Applying a gender approach in practice: what does it mean when we meet people in the field?

Input to discussion, gender approaches, ENERGIA webinar 29 May 2015

Tanja Winther RA1: ‘Examining Factors that Enhance and restrict Women’s Empowerment through Electrification’ (EFEWEE)
The interview context

Positions

People speak for effect

Mixed or same sex groups

Detached from daily life

Trust

Close to practice
Gender research
Mapping the situation within the household

• Attempt to talk to both wife and husband, at least register each persons’ income/occupations and other important individual data
• Register the gender of respondent (and interviewer)
• Avoid using the term “head of household”!
  – Ethical problem: Assumes the man is head if there are two partners
  – Important data will be missing
• Include: “Who in the household…”
• Separate between questions on norms and what they actually do
• Relatively easy: questions on income, assets/ownership, routines
• Challenging: questions on decision making
What do we hear?
(economist and anthropologist analysing same interview)

Interviewee:
‘Yes, I am worried about the future and what kind of world my children will live in’

Economist interpretation:
This person has a strong environmental concern

Anthropologist interpretation:
In this interview with two female researchers focusing on sustainability, this woman expressed a strong environmental concern and even anxiety when being asked if she believes in global warming (...and she seemed uninterested when receiving the chocolate gift)
Mixed methods:
Interpreting conflicting findings
Comparing what people say and do
(examples from Zanzibar)

**Interviews 1991**
After light and radio, what appliances would you obtain next?
- Men: 1) freezer (fish) 2) electric stove 3) TV
- Women: electric stove (but also much fear)

**Observed 2001**
- Relatively few freezers, but rarely used for storing fish
- No electric cookers
- Many television sets
Cooking

- Techn. scripts
- Finances
- Safety
- Taste
- The good life
- Division of work
- Access to energy/fuel
- Knowledge

The good life
Examine gendered realities before intervention

- Opportunities
- Assets/endowments
- Decision making power

Examine the nature and process of intervention

- Various groups of women empowered (process)?
  - Other groups empowered?

Document gendered realities after intervention including careful treatment of changes caused by intervention (attribution)