



FLAGSHIP PROGRAMME 



# WOMEN'S ENTREPRENEURSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

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## The issue

Increasing women's access to sustainable energy and opportunities is a pre-requisite for poverty alleviation and women's economic empowerment worldwide.

Today, 1.1 billion people globally lack access to electricity and 2.9 billion use solid biomass for cooking and heating. Based on current trends, it will take until 2080 to achieve universal access to electricity, and the mid-22<sup>nd</sup> century for access to non-polluting energy for cooking. Women disproportionately bear the burden of energy poverty. They face significant health and safety risks from household air pollution, from carrying heavy fuel loads, and from the lack of lighting.

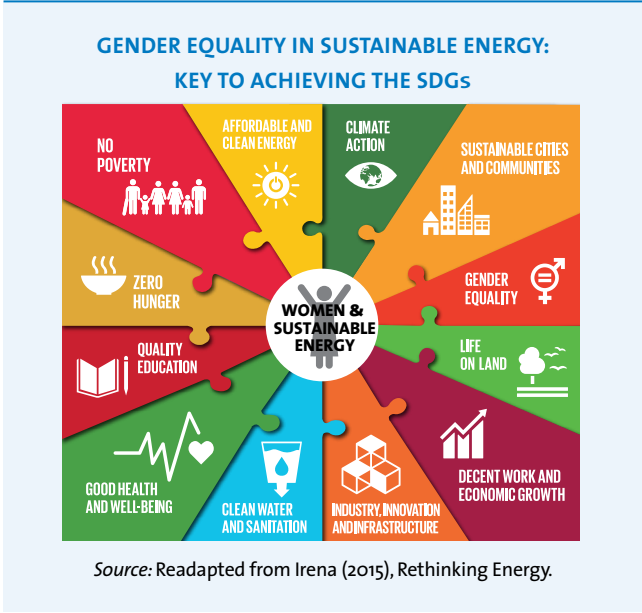
Rapidly falling renewable energy technology costs and new business models mean that decentralized energy solutions hold great promise to accelerate universal sustainable energy access. Women can be powerful agents of change in this transition. Close to their customers, women entrepreneurs have enormous potential to lower customer acquisition and servicing costs and drive these decentralized solutions.

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 multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Our strategy for change

UNEP and UN Women have joined forces, as the leading environmental and gender equality agencies in the United Nations system, to develop a Global Programme to promote Women's Entrepreneurship for sustainable energy.

The Global Programme will initially focus on Senegal, Morocco, Myanmar, India, Indonesia and Bolivia. Experience shows that an integrated set of action is required to remove gender specific barriers and shift the current paradigm from one where women are passive providers and users of energy, to one where they are agents of change in promoting sustainable energy technologies and their productive uses.



This Global Programme will:

- 1. Promote gender-inclusive energy planning and policies** by increasing women's participation in policy formulation, developing targeted policy measures and linking energy policy making with other sectors, notably education and health.
- 2. Remove skills, information and social norms barriers** for women sustainable energy entrepreneurs, and ensure safe, bias-free working environments that attract, retain and promote women.
- 3. Improve access to finance for women entrepreneurs,** particularly by strengthening traditional and innovative financial intermediation services (e.g. direct and directed lending, credit enhancement mechanisms, capacity development for commercial banks, integrated web-based platforms and challenge funds).
- 4. Promote women's productive use of sustainable energy,** particularly in agriculture and micro-enterprises, and reduce their time dedicated to unpaid domestic and care work.

#### FACTS AND FIGURES - WHY INVEST IN WOMEN & SUSTAINABLE ENERGY

- 1.1 billion people lack access to electricity and 2.9 billion use solid biomass for cooking and heating homes (UN, 2015).
- 65% of primary schools and over 30% of health facilities in sub-Saharan Africa lack access to electricity (Practical Action, 2014).
- Women have a higher relative risk than men of developing adverse health outcomes due to exposure to smoke from solid fuels, including COPD and lung cancer (WHO, 2014).
- A village woman in northern Nigeria can spend 60 to 80 times more for energy than a resident of an industrialized country (Kofi Annan's foreword to *Africa Progress Report 2015: Seizing Africa's energy and climate opportunities*).
- Solar PV module prices in 2014 were 75% lower than in 2009 (IRENA, 2013).
- Only 20% of the renewable energy workforce is women (IRENA, 2013).
- Women entrepreneurs can demonstrate more than twice the business capacity and success than men (wPower Hub Report, 2014).

## How the Programme works

This Joint Global Programme will operate as a flexible mechanism that can receive contributions from multiple financial partners while enabling UN Women and UNEP to handle implementation according to their own operating procedures.

These six participating countries present a wide degree of variation in their energy sectors and addressing the gender differentiated risks will require a range of distinct approaches. It is expected that the policy, technology and financial solutions developed by the Programme will subsequently serve as a menu of options for self-starting countries to choose from in the future. Country initiatives will be supported through policy services provided by UN Women and UNEP's team of experts.

For more information on the programme, contact:  
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## Partnerships for change

Creating an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship and sustainable energy will require partnering with a broad range of stakeholders.

UN Women and UNEP have established networks of local, national and international partners in the field of sustainable energy and women's empowerment. In particular, the Global Programme will partner with a range of financial institutions and ICT-based financial service providers to promote financial innovation and deepen financial markets.

## Data collection, monitoring and evaluation

Achieving the Programme's goals will require an integrated approach that links women entrepreneurs to a range of stakeholders to successfully scale up their ventures.

To this effect, and as part of its broader women's economic empowerment programme, UN Women has designed "WomenPower™", an integrated cloud-based platform that links women entrepreneurs with information, finance providers, goods and service suppliers, customers and leads, and markets. The platform will also address the data gap by enabling the collection of first-of-its-kind gender-disaggregated data on energy access and entrepreneurship. Contributing partners will be able to view key performance indicators in real-time to monitor the progress of the Programme. This will provide solid evidence to evaluate the impact of different gender-responsive market transformation strategies. Furthermore, the platform will support overall Programme implementation.