Women’s empowerment in energy projects: What is the meaning?

Dr. Tanja Winther
Associate Professor, University of Oslo, Norway

Engendering the Energy Transition
Theory meets policy and practice, South meets North
23-24 November 2016
EFEWEE (2015-2018)
Exploring Factors that Enhance and restrict Women’s Empowerment through Electrification

- Comparing grid and decentralised systems
- Kenya, India and Nepal
- Mixed methods
Consortium Members EFEWEE

- Tanja Winther, University of Oslo, Norway
- Kirsten Ulsrud
- Karina Standal
- Debajit Palit, TERI, India
- Mini Govindan
- Anjali Saini, Seacrester Consulting, Kenya
- Henry Gichungi
- Magi Matinga, Dunamai Energy, Malawi
- Raju Laudari, AEPC, Nepal (collab. partner)
Motivation 1: social change is complex

Invest in a lamp and let a girl read...

Invest in a cow ....('girl effect')

Multiply

Empowerment

Potential for empowerment
Typical gender goals in energy projects/programmes

- Women’s increased welfare
- Women’s economic empowerment
- Women’s political empowerment

Skutsch 2006
Clancy et al. 2007
IEG 2008
Motivation 2: risk of more inequality

Men tend to be recruited in management/operation

Electricity and appliances: desired, high status
Meaning of empowerment from below

- “To be educated”, “unity”, “political power”
- “No association electricity – empowerment”
  Focus group discussions, Chhattisgarh, India 2016

- “To make somebody able to do something. Light empowers them to read”
  Interview with female staff, Ikisaya Energy Centre, Kenya 2016

- “Nowadays, women have become empowered: they make an income and can just leave”
  Man telling his life story, Homa Bay, Kenya 2016
Meaning of empowerment

- “Achieve agency” (choice → action)
  Measure: agency + material, social, human resources
- Friedman: 1992: Marginalised groups moving out of subordinated position

➢ Energy: How do we conceive women’s empowerment?
EFEWEE Assumptions & definitions
Drawing on Friedman (1992) and Kabeer (1999 and 2001)

• **Women’s empowerment**: A process towards gender equality

• **Gender equality**: Women and men’s equal
  – rights
  – access to and control over resources
  – power to influence matters that concern or affect them
The grid in the village: representation of social organisation
Uroa, Zanzibar

UROA VILLAGE 1991
Drawn by
Juma Hassan Juma
Rural Zanzibar (grid)

Women did obtain improved welfare (‘development’) and more flexibility, but men’s dominance was reinforced

HOW:
- Men controlled houses, electricity and assets
- Discriminating rules for inheritance and divorce
- Women excluded from local electrification process

Winther 2008
Cutwini, South Africa (grid)

Women obtained increased agency and control over resources

HOW:
- Many single female households
- Government grants were given directly to women guardians
- TV: Alternative gender narratives and information about rights

Matinga 2010
Rural Afghanistan (solar engineers)

Women gained increased agency
Changed gender norms

HOW:
• Women trained and recruited as solar engineers
• Changed perceptions of what a woman can do
• Fathers-in-law: continued control over household finances

Standal 2008
Reviewing empirical literature I
Qualitatively oriented studies

- Explorations of electrification in local contexts, with focus on ‘who, ‘how’ and ‘why’
  - Process
  - Design of electricity supply
  - Social practices rather than single indicators
  - Impact on
    - Organisation of daily life
    - Household finances, formal and informal economy
    - Decision making
    - Gender relations, norms and ideologies

- Different paths to empowerment
Reviewing empirical literature II
Statistical studies (incl modelling)

Gendered impact of **having access to electricity** on

- Employment rate
- Fuel use and cooking technology
- Welfare indicators
  - Time use (drudgery)
  - Fertility rates
  - Girls’ and boys’ study time and enrolment in school
- Attitudes to norms that discriminate women

```
HH electricity access  →  Indicator X
```
How to **bridge** the various approaches so as to **accumulate** knowledge and understand the **mechanisms** at work?
## Analysing women’s empowerment through electrification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Dimensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **1 Overarching issues**            | Women and men’s rights  
                                      | Gender ideologies and norms  
                                      | Women and men’s social positions |
| **2 Access to and control over resources** | Material opportunities (short term)  
                                      | Material endowments (long term)  
                                      | Social resources (e.g. social networks)  
                                      | Human resources (education, drudgery, health) |
| **3 Power to influence decisions (Agency)** | Life decisions (incl. political power)  
                                      | Everyday decisions  
                                      | Decisions on electricity’s uses at home  
                                      | Involvement in system of supply |
| **4 Impact of women’s involvement in supply** | The impact of women’s involvement in supply on the empowerment of women in the wider community |
| **5 Negative effects**              | Signs of negative impact of electrification on any of the above dimensions |
Kitui, Kenya (energy centre)
Endau, Kenya (grid)
Available results, EFEWEE
From the scoping phase (literature review and review of policies)

• EFEWEE Web and Blog http://www.efewee.org
• ENERGIA http://energia.org/research/
• tanja.winther@sum.uio.no
• mmat_001@yahoo.com (Magi Matinga)

In progress (academic journals):
• Matinga, M., T.Winther and K.Standal: “Electrification and women’s empowerment: What is the evidence?”
• Winther, T., M.Matinga and K.Ulsrud: “Electrification and women’s empowerment: Proposal of a framework of analysis”
Thank you