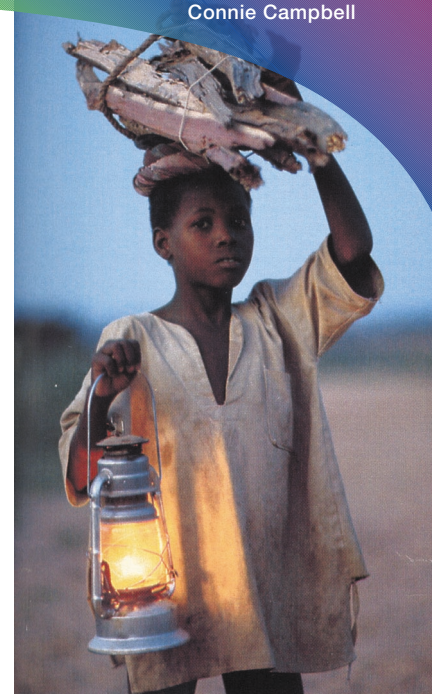


## Gender Makes the Difference

- Nearly 80% of rural women in Asia are affected by the scarcity of fuelwood. Fuelwood is scarce for 60% of rural African women and 40% of rural Latin American women.
- Worldwide, the average time a family dedicates to water and fuel transportation for domestic use is 1320 hours/year. This is equal to approximately three hours of an adult woman's time per day.
- Women spend three times more time transporting fuel and water than men, and women carry four times more than men in volume.
- Despite the important role of biomass for women in meeting the energy needs of both rural and urban households -supplying 90% of energy in some developing countries- little attention is paid to this source (less than 1% of public energy budgets).
- Women and children suffer from higher levels of lung and eye disease than men because they spend more time inside the house and are, therefore, more likely to be exposed to indoor air pollutants, such as soot released into the air when biomass fuels (e.g. wood, charcoal, dung, crop residue) are burned for cooking and heating. The World Bank has classified indoor air pollution in developing countries among the four most critical global environmental problems.
- Evidence from throughout the developing world suggests that a focus on productive, often male-dominated, energy services has neglected the complementarity of productive and reproductive activities in rural households. This has led to interventions that are not only gender-biased, but are also less effective for poverty reduction.
- Energy-related institutions have significantly fewer female professionals at all levels. Women are less likely to receive training due to family responsibilities and cultural constraints. Estimates for the North indicate that women constitute less than 20% of the professional energy workforce, and figures for the South are likely to be lower.

To address the theme of gender and energy, it is necessary to understand how social inequalities affect energy use, management and access. The ways in which people use, conserve, understand and participate in the benefits of different energy resources depends on their socioeconomic condition, gender and ethnic origin. Women and men have different productive roles, which in turn require different energy inputs. While the burden of household energy supplies and services remains largely the responsibility of women, access to modern energy carriers, such as clean fuels and electricity, affects both sexes.

The availability of energy services affects men and women differently, depending on the energy applications with which they are involved. Unfortunately, most policy debate and legislative frameworks have not been gender-sensitive.



**FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS  
TOPIC CAN BE FOUND AT:**

ENERGIA  
[www.energia.org](http://www.energia.org)  
Sustainable Energy and Environment  
Division (SEED) of the United Nations  
Development Programme  
[www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)  
Southern African Gender and Energy  
Network (SAGEN)  
[www.mepc.org.za](http://www.mepc.org.za)  
OWWEGA  
[www.owwega.org/](http://www.owwega.org/)  
Environment Liaison Centre International,  
ELCI  
[www.elci.org/](http://www.elci.org/)  
Gender and Energy Planning  
[www.fao.org/sd/EGdirect/EGan0004.htm](http://www.fao.org/sd/EGdirect/EGan0004.htm)  
Energy Policy & Equality Between Women  
and Men  
[www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/  
vLUIImages/Policy/\\$file/09-energy.pdf](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/INET/IMAGES.NSF/vLUIImages/Policy/$file/09-energy.pdf)

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[www.iucn.org](http://www.iucn.org)

A gender equity perspective in the energy sector will help to:

- a. Recognize and value women's roles with respect to energy in all its dimensions, from survival and household well-being to productive applications.
- b. Promote a more equitable distribution of responsibilities and benefits related to energy use, management and access.
- c. Draw attention to energy-related problems and solutions by showing how the degree of equity in women's access to productive resources (such as credit, information, training, labor) affects use and management of all energy sources.
- d. Promote women's effective participation in local to international decision-making processes. Achieving women's effective involvement requires measures for overcoming gender inequalities in participation through mechanisms such as education, empowerment, technology transfer, organizational promotion, financial assistance, training, etc.

**WHY GENDER MAKES THE DIFFERENCE IN ENERGY  
INITIATIVES**

- Direct and indirect household energy consumption is reduced and fuel substitution programs are more effective when women are the target clients for such interventions, because they are the primary decision-makers for household energy use.
- Increased and more diversified food production is achieved through the reallocation of time and energy of women and girls freed from preparing food by hand every day. In Guatemala, the introduction of electric mills has reduced the amount of time (from two hours to 15 minutes) that women spend in grinding corn for producing "tortillas".
- Reduction of time and labor required for household chores is one of the most important results of having access to alternative and sustainable energy resources.
- Increase in school attendance (especially girls) is achieved, since less child labor is required for gathering fuelwood and maintaining open cookfires for lengthy food preparation.
- Electric lighting provides some of the greatest benefits, since it contributes to safety, convenience and the possibility of social recreation in the evenings. In various communities, there has been a reduction in sexual assaults in places where electricity has been introduced.
- Women's microenterprises are an important factor in household income as well as in women's welfare and empowerment. Many microenterprises are heat-intensive (e.g., food processing), labor-intensive, and/or light intensive (e.g., home industries during the evening hours). The lack of adequate energy supplies affects women's ability to carry out these microenterprises profitably and safely. The provision of affordable energy can be a key factor in enabling rural enterprises for women.
- The health of women and children is improved through the use of cleaner fuels.
- Foods can be stored longer in households with cooling systems, reducing waste and health problems due to food spoilage.

IN COLLABORATION  
WITH THE  
**COMMUNITY  
CONSERVATION  
COALITION:**

