

5 GENDER EQUALITY



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



1. WOMEN AND ENERGY

1.1. Background

This chapter analyses the experiences of LAC partners on energy projects to understand the results and impacts of these projects and identify areas to improve, foster and/or replicate them. The approach is based on **inequalities, gender-differentiated impacts and vulnerabilities** that women face due to access restrictions to energy services, based on the reality of energy matrices and the dominant investment models in the region.

1.2. Regional context

Natural resources extraction and the expansion of the extractive mining, oil and gas have been a global trend that has occupied, and continues to occupy, a significant place in LAC. The development of capitalism and the ideal of modernity have deepened and expanded the exploitation both of workers and the environment. The **territory** has become the centre of dispute in which the violent presence of extractive and **infrastructure projects** transforms land tenure, access to natural resources, local productive and economic structures and social and cultural practices. It imposes new power relations by transforming the territory according to the needs and interests of business and different financial and political actors. By transforming territories, mining and energy projects reconfigure gender relations embedded and change power relations based on production and access to the territory, configuring a scenario of greater **inequality and vulnerability**.

1.2.1. Energy policies in LAC and their transition to less polluting energies

In South America, where the primary production of energy depends on "fossil fuels" (oil, gas and coal) representing 77% of the total, which means a low production of renewable energy¹. The region is self-sufficient in energy and consumes 87% of the primary energy it produces. Yet none of the South American countries are self-sufficient. The **final energy consumption** grew at a rate of 2.89% per year² in the last 10 years. In this scenario, the transportation sector is a major consumer of fossil fuels representing nearly 40% of the total with a growth of 3.38% per year. The industrial sector represents 33.6% followed by the domestic sector 15.7%³. While hydro energy

¹ Hydraulic energy produced in flat regions is included. This type of energy has come into question because of its social, economic, environmental and climate impacts.

² The information is based on Latin-American Energy Organisation (OLADE) energy balances from 2000 to 2014.

³ Juan Carlos Guzmán y Silvia Molina (2017). Discursos y realidades: Matriz energética, políticas e integración Carpio / CEDLA 2017

and petroleum derivatives are the primary sources of electricity generation in Central America, the use of mineral coal and geothermal energy remain important. In **energy consumption**, the most important sector is the residential, followed by the transportation and industrial sector. Remarkable is the high consumption of conventional biomass, notably of firewood, which is calculated to be 40% of the total⁴.

Hydrocarbons play a dominant role in the **electricity generation** system of the Caribbean region. Oil products and natural gas made up nearly 90% of the region's installed capacity and power generation in 2015. Mineral coal, hydropower, and non-conventional renewable sources complement the energy matrix with a minority share. In terms of consumption in the Caribbean, the industrial, transport and residential sectors are the most important, which are derived mainly from oil, natural gas and biomass.

1.2.2. An access approach to services: energy, poverty and gender

Poverty, in general, **energy poverty** affects women, particularly in terms of health, limitation of time to engage in education, income-generating and livelihood enhancing activities. But by addressing energy poverty and gender roles only from an energy access approach do not solve the structural causes of inequalities. While "energy poverty"⁵ is linked to the supply of energy to households, the concept of "**feminisation of poverty**" defines public policies and other interventions. It does not fully show the differentiated impacts of access restrictions to basic levels of **energy services** on vulnerable groups (women and children) nor do they capture the linkages between this approach and the maintenance and/or possibility of overcoming gender roles within family structures. Much less, these concepts do not consider the relationship between the structural causes of poverty and the primary export model, **women's unequal situation** in the labour market and the societal vision that remains deeply entrenched by heteropatriarchal tendencies.

Development institutions agree that **gender disparity in the extractive sector** is due to the important presence of male domination in terms of decision-making, planning and skilled employment. The intrinsic conditions of the capitalist development tend to be overlooked, based on accumulation and exclusion practices. Capital is permanently present in all ways of life and in the process of concentrating wealth; it accumulates and centralises the means of production and control of social life⁶. At the same time, capital exercises **power relations**, it subalternates and discriminates, deepening in this way the linkages between sexism, racism and exploitation, dynamics present not only in the extractive sector and the State but also within the family, communities, organisations and even social movements.

1.2.3. Public policies, energy and women

What is the impact of public policies in **reducing inequalities**? Until now, we have seen the use of resource rents to tackle social and gender inequalities, using revenues generated from the commodification of nature to "mitigate" the effects of rent seeking through compensation and **local investments** in specific social and economic sectors. Conversely, States and international cooperation agencies have agreed to work towards achieving the SDGs and mobilise efforts to end "extreme poverty, fight

⁴ CEPAL, OLADE, BID (2017): Eficiencia Energética en Latino América y el Caribe: Avances y oportunidades.

⁵ While there is no consensus on the scope of the concept, some indicators define it: income level; access to energy, energy efficiency and impact on a family's budget

⁶ Vainer C. De Araujo F. (1992). Grandes Projetos Hidrelétricos e Desenvolvimento Regional. Rio de Janeiro: Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação (CEDI).

inequality and injustice and tackle climate change”, but with few concrete results to date.

In this scenario, and after the commodity super cycle, it becomes clear that there are no real changes in public policies’ export orientation strategy. Thus, social impacts persist, and inequalities grow under these conditions, as shown by high levels of poverty, unemployment and low income.

1.3. Experiences, progress and achievements

Hydroelectric **megaprojects** and projects linked to the extractive industry (hydrocarbons and mining in particular) lead to individual and collective human rights violations, limited political participation, criminalisation of social movements, harassment and exclusion. These megaprojects do not seek to tackle poverty, inequality or to improve the quality of life of most of the population.

The differentiated **impacts on women** also involve the restrictions to access energy because of policies that prioritise commercial gain above local needs. In this context, it is hard to find successful policies and actions that contribute to overcoming gender roles and creating conditions for equality.

Many power generation and access to energy projects targeting women are generally related to **energy efficiency, renewable energy or use of the technology according to local conditions**. These projects have local impacts and are important to improve women’s lives, their health conditions and reducing their time used in domestic work. They create spaces of dialogue and information for women but also opportunities for organising and training.

Using **renewable energy** in domestic, social and productive appliances may have an important impact in meeting a family’s energy demands in rural areas. However, there is an information gap about measuring **women’s empowerment impacts** and the meaning of empowerment itself, especially for those who are said to be the main beneficiaries of these projects. For community-access-to-energy projects that involve community organisation and collective participation, important impacts are related to economic empowerment, organisational capacity and opportunities for strengthening political participation.

Supplying electricity to rural areas and making its use **sustainable over time** are two challenges faced by the electrification system. It is essential that the State plays a decisive role in rural electrification and that local stakeholders also play a role in the provision of energy systems. In the same vein, it is pivotal to count with mechanisms to reduce high-energy investment costs and ensure the future operation of these systems.

The cases described below include analysis results of CA’s community interventions related to resistance projects and/or local responses to public policies, and projects aimed toward **improving family’s quality of life**.

1.3.1. Community organisation, struggles and responses from people affected by megaprojects and public policies

AREA	ORGANISATION (PARTNER)	PROJECT CONCEPT	DESCRIPTION
BOLIVIA – REGIONAL	UNITAS CEDLA	Training, organising, and planning actions of	The project strengthens social organisations and movements through articulations at a subnational, national and regional level for social change. There is a human rights

		resistance	approach which provides a comprehensive and integrated conceptual framework that addresses the causes of poverty: investments in large-scale energy and infrastructure projects. The project contributes to create awareness about the obligations and commitments assumed by the State to ensure a dignified and safe life for all.
BRAZIL REGIONAL	Movement of People Affected by Dams (MAB)	Women are aware of their political role on the impacts of the energy model on their communities and their lives/ (<i>Arpilleras: embroidering resistance</i>)	The Women´s collective, created by the understanding of the differentiated impacts on women of the current energy model that promotes the construction of hydroelectric plants, works through training activities and creation of dialogue spaces. The objective is to strengthen the role of women as political actor to work on issues related to violence at all levels. The project also contributes to MAB´s regional articulation of people affected by dams.
GUATEMALA	Madre Selva Collective	Mini-hydroelectric plants as community alternatives against hydroelectric megaprojects, planned as part of the militarisation of territories.	Through promoting small and low-investment community-based hydroelectric plants that generate electricity at low cost, Madre Selva Collective contributes to meet local needs by improving the communities' quality of life, local organisation and productive strategies. These projects raise questions and strategies of resistance to face violence and negative companies and government' actions that seek to divide, co-opt and rule social organisations.
HAITI - DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Montalvo Centre Jesuit Migrant Service	Promoting sustainable environmental policies and practices as well as actions to adapt to climate change along the Dominican Republic-Haiti border.	The aim is to raise awareness, reflection and training of local authorities, youth, and women's groups to promote sustainable environmental policies, leadership, empowerment, cooperation and organisational capacity. Montalvo Centre works towards these objectives through actions in the defence of the environment at the border and by creating a binational platform and promoting an environmental movement to fight the effects of climate change and to

			protect natural resources.
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1.3.2. Energy and quality of life for families and women

COUNTRY	ORGANISATION (PARTNER)	PROJECT CONCEPT	DESCRIPTION
GUATEMALA	Madre Selva Collective	Micro and mini community hydroelectric power plants.	Micro and mini community hydroelectric power plants provide service to several villages and families, promoting a management model based on community organisation and collective work and benefits.
BOLIVIA	Soluciones Prácticas CIPCA Inti Illimani UNITAS	Solar cookers, <i>solar dryer cum cooker</i> and other renewable energy projects that benefit communities and families and promote local economic activity.	The project identified and prioritised projects that facilitate access to energy and water services to communities and families. Considering that 80% of families in rural Bolivia (around of 1,160,000 families) use biomass for cooking, the use of technology linked to renewable energy is particularly promoted so women and families are not as affected in terms of health and use of their time. These projects, besides improving the quality of life, will contribute to create and keep spaces (and time) for meetings, debate and organisation.
HAITI – DOMINICAN REPUBLIC	Montalvo Centre Jesuit Migrant Service	Solar lamps and efficient wood stoves.	The approach to access to energy to work in prevention and leadership against climate change at the border and to promote youth leadership. It focuses on women’s access to energy, whom are generally the centre of family life and are undocumented as result of migration.

1.4. Fundraising opportunities and concept projects

Based on this analysis and CA’s intervention in LAC, three possible and complementary areas of action have been identified.

1.4.1. Access to energy for rural communities, climate change and women

Objective: Reach out to communities, neighbourhood organisations and / or municipalities to promote access to energy, the use of technologies linked to renewable energy and productive activities in families and rural populations while creating an environment for collective work, organising and discussing issues such as key factors in social protection and the role of the State in ensuring women’s rights.

Justification: It is recognised that women's participation in household and community productive activities, their economic independence and their effective participation in decision-making, represent fundamental changes in society. Women's access to energy from **reliable and renewable sources** means reducing a considerable burden in women and girls' lives in rural areas particularly, a burden that negatively impacts their health, education, possibilities of access to resources and role within the community.

Therefore, access to energy for women means greater possibilities of **economic autonomy** and even independence of mind when this service arrives accompanied with opportunities for training, organisation, dialogue and reflection on community's prospects and perspectives for women and girls. Overall, this means strengthening and promoting effective participation, leadership and the active political role of **women in decision-making bodies** such as the family, community, institutions and social organisations so they can exercise their rights and generate changes in society.

Actors and future changes among them: Women's, peasant, indigenous, social organisations, neighbourhood councils, school boards, community and / or municipality authorities promote projects, seek resources, advance community's commitment to access to energy; strengthening of women's participation in diverse projects and their management; foster the construction of collective spaces for debate and training activities. They accomplished this by being committed to the needs of families and the communities and by being aware of the problems faced by the population, in particular women and girls.

Impact:

- Improvements in health, family income and quality of life of families and women;
- Building of local alternatives that challenge the predatory energy model linked to human rights violations;
- Sustaining communities through women and girls' empowerment;
- Capacity development and / or strengthening of local organisations through women's participation.

1.4.2. Recognising human and territorial rights and strengthening organisations and social movements

Objective: Create spaces of debate and training about the differentiated impacts of the current development and energy model and regional energy integration process *from a human rights approach* that understands the relationship between human rights, public policies and their impacts in communities. This is achieved through men and women's leadership training programmes in communities, organisations and social movements and, particularly, women's and youth spaces. Vulnerable groups (communities affected and particularly women's organisations) are given a special role while promoting articulations, a common resistance agenda and a development model created from bottom up.

Justification: LAC countries are planning and executing a very broad set of transport, energy and extractive projects at a rapid pace, and in this way, they are opening territories and access to resources to international capital. This involves the construction of a paradigm that establishes development where each country and region is interconnected with global markets. This development model, that overexploits nature and the work force and alters community's ways of life, is particularly violent towards women and their impacts are changing the economic and social relations in the family and the community. In addition, world impacts of climate change require immediate responses. **Deforestation and the destruction of tropical forests** are among the main causes of greenhouse gas emissions.

Actors and future changes among them: Organisations and community's leaders work to exercise their individual and collective rights to ensure that local needs are met, livelihoods are not affected, and territorial rights are recognised. Priority must be given to participation of vulnerable groups, affected communities and especially women's organisations, promoting cooperation among organisations, with a common agenda for reflection and advocacy.

Impact:

- Leaders transfer knowledge to their communities and organisations;
- Communities and organisations debate, cooperate and generate strategies and proposals;
- Creation of local response capacities based on the understanding of local, national and regional processes.

1.4.3. Knowledge production about energy policies to generate debate and proposals

Objective: The objective is to promote participation of society in discussions and advocacy proposals related to policies and **energy planning processes**. In this sense, studies and critical analysis will be produced about the situation of access to energy within a framework of energy policies, national plans and projects, with clear links with the effects of climate change and political, economic and social policies.

Justification: Public policies and state planning respond to a series of elements: development models, policies defined in international and national spaces, political and government programmes, complex relationships. In the exercise of their power, actors in these complex relationships interact according to their differentiated capacities and diverse interests. By being a manifestation of the political and economic development model, they tend to reflect the interests of groups of power, deepening in this way poverty and inequalities. This reality becomes clear as tensions flare up during the implementation stage of these policies. These disputes are intrinsically linked to the use of natural resources, and particularly, to different worldviews among affected communities and investors given that "development" does not mean the same for either group; investors (the driving forces behind megaprojects) and government (who uses its power to generate and distribute wealth) have a particular vision regarding development, local populations hold other visions.

This situation leads to **social conflicts**, deep social inequality, rights violations and environmental problems, which affect most of the population and in greater degree communities who live far from decision-making spaces.

Actors and future changes among them: Civil society (social movements, women's organisations, workers, academia, press, etc.), and in particular, groups affected and excluded from economic and energy policies count with conceptual elements and knowledge that allow them to discuss public policies and influence decision making processes.

Impact:

- Social actors and civil society in general are informed and promote spaces of debate, deepening critical analysis and generating ideas, collective action and energy policies advocacy strategies.