0:00:01.3 Speaker 1: Okay, so just by...

0:00:02.8 Speaker 2: The whole objective... Okay, you let me know, please.

0:00:05.3 Speaker 1: Yes, so just to introduce the project. This is a project that Friends of the Earth, Ghana is implementing or a research we are carrying out in partnership with Anglia Ruskin University and Leeds Beckett University in the UK. It's focused on equitable energy access and bringing in the gender element, trying to access gender equity, the scale of or the role of gender equity in the context of energy access in Ghana. So briefly it will just be a few questions that I will be asking, and just try to get your perspectives on... Based on your experience and your exposure in Ghana, what are your perspectives on these issues? So basically, we'll start with a few definitions of... Or your perspectives on a few concepts. Then we will move into the policy aspect, and then a bit about renewable energy and energy transition.

0:01:26.2 Speaker 2: Okay.

0:01:27.1 S1: Okay. Alright. So if you could just briefly introduce yourself, your role and your... Yeah, your experience in the energy issues in Ghana.

0:01:47.7 S2: Very well. My name is XXXX. I work for XXXX, it's a civil accessible society entity.

0:01:53.8 S1: Okay.

0:01:54.1 S2: And I'm a member of the XXXX, And I was also the recent past chair of the XXXX, Ghana, tasked with the responsibility of ensuring the effective utilization of the... Or XXXX.

0:02:31.9 S1: Okay.

0:02:32.3 S2: Yeah.

0:02:32.5 S1: Right. Okay, thank you very much, sir. So in your experience, how would you describe equitable energy access in Ghana?

0:02:45.7 S2: Well, as the word says, equitable means you get what you need or what you require. But when you look at the energy sector in Ghana, when you look at energy in terms of what we need to power ourselves, our houses, our food, for domestic and industrial use, you realize that the energy sector is on a certain trajectory. The trajectory it follows is more oriented at supplying energy needs for... That is when you look at it from the state's perspective. When the state is looking at energy, it's looking at energy from the business perspective. So how compact investment it does to assess energy that power industry needs.

0:03:42.6 S1: Okay.

0:03:43.1 S2: So, that is the starting point. So that is how the energy situation... So if you look at the energy policy, the energy legislation, you will see this trend... This type of sentiments running through.

0:04:00.3 S1: Okay. Right, okay. So if we bring in the concept of gender, how would you describe gender equity in energy access, in the context of Ghana?

0:04:14.0 S2: Well, when you look at gender, depending on which aspect of gender you are looking at, I will look at gender from the energy aspect, from the perspective of the ordinary citizens who majority are marginalized in terms of their... The structural arrangement of the society. So when I am looking at gender from the marginalization perspective, the marginalized society, which includes more of women anyway, in the first place. I will not directly look at it from men and women perspectives, I will look at it from the marginalized. The marginalized women constitutes a greater proportion of the marginalized society arising from the kind of labour they find themselves in and the way the society is structured, also, Even though there are moves to empower women to be on top of certain issues, but largely, that has not been achieved properly. So women are still part of the marginalized societies in terms of access to many things, including energy.

0:05:15.9 S2: So definitely. And when you look at the industrial spin that is placed on energy for the government system, you will see that the... Those who form the cream, or those institutions that lead that are of interest to business are not even women-led, largely, are not women-led in the first place. And if you cascade it down to the perspective in which I am putting it, the marginalized, you will see that the energy sector is most controlled by the rich and the powerful, or those who are politically exposed, or those who are economically exposed, or... So, it is an elite game, let me put it that way, which has implications even for women because if you look at... Yeah. That is it, that is how it looks like. So women are embedded in this arrangement where equity, the access to energy is not very favorable to women. When you go to the rural areas, it's clear.

0:06:21.9 S1: Okay, okay. I was very interested in that statement you made that it has implications for women, if you could elaborate a bit more on that.

0:06:32.9 S2: Yeah, it has implications for women because when you look at... Let's even look at the ordinary Ghanaian society from the rural perspective. From the rural perspective because still majority of the people are still locked up, so understanding the energy sector in terms of access, you may necessarily want to look at what happens in the rural areas. So when you go to the rural areas, people are still... The bane of the power situation is still powered by, what do I call it, the wood, the charcoal and the wood burning hearth so... And those who... And the way the society is structured, women are still the fetchers of firewood or fuel-wood. So because of climate change and other forms of other human-induced pressures on the resources, which forms the basis for wood fuel, women have to cover a lot of distances and it becomes energy sapping. And in so doing, they have very little labour left to do other things. So, they are disproportionately affected when you look at energy from that perspective.

0:07:49.2 S2: And again, when even you look at it from the light industry perspective, when industries are established from the national grid, you will realize that when you look at it from the labour perspective, you see that a lot of the labour work or labour... Yeah, a lot of labour expenditure that is extended on the industry, is women who do the casual aspect of it. They are the tail-end of the business value chain, in terms of the industry operation, so there too their contribution to the industry, as a result of the energy chain where they find themselves, is very little and it affects them in terms of income.

0:08:32.7 S2: So at that level too, women are somehow are disproportionately affected and all this is based... Is an issue of the structure of the society. So I will look at it from the structural violence perspective, so it is a kind of senior violence that has been unleashed by the structure that we have, and people have come to accept it even though it is painful at certain times. But because there is no ready opportunity to address the situation, people have accepted it as the way a society should run. So it's an issue from the social structure that we find ourselves, which I will quickly want to link to the structural violence theory.

0:09:18.3 S1: Oh, okay, okay. Okay, I think you have touched it ties a little bit on the next question, and that is the infrastructure part, but I wanted to find out like when new energy infrastructure is provided, who do you think benefits the most? Is it... Between men and women, who do you think benefits the most, say, rural electrification, street lights, solar energy. If this infrastructure is provided, who does it usually benefit the most?

0:09:47.7 S2: You know, the rural... If you look at energy infrastructure provisioning through the rural infrastructural system, the idea is to give power or to centralize energy to the sub-national levels, in order to power or to grow industry. That is the thinking and that is the theory, but again, those industries must be established by people or by agencies or institutions, and most at times those who have the energy, even when you take a simple corn mill as a rural enterprise, you realize that most of them are owned by men. So even at the power distribution level to the rural areas, men tend to become the biggest beneficiaries of the power distribution network, and women still trail behind, so even... So if you look at this whole... Yeah, if you look at the structure, you'll see that still, even in the rural industry level women are still doing very little. When you go to the Northern part of the country, look at the shea-butter industry, where people use light power to do the milling. You realize that at the end of the day, women sell their labour, they're in the milling houses, trying to go through the processes and even cream the, whatever, the shea-butter, but at the end of the value chain, the beneficiary of that industry are men-driven. So women play a role in it, but they don't get as much as men.

0:11:27.4 S1: Okay.

0:11:28.1 S2: So they're only contributing their labour to earn a living and probably get something very little to save, but at the end of the day, the biggest chunk goes to those who do the investments, which are men-driven most of the times.

0:11:45.5 S1: Okay. Let's talk a little bit about policy. Do you think Ghana's energy policies are gender-sensitive, and if not, what are some of the gaps that you think need to be filled?

0:12:02.3 S2: The whole idea about the energy policy is to address energy needs.

0:12:09.8 S1: Yes.

0:12:10.1 S2: For the country in totality. So the policy speaks to that intention. The policy is well intended. And you see, there is one thing having the policy and there is another thing having the action on the ground. So what we have is a kind of policy that seems to be ambitious too.

0:12:29.6 S1: Yeah.

0:12:31.1 S2: However, the implementation gives the policy away, clearly.

0:12:33.9 S1: Okay.

0:12:33.9 S2: So, the disparity around gender, in terms of energy access, in terms of benefiting from the use of the energy, also still goes against women, also still goes against marginalized societies. Because when you look at gender even from marginalized societies, and even if you look at it from the point of even migrants and non-migrants, you'll see that migrants societies, especially the illegal migrants are living in squalid, how do I call it, settlements.

0:13:13.0 S1: Okay.

0:13:13.6 S2: And their access to energy... At times, they have to even to steal the energy to live on because they don't have that... The systems does not support... They are even sneaking into the system, so they don't want to be known.

0:13:25.9 S1: Yeah, yeah.

0:13:26.4 S2: In that case, their access to energy is very little. People have to light... People have to hide in kiosks and put on lights for maybe just two hours.

0:13:37.9 S1: Okay.

0:13:37.9 S2: And just do something quick in order not to be caught. And in this way, if you look at this, women are still the biggest sufferers. The [0:13:47.7] \_\_\_\_ of the north are living in squalid systems, settlements in Accra, all over. They're living in places that they don't have light, they're running shifts... Even when they have light, they have it at a very little timeframe. And so the power rationing system is not very... Like where I live presently, you'll realize that there are houses around you that the people there are mostly women doing all kinds of little bit trade, there's no power, and they're not linked to the national grid. Even when they have, they cannot pay because they don't have what it takes to pay. So it affects their access.

0:14:26.9 S1: Okay. Is it because of their low income status or is it...

0:14:33.4 S2: Perfectly, it is. That is one big factor because you see the whole Ghanaian economy thrives on, mostly on informal economy. And in the informal economic sector, there was a study from [0:14:41.2] \_\_\_\_ Foundation, which shows that 70% or 75% of Ghanaians are living on the informal... And women constitute the biggest chunk of that 75% of the informal economy, doing menial jobs, who are not connected to the national system, they don't have the social securities and all that. So they tend to become poor as a result of this structural arrangement. The state is no able to identify them and put them on stream, so they themselves also are living on their own.

0:15:20.6 S1: Okay.

0:15:21.2 S2: And in so doing, they've just become poor because there's no... Assuming somebody knows that he is part of this contribute... The system identifies and encourages the person to put just 5 cedis a month into a kind of fund that the state organizes, the person will be bold enough to do other things and to announce herself, that I'm the charcoal seller, I'm here, please let me know where to pay my tax, so that I can also benefit this into the future. But there's no system to identify them. So with that arrangement, which is embedded in the social structure, that we have not the social structure. But we have, yeah, the structure but we have not the social structure per say, but even the political arrangement does not have a system, aggressive system to identify people. Recently, there was an attempt to do some housing markings and all that, I don't where it has gone to. I don't know that is enough to identify those on the streets, women selling dog chains, and fruits, apples, and all that. You cannot understand how somebody can sell water and make a living.

0:16:30.4 S1: A living.

0:16:30.6 S2: So people are really, really selling their labour for very little. And at the end of the day, they cannot pay for the price of the energy because they don't have what it takes to pay for it.

0:16:39.7 S1: Okay, okay. But do you think that is just an economic issue or there is a cultural element to that deprivation or that vulnerability?

0:16:50.3 S2: For now, I've seen very little of the culture now.

0:16:54.7 S1: Okay.

0:16:56.0 S2: I see it more of economy... You see, at times, the cultural issues have transformed themselves into social issues or economic issues, okay?

0:17:07.6 S1: Yeah.

0:17:07.8 S2: In the past, in the rural areas where culture was very strong, the place of women was in the kitchen. So, by so doing, they have to fetch the firewood. Yes, that also exists anyway at the rural area. But when you come to the urban centres, it's purely economic.

0:17:26.1 S1: Oh, okay, okay.

0:17:26.6 S2: It's purely economic, and it's purely a failure of the state to provide the essential services and essential social amenities for people to live in. For instance, if there were housing units in Accra that can accommodate the least economic earner in this country, just a small house fitted with some power arrangements, which shows that if you're living on this type of income, you pay for this type of power or you pay this amount of power, everybody will have access to energy.

0:17:55.8 S1: Yeah.

0:17:56.0 S2: But we don't have that system in place. The government itself do does not know where the their citizens are living. Citizens aren't in the system, then they are also not confident enough to demand power, because by so doing, they'll be exposed to other economic demands that they would not be able to meet. So there is also a problem of the system, and the system is... Like what I'm talking about, I'm talking about the more distinct structure, which is making it cost... Which is constraining the ability of ordinary citizens, including women, to access social services and amenities, for example, like energy.

0:18:31.1 S1: Oh, okay, okay.

0:18:31.6 S2: Yeah.

0:18:33.2 S1: Alright. I think you've already touched a lot on the next question. I was coming to talk about what in your view would be the best practices? How do we bridge that gap? I think you've already touched a little bit on some of them. But if you could give maybe categorically a few points that you think, actions that you think we need to be... We need to take to be able to break that gap. What in your perspective would be the best, the best practice?

0:19:03.0 S2: For me the starting point will be a developmental state. Having a state that takes control, not... Also, to facilitate the development of the country. In so doing, the state will be able to know its citizens better. Knowing its citizens means understanding the economic potential, the economic opportunities and the kind of economic participation that people find themselves in, in order to even sell the energy to them at a price that they are able to afford. But doing that should also be based on the fact that these people have to get their necessary income, then they must also be employed.

0:19:43.1 S2: There must be a system that must mops up the energy that is being wasted in the marketplace. You see a lot of people, women selling certain things that they are... They just want to live, like that is what they want to do, and that cannot be said to be a good economic opportunity for citizens, it's not decent enough. It's not... It's dehumanizing, people are involved in all kinds of dehumanizing economic activity and we will also look, the elites also look on it and say people are doing their own thing or they are engaging in their own economic... That is not a pure, a good economic activity that can drive the country even into prosperity. So, the first thing is that the state must reorganize its approach to economic development. There is this ping of private sector led growth, which is a good thing, but that should be balanced with a strong state participation.

0:20:41.7 S1: Okay. Okay.

0:20:43.5 S2: We can not leave everything unto the hands of the private sector because the interest, the biggest interest of the private sector is profit. But the state will look beyond profit, and balance profit with social amenities or what will make citizens look like real human beings, the state will be more interested in that than the private sector. So there is a need for the state to seize some space within the economic sphere, the economic development sphere, than what we are doing today, in order to give that citizen that hope and the [0:21:17.7] \_\_\_\_ to be able to participate even in the private sector business opportunities. If people sleep in squalid homes, they don't get to breath well.

0:21:29.4 S2: They sleep in shacks, the air circulation in their rooms are poor, they wake-up in the morning already tired. So even if they have to participate in industry activities as even common laborers, they are not able to give the best of their labor because they don't have that labor because that strength is not there. So in this way, the state must be interested in what kind of housing units are important for citizens. In order to be able to do that part, they show the whole agenda of the private sector led groups should be looked at in a holistic perspective. It's not enough to say we have created free zones for private sector people to come in and when they come we are able to. The state cannot only reduce its system into tax collector, it must do better than this.

0:22:14.4 S1: Okay? Okay. Alright. So from based on those key points, what role do you think your organization... You mentioned your role in XXXX, your role in XXXX, and also, XXXX. What role do you think these institutions or organizations should be able to play in ensuring that change?

0:22:44.9 S2: Yeah, from... Let me take it from the bigger perspective first. XXXX and XXXX are all speaking the same language; how to utilize the energy revenue, revenue from our energy sector to power development that creates a balance of societal roles. So basically, and doing this should be done on the basis of transparency and accountability. Then accountability means that what you are using the money for, your accounts also speak to the needs of the people.

0:23:24.6 S1: Yeah. Okay.

0:23:24.7 S2: So the question then arises from this, what are the needs of the people? It is only when you understand the needs of the people in fairness that the expenditure pattern of the revenues from the oil and gas or the energy sector will be addressing the accountability because it must account to the people's needs. And for me some of the needs we have are very basic, which we call the basic, whatever, essentials of life; food, clothing and shelter. And the biggest one for me now here is shelter. People don't have where they... What it takes, or they don't have what it takes to even sleep decently as human beings and wake up with energy. So there must be an agenda to focus our energy sector revenue into creating the needed accommodation for ordinary citizens to live in.

0:24:22.7 S2: So that would be the best one from the XXXX and XXXX perspective, which is the basic fabric of the principle that established these two institutions. Now, when you come back to our own organisation as NGO, like the XXXX, we have been campaigning for energy transition. We have been campaigning for energy sustainability and equity, which speaks to the very research that we are doing, so we are in the trade. So we can only campaign because we are just a small group. We cannot, we don't have the financial muscle to do what... We can only inform government to do this the way that the will of our energy asset speaks to or becomes accountable to the needs of ordinary citizens.

0:25:11.1 S1: Oh, okay.

0:25:11.3 S2: That, I think, we can do. We can only campaign, we can lobby, we can only remain in that scene because this is a small group that can only work with other groups to raise these type of voices, to create the structure of policy, policy structure, to suggest policy proposal to government to fit into a legislation that speaks to the needs of ordinary citizens. Most at times, it is true that our energy sector policies, legislations, regulations, and all that, what have you, are too much in [0:25:52.2] \_\_\_\_ looking at big time private sector involvement, which at the end of the day, it does not work well for citizens or does not align with ordinary citizens aspirations and needs.

0:26:03.2 S1: And need. Okay. Just, one last question, so you talked... You mentioned a little bit about energy transition as being one of the components of your work. Do you think, from your perspective, that Ghana government or the Ghanaian government is committed to ensuring energy transition in Ghana?

0:26:25.4 S2: For now, in my own assessment, which can be a little tardy, I am not sure the government is caught up very well in this energy transition thinking.

0:26:53.1 S1: Okay.

0:26:53.2 S2: In some statements, policies, or some write-ups, you will see it in one line. The government is not, even if they know, their commitment is not yet strong enough for us to clamour around, there's nothing like that. It's still being gradually led by civil society.

0:26:57.2 S1: Okay.

0:26:57.3 S2: People still... Because if you look at energy... Petroleum Revenue Management Act, all... It's not... It only makes some reference to investing, using some of... If you look at the way the petroleum revenue has been used over time.

0:27:11.7 S1: Yes.

0:27:11.8 S2: None has been used to support the energy sector into a transitional phase, no. We are using it to do other things, building schools, supporting school fees and all that.

0:27:22.6 S1: Okay.

0:27:22.7 S2: So instead of using some of the petroleum revenue into energy transition activities, we haven't done that. 10 years on to oil now, that has not been done. Even though it is stated somewhere in the legislation as one of the areas that could be chosen as priority, but no government has ever chosen that as a priority. So that tells me that, yes, it's just a lip service for now, so maybe they're waiting until such a time that it catches on them. Now that the oil companies are shifting their grounds towards energy transition policy, perhaps when it gets there, and our energy... Or petroleum resources becomes stranded, then probably they will be thinking of that.

[laughter]

0:28:05.8 S1: Yeah, maybe. Okay, alright. So those were all the questions I had. Thank you very much.

0:28:12.9 S2: Always my pleasure.

0:28:13.0 S1: But do you think there are any, in this context of this research, do you think there are any issues that we haven't addressed? We talked about equitable energy access, the gender roles and challenges, the policy perspective, and a bit about energy transition. Do you think that there is any, there are any other issues that we need to bring into this research that...

0:28:41.7 S2: I think that you will maybe... I touched on it, but probably you can espouse it a bit further or you can explore further.

0:28:50.9 S1: Okay.

0:28:51.0 S2: The whole idea... The whole debate about energy access, energy equity, and all the rest, has some relevance for the kind of economy we operate and the players, the actors in the field.

0:29:05.7 S1: Okay.

0:29:05.8 S2: The actors in the field of our economy is, like I said earlier, when you look at the Ghanaian society, 70% of us are not known to the mainstream structure, we are not on the government payroll, so the government... We're not taxable, but we're in the informal sector doing something on our own. So until the states gets to bring these people on board, mop them up and know them, then we can understand the full picture of the energy situation in the country, in terms of those who are involved. So if you look at it from the labour, the access in the labour field, it's tentative.

0:29:43.0 S1: Okay.

0:29:43.1 S2: Yes.

0:29:43.3 S1: In other words, the informal sector.

0:29:43.5 S2: The informal sector, exactly so, the informal sector.

0:29:43.6 S1: Oh, okay.

0:29:43.7 S2: You cannot understand it totally when you don't look at the informal sector.

0:29:43.9 S1: Oh, okay, okay. Alright, alright XXXX, thank you very much. I really appreciate your time, I know you're very tight this morning, but I really...

0:30:01.7 S2: Oh no, that's okay, it's all part of it, these are the things that makes it tight, otherwise we can't say we're tight, we're finished.

[laughter]

0:30:08.5 S1: Okay.

0:30:08.6 S2: If it were not so, we'll not say we're tight, so it's okay.

0:30:11.3 S1: Okay.

0:30:11.4 S2: It's good to be tight and that is also how you energise yourself.

0:30:15.7 S1: Oh, okay, okay.