

# SMART ELECTRICITY PLANNING

Fast-tracking our transition to a healthy, modern, affordable electricity supply for all.

## FACT FILE 4

### WOMEN, POWER AND LEVERAGING CHANGE

*Two powerful ways to bring about positive change in South Africa: give women access to energy; and teach them about energy conservation and efficiency measures.*



#### EVENING OUT GENDER INEQUALITY

- Giving women access to energy is key to righting gender inequality in South Africa.
- Women are responsible for most of household tasks which are labour intensive, but usually go unpaid: cooking, child care, shopping, cleaning, heating the home and water, collecting and buying fuel such as wood, charcoal or manure for burning, and so on.
- Women also make up the bulk of the country's poor, and constitute a disproportionate section of the informal labour market. A pro-poor electricity grid is economically, socially and environmentally ethical, beneficial, durable and resilient in the face of ongoing global change.
- If women have access to affordable, reliable energy which can be provided locally, drawn from renewable sources more efficiently than from the electricity grid:
  - It will reduce the burden of unpaid, labour-intensive domestic chores, by allowing them to use electricity as a substitute for labour, for instance, in the form of a washing machine or a vacuum cleaner.
  - It will free up their time to spend on other things like helping with their children's education, or running a small business.
- An example of how much change energy access can bring, comes from a United Nations women's project in West Africa which found that by introducing locally generated energy, women's labour hours were reduced by two to four hours a day. The positive spinoffs included increased income, education and adult literacy rates.
- How to get affordable energy access to women:
  - Their homes must be linked to the grid.
  - The cost of electricity must be reasonably priced.
  - Or they must have some form of renewable energy technology installed, such as a solar water heater.
- Righting gender inequality in the context of energy access calls for tailored and appropriate responses from policy makers through all tiers of government, as well as from the private sector, civil society, and the public.
- Furthermore, including the poor and women in energy planning processes allows them to be agents of their own lives, as opposed to the current model where electricity pricing decisions and grid management are made in spaces generally still inaccessible to them.

#### WOMEN AS A FORCE FOR CHANGE

- Women tend to be responsible for allocating household budgets. They are also usually in charge of the managing the family's energy.
- Involving women in energy efficiency and conservation measures can have surprising results:
  - In the United States, when two women founded The Riot for Austerity movement in 2008, they managed to reduce their household carbon emissions by almost 80% in a year.
  - A huge barrier to energy efficiency investment is simply knowledge. When women were informed of energy efficiency options, they readily choose these as an opportunity to save money.
  - Residential sub-sectors can contribute to national electricity savings targets by installing solar water heating or heat-pumps and water-saving shower heads, efficient lighting and more efficient household appliances. Informing women on these options is likely to lead to behaviour changes relating to energy use which can contribute to reduced electricity consumption and related carbon emissions.
  - Managing peak-hour electricity needs is key to the residential sector's response to demand-side energy management. Solar water heaters, heat pumps, using timers for pool pumps and water features, efficient lighting, ceiling insulation, informing poor women about the availability of better and safer designs of fuel efficient stoves, changing to liquid petroleum gas (LPG) or biofuels for cooking and heating, are all simple and low cost measures with guaranteed, immediate and sustained reductions of peak demand and energy consumption.
  - Women, as household energy managers, must be targeted deliberately for how their energy use choices can help smooth out peak household demand.

The Smart Electricity Planning report is a civil society response, under the Electricity Governance Initiative, to the South African government's Integrated Resource Plan 2012-2030, which lays out a blueprint for how to meet the country's electricity needs in coming decades.

For more information, please find the full report at <http://irp2.wordpress.com/smart-electricity/>

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