

Gender and Energy Planning

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Personal awareness of gender

6.1. Planning approaches to gender in energy

The Fundamental Purpose of a Gender Approach in Energy Planning

We have already seen that the understanding about how women should be involved in development has itself evolved over time. The current preference is to think not in terms of special or separate programmes women, but in terms of *gender*. There are still a number of different positions, however, that can be taken regarding the reason for and purpose of a gender approach in energy planning.

Gender for Efficiency

Many energy planners are increasingly aware that their projects have been less than satisfactory, and have interpreted this in terms of failing to understand the needs of the people concerned. For a number of years it has generally been accepted that *participation* is a fundamental requirement for project success, because it was understood that a proper understanding of people's needs and priorities can only be gained through a participatory process. Similar to this is the notion that each gender has its own requirements and its own constraints which need to be taken into consideration. A gender approach ensures that these needs and constraints are at least understood by the planners, which should enable them to design better project and programme interventions.

The film "Gender Analysis for Community Forestry", produced by the FAO Forests, Trees and People programme is a good example of this approach to planning with gender. In the film the different roles and requirements of men and women are explained, and we see how the project is modified to suit these requirements.

This approach to gender makes no attempt to change the basic roles which men and women play. It accepts the status quo and maximises project efficiency by ensuring that the project is sensitive to these roles.

Gender for Equity

At the other end of the scale there are energy planners who see the gender approach primarily as one which highlights inequalities in society, and which stresses the fact that in almost all societies women are subordinate to men in most respects. The purpose of applying gender analysis is, in this view, not to increase the success of projects by fitting them more closely to people's current needs, but to change the status quo: to meet not just the practical needs of women but to help them meet their strategic needs and to give them more power relative to men. The gender analysis is used to identify the most serious blockages to women's control over resources, to document the conditions under which women work relative to men, and to propose changes which benefit women.

Intermediate Positions

Most energy planners find themselves between these two extreme positions. Most energy planners, particularly in the area of wood energy, are more than aware of the enormous burden carried by women, literally and figuratively, as regards the daily supply of household fuel. Increasingly planners are also becoming aware of the fact that solving woodfuel supply problems is difficult for women because of their lack of rights to land: it is often much more difficult for women to plant trees than for men to do so. Most planners are also aware of the inequalities as regards labour inputs in agriculture (women provide the bulk of agricultural labour worldwide) and the 'triple role' of women, which means that on top of agricultural work they have all their housework to do too. In other words, it is almost impossible to deny the fact that women have a relatively hard time compared to men in rural life - and from there it is a relatively short step to taking the position that this is unfair and something should be done to improve their situation vis-a-vis that of men.

Changing the relative status and rights of women however means interfering in social practices which are considered to be culturally determined, which raises the fear that many positive cultural values will be lost as well. Some societies are much more willing to make fundamental changes as regards women's position than others and the energy planner, whatever his/her own personal views on the subject, will have to be very sensitive to the realities and the potential for change. In some cases it is a big step even to accept that women have practical needs which are different from men's, and need to be consulted concerning what these needs are. In other cases this is well understood already and the energy planner may be in a position to initiate deeper changes, for example by increasing women's control over certain natural resources.

The point is that awareness of gender, and use of gender based planning procedures, can help the planner whether the aim is efficiency or whether the aim is equity; and in most cases, the aim is in fact somewhere in between.

How the Gender Approach Fits into the Overall Planning Approach

Another point of discussion in gender and energy planning is whether the inclusion of gender issues is a relatively simple matter or whether it requires a complete overhaul of the planning procedures and a rethinking of planning theory. There are proponents of both positions.

The 'Add-Gender-And-Stir'¹ Position

Many planners feel that gender is a socio-economic variable just like many others (class, income group, ethnicity etc) and that if proper data on gender is made available, gender can simply take its place alongside these other variables. This position is one taken by many planners who feel that the basic model of planning they use should not be changed, whether it is based on a rational comprehensive type of planning ideology or on socialist principles or on participatory procedures.

¹ Anyone who is familiar with supermarket convenience foods and their preparation will be familiar with this phrase! It refers, for example, to packets of ready made cake mix: all you have to do is add an egg and stir and the cake is ready. The parallel in this case is that 'gender' is just one of the many ingredients in the energy planning cake mix and that it can be simply added without making any further adjustments.

The 'New Paradigm For Gender Planning' Position

In contrast to this a growing number of planners feel that the old models of planning are so firmly based in the idea of the household as the basic unit in society and the man as the primary decision maker, that totally new models will have to be developed if gender is to

receive the attention it deserves. Such views are held both by planning theorists of the far left, who have tried and apparently failed to integrate a feminist angle into Marxist theory, and by planning theorists of the right who support the principles of market economics and capitalism as the engine for development. Indeed theorists of all political persuasions are engaged currently in developing new planning models in which it is hoped that gender will be the central issue. One example is represented by the ecofeminists who are working from a quite different set of assumptions about what development *is*; starting from a new theoretical base they will presumably eventually develop planning procedures which reflect this. Other writers, for example Moser (1993), stress the need for a 'new paradigm' but so far outputs have been more procedural than theoretical. One of the difficulties with approaches such as that proposed by Moser is that while gender is central to the planning procedures adopted, many other important issues environment, class, technical options etc. are completely left out of consideration.

Intermediate Positions

It is of course very possible to take an intermediate position between these two extremes, and in the short term at least it is likely that most planning agencies in the energy field (as in other areas) will be more concerned with how to modify their planning methods to incorporate gender than with designing totally new methods. The matter of immediate and practical concerns are: what types of planning procedures should be introduced, and at what points in the planning cycle?

Alternative Ways of Embedding the Gender Approach in Planning

Even if (as is usually the case) the choice is made to modify existing planning procedures to incorporate gender rather than scrapping the whole system and starting again, there is still some choice available as to where and when the gender procedures will be inserted.

Using Gender Analysis As A Filter

A parallel might be made with environmental concerns. In many agencies Environmental Impact Statements are compulsory for all project proposals and these are made following a standard procedure and with specified types of data. Once the EIA is made, it is reviewed and should the impacts on the environment be found very severe, the project must be modified, or may even be rejected totally. The format of the EIA is fixed, but generally the decision to modify or drop the project is made by a committee or in consultation with staff and people concerned. It is possible to envisage the gender component of planning in a similar way; to see gender analysis as a 'sieve' or filter through which all project proposals should go before approval. Thus projects are not deliberately designed with gender as a primary concern, but some degree of equity is assured because all projects have to pass a 'gender test', so to speak.

Not surprisingly perhaps, use of gender analysis in this way is most often found in conjunction with the 'add gender and stir' approach.

Building Gender into The Project Cycle

Another approach which has been taken by some agencies (for example, it is proposed by SADC TAU, the energy agency for the southern African countries, as a model for all national energy planning agencies) is to work through the project cycle ensuring that gender issues are considered at every stage. This is akin to the 'wearing of gender specs': it involves consciously seeing the gender aspects of the development process as it is going on, and the gender impacts of potential interventions. This is a more thorough-going approach to

incorporating gender issues, and it means that a variety of different planning tools or analytic frameworks will be needed for use at different stages and at different levels of data aggregation. The result will be that gender considerations may be creatively taken into account from the very beginning of the process (problem identification and project formulation) and not merely used to filter out 'poor' projects. It presupposes of course that the agency concerned already uses the project cycle method and sticks to this rigorously, which is by no means always the case even when agencies claim to use the project cycle as their basic planning procedure.

Building Gender Into Other Planning Procedures

Some agencies base their planning procedures on other models such as the Logical Framework or ZOPP, or possibly around computer based energy models which predict supply and demand etc. In principle there is no reason why gender issues should not be incorporated into such models, whether they are used at the beginning of the planning process to identify potential interventions or at the end to evaluate them. The important thing is to set up a procedure involving the use of gender analytic and planning tools such that they fit into whatever planning model is already in use. In this way the gender issue is 'mainstreamed', and not kept apart as a separate (possibly omittable) procedure.

6.2. The Household

The Household

The most immediate and personal awareness of gender issues is in the household. The household is also the focus of project interventions in the area of wood energy, particularly project interventions aimed at increasing the income of woodfuel producers. Most policy analyses view the household as a single unit, having only one set of preferences. It is assumed that the welfare of individuals in the household does not depend on the person who is targeted by the person, usually the male head of the household, who receives the extra income. But, should one look at the way resources are distributed within the household? The same extra income derived from a project, whether given through men or women, may not have the same effect on household welfare, if women and men tend to spend the income they control in different ways. This would make a difference in poverty alleviation measures. Empirical studies in a number of countries show that the different ways in which household income is controlled translate into different patterns of expenditure. Men spend more of the income they control for their own consumption than do women. Men spend more on alcohol, cigarettes, and other status consumer goods. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to purchase goods for children and for general household consumption. Thus, for poverty alleviation measures it does make a difference whether the extra income is under the control of women or men.

Discussion Question

A land reform programme increases the consumption possibilities of households in peninsular South Asia. In another village there is a programme of compulsory school attendance with a midday meal programme. Will there be any difference in the inequality of consumption between boys and girls in the two programmes?

(Author's note: Initially, at least some of the participants held that there would be no difference in the inequality of consumption of boys and girls in the two programmes. They said that parents were equally interested in the welfare of their children, whether girls or boys. But others opposed this view, saying that parents did discriminate against girl children. Thus, income given to the household, will be spent in a discriminatory way against girls. But,

income distributed as a public feeding programme, a compulsory school attendance with mid-day meal scheme, would not favour boys against girls).

Why Inequality in Consumption?

Evidence shows that there is a regular and substantial inequality in distribution of resources and leisure within a household. Women and girls regularly get less of the consumption possibilities of a household than do men and boys. At the same time, they also get less of the leisure time and work longer hours than do men and boys. Can we assume that the inequitable distribution of resources within a household represents a willing act on the part of the women (and girls)? Nancy Folbre challenges such an assumption: "The suggestion that women and female children 'voluntarily' relinquish leisure, education, and food would be somewhat more persuasive if they were in a position to demand their fair share. It is the juxtaposition of women's lack of economic power with the unequal allocation of household resources that lends the bargaining power approach much of its persuasive appeal." (Nancy Folbre, 1992, *Who Pays for the Kids?*, RKP: London). The distribution of resources within the household is not the result of the "altruism" of the (male) head of the household. The distribution of resources within the household can be seen as a bargaining problem. In relations between spouses there exists both cooperation and conflict - by cooperation they can both improve their position, but there is also conflict over the distribution of gains within the household. What determines the distribution of gains within the household? As stressed by Amartya Sen, a key factor is the fallback or breakdown position of each partner - the income or well-being that each person can achieve if cooperation were to fail, i.e. the independent position that each partner can attain without the other. The person with a weaker fallback position, i.e. with less independent possibilities, will be weaker in the bargaining, whereas the person with a stronger fallback position will be stronger in the bargaining. The independent access to income that a woman has will strengthen her bargaining position within the cooperation (i.e. within the household) and thus improve her share of welfare from total household income. The breakdown position indicates the person's vulnerability or strength in the "bargaining". If, in the case of a breakdown, one person is going to end up in more of a mess than the other person, that factor will weaken that person's ability to secure a favourable outcome.

Policy Implications

In order to reduce inequalities of consumption within the household, it is necessary to enhance women's independent access to income. Changes in women's access to common property resources, inside and outside the marriage, would alter the distribution of resources (consumption) within the household. Thus, the importance of going inside the "black box" of the household in order to discuss individual incentives and the distribution of welfare among its members.