's likely to be an online situation. So broadly, that the objective of the study.

0:40:15.8 RESPONDENT: Yeah, okay. There's one thing maybe I'm not sure you've captured, that during the last political campaign, the government was distributing a Gyapa, that's an efficient cooking stove, to party people here and there, but this could have been institutionalised that women can have access to, they have a point they can go and buy it at a particular subsidised cost instead of the way it's being done. So I don't know how you could... Is that the policy [0:40:55.6] \_\_\_\_?

[laughter]

0:41:01.2 S1: I think that's critically important. Yeah, because it highlights the political influence in the context of energy access, so probably that's something that we need to investigate further as well.

0:41:20.3 RESPONDENT: Yeah, so it will be something when we are looking at maybe policy, can there be, not only in Accra, but then not only in the district capitals, but where can we make... Now, there's a structure for LPG. If we want to reduce the quantity of wood being used, or charcoal being used, is there another way that we have, where these women can go and buy some of these things at a reduced cost or whatever? So that is also another policy we could be looking at. Access, we are thinking about access, any point that women can go have a source of energy equipment that they need at a reduced cost, subsidised cost, which now is not the case.

0:42:30.3 S1: Okay, okay, okay, okay. So those are... I've noted all the points down, so we'll use it to revise the interview protocol. And hopefully, in our next interviews, we can bring in these issues, but I think we could also... We'll also note it for the regional discussion, the exchange. So I'm hoping that maybe when it is scheduled... Currently, we've not scheduled it yet, but I'm hoping that when it is scheduled, I would let you know so that in case you'd be available, if you would like to join, whether... I'm not sure if it is likely to be in person or virtual, but I would update you when it is scheduled so that in case you are available, we could...

0:43:28.3 RESPONDENT: Yeah, if it is scheduled not on Mondays, Tuesdays, Fridays, I would manage to participate. So Wednesday, Thursday is open.

0:43:40.5 S1: Wednesday, Thursday.

0:43:42.3 RESPONDENT: So, Wednesday, Thursdays are open. Or unless I move out of Accra. So you can use that. Yeah.

0:43:52.6 S1: Okay, so thank you very much, sir.

0:43:57.3 RESPONDENT: Thank you very much, it's a pleasure talking to you, and thank you for taking up all my excuses here and there. [0:44:09.3] \_\_\_\_.

0:44:10.3 S1: That's understandable. [chuckle] Thank you very much, I really appreciate your time and your insights. So, please...

0:44:18.2 RESPONDENT: Now, this question is on XXXX. When is the national meeting supposed to be taking place? Is it live?

0:44:34.8 S1: With the XXXX, it's XXXX who is working on it, but I'll find out and let you know.

0:44:40.0 RESPONDENT: I remember that I receive a mail, but I don't know exactly where it is now. I didn't act on it immediately, so I don't know where it is now. So is he in the office already?

0:44:53.9 S1: I have not checked but... Yeah, I'm in a different office, but I'll check right now and then find out, and then give you the date.

0:45:02.8 RESPONDENT: Okay, yes. I'll be very happy.

0:45:05.2 S1: Okay. [chuckle] I'll check right now. Okay. Alright, thank you very much, sir.

0:45:12.1 RESPONDENT: You're welcome.

0:45:12.7 S1: Okay.