

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

RURAL WOMEN IN CHARGE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY SOLUTIONS

An estimated 2 billion people around the world do not have stable access to electricity. These people live mainly in rural areas of the Global South. Energy poverty creates unequal opportunities, particularly for women and girls. ActionAid's unique approach combines clean and equitable energy solutions with the empowerment of women and girls. By putting women in charge of renewable energy solutions, we can light up the world, one community at a time.

THE NEED FOR ENERGY EQUALITY

The large-scale use of fossil fuels has devastating consequences for people and nature, including severe air, water and soil pollution, loss of biodiversity and loss of livelihoods. Human rights are literally being bulldozed to make way for coal-fired power plants. Women and their communities are losing their land, livelihoods and homes. In addition, national energy networks mainly serve people living in large cities. Rural communities often suffer power cuts, which means that household chores and activities that depend on electricity are regularly disrupted.

In Somaliland, much of the food is produced by women farmers like Maryan. They rely on fossil fuels to access water and irrigate their land. External shocks make the communities particularly vulnerable to climate change.

Maryan: 'Whatever impacts the world, will impact us as well. My biggest worry is that fuel becomes unavailable.'



ENERGY AS A DRIVER OF CHANGE

Reliable access to renewable energy is key to improving livelihoods. It reduces the time women and girls spend on household chores, giving them more time for education and paid work. It improves access to water, sanitation and hygiene. It can be used to power lanterns, allowing people to work or study in the evenings and making communities safer after dark. And it creates new opportunities for local entrepreneurship by providing a stable supply of energy to charge electrical devices and vehicles. By generating renewable energy locally, rural communities are no longer dependent on the larger, unstable fossil fuel-based grid. The use of renewable energy drastically reduces harmful environmental impacts.

WOMEN IN CHARGE OF SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS

Everywhere in the world, and particularly in the Global South, women and girls are disproportionately affected by poverty and climate disasters. Gender inequality limits women's rights to participation, education and employment. In all of our projects we promote women's leadership, because women bring viable skills, networks and expertise that have the potential to create more resilient and equitable societies. Their leadership position in the energy supply of their community, combined with new opportunities for education, paid work and entrepreneurship, will improve the socio-economic position of women and girls in the long-term.

With the new income generated by the reliable energy supply, the community can allocate resources to maintain the solar panels and equipment. This includes a budget for necessary replacements in case the installation or equipment breaks down after several years. As a result, the community will be able to maintain the installation and equipment for many years to come. As a result, a one-off investment in the project can have a huge, long-term impact on the community.

The case of Bangladesh: Off-grid solar power for rural communities

Only 3% of Bangladesh's energy comes from renewable sources. Rural communities often suffer from lack of access to energy and power outages. In the past, the government has introduced home-based renewable energy solutions. This was unsuccessful because not all community members received trainings in maintenance.

After much testing and consultation, ActionAid is ready to launch a new model: small-scale, local solar installations to provide energy to rural communities, not at the household level, but at the community level. Community members will collectively own and use the grid, and women and girls will be trained to maintain it. Working with the Renewable Energy Innovation Lab (REIL) at Daffodil International University in Dhaka, a grid has been developed and is ready to be rolled out to a first community in the Barisal Division, a region where ActionAid has been working for decades.



A LOCAL SOLUTION WITH GLOBAL POTENTIAL

ActionAid is an international women's rights organisation working in over 70 countries for a just and sustainable world. We were one of the first international NGOs based in the Global South. Today we work with over 15 million people and 2,000 communities. ActionAid has a unique feminist approach and decades of experience in tackling the root causes of poverty and inequality. Starting with the needs of women and communities in the Global South, we form a powerful movement to bring about lasting change.

PARTNERSHIPS

We know from this experience that local, renewable energy is the solution to meeting our global energy needs without harming people or the planet. In Bangladesh, but also globally. That is why we are asking partners to help us realise this global potential. We are looking for financial resources, but a partnership can also help us increase our knowledge and access networks. Together we can bring about an energy transition to renewable sources that is sustainable and fair.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like to know more about our women-led renewable energy solutions, please contact us at:

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