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The Sustainable Development Goals on gender equality, women's empowerment—SDG 5—and on energy access—SDG 7—are prerequisites for achieving many other SDGs, such as:

- SDG 1 on poverty
Studies show that women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities, while men reinvest only 30 to 40 percent.
- SDG 3 on health and wellbeing
Improved lighting and hygiene associated with clean energy and safely managed water help reduce mortality rates.
- SDG 4 on education
A recent study from Brazil showed that in rural areas with access to electricity, girls are 59 percent more likely to complete their primary education.
- and SDG 13 on climate change
Universal access requires energy to be affordable and reliable, but generating it must not irreversibly harm the environment, highlighting the need for renewable energy.

Both SDGs — 5 and 7 — are also inextricably linked, as women's participation can increase project and policy effectiveness and efficiency of energy interventions and the achievement of SDG 7.

Women and children are often disproportionately affected by a lack of energy access, in that their time and labour must typically fill the gaps (e.g., gathering biomass for cooking, manually processing grain or other food in the absence of machines, and so on). They are exposed to household air pollution—Africa alone accounts for about 600,000 deaths each year as a result of household air pollution. They carry the physical burden of fetching water and wood-fuel and are at risk of sexual violence when collecting fuel and water or are outside after dark.

In households, women are often the primary energy managers. But sustainable modern energy infrastructure and technology tend to reach women and girls last, even if vital for relieving their disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, and enhancing their economic opportunities. This situation however, obscured by the lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics.

Despite this, women could play powerful roles in extending sustainable modern energy. Yet all elements of energy planning and policy-making need to factor in gender dimensions and actively advance women's leadership. Women need to be involved from start to finish in the design of modern energy access technologies and programmes. They need to be empowered to become more involved in the provision of energy services. Within the energy industry itself, barriers to women executives,

entrepreneurs and employees must fall. And their representation on national and global energy councils and other fora must grow.

Access to electricity can support women's economic empowerment by facilitating productive and employment opportunities. Engaging women in energy value chains, as employees and as entrepreneurs helps augment their incomes. And when a woman is given an opportunity to earn an income, it helps in many other areas of her life. As mentioned previously, studies show that women reinvest 90 percent of their income in their families and communities, while men reinvest only 30 to 40 percent.

In recent years important progress towards including women in the energy value chain has been made. Women are slowly, and steadily going beyond their traditional role as "users" and "beneficiaries," and becoming a part of the solution in the energy access gap, which the conventional business as usual approaches are unable to solve.

In recent years, a number of actors have started working at the intersection of gender, social inclusion, sustainable energy and climate change. The legitimacy of gender inclusion and energy access as an interrelated issue area is now well established; studies show positive benefits when these issues are tackled together. A global movement is underway to create a more inclusive approach to energy access, with women and marginalized people taking centre stage—no longer as victims, but as agents and accelerators of change.

This is strengthened by several recent international agreements, which provide a framework for gender and energy work, including the Istanbul Programme of Action for 2011-2020 which charts out a path for Least Developed Countries (LDCs), highlighting energy access as a priority area for action, along with gender equality and the empowerment of women; the Sustainable Energy for All (SEforALL) initiative, launched by the United Nations Secretariat in 2012 and the 2016 Paris Agreement on climate change, which formally recognizes the intersection of climate change and gender equality, empowerment of women.

ESMAP, SEWA, UN Women, UNEP, ADB, UNIDO are early mover on gender and energy and have played an important role in ensuring that gender issues in energy go beyond advocacy to produce concrete results in investment, project design, and implementation-by focusing on knowledge generation and supporting pilot interventions at the country level.

At the regional and national level, a number of positive developments have recognized the centrality of gender considerations in energy sector interventions. The "ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access," adopted in June 2017, is one example. In West Africa, 15 countries have committed to address existing gender barriers in expanding energy access.

When it comes to bridging the energy access gap at the last mile, women and their organizations such as SEWA, ARC finance, Frontier Markets, are uniquely positioned to play a critical role. A large number of women are engaged in small and medium-sized enterprises; female ownership represents 30 to 37 percent of all SMEs. This provides a ready springboard for selling energy products and services, leveraging their networks to promote adoption of new technologies. They are effective spokespeople for use of clean energy, endorsing marketing messages and taking advantage of women-to-women communication strategies.

Because women are close to their customers and know local circumstances, women entrepreneurs have enormous potential to manage supply chain and acquire new creditworthy customers in rural areas, lowering the customer acquisition costs.

ENERGIA's Women's Economic Empowerment program works closely with women energy entrepreneurs in hard-to-reach areas across Indonesia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. The "last-mile" distribution model, centered around women-led micro- and small-scale businesses, has led to a robust program with 4,153 women entrepreneurs involved in selling and distributing clean energy products to 2,6 million consumers.

A number of partnerships and networks are also emerging, such as the SEforALL's People Centred Accelerator, wPower, the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, the Clean Energy, Education and Empowerment Initiative, Women of Renewable Industries and Sustainable Energy (WRISE), Women in Solar Energy (WISE), Entrepreneurial Women in Renewable Energy (EWIRE), and the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET). All spreading ideas, mobilizing support, and providing encouragement, to build a cadre of women leaders in the energy sector.

While there is considerable momentum on the gender and energy nexus globally and new innovative women-centric business models are emerging, potential gains are not being fully realised due to persistent gender barriers and gaps, such as funding barriers, women's representation in energy sector, discriminatory social norms and practices and data availability. An enabling environment for women in the energy sector at all levels has to be created. Therefore, we call on governments, investors and energy practitioners:

- To build gender-responsive global and national energy sector policy regimes through evidence-based policy advocacy
- To promote and invest in decentralized sustainable energy technologies that support gender equality and women's economic empowerment
- To scale up women's energy entrepreneurship approach as an effective business model, including to reach last-mile communities
- To prioritize clean cooking fuels and technologies
- To engender energy sector programming through supporting national and locally led initiatives
- And to include systematic and sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis of gender statistics as part of programming and to support policy formulation

Thank you