



Women in Senegal to benefit from new opportunities in the energy market

GVEP International and SEM Fund are joining forces to increase women's participation in the energy market in Senegal and make sustainable energy available to the poorest communities.

Over the next three years, 250 women-run micro and small enterprises in eastern Senegal will receive tailored mentoring, business and financial support to expand access to energy products and services, and to increase their productivity.

Rural communities in the regions of Tambacounda and Kedougou suffer from low access to energy – 9% and 4% respectively – as well as chronic poverty and unemployment. Dependence on solid fuel for cooking is high (89%) – while penetration of improved cookstoves remains low (less than 4%).

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by energy poverty as they spend several hours a day collecting firewood, cook on inefficient and smoky cookstoves – which kill about 6,300 Senegalese each year, according to WHO (2009) and rely on poor lighting for their house chores.

Women in the Tambacounda and Kedougou regions derive most of their income from agricultural crop processing and transformation activities.

Increasing energy access offers new economic opportunities for women, both via productive use of energy applied to the processing of rice, sorghum, millet, maize, cotton, baobab fruit and honey, and via the sale of energy products and services.

This will not only contribute to women's economic empowerment but also have a considerable impact on their estimated 4,500 family members, who will benefit from the extra income. More significantly it will provide 400,000 women, men and children with improved access to clean energy, including small local trade businesses such as shopkeepers, retail outlets and smallholders.

However, women entrepreneurs face multiple barriers in participating in the energy market:

- lack of skills, training and educational opportunities;
- lack of access to finance given that most of the collateral assets required by banks are controlled by men;
- lack of awareness of energy as a service and as a business opportunity in the rural market;

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- lack of authority within the family and community, coupled with prejudice about gender roles from male suppliers or distributors.

Addressing these barriers requires a systematic and integrated approach to improving women's position along the value-chain.

GVEP and SEM Fund will work together with various actors at a local and national level to break down those barriers and challenge stereotypes.

250 women will be recruited from communities in the regions of Tambacounda and Kedougou. Age will not be a restriction: both young and mature women are welcome to apply. The selection criteria will instead focus on their entrepreneurial spirit, enthusiasm to create a sustainable business and ability to influence and act as a positive role model within the community.

“By supporting women-run enterprises in expanding their linkages with financing institutions, markets and products, we are supporting a holistic system that will bring clean energy one step closer to those who need them most” explains Sire A. Diallo, Executive Director of SEM Fund.

“Men will also have an important role to play”, explains Leah Kaguara, Programme Director at GVEP International. “Through the active involvement of male opinion leaders in gender sensitisation activities, we hope to create an environment where families and communities support women entrepreneurs in their growth”.

The project is partly funded by ENERGIA, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy.

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NOTES TO THE EDITOR

GVEP: GVEP International is a non-profit organisation working to alleviate poverty in developing countries through increased access to sustainable and renewable energy. To achieve this goal, GVEP supports the development and growth of small and medium-sized enterprises that deliver energy products and services to the poor. To find out more visit <http://www.gvepinternational.org/en>

SEM Fund: SEM Fund is social enterprise dedicated to tackling poverty and environmental degradation. Based in Senegal, SEM is a Senegalese registered not for profit and US registered 501C3 organisation. We are dedicated to creating viable solutions for low-income households to satisfy their basic energy needs in a safer, cheaper and environmentally friendly way. To find out more please visit <http://sem-fund.org/home/>

ENERGIA: ENERGIA is the international network on gender and sustainable energy, founded in 1996. ENERGIA works in Africa and Asia through and with regional and national gender and energy networks. ENERGIA works from the contention that projects, programmes and policies that explicitly address gender and energy issues will result in better outcomes, in terms of the sustainability of energy services as well as the human development opportunities available to women and men.