0:00:01.5 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

0:00:03.6 RESPONDENT: Yeah, I think you had a challenge at your end.

0:00:06.2 INTERVIEWER: Yes please, yes, please.

0:00:09.7 RESPONDENT: Hello.

0:00:10.6 INTERVIEWER: Yes, please I can hear you now.

0:00:13.8 RESPONDENT: You can hear me now?

0:00:15.8 INTERVIEWER: Yes, please.

0:00:17.0 RESPONDENT: Okay. So basically, my name is RESPONDENT. I work as XXXX. I'm also a member of so many women's rights coalitions and networks. But my specialty is really on women's rights and gender equality. And I hold a PhD in Gender and Energy studies from the University of XXXX, UK. I think that's okay.

0:00:48.6 INTERVIEWER: Yes please, that's great. Please, if you could tell me a bit about your... In terms of energy, what are some of the policy areas that you are focused on or you've done some work in that in...

0:01:05.8 RESPONDENT: Okay, energy in the past several years was seen as a neutral sector. That did not have any gender dimension. And so the tendency was to focus on issues relating to their use of energy. And even with that, if you take the context of Africa and Ghana for that matter, you find out that even though we all need energy for our livelihoods, at the basic level you find women being responsible for its provision. Here, we are talking about energy as a source for cooking food, as a source for boiling water, and as a source for providing warmth. And so the emphasis on the use of biomass was taken as a given and nobody felt there was a need to bring policy into that sector because it was poor people who were using biomass, and therefore with the increasing shortages of supply in biomass resources, you found out that the burden on women who are seen as primarily responsible for providing it and also using it for cooking and all those things I've mentioned before. It became very difficult.

0:02:45.8 RESPONDENT: And that is why we say the other energy crisis... And this is something that the World Resources Institute categorized in 1975. And so it was from that period that an interest in biomass resources was generated. Since then, efforts have been made to try to analyze the energy-poverty nexus. And to see how biomass energy resources could be developed in ways that would address the needs and concerns of communities and also women. But apart from the biomass issue, there's also the other energy forms, like petroleum, like electricity, what have you. And so increasingly, once there was an interest in not just looking at biomass as something that was freely available and freely given because women were collecting. It became necessary to look at the whole energy setup and see how there is an interphase between women, men and the inequalities that are generated in this.

0:04:03.8 INTERVIEWER: Okay. That's great. From that perspective, how would you describe equitable energy access?

0:04:15.4 RESPONDENT: Okay. When we talk about equitable energy access, we are talking about a situation where there is inequality as far as accessing energy is concerned. Poor households, they tend to use less energy than wealthier ones. In absolute terms. Because they even have very little access to water and they use the energy to boil water for drinking and other hygienic purposes. And because the water is not so healthy, it increases the likelihood of them getting water-borne diseases. I mean, we are talking about COVID-19 now, and the challenges faced by women in accessing energy to make sure that they have the right hygienic water and other resources that will enable them to have meaningful livelihoods. And so you find out that illness also reduces the ability of the poor to improve their livelihood. And therefore, this increases their vulnerability, you see. And because poor families do not have equal access to energy, their children tend to also be vulnerable in terms of how they can even access lighting at night. And how home lighting then becomes an option for improving educational performance and life chances at the level of the poor. When we talk about equitable access to energy. We are talking about a situation where we make sure that energy access is not related to wealth but it is related to need, it is seen as one of the basic needs. And whether you are poor or you are rich you should have that basic access in order to enhance your livelihood.

0:06:23.6 INTERVIEWER: Oh okay. Thank you very much. If we had to bring in the concept of gender, how would you... Can you tell us your perspective on gender equity in energy access? How do we ensure gender equity in energy access, in the Ghanaian context?

0:06:43.9 RESPONDENT: Okay.

0:06:44.5 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

0:06:45.4 RESPONDENT: Yes, so in the Ghanaian context, we've already talked about the biomass that it's often the case that it is women who are expected through their traditional role to provide it and even though when you talk about electricity, we have increased access to electricity to a large extent in this country, above 80% penetration, but then in terms of use, you have to ask yourself to what extent are women able to use it in ways that men also are able to use it.

0:07:22.3 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

0:07:24.4 RESPONDENT: When you look at the situation you find out that if you are looking at women and men in terms of the energy access, you see that there is inequity with men having much more access to a range of energy sources, a range of energy sources. Even when it comes to cooking, you know we have the LPG and the LPG, the liquefied petroleum gas, it's only available in urban and peri-urban communities, but not in the rural areas. And so women are constrained, there is a gender issue there in terms of the more clean energy sources and their availability and use. You find out that when the energy is cleaner, then access by women becomes limited and that is the problematic because that is what we have to solve.

0:08:21.4 RESPONDENT: How do we make sure that when the energy is cleaner, it is accessible to both women and men on an equal basis and within the different context. And therefore we have to bring in the household, looking at the different energy use patterns within the household. For instance, I talked about electricity, when electricity became available in this country, you found out that when we carried out a survey, you saw a differential use of electricity.

0:08:53.3 RESPONDENT: Where men now buy many more appliances that will increase their use of electricity and more advanced technologies like maybe television, video and what have you, the women were using the electricity for income generation like acquiring deep freezers, fridges and what have you. So when we are talking of energy, we cannot talk about it in neutral terms.

0:09:28.1 INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay.

0:09:29.1 RESPONDENT: Because access is gendered and use is also gendered. And then even when you come to the planning stage, if you check the whole educational system, women are not usually found within the energy sector as professionals, as planners and as academics because we are brought up to believe that we should go into the social sciences. Scientific field tends to be dominated by men and when this happened the thinking of men affected the planning process of energy. And so the perspectives of women are not factored into the planning process and that also hinders the extent to which energy will be seen as a gendered space that needs to be disaggregated and analyzed to make it much more gender-responsive.

0:10:24.9 INTERVIEWER: Okay. All right. I think you've already addressed like four or five of the other questions I have. [laughter] So, I just keep...

[laughter]

0:10:38.6 RESPONDENT: Anytime I am in an interview with somebody, that is what they tell me.

0:10:43.6 INTERVIEWER: Okay. [laughter] Okay.

0:10:44.4 RESPONDENT: Oh, you've answered all the questions.

[laughter]

0:10:46.1 INTERVIEWER: Okay, so I will just skip a few but I still want to talk a little bit on in terms of participation. So I was coming to talk about benefit, the difference in benefits, but I think you've addressed that. So I'll talk about participation and decision-making process.

0:11:03.8 RESPONDENT: Yes, yes.

0:11:04.5 INTERVIEWER: If you look at it at the community or even at the household or even at the national level, do you see any differences in terms of the gender, women's ability to participate in the decision-making process.

0:11:18.9 RESPONDENT: Yes. Actually it is improving because of the way that has been done by women's rights organizations and also the recognition at the international level that these gender and energy issue must be taken seriously. So if you take the Sustainable Energy For All Initiative, you see that there's a big component on gender and energy, we have networks and coalitions on gender and energy. I myself, I am an advisory board member of XXXX. So all of these efforts at the international level by academics, by activists, has led to a situation where there is increasing recognition of the importance of making sure that women play an active role in decision-making when it comes to Energy Services provision. So in this country, for example, even if we take MIDA, it has a big component on gender and energy, of course I have played a role in that, if you take the climate change work that is going on...

0:12:34.2 INTERVIEWER: Sorry, MIDA is...

0:12:34.5 RESPONDENT: You have a whole chapter on gender and climate change and of course...

0:12:41.1 INTERVIEWER: Just a moment.

0:12:41.2 RESPONDENT: MIDA is the Millennium Development Agency.

0:12:44.9 INTERVIEWER: Authority. Oh, okay. Okay. Alright.

0:12:48.6 RESPONDENT: MIDA is a US funded program.

0:12:51.4 INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay. Alright.

0:12:52.8 RESPONDENT: So basically the... Yeah, because of the issue I mentioned earlier about the educational system and how women are not encouraged to go into the scientific world understanding the decision-making process within household becomes difficult because the men do not play an active role in household decision-making and provisioning, and therefore, it works against women's ability to have their voices heard in the decision making, but as I've already said, there is an increasing recognition of this. So if you take the world summit on sustainable development, there was an acknowledgement that this has to change and then if you take the sustainable development goals, this is also very, very well captured within it. So I think that the situation is bad, but it is improving because of the work that is being carried out at different levels on the importance of making sure that gender... That the gender dimension of energy appears. Yes.

0:14:05.1 INTERVIEWER: Okay, alright. So I think you've already touched a little bit on the next question, but I still want to get some more information. So do you think in that context, would you describe Ghana's energy policy as gender-sensitive?

0:14:27.3 RESPONDENT: Not really. I think... Even if you take the energy sector in Ghana, I think it is not really mainstream, it is not really mainstream, even though there have been sufficient work done. There used to... We did an energy audit of energy institutions in Ghana here, and the results are there for it to be used. But you know, because it's a male-dominated sector, it becomes very, very, very difficult for the ideas and the thinking of women to get into the mainstream. So even though they now have a section on gender issues, it is not mainstream and... Because for example, if I take the petroleum sector, I mean we are now an oil rich country, but if we were to analyze the sector from a gender perspective, we will see a lot of gaps. At the beginning when the policies were put in place, we did a lot of gender analysis.

0:15:37.1 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

0:15:37.4 RESPONDENT: You see, we... We engaged with parliamentarians to make the petroleum laws more sensitive, the work is there, but if you take the finalized versions, you will see that they are not sufficiently gender responsive. And of course, this is not a peculiar to Ghana, it's across board in the world, and therefore, it means that we have to continue to work to ensure that the change happens because otherwise, then the energy poverty situation will not be addressed within the short to the long term.

0:16:15.5 INTERVIEWER: Okay, okay. So in our...

0:16:17.0 RESPONDENT: And also if look at the...

0:16:19.5 INTERVIEWER: Yes please, I'm listening.

0:16:22.1 RESPONDENT: Yes, yes, I wanted to point out some of the implications for the lack of enough gender issues in energy polices. If you look at the current energy policies and planning, you will see that there's an increasing thinking and efficiency in the electricity sector through privatisation, reducing subsidies on fossil fuels and so on. So when you look at the approaches that are used, you realise that the implication for women as far as this focus is concerned, has not been well thought out. Even though electricity has many benefits it does not help to address the major energy problems. So most women in the rural areas continue to face these challenges in terms of meeting their practical needs. That is; cooking requirements and what have you. Of course we know, cooking with electricity is not cheap, but then if privatization results in lower electricity prices, which is even debatable, it is unlikely to meet cooking needs even of richer women, and so... Well, we can also touch on other options like the LPG issue that I talked about. Very, very important because it reduces drudgery and it saves time for women. We have not seen it as primarily an energy source that we can help minimize the drudgery of collecting and using fuel. So these are the issues.

0:18:03.8 INTERVIEWER: Oh okay, okay, so in terms of... Okay, you've established some of the major gaps. What would you say are the opportunities that are available to address gender equity? Are there any opportunities in Ghana that you think can be used to address gender equity in terms of energy access?

0:18:31.1 RESPONDENT: Yes.

0:18:31.8 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

0:18:33.6 RESPONDENT: So for instance, if you take electricity, you see that we have a program. A national program on agriculture. Then also...

0:18:45.3 INTERVIEWER: Yes.

0:18:47.1 RESPONDENT: Something... Yeah, for food and jobs or whatever, whatever.

0:18:52.3 INTERVIEWER: Planting for Food and Jobs.

0:18:53.3 RESPONDENT: That requires a lot irrigation. You see?

0:18:56.8 INTERVIEWER: Yes.

0:18:57.3 RESPONDENT: Yes, and planting for food and jobs, we can look at women's needs in terms of availability of irrigation, we can look at it in terms of mills for grinding, and then also for lighting, for improving working conditions in the night. And so... And then in terms of their own productive work, increasing the possibility of enabling them to work at night, increasing the hours of working, because in the rural areas, even though electricity might be available, it may not be accessible to the women even within their own households. So making sure that women have access to electricity for refrigeration, for food production and the sale of food. And then also enterprises; hairdressing, internet cafes, where women can actually go and access some of these opportunities. In terms of strategic interest of women, you know the streets are never safe for women.

0:20:08.2 INTERVIEWER: Okay.

0:20:08.6 RESPONDENT: Do you see?

0:20:09.7 INTERVIEWER: Yeah.

0:20:10.0 RESPONDENT: How do we make sure that there are street lights all over? So that when women have to walk the streets at night, they can be safe. Then we have to make sure... Especially in this time of COVID-19, how do we make sure that the rural woman has access to the internet and can access information, as we are doing, it is nothing fanciful, it can be defined and operationalised as a basic need in the time of COVID. Then regarding biomass, if we provide improved stoves that can... Basically, here we are talking about supply and conversion technology, where women will be able to have improved technologies, better stoves rather than carrying firewood. And then when it comes to the forest, community forest management issues, we need to make sure that women play a role in the decision making processes.

0:21:18.3 RESPONDENT: And then when we look at mechanical energy, these are different forms of energy, we have to make sure that there is good transport systems that allow women to access commercial and social and political opportunities. Just yesterday, I heard the women saying that they were going to demonstrate, they were going to stop bringing tomatoes from the interland to Accra because of lack of safety kinds of thing. These are real life issues, which we need to sit down as energy experts to tease them out so that they are relevant for women rather than just pushing contracts and talking about privatization just who don't benefit anybody, especially women.

0:22:12.9 INTERVIEWER: Oh okay, alright. Let's talk specifically about renewable energy, do you think in terms of renewable energy, finance is one of the biggest challenges? Do you think energy... Renewable energy finance is gender sensitive?

0:22:35.8 RESPONDENT: I think efforts are being made now, because they have seen that when it comes to renewable energy, many of the areas where the applications could be useful are areas where women dominate. You will find out that there is a shift in emphasis. In the past, they were just trying to see whether it could play an effective role in the same way as fossil fuels. But I think that increasingly, they have seen both the limitations and the strengths of renewable energy. I think one of the opportunities we have now is the reduction in costs of renewable energies, but then we need to start from our own contexts and see the areas where renewable energy sources are being used by women and then adapt them using local technologies to enhance the efficiency of the energy sources. But here also, the limitation is that, of course, we see that the renewable energy law is now being... How do we say it?

0:23:54.0 INTERVIEWER: Reviewed.

0:23:55.4 RESPONDENT: Amended, because there were... Yeah reviewed, because of the loopholes within it. And many of these... Many of the private sector people who come in from outside, they are really not interested in addressing the issues we are discussing now. And so we have to make it a mandate, a requirement, that whatever project you come to Ghana to implement, there has to be a strong gender component, and we have to monitor and make sure that they actually comply and that at the end of the day, there is an improvement. Yes.

0:24:41.0 INTERVIEWER: Great, okay. Let me shift a little bit to energy transition. We know that in Ghana, we have the hydropower, but recently we are also seeing a lot of emphasis on petroleum and natural gas, but there are also some talk about renewable energy, solar installations. From your perspective, do you think the Government of Ghana is commit... Is really committed to energy transition, ensuring energy transition in Ghana?

0:25:25.0 RESPONDENT: Energy transition is something... It has to happen, by all means, because you always have to move from a low point of energy to improved forms of energy. As for the transition, it's a matter of course. But how we go about it, is the issue. When you talk about solar energy, even though we have a lot of sun... Some people... When you talk about solar energy, people feel that it's just the sun, but it is also about the technologies that are generated to become solar energy systems. And what I think is that it has to be a holistic approach because you cannot select one particular technology, and say, "This is what I'm focusing on." Every technology has to be evaluated, every energy technology has to be evaluated. The challenge we have is that so far, there's been very little investment in modern and efficient small scale renewable conversion technologies, and there's also very little support for the promotion of such technologies in energy programs, although we see some... Increasingly, we are seeing some NGOs working in the area. Some of them, many of the initiatives are at their infant stages and they have not been evaluated. So it becomes very difficult to put your hand on a particular form and say, "This is the way to go."

0:27:12.3 RESPONDENT: But what I can emphasize on is the possibilities that exist with modern energy careers are substitutes for existing energy resources, and also the potential such sources can open up. I think in the rural areas, we have already placed a high priority on electricity, even though it is mainly for lighting and entertainment, and it appears that we do not see the opportunities for making productive use of electricity except with irrigation and so on. So all I'm saying is that, yes, the transition is something that we have to do and we are doing it, but we have to broaden it too, otherwise by the time we realize we are moving into big energy projects and leaving the people behind once again, especially the women.

0:28:11.4 INTERVIEWER: Okay, so from your perspective and from your observations, would you say at the household level, there has been a shift or a change from... Would you say, has there been any changes in terms of the energy that is used for cooking for heating at the household level, have you seen any... Have you observed any changes?

0:28:38.5 RESPONDENT: Not significantly, not significantly. Not significantly. Yeah, not significantly. I myself, when I go to my village, it's the firewood that is used for cooking, even with the coal pots. The majority of the people are still using the old types of coal pots, you understand, so it has to be like a movement. A big initiative. They started this initiative of clean cooking food... The clean... How did they call it? Clean cooking initiative which is a global initiative but they haven't been able to do much. You see, they haven't been able to do much, and I think some of this initiative when they come up, we have to interrogate them very very well and have to insist on them demonstrating real change at the end of the day. So in terms of access to energy resources, the use of firewood in the local context, I think that even though there has been some improvement in terms of the use of... If you go to the north, you see that there are improved cook stoves that are used for brewing pito, dress making what have you, but they are still very insignificant, and they are disproportionately low compared to the activities that are taken by men.

0:30:16.5 INTERVIEWER: Okay, doc, thank you very much for your time. Thank you very much for your insights.

0:30:24.0 RESPONDENT: You are most welcome.

0:30:26.0 INTERVIEWER: So these are the questions that I have, these are the areas we actually listed to touch on. But given your experience and your exposure, I don't know if you feel there are certain issues that we have not addressed or we need to address in this research.

0:30:47.6 RESPONDENT: Yeah. I think they capture the essence of the discussion that has to take place, but maybe you can focus a bit more on a energy entrepreneurship which can also serve as a way of getting women to increase their income generation. The area of charcoal production and the need for improved technologies that can boost sustainability and incomes and see the role, also interrogate the role that women play there. You understand.

0:31:32.0 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Yes.

0:31:32.1 RESPONDENT: Because we know that initially, women were the ones who were doing this on a small scale level, but when it became much more lucrative, the men have taken over. Every time if you identify an energy activity, then you ask those gender questions. Who is doing what? Who is benefiting, who is losing and that sort of thing. Because much of the time, when the work becomes easier, you see that the men have taken over. So you have to look at those things. And then with electricity, how we can expand small scale service enterprises for women. And then look at all these energy sources building in the COVID-19 experience, as well. So that would be my addition.

0:32:24.9 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Thank you very much. I really, really, really appreciate your time.

0:32:32.9 RESPONDENT: You're most welcome.

0:32:33.3 INTERVIEWER: I know you've been very busy and we also struggled a little bit with the internet connection, but I'm happy...

0:32:42.6 RESPONDENT: I know.

[chuckle]

0:32:43.3 INTERVIEWER: I'm happy you are very patient with me.

0:32:43.8 RESPONDENT: Yes. It's good we were able to do it.

0:32:46.2 INTERVIEWER: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it is...

0:32:47.8 RESPONDENT: Yes.

0:32:49.2 INTERVIEWER: Yeah. So thank you very much. We'll be following up with you on as we proceed, that... We have plans of organizing more like an exchange, original exchange, so there is likely to be a workshop either within this year or early next year, so I'll keep you updated in case when it's scheduled and you are available, if you'll be able to participate, that would great.

0:33:20.1 RESPONDENT: That would be most interesting. Yeah.

0:33:24.0 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Alright.

0:33:26.0 RESPONDENT: Okay. So all the best and...

0:33:30.5 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Thank you very much, doc.

0:33:31.8 RESPONDENT: I wish you the best.

0:33:33.1 INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much, thank you very much.

0:33:33.2 RESPONDENT: Bye bye.

0:33:33.2 INTERVIEWER: Okay. Bye.