

Workshop On

**WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS  
&  
SUSTAINABLE ENERGY IN AFRICA**

**CONCEPT NOTE**

**“Africa 2030: Unlocking Opportunities for Women in Sustainable Energy” Towards Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and AU Agenda 2063**

Under the Auspices of the 16th African Ministerial Conference on Environment session (AMCEN 16) 13-14 June 2017 Libreville, Gabon



**Location:** Radisson Blu Hotel, Libreville, Gabon

**Invited Countries:** Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Senegal, Gabon, Cameroon, Morocco, Egypt, South Africa, Mauritius, Zambia and Malawi

**Language:** English and French



UNITED NATIONS  
UNIVERSITY  
UNU-GEST



## INTRODUCTION

UN Environment, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Iceland, UNU-GEST, UN Women and Pan African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA) are organizing the workshop “Women Entrepreneurship on Sustainable Energy” in Libreville, Gabon during the Sixteen Session of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN 16) on 13-14 June 2017.

AMCEN 16 will take place in Libreville, Gabon on 12-16 June 2017 under the overarching theme of “Seizing the Moment: Investing in Innovative Environmental Solutions to Accelerate SDGs and AU Agenda 2063 implementation in Africa”. AMCEN 16, will bring together Africa’s experts and highest level decision-makers on the environment. It will lead to: (a) resolutions and declarations on implementation of SDG 2030 and AU Agenda 2063 as well as Paris agreement and (b) a call to action for how countries will address the critical environmental challenges facing the continent today. The workshop comes at the opportune moment when the continent is gearing up to the implementation of the Paris agreement and achieve the global Sustainable Development Goal’s 2030 and Continental AU 2063 development agenda through integrated approaches of innovative solutions.

The Women Entrepreneurs and Sustainable Energy workshop is being held back-to-back with the AMCEN-16 to bring to light the role that women can play across the energy value chain to expand economic opportunities and alleviate energy poverty. The convening of experts from 16 countries is expected to inform AMCEN-16’s key messages and recommendations for incorporation into the 2017 AMCEN outcome document. Specifically, this will lead to gender equality concerns being included in the action agenda on gender and sustainable energy as well as the project pipeline of the UN Environment Africa Office in order to accelerate sustainable energy for all in Africa in particular at the national level.

## BACKGROUND

Renewable, clean energy and gender equality are preconditions for sustainable development and for tackling climate change. This linkage is tacit in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and AU Agenda 2063 - The Africa We Want . Women’s empowerment and collective action (SDG 5, and Agenda 2063 Goal 17) and access to modern energy services (SDG 7, and Agenda 2063 Goal 7) are central to building more environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient societies (SDGs 13 and 15 and Agenda 2063 Goal 7) (UN Women, UNDP and UNEP, 2015).

Access to modern energy services is still severely limited across the globe, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, leading to energy poverty. More than 600 million people do not have access to electricity and approximately 730 million people rely on traditional biomass (IEA, 2014a). Lack of access to reliable electricity limits economic opportunities and hinders health care and education improvements, among other things. Dependence on firewood and biomass for household energy contributes to environmental degradation, adverse health effects, and climate change, leading to air pollution as well as deforestation, land degradation and desertification. Moreover, about 600,000 people in Africa die each year as a result of indoor air pollution (Africa Progress Panel, 2015).

In Africa – and particularly rural Africa – women perform key functions in meeting household and community energy needs. They are typically responsible for providing household lighting, heating and cooking, but rarely have access to modern energy resources; this has economic, social, health and security-related impacts on women’s lives (UN Women, UNDP and UNEP, 2015). The disproportionate effects of energy poverty on women have been well documented, particularly for female-headed households (Glemarec, Bayat-Renoux and Waissbein, 2016). For instance, the time spent on firewood collection – on average of 2.1 hours per day - prohibits women from being engaged in more productive or educational activities (Lambe, et al. 2015) and also expose women to safety risks while gathering fuel wood. As a result of indoor air pollution from cooking with firewood women, moreover, experience adverse health effects and high prevalence of respiratory diseases.

As the primary energy managers in households and communities in developing countries, women can be powerful agents for change in the transition to sustainable energy and economic development (UN Women, UNDP and UNEP, 2015). However, women’s current participation in decision-making and policy processes at the community, national and regional levels in the energy sector is limited.

Further, local women entrepreneurs face a range of gender-specific barriers in the private sector. These include limited participation in the formal employment sector; more difficulty accessing financing for launching and scaling up a business; fewer opportunities for technical and business training and education; smaller number of women champions to mentor younger women entering the energy sector; and overall business risks for the clean energy sector in developing countries that affect both women and men (e.g., access to high quality products, foreign exchange risks, limited consumer finance, weak distribution channels, and uncertain tariff and duties).

In recent years however, there is a growing awareness that energy, as a critical enabler to development, can also play a transformative role in the lives of women by enhancing their productivity and effectiveness at home and at work. For example, when women gain physical access to a connection and make use of energy services, the poverty reduction impacts are multiple on health, income generation and family. At the same time, there is evidence that goes beyond their traditional role as “Users” and “beneficiaries” women and their networks have started playing a role in extending energy services particularly to the difficult to reach and poor market segments (the last mile). Combining these factors women have a huge potential to advance energy access and can be powerful agents of change in the continent’s energy transition to be. However, the potential of women as entrepreneurs is under-utilized. The existing gender gaps in access to finance, information, technology, goods and services and markets translate into additional investment risks. Addressing these gender-differentiated risks will unleash the potential of women entrepreneurs in sustainable energy and contribute towards the achievement of SDG 5 and 7 and Agenda 2063.

It is against this backdrop that key partners are joining forces to host a two day workshop for African environmental and energy policy makers, attending AMCEN 16, to hear

from, women entrepreneurs involved in promotion of sustainable energy, and experts in energy and environment to explore ways to promote the expansion of sustainable energy solutions that empower women entrepreneurs in Africa, across the energy value chain. Issues of sustainable energy, gender and potential integrated solutions from various perspectives will be discussed along with specific policy instruments and gender differentiated risks.

### MAIN OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

This workshop aims at identifying the main barriers and challenges that hinder the establishment growth and development of women entrepreneurs, including micro- to small and medium sized enterprises, serving the different markets including last mile energy market. An action framework will be developed to outline different approaches for women entrepreneurs to access technical and business skills and know-how; build technical competencies in sustainable energy technologies (e.g., clean cook stoves, bio briquettes, solar home systems and solar lanterns, biogas units, and community micro and mini-grids); utilize existing distribution networks; and gain access to start-up and working capital. By focusing on enterprise creation across the value chain, with a particular focus on gender equality, communities in rural and peri-urban areas across Africa will begin to enjoy the benefits of access to sustainable energy at an accelerated pace.

The outcomes of the workshop are moreover expected to inform AMCEN 16's key messages and recommendations for incorporation into the 2017 AMCEN outcome document. Specifically, this will lead to gender equality concerns being included in the 2017 AMCEN action agenda on gender and sustainable energy as well as the project pipeline of the UN Environment Africa Office in order to accelerate sustainable energy for all in Africa in particular at the national level.

### EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS

- (i) Women Entrepreneurs from sixteen African countries (selected on the basis of geographical distribution and on-going work to promote women energy entrepreneurs)
- (ii) Development partners and stakeholders working with gender and sustainable energy issues
- (iii) Policymakers and environmental/energy experts
- (iv) Local and regional financial institutions
- (v) Government representatives from Energy Ministries from the 16 African countries represented at the meeting
- (vi) Suppliers (who manufactures/or imports renewable energy and energy efficient products)
- (vii) Representatives from private sector

### EXPECTED OUTPUT

In order for African women to be economically, socially and environmentally empowered the continent needs to leverage on catalytic sectors, such as Energy, as a means to accelerate inclusive socio-economic development, and address climate change through the implementation of the Paris agreement, Agenda 2030 and AU Agenda 2063.

The workshop is expected to provide a platform to discuss, through panel and working groups on how access to sustainable energy can empower women as customers and business owners. Challenges and barriers will be discussed

including: (1) inadequate environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy and environmental policies; 2) limited access to finance and market for women energy entrepreneurs across the value chain and; 3) Inadequate business and technical knowledge, skills and confidence to be a part of the formal sector. The discussion will also propose a solution action plan for these barriers.

### The expected output of the workshop include:

- Identified gender gaps in (a) policies, (ii) access to finance and market, and (iii) skills to empower women entrepreneurs across the energy value chain;
- Provided ideas on sustainable energy solutions specifically on finance access and skills and knowledge on sustainable energy technologies and business opportunities.
- Identified a set of possible market transformation policies and approaches for environmental and energy policy makers, attending AMCEN 16, that address gender-specific barriers for energy entrepreneurs; and
- Provided policy and strategic guidance to be considered by the African Environment Ministers attending AMCEN 16 to strengthen the role of women entrepreneurs' in the energy sector.
- Provided guidance to development of a gender-energy project led by UN Environment
- Shared experience on best practices on environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy practices
- Showcase good practice business models/initiatives using innovative solutions to prompt women entrepreneurship development in last miles in Africa
- Identified action agenda for each stakeholder and strategic activities beyond the workshop.

### WORKING GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Three working group discussions will be held on: (i) Environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy policies; (ii) Access to finance and market for women energy entrepreneurs across the value chain, and (iii) Capacity building and skills on technical and business aspects for entrepreneurs. The results of each working group discussion will be used to develop a short paper with a set of key messages and recommendations that could be a basis for the African Ministers to provide appropriate policy and strategic guidance during the AMCEN session as well as a potential forthcoming UN Environment led gender and energy project.

### Working Group Discussion 1: Environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy policies

A gender-responsive energy policy assesses gender gaps, identifies actions to close them and promotes women's engagement in the energy sector – including in decision-making processes (UN Women; UNEP 2016b). Harmonizing policies across multiple ministries is important for an environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy sector. It is also an important condition for women's empowerment to succeed in the energy sector. A gender-responsive energy policy (as defined by UN Women and UN Environment) is characterized as one that recognizes and identifies (i) the energy needs of different gender groups appropriately, (ii) the need to increase women's

participation in decision-making processes related to energy in a consistent manner and (iii) actions to address gender-related issues in the sector. Once gender concerns are included in energy policies, sufficient budget allocations for implementing these objectives need to be ensured (UN Women, UNDP and UNEP, forthcoming). Gender responsive energy policies can catalyse change for women entrepreneurs involved in the energy sector and promote a more sustainable energy sector.

This working group discussion will consider the range of possible public policy instruments to address gender differentiated risks and barriers for entrepreneurs including creating an enabling environment in last mile energy market. The discussion will also focus on (i) Mapping Priority Policy and regulatory barriers and potential solutions from the perspectives of Women Energy Enterprises; (ii) Identifying enabling policy, regulatory conditions and instruments at the national and regional levels to scale up women entrepreneurs in the energy markets; and (iii) Identifying key institutional frameworks to support the means of implementation.

**The discussion will be framed around the following questions:**

**Moderator/Scene setter:** Sheila Oparachoa, Energia

**Rapporteur:** TBD

- What are the challenges and opportunities for making energy policies more gender environmentally sustainable and responsive in Africa?
  - o How can we change the narrative in energy policies to depict women as agents of change, rather than just beneficiaries or observers?
  - o In your country, do gender impacts and opportunities come under consideration as part of energy policy development? If yes how is it handled? If not, why and what are the related challenges?
  - o What would it take for gender and environment ministries to be better engaged in the energy policy development process?
- What is women's representation in energy policy making and decision making in your country? What are some of the concrete actions that could be taken to increase women's participation?
  - o Do decentralized renewable energy systems offer better opportunities for women to participate in decision-making? If yes how?
- How do we ensure that gender-responsive energy policy priorities and actions are budgeted for and implemented?
- What best practices or case studies are available from your countries on environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy policies?

### Working Group Discussion 2- Access to finance and market for women energy entrepreneurs across the value chain

According to UN Environment and UN Women access to affordable finance and new financing models adapted to the cash flow profile of poor households can help the energy poor, and particularly women, to offset high, upfront costs of sustainable energy technologies and become key enablers for scaling up deployment of sustainable energy.

Women entrepreneurs are uniquely positioned to become agents of change (e.g. reduce customers acquisition and repayment) in expanding access to clean energy in emerging markets (UN Environment & UN Women, March 2016).

Financing solutions are also needed to attract investment in energy access solutions from commercial and social investors that can benefit communities where women are most in need of energy services. (UN Environment & UN Women, March 2016). A wide range of traditional and innovative financing options already exist that are tailored to local contexts and strengthen financial services to support women entrepreneurs involved in promotion of sustainable energy, but the pace is slow in Africa

Sustainable and renewable energy solutions such as solar, mini-grids, clean cooking and even biogas (energy from animal and household waste) have the great potential to aid in the development of women-owned small-scale enterprises. These enterprises could effectively be inclusive energy-producing companies using mobile phone-based micro-payment systems to generate revenue from local (rural or peri-urban) markets aimed at supplying this energy to the poor. It is in this context that important to note that women are not only consumers, but also producers, of energy and thus can play a crucial role in supporting the transition to a green economy.

Energy efficiency solutions such as efficient lighting, efficient household (e.g. refrigerators) and manufacturing (e.g. sewing machines) appliances have significant potential to support the development of women-owned small and medium enterprises and cooperatives. These enterprises would need adapted financial mechanisms to enable loans to generate revenue for rural, peri-urban or urban markets aimed at making such energy efficient technologies for productive uses more accessible to poorer women communities. Climate finance initiatives could be one avenue to support such efforts. (UN Women, UN Environment 2015)

Further, sustainable access to market is required to guarantee women energy entrepreneurs an increase in income and growth in the businesses. Nevertheless Women's access to market is particularly limited to several factors including (i) inadequate training and business skills; (ii) Saturation of local markets and challenges in reaching market further away from home; and (iii) Cultural and social norms. Given these challenges gender responsive energy access policies and investments need to include interventions that make market work for women energy enterprises and empower women to compete in energy markets.

This working group will centre innovative financing schemes and access to markets which can improve women entrepreneurs' access to resources and remedial measures for contract non-compliance to empower women sustainable energy entrepreneurs.

**The discussion will be framed around the following questions:**

**Moderator/Scene setter:** Myriem Touhami, UN Environment

**Rapporteur:** TBD

- What are the main barriers that women entrepreneurs focusing on sustainable energy face to access finance in the energy sector?
- Are there certain credit enhancement mechanisms that are more suitable to women entrepreneurs and sustainable energy initiatives?
- How can seed and scale-up capitals be made more accessible to women entrepreneurs?
- What respective roles can national governments, development banks, micro-finance institutions and the private sector play in removing barriers and enhancing women's access to finance in the energy sector?
- What mechanisms need to be put in place for pay as you go (PAYG) a sustainable and innovative solution for financing energy services in Africa, in particular for women?
- What best practices or case studies are available from your countries for access to energy financing by women entrepreneurs in your countries?
- What are the main barriers for women accessing last mile energy markets?
- What are good practice and lessons from strategies and interventions that have been successful in empowering women energy enterprises to compete in energy markets?
- What are good practice and lesson from strategies and interventions that have been successful in making markets work for women energy enterprises.
- What are the main barriers to up-scaling existing and accelerate the deployment of new technologies?
- Are there any programmes in place in your country that have been particularly successful in providing training and capacity building of women energy entrepreneurs? What are the features that made it successful or challenges?
- What is needed to encourage greater participation by women in sustainable energy technologies educational fields and careers? Are there specific jobs in the clean energy sector that women are particularly well placed (or not)?
- What role can policy makers and the private sector play in furthering capacity building and upscale the use of existing and new technologies?
- What are the good examples and lessons learnt of models for providing business development support to women energy entrepreneurs that can be further replicated?

### Working Group Discussion 3- Capacity building, skills and empowerment

Many different environmentally sustainable energy technologies to meet women's energy needs have been developed and piloted across the region. However, there is an urgent need to develop associated skills, enhance use, widen distribution to reach more customers and lower associated costs with clean energy products and services using an enterprise-centred approach. The low number of women energy entrepreneurs will require a concerted effort to build the talent pool with wider availability and uptake of technical training and education as well as shifting gender stereotypes, social norms and practices to expand occupational choices for women (UN Environment & UN Women, March 2016).

In addition to technical skills, enhancing women's entrepreneurial skills through training on business models, business plan development, procurement, marketing, financial management, legal frameworks, existing remedial recourse mechanisms in case of contractual breaches, alternative supply chains, and land titling arrangements will be required. In addition to focusing on the entrepreneur, engagement of policymakers, development partners, and the private sector will be needed to help support the expansion of the energy sector to include more women.

**The discussion will be framed around the following questions.**

**Moderator/Scene setter:** Leah Kagwara, Energy4Impact

**Rapporteur:** TBD

- What are the capacity and skills gaps and how can they be addressed?

## DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME

<b>MONDAY, 12th JUNE, 2017: ARRIVAL and REGISTRATION OF DELEGATES</b>		
17:00-18:00 - Meeting of Moderators/Panellists/Rapporteurs		
<b>DAY ONE: TUESDAY, 13th JUNE, 2017</b>		
TIME	AREA/TITLE	PRESENTOR
OPENING CEREMONY: MC- UN Environment		
08:00-10:00	Brief Remarks from Main Organizers and Co-organizers	UN Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Iceland, UNU-GEST, UN Women, AFWMLE, PACJA
10.00 – 10:30 Coffee Break/Press Release /Group Photo		
<b>PRESENTATION - Regional and national best practices on Sustainable Energy and Gender</b>		
10:30-11:30	Energy as an enabler to achieve SDGs and Agenda 2063 in Africa	UN Environment
	Sustainable Energy and Gender	UN Women
<b>Plenary Session 1</b>		
11:30-12:30	Engendering energy policy-A regional perspective	ECOWAS (Monica Maduekwe)
	Panel Session I: Environmentally sustainable and gender responsive energy policies	Panelists/Moderator (Sheila Oparaocha)
12:30-14.00 Lunch Break		
<b>Plenary Session 2 &amp; 3</b>		
14.00–15:00	Financing solutions to attract investment in energy access – with a focus to support Woman	WB (Camilla Gandini)
15:00-16:00	Panel Session II: Access to finance for women energy entrepreneurs across the value chain	Panelists/Moderator (Myriem Touhami)
16:00- 16:30 – Tea/Coffee Break		
16.30–17:30	Building women in energy entrepreneurial skills for productive execution	Charity Wanjiku
	Panel Session III: Capacity building, skills creation and empowerment for entrepreneurs	Panelists/Moderator (Leah Kagwara)
17:30-18:00	Wrap up	
<b>DAY TWO –WEDNESDAY, 14th JUNE 2017</b>		
<b>Working Group Discussions</b>		
08:30-9:00	Summary of Day 1	Country representative
09.00–11.00	Working Group Discussions- 1/2/3	Participants/moderator (Sheila Oparaocha, Myriem Touhami, Leah Kagwara)
11:00-11:30 Tea/Coffee Break		
<b>Working Group Discussions</b>		
11.30-13:00	Continue Working Group Discussion	Participants/Moderator (Sheila Oparaocha, Myriem Touhami, Leah Kagwara)
13.00-14.00 Lunch Break		
<b>Report on outcome of the Working Group Discussions</b>		
14.00-14.30	Working Group 1 - "Gender responsive energy policies"	Moderator/Rapporteur
14.30-15.00	Working Group 2 - Access to finance for women energy entrepreneurs across the value chain	Moderator/Rapporteur
15:00-15:30	Working Group 3 - Capacity building, skills creation and empowerment for entrepreneurs	Moderator/Rapporteur
15.00-15.30 Tea/Coffee Break		
15.30–17.00	Discussions and presentations of Key messages and recommendations	All / Moderators
17.00-17.30 CLOSING SESSION		
	Brief Remarks from Main Organizers and Co-organizers	UN Environment, Ministry of Foreign Affairs-Iceland, UNU-GEST, UN Women, AFWMLE, PACJA
Working Dinner with Ministers - Chair, Africa Women Ministers and Leaders on Environment (AFWMLE)		
19:00-21:00	Presentation of outcome of the workshop	African Ministers/participants
	Launch-Africa Energy Resources Atlas	

## REFERENCE AND BACKGROUND MATERIALS

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