



wPOWER

PARTNERSHIP ON WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RENEWABLES



FROM ADVOCACY TO ACTION:

TOOLKIT ON GENDER ADVOCACY IN CLEAN ENERGY

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FOREWORD

Increasing clean energy access at the household level has proven challenging, yet the innovative responses to this have been nothing short of astounding. I consider myself fortunate to have met some of the enthusiastic and dedicated women and men who are consistently developing new approaches to what can sometimes seem intractable.

Above all, I am inspired by the grassroots women who refuse to be victims of inefficient and harmful sources of energy. Women who are unstoppable in pursuing health and safety for themselves and their children; women who are courageously leading the charge in this fight for clean energy access, and women who we at wPOWER have pledged to support every step of the way. These women are the inspiration for this toolkit, and I'm excited to see how the calls to action you will find in this document will deepen your work.

This toolkit contains advocacy messages which we believe can make the case in more compelling ways. May we all continue to be strong advocates for women's leadership in clean energy access.

Aluta continua!



Wanjira Mathai,

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To create a cohesive and targeted advocacy agenda that strengthens women's involvement in clean energy access, wPOWER and its partners have developed this toolkit to highlight key calls to action. The toolkit focuses on five key areas for increasing involvement of women in clean energy initiatives for accelerated energy access.

ADVOCACY GOAL	CALL TO ACTION FOR SECTOR PLAYERS
Advancing women's participation in clean energy entrepreneurship 	Sector players are urged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Generate awareness on opportunities for women in entrepreneurship and share motivational stories of successful women entrepreneurs.• Provide accessible and affordable working capital to accelerate the growth of enterprises.• Collate and share evidence that supports women's vital role in clean energy entrepreneurship to encourage investments.• Address cultural barriers and implement gender-inclusive policies to support women's participation as entrepreneurs.• Offer mentorship opportunities and extend capacity building through trainings and skills development, especially for early stage entrepreneurs.
Improving access to finance for women in clean energy 	Financiers are urged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide affordable and accessible working capital and consumer financing to promote scaling of enterprises and purchase of products respectively.• Promote awareness of available finance and offer financial advisory services to enhance financial literacy.• Revise conditions for credit access to ensure more women participate as entrepreneurs and consumers.• Incentivise women's engagement through results-based financing predicated on women's involvement as entrepreneurs and/or employees across the clean energy value chain.
Expanding research on women's impact in clean energy initiatives 	Researchers are urged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explore the impact of women's involvement on clean energy initiative outcomes.• Collaborate with organizations to gather, analyse and harmonize data for easier evaluation of sector progress.• Disaggregate data by gender and share findings with government, private sector, civil society, and financial institutions, to inform program decisions.• Engage in effective communication of research findings to avoid duplication.
Promoting gender-inclusive policies for clean energy 	Governments and companies are urged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a conducive business ecosystem by simplifying licensing and registration processes for entrepreneurs, while providing tax exemptions on products and activities related to cookstoves and solar.• Enforce strict employment rules that promote welfare and equality of women in the workplace.• Provide affordable and accessible child care services to encourage women's participation in the sector.• Prioritize the sector as a driver of change for national gender equity.
Focusing engagement at the grassroots level 	Implementers are urged to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participate in sub-national processes to positively influence development agendas.• Engage community leaders and the sub-national government to gain advice and guidance on the local dynamics of communities.• Collaborate with women's groups, schools, and houses of worship, to promote awareness of clean energy initiatives.• Identify clean energy champions to spearhead awareness campaigns.

INTRODUCTION

The burden of energy poverty rests disproportionately on the shoulders of women, who, in a majority of sub-Saharan African and Asian households, are primarily responsible for energy generation and use in the homes (cooking, heating and lighting). This also means that women are most vulnerable to the negative health and socio-economic impacts of inefficient energy sources in their homes. Often, women and girls are at risk of violence which may occur during long distance travels to fetch fuel for cooking ([Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves \[GACC\], 2015](#)).

Access to reliable and clean energy at the household level is therefore one of the most pressing issues of our time, one that requires close collaboration and coordination to be addressed effectively.

However, organizations working in clean energy access at the household level (last-mile) often advocate for women's participation independently of each other. These sector players tend to outline problem areas and their own set of proposed solutions, often relying on different and at times contradictory data sources. More often than not, this results in incoherent advocacy and marginal impact. Such individual efforts lead to missed opportunities, which would have been capitalized on if there was a concerted effort to synchronize messages.

For this reason, wPOWER has identified the barriers and opportunities for strong advocacy for women in clean energy access at the household level, through working group meetings, consultations, and events that focus on the potential of a collective impact. This toolkit gives organizations within the sector clear calls to action for a more cohesive and targeted advocacy agenda.



ADVANCING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN CLEAN ENERGY ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Key Barriers: As key energy managers in their homes, women are often relegated to the role of end-users. While women stand to benefit greatly from clean energy sources for cooking, lighting, and heating in their homes, disregarding their potential contribution across the entire clean energy value chain would be misguided. wPOWER believes that to effectively tackle energy poverty, it is necessary to leverage women as key decision-makers and players.

In a 2015 study published in the *Journal of Health Communication*, women cookstove entrepreneurs out-sold their male counterparts to the order of 3 to 1 ([Shankar, Onyura & Alderman, 2015a](#)). Furthermore, a study commissioned by the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves showed that when women entrepreneurs sold stoves to women end-users, the end-users were “more likely to report consistent and correct cookstove use and were more likely to report the benefits of cookstoves as compared to male cookstove sellers ([Shankar et al., 2015b](#))”. Increasing the understanding, visibility, prioritization, and support of women’s economic empowerment through clean energy entrepreneurship makes business sense and is therefore critical for success in this sector.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for sector players:

- **Generate Awareness:** Women need to be aware of the opportunities to work as clean energy entrepreneurs. Awareness can be created through women’s group meetings, recruitment posters, radio advertising and government networks.
- **Provide Financial Capital:** Accessible and affordable working capital allows women entrepreneurs to start, grow, sustain and scale their businesses.
- **Address Cultural Barriers:** Women are often relegated to reproductive and household roles. Showcasing women in clean energy income generating activities can build family and community support.
- **Offer Mentorship:** 75% of women leaders confirm that mentorship plays a crucial role in their career ([Laukhuf & Malone, 2015](#)). Business networks, peer-to-peer support systems, mentors, and leadership programs are therefore vital in advancing entrepreneur’s growth prospects and promoting sustainability of their businesses.
- **Broadcast Success Stories:** Sharing relatable stories of successful women entrepreneurs can motivate and build self-confidence in other women entrepreneurs.
- **Extend Capacity Building:** Advancement of business, accounting, technical, legal and personal development skills can boost women’s abilities as entrepreneurs. Specialized approaches such as Personal Initiative (PI) and agency-based empowerment training can also boost proactiveness, voice and ability to make powerful choices. One randomized controlled trial in Togo found that PI training increased microenterprise profits by 30% ([Campos et al, 2017](#)).
- **Collate Evidence:** Publicly showcasing evidence for women in clean energy entrepreneurship can encourage investment by providing a business case for gender inclusion in the sector.
- **Improve Transport Systems:** Infrastructure is key in enabling entrepreneurs to access markets. An impact survey in Peru found that 43% of women felt that rehabilitated roads and tracks enabled them to obtain additional income ([World Bank, 2014](#)).
- **Implement Gender-Inclusive Policies:** Approaches such as simplifying business registration processes, eliminate barriers to entrepreneurship, setting the foundation for women to succeed in the sector.



IMPROVING ACCESS TO FINANCE FOR WOMEN IN CLEAN ENERGY

Key Barriers: On virtually every global measure, women are more economically excluded than men ([World Bank, 2014](#)). Many women entrepreneurs lack the assets, education, experience and basic credit information required by financial institutions to obtain credit or capital. In cases where credit is awarded, the terms of borrowing are unfavourable. “Many country studies show that women entrepreneurs are more likely to face higher interest rates, be required to collateralize a higher share of the loan, and have shorter-term loans” ([International Finance Corporation, 2011](#)).

Interestingly, a mid year data summary from the Entrepreneurship Database program at Emory University showed that “ventures with women on their founding teams are significantly less likely to attract equity investors, yet they are significantly more likely to report positive prior-year revenues” ([Roberts, Peters, Koushyar & Lall, 2015](#)). Not only is it misguided to neglect women as entrepreneurs, it is misguided to ignore their purchasing power; considering predictions that say that by 2028, women will control nearly 75% of consumer discretionary spending worldwide ([Ernst & Young, 2009](#)). Financing women entrepreneurs and economically disadvantaged end-users is therefore a critical component for growth in the sector.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for financiers:

- **Provide Working Capital and Credit:** Innovative and appropriate capital and credit allows women entrepreneurs to accelerate and scale their enterprises. Examples include revolving funds, enterprise loans, mobile loans, grants, microcredit, and equity capital.
- **Provide Consumer Financing:** Flexible financing (low interest rates and extended payback periods) allows women end-users of varying income levels to access clean energy solutions. Examples include PAYG, micro-loans, informal cooperative groups.
- **Promote Awareness of Available Finance:** When women entrepreneurs and consumers are educated on the range of available finance options, they can make informed financial decisions.
- **Incentivise Women’s Engagement:** Results-Based Financing (RBF) predicated on women trained as entrepreneurs and/or employed in the value chain can push implementers to support women within their organization or programs.
- **Engage Implementers:** Engaging potential women entrepreneurs during clean energy trainings allows financiers to position themselves as a source of startup capital and consumer financing. This promotes enterprise and ensures that future customers of these women entrepreneurs can easily access finance.
- **Encourage Financial Literacy:** Financial advisory services can be offered to women entrepreneurs to optimize profitability and sustainability of their business.
- **Revise Conditions to Access Finance:** Lack of education, cultural barriers and mandatory ownership of assets can hinder women’s engagement with financial institutions. By making it easier for women to access finance, they can participate more as entrepreneurs and end-users.

“Bringing clean energy access to the grassroots is the great work of our time, and women as champions of clean energy and climate action are the real heroines of this great work. ”

Wanjira Mathai





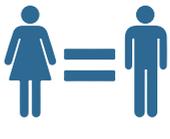
EXPANDING RESEARCH ON WOMEN'S IMPACT IN CLEAN ENERGY INITIATIVES

Key Barriers: There remain significant gaps in research on clean energy access at the household level, especially pertaining to the impact of women in clean energy entrepreneurial and employment initiatives across the value chain. These gaps result in uninformed decisions during the planning and implementation of clean energy initiatives, which negatively influences their success rates.

Building a strong research base on women's impact in clean energy initiatives is therefore crucial in ensuring that informed decisions are made during planning and implementation. Moreover, a coordinated and comprehensive research base generates the evidence needed to gain support and commitments from key stakeholders including government, financiers, policy makers, civil society, public institutions, private sector, consumers and the media.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for researchers:

- **Increase Research Scope:** Exploring the impact of women's involvement in clean energy initiatives can yield data that supports the financial viability of engaging women across the value chain.
- **Partner with Implementers:** Collaborating with organizations that support women's participation in clean energy initiatives, allows for acquisition of vital data which can be analyzed and used to inform program decisions.
- **Harmonize Data:** By standardizing impact methodologies and indicators, evaluation of sector progress can be simplified and prioritized. This includes tracking and analyzing the impact of women's involvement in clean energy initiatives.
- **Disaggregate Gender Data:** Gender-specific data should be analysed and disseminated to stakeholders. According to the World Bank, "improved gender-disaggregated data, with stronger quantity and quality, will strengthen the business and policy case for financial inclusion for women entrepreneurs" ([World Bank, 2014](#)).
- **Communicate Effectively:** A communications strategy should be developed to simplify technical research outcomes for stakeholders.
- **Share Findings:** Findings should be distributed amongst researchers on a continuous basis, to avoid duplication of content. This can be achieved through events and forums, online and otherwise.
- **Monitor Impact:** The impact of research publications should be monitored and evaluated. The impact data can help streamline future projects based on what has been shown to be useful.
- **Engage in Systematic Studies:** Rigorous and methodical research designs such as Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT's) should be encouraged in order to provide evidence that a clean energy intervention works effectively.



PROMOTING GENDER-INCLUSIVE POLICIES FOR CLEAN ENERGY

Key Barriers: Despite efforts to engage women in employment and entrepreneurship, lack of strong policies and poor enforcement of existing policies has been a hindrance to progress. This is especially disappointing, considering women's pivotal contributions to the economy. In Latin America, income contributed by female spouses in two-parent households reduced poverty levels from 40% to 26% (Pagés & Piras, 2010).

A conducive policy environment is critical to catalyzing local markets, promoting opportunities for women in clean energy, encouraging investments, boosting economic growth, and building partnerships between governments, private sector, and civil society.

It is equally important that women play a key role in the discussions and decision-making surrounding the formation and implementation of these policies.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for government:

- **Create a Conducive Business Ecosystem:** Expensive permits, complicated business licensing/registration processes and harassment by city officials hamper the ability of women entrepreneurs to engage in economic activities. Eliminating these barriers to entry promotes women's enterprise in the sector.
- **Create a Favorable Market Infrastructure:** Exempting duties and taxes on products and activities related to cookstoves and solar makes it more affordable for women to engage as entrepreneurs and consumers.
- **Create Strict Employment Rules:** Women are often underrepresented in the workplace, especially in traditionally male-dominated areas such as manufacturing. To combat this, strict employment rules that dictate the equal hiring of women need to be enacted. These rules can be coupled with financial incentives for organizations to hire, retain, and advance women at all levels of the organization.
- **Provide Robust Social Services:** Child care responsibility is highly gendered, and the associated time demands greatly restrict mothers looking to engage in economic activities. In Mexico, child care is the biggest restrictor of growth for WSGBs [Women-led Small and Growing Businesses] (Fries, Gonzalez & Pesquera, 2014). However, robust support by government through provision of affordable and accessible child care services can encourage women to invest time and resources into their enterprises.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for companies:

- **Incentivise Women's Employment:** Flexible working hours for new mothers, generous maternity and paternity leave, safe workspaces free of harassment, and opportunities for career growth can encourage women's participation in the workforce.
- **Provision of Child Care Services:** Provision of child care services for employees can encourage women's participation in employment.



FOCUSING ENGAGEMENT AT THE GRASSROOTS LEVEL

Key Opportunities: While the national and sub-national (e.g. county and province) government provides a good entry point through which sector players can become involved in energy planning, it is essential for energy access initiatives to include contributions from the grassroots.

Giving appropriate ownership of activities to communities promotes leadership, accountability, and responsibility, while also allowing for long-term economic sustainability. We implore sector players to cascade engagement to the beneficiaries of the initiatives, who are women retailers, end-users, and the community as a whole.

CALL TO ACTION: Recommendations for implementers:

- Identify and approach respected community leaders and elders, who have knowledge and influence on the needs and dynamics of their communities.
- Mobilize students, parents and teachers to spread awareness on clean energy issues and solutions, as well as to support execution of initiatives.
- Form linkages with local women's groups and take advantage of their strong and wide networks to create awareness.
- Collaborate with churches, mosques, temples and other houses of worship, to present and discuss clean energy initiatives with their members.
- Pinpoint a clean energy champion at the community level to promote initiatives, awareness campaigns, and women's participation in entrepreneurship, employment and as end-users.
- Target health workers, energy officials, and environmental advocates employed by the government to work within communities, to generate awareness through their networks.

SUMMING UP

As long as there exist barriers that hinder women's involvement in clean energy initiatives, we will continue to witness the prolonged use of inefficient, expensive, and harmful energy sources in Asian and sub-Saharan African households.

It is our expectation that by outlining these barriers, defining the calls to action and sharing our tools and resources for making the case for women's leadership, sector players will be empowered to address them fully and in a unified voice.

This toolkit is a result of contributions from our partners and stakeholders across the globe. We thank everyone who has contributed to the approach, development, research and review of the messages found in this work.



About wPOWER

The Partnership on Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables (wPOWER) is a U.S. Department of State-funded project, with a mission to promote the central role that women must play in clean energy entrepreneurship and in addressing climate change, and a vision to empower 8,000 women in clean energy entrepreneurship to deliver clean energy access to 3.5 million people globally by 2018.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. BURN Manufacturing Case Study: Gender-smart Initiatives in Cookstove Manufacturing (Case Study), wPOWER [\[Here\]](#)
2. Wisdom Innovations Case Study: Women's Participation in a Sustainable Clean Cooking Business Model (Case Study), wPOWER [\[Here\]](#)
3. Scaling Adoption of Clean Cooking Solutions through Women's Empowerment (Resource Guide), Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves [\[Here\]](#)
4. What Motivates Women to Buy? Valuing, Understanding and Targeting Women for Improved Cookstove Purchase (Research Brief), Mercy Corps and Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves [\[Here\]](#)
5. The Bottom Line: Why Gender Inclusion is Good for Business (Brief), Value for Women [\[Here\]](#)
6. Women Entrepreneurs Need Mentors (Research Study), International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring [\[Here\]](#)
7. Minimum Standards for Mainstreaming Gender Equality (Document), The Gender Practitioners Collaborative [\[Here\]](#)
8. Poor People's Energy Outlook 2017- Financing National Energy Access: A Bottom-Up Approach (Report), Practical Action [\[Here\]](#)
9. The Business Case for Women's Economic Empowerment: An Integrated Approach (Study), The Oak Foundation, Dalberg, International Center for Research on Women [\[Here\]](#)
10. The Gender Dividend- Making the Business Case for Investing in Women (Study), Deloitte [\[Here\]](#)
11. Creating Opportunities Strengthening the Ecosystem for Women Entrepreneurs in México (Research Study), Value for Women, Fundación Banorte and the Aspen Network of Development Entrepreneurs Capacity Development Fund [\[Here\]](#)
12. A Guide to Womenomics (Article), The Economist [\[Here\]](#)
13. Understanding Impacts of Women's Engagement in the Improved Cookstoves Value Chain in Kenya (Research Study), Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, John Hopkins University, Envirofit, ESVAK Community Development Initiatives [\[Here\]](#)
14. Strengthening Access to Finance for Women-Owned SMEs in Developing Countries (Report), International Finance Corporation & Global Partnership for Financial Inclusion [\[Here\]](#)
15. Expanding Women's Access to Financial Services (Article), World Bank [\[Here\]](#)
16. Strategically Engaging Women In Clean Energy Solutions For Sustainable Development And Health (Brief), Anita Shankar [\[Here\]](#)
17. Scaling Up: Why Women-owned Businesses Can Recharge The Global Economy (Report), Ernst & Young [\[Here\]](#)
18. Teaching Personal Initiative Beats Traditional Training in Boosting Small Business in West Africa (Report), Campos et al (Science Mag) [\[Here\]](#)
19. Agency-Based Empowerment Training Enhances Sales Capacity of Female Energy Entrepreneurs in Kenya (Case Study), Shankar et al [\[Here\]](#)