MECS
Modern Energy Cooking Services




Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC)




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Introduction

Cooking is essential to daily life, yet the methods and fuels used profoundly affect health, gender equality, and sustainable development. Across the world, particularly in low-income communities, women disproportionately bear the burden of traditional biomass-based cooking, which relies on firewood, charcoal, cow dung and kerosene. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), nearly 2.1 billion people continue to use these polluting fuels[1], leading to severe health impacts and limiting economic opportunities, particularly for women.

Women in these households spend hours collecting fuel and preparing meals over inefficient stoves, exposing themselves to harmful air pollution that leads to 3.2 million premature deaths annually in 2020, as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO)[2]. Additionally, the time and labour spent on fuel collection and cooking restrict women's access to education, employment, and economic independence. In many rural settings, the search for fuel also puts women and girls at risk of violence and exploitation, particularly in conflict zones.

The transition to modern energy cooking—including electric and biogas cookstoves—has the potential to empower women, enhance household health, and drive economic growth. The Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA) highlights that enabling access to clean cooking fuels and technologies would **free up 10 hours per week for women**[3], allowing them to invest in income-generating activities, self-development, or education. Furthermore, shifting to clean cooking could play a pivotal role in addressing climate change, as traditional biomass cooking contributes significantly to forest degradation[4] and greenhouse gas emissions.

This report is grounded in extensive primary research conducted under the Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC) strand. The research methodology encompassed a combination of panel discussions, stakeholder consultations, direct interviews, and targeted surveys with both women and men actively involved in the clean cooking domain. The insights derived from these engagements provide a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted challenges that women face in transitioning to clean cooking solutions. Additionally, the findings highlight the significant economic and social benefits associated with the adoption of modern energy cooking technologies. The report also identifies critical interventions necessary to effectively integrate gender and social inclusion considerations into clean cooking policies and programs. These insights are intended to inform policymakers, practitioners, and development partners aiming to accelerate the adoption of inclusive and sustainable cooking solutions.

About Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) programme:

Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) is an eight-year research programme funded by UK Aid (FCDO) and led by Loughborough University. MECS programme researches the socio-economic realities of a transition from polluting fuels to a range of modern fuels. Whilst the research covers several clean fuels, the evidence is pointing to the viability, cost effectiveness, and user satisfaction that energy efficient electric cooking devices provide. The programme works in close collaboration with NGOs, governments, the private sector, academia, policy representatives, and communities across 16 countries to accelerate the shift from biomass to genuinely clean cooking.

[1] — SDG Indicators
[2] Household air pollution
[3] https://cleancooking.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Gender-and-Clean-Cooking.pdf
[4] Woodfuels, Deforestation, Degradation and Forestry - Modern Energy Cooking Services

MECS In India: The programme was launched in early 2020, and works across the intersections of policy, finance, supply chain and promotion of electric cooking to enable the transition to modern fuels for cooking. It supports India's emergence as a global hub for manufacturing clean cooking devices for domestic and international markets, aligned with the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India missions, as well as the objectives of the GoElectric and LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) campaigns launched by the Government of India.

Gender, Policy, and the Need for Systemic Change

Clean cooking is not just a technology issue; it is a gender equity and policy challenge. It is essential to prioritize ***gender-responsive and transformative policies that integrate women into energy planning, policies and strategies, financial inclusion programs, and entrepreneurship opportunities***. Women hold vast experience and knowledge in cooking, making their involvement indispensable in the **design, promotion, and adoption** of clean cooking technologies. Their participation ensures that modern cooking solutions are not only efficient but also culturally relevant, user-friendly, and aligned with household needs.

The **Gender Equality, Equity, and Women's Empowerment Framework**[5], developed by Dr. Yesmeen Khalifa under the Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) programme, highlights the integration of gender equality, equity and social inclusion in modern energy cooking (MEC). It emphasizes the distinction between ***gender equality as a goal and gender equity as the means to achieve it***, advocating for fairness tailored to specific needs. Key challenges identified include the lack of gender-specific data in energy access, insufficient recognition of the interlinkages between SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 7 (clean energy), and the absence of robust frameworks to assess gender impacts in MEC projects. Existing methodologies often rely on indicators like time savings, which is an important indicator but fails to capture broader gender co-benefits.

The framework is based on the Social Measurement Tool that was developed by the Clean Cooking Alliance (CCA)[6] and the International Centre on the Research for Women (ICRW) to measure social impacts of clean and/or efficient cookstoves (CCA and ICRW, 2016) and the conceptual framework that was developed to monitor and achieve gender equality and equity in the WASH sector (Caruso et al. 2021a; Caruso et al. 2021b). The Social Measurement domains and the WASH domains were mapped with SDG 5 and SDG 7 interlinkages[7] to identify the gender dimensions in the MECS sector. A unifying framework to assess and monitor gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in the MECS sector was developed with four interconnected domains, which are as follows:-

Equitable Access – Ensuring that clean cooking solutions are affordable and available for all, particularly women and marginalised groups**.**

Access to Resources – Addressing financial, technological, and knowledge-based barriers that hinder adoption. The ability to access resources (co-benefits) related to the MECS sector (such as time and labour, safety and freedom of violence, health and well-being, knowledge, information and technologies, social capital, and financial resources).

Decision-Making Agency – enhancing women's participation in household and community-level decisions regarding modern energy cooking. The ability to exercise agency at the

[5] https://mecs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Gender.pdf
[6] https://cleancooking.org/reports-and-tools/measuring-social-impact-in-the-clean-and-efficient-cooking-sector-a-how-to-guide/
[7] https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/Policy%20Briefs%20-2022%20Energy%27s%20Interlinkages%20With%20Other%20SDGs.pdf

household level and public participation (including the ability to participate in income-generating activities, employment and leadership positions), and the freedom of movement.

Enabling Environment – understanding and improving the enabling environment (social, policy, economic and policy contexts) to facilitate widespread adoption, improve the delivery of services and to ensure women's participation and engagement in the MECS transition.

Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC) Initiative

Recognizing these systemic challenges and opportunities, **Finovista** launched the **Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC) initiative** for MECS to drive a **women-centred approach** to clean cooking in India. By giving more prominence to women in the clean cooking, and related, sectors as **adopters, facilitators, entrepreneurs, and policy advocates**, the WMEC Initiative unlocks their potential to drive behavioural change, improve energy access, and accelerate the clean energy transition.

The comprehensive mix of panel discussions, stakeholder consultations, direct interviews, and targeted surveys involving various stakeholders in clean cooking domain helped in gathering insights from diverse engagements thus offering a nuanced understanding of the challenges faced by women, which in turn helped in designing the undertaken aims of the initiative. The **WMEC Initiative** aims to work towards:

- **Enhancing Participation and Representation**: Increasing women's engagement in clean cooking discussions and decision-making forums. Enabling platform for women to connect, share experiences, and develop strong networks. Under this programme, efforts will be made to develop mechanisms to support and seek feedback from local initiatives as this could have larger impact of strengthening the women-led community initiatives like Self-Help Groups (SHGs), local community organizations, and women's networks in adopting and promoting clean cooking solutions.
- **Raising Awareness**: Educating communities on the **benefits of clean cooking solutions** and the adverse impacts of traditional cooking practices. Supporting women as adopters and facilitators of clean cooking by ensuring that women are empowered to make informed decisions regarding energy use and household cooking technologies. Further, overcoming behavioural and perception barriers by designing awareness campaigns to dispel myths and encourage a shift towards modern cooking technologies.
- **Improving Financial access**: Enhancing women's ability to secure funding and financial support for clean cooking technologies and businesses. Addressing financial barriers through facilitating access to microfinance, carbon finance, and other financial instruments to make clean cooking solutions more affordable.
- **Creating Opportunities**: Developing pathways for women's employment and entrepreneurship in the clean cooking sector and fostering innovation by leveraging women's knowledge of cooking and energy use to co-design modern cooking appliances that cater to user needs.
- **Facilitating Cross-Sector Collaboration**: Connecting global, national, and local organizations to create a sustainable ecosystem for gender-inclusive clean cooking.

WMEC aims to Engage a diverse set of *Stakeholders* i.e. Startups and SMEs, think tanks, policy institutions, local community groups and NGOs, financial institutions, carbon finance developers supporting women-led clean cooking enterprises, academia and research organizations, contributing

to data-driven solutions and policy recommendations, Anganwadi workers and rural women's networks involved in community outreach and behaviour change initiatives.

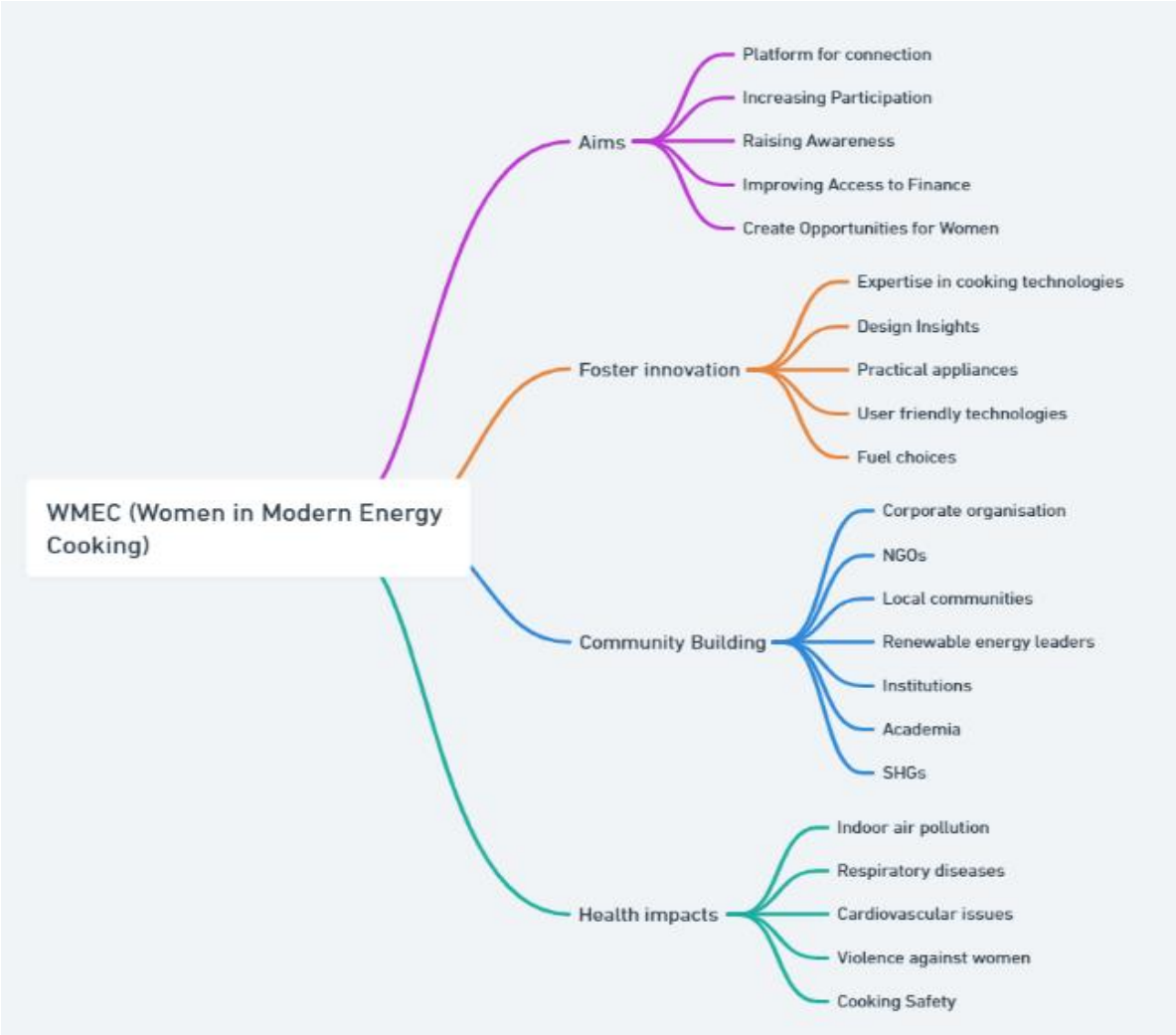


Figure 1: WMEC Overview

Key Pathways to Gender Mainstreaming in Modern Energy Cooking (MEC)

Gender mainstreaming in clean cooking is essential to accelerating adoption, improving health outcomes, and enhancing women's economic empowerment. Despite being the primary users of cooking energy, women face financial, social, and structural barriers that limit their access to cleaner technologies. Research shows that when women are actively engaged—as consumers, entrepreneurs, and decision-makers—the transition to clean cooking is more effective and sustainable. However, many policies and programs remain gender-blind, failing to address women's specific needs, preferences, and constraints.

To enable gender mainstreaming, ***policy frameworks must embed gender-transformative approaches*** to address intersectionality and integrate women and gender perspectives into national clean cooking strategies. ***Institutional capacity building is equally crucial,*** ensuring that program design and implementation prioritize gender equity and social inclusion***. Economic empowerment is***

another key pillar, as women often struggle with financial constraints that limit access to clean cooking solutions. ***Expanding microfinance, pay-as-you-go models***, and targeted subsidies can bridge this gap, enabling women to afford and sustain the use of clean cooking technologies.

Beyond economic factors, behavioural and social norms play a significant role in shaping energy decisions in rural and low-income households of India, women's participation in clean cooking is often limited by traditional gender roles, with household energy choices frequently controlled by men. Addressing these dynamics through community engagement and targeted behaviour change programs can create a more supportive environment for adoption. Additionally, ***positioning women as local influencers, sales agents, service and technical solution providers*** strengthens last-mile distribution and increases uptake.

Clean cooking technologies must also be designed with a ***user-centric approach, incorporating women's feedback on usability***, affordability, and efficiency. Distribution models should leverage women-led networks to enhance accessibility, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Furthermore, ***data collection and research must prioritize gender-disaggregated insights*** to inform policies and track progress. Many existing programs lack granular data on women's experiences with clean cooking, limiting their ability to design effective and evidence-based interventions.

While significant strides have been made in integrating gender into energy access discussions, ***gaps remain in understanding the lived experiences, priorities, and constraints faced by women in adopting clean cooking solutions.*** More structured discussions with women—both users and non-users of clean cooking technologies—are essential for designing interventions that reflect their realities. This means moving beyond broad assumptions and collecting granular, gender-disaggregated data and other factors of discrimination that intersect with gender (such as age, ethnicity, disability, income, geographical location, education and literacy level, etc.) to inform policies and programs and **especially in the Indian context**. Thus, at WMEC we started to have a lot of these discussions with Indian stakeholders especially women.

WMEC Research- Consultations/Panel Discussions/Primary Surveys

This report draws upon **primary research**, including **panel discussions, stakeholder consultations, and direct interviews and surveys with women and men engaged in the cooking and energy sector** that was undertaken as part of the WMEC strand. This includes: -

Secondary Literature Survey

- A secondary literature survey was conducted to understand the existing body of work on Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC). This involved reviewing academic papers[8,9], policy reports[10,11] and case studies and available frameworks that address the role of women in adopting and promoting modern energy cooking solutions.
- Key sources of information included journals, government reports, publications from energy organizations, and other relevant documents that discussed the challenges, opportunities, and impacts of clean cooking technologies for women.

[8] https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2015.1134642
[9] https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2023.103399
[10] CCA-gender-sheet ENGLISH.indd
[11] 17489PB_12_Draft.pdf

Inputs from WMEC panels from Talk Series & Forum

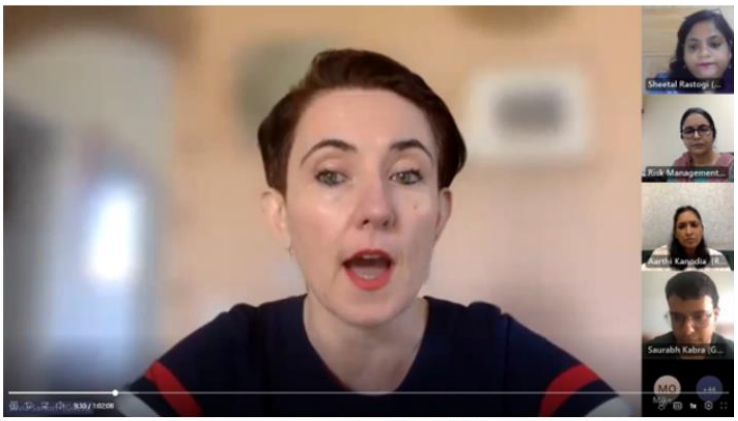
- A series of 3 Panels across Talk Series [Talk series 1.6, Talk series 2.10,] and 2 in MEC Forum [MECF 2023, MECF 2024] were organised under MECS Programme through its India country partner Finovista on the topics Engaging women as a game Changer and Women in Clean Cooking, under Phase 1,2 where experts, researchers, and stakeholders shared their perspectives and similarly for MEC Forum. Inputs from these discussions were recorded, including key takeaways, expert recommendations, and participant feedback. These served as foundational insights for understanding the broader context and challenges facing women in this domain, contributions of women in promoting and using modern cooking technologies.

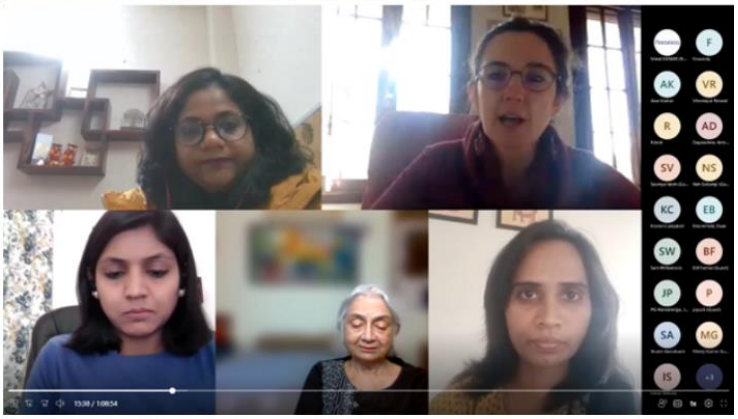
Surveys & 1 to 1- Stakeholder consultations

- Based on the information gathered from the secondary literature survey, Talk Series, and panel discussions, a questionnaire [Annexure 2] was developed. This questionnaire aimed to collect in-depth, qualitative data from stakeholders engaged with modern energy cooking solutions. The questions were designed to address various aspects such as:
    - Awareness and adoption of modern energy cooking technologies
    - Their vision on clean cooking future pertaining to women
    - The role of women in the promotion and dissemination of clean cooking solutions
    - How can they contribute to the WMEC initiative
- Stakeholders and potential respondents were emailed, inviting them to participate in the consultation process. The emails included a link to the MS Forms questionnaire, allowing participants to fill out the survey online [Annexure 2]. With a selected few key stakeholder, the consultations were conducted virtually through MS teams meetings. These consultations allowed for a deeper exploration of the challenges, perceptions, and needs of women regarding modern energy cooking.

The insights gathered reflect the **barriers women face in transitioning to clean cooking, the economic and social benefits of modern energy cooking, and the key interventions needed to mainstream gender and social inclusion in clean cooking policies**. The following sections of this report will provide an in-depth analysis of these findings and present actionable recommendations for advancing **gender and social inclusion in clean cooking**.

Consultation from Talk Series & MECF





Findings- Key Challenge Areas

As noted in the **Gender Equality, Equity, and Women's Empowerment Framework**, recently interconnections have been made for SDG 5 and SDG 7; and four key areas have been identified where gender inequalities are substantial in the energy sector i.e. 1. access to electricity and clean cooking fuels and technology, 2. employment and leadership, 3. entrepreneurship, and 4. the enabling environment for women's participation in the energy sector (UNDESA 2022)[12]. Data on energy are rarely disaggregated by gender. Monitoring gender equality in the energy sector and MEC requires gender statistics which include but also extend beyond sex-disaggregated data. ***The benefits of investing in women are not widely understood by project owners and developers***. We would be using the four Domains highlighted in the framework to classify the challenge areas identified through the research (Refer Figure 2)

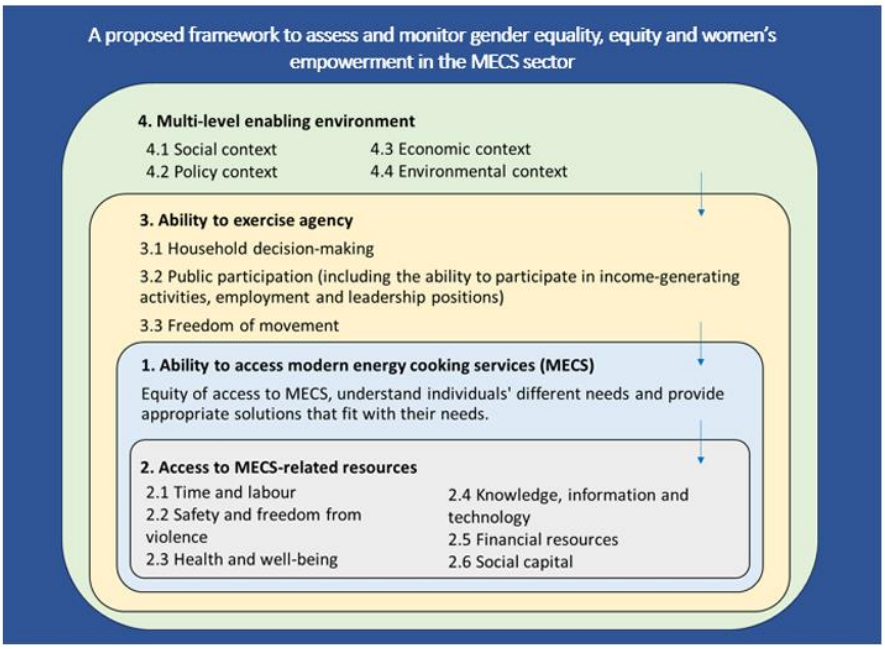


Figure 2: A proposed framework to assess and monitor gender equality, equity and women's empowerment in the MECS sector - adapted from CCA and ICRW Social Measurement Tool and the WASH framework.[13]

The following are the most frequent challenges that women encounter as highlighted by the participants in the consultations.

- **Ability to access Modern Energy Cooking Services--** MEC Technologies is still at an early stage and often faces the challenge of availability and affordability. In rural, remote areas and Tier 3 cities in India, the quality and reliability of electricity supply pose significant challenges for the adoption of MEC technologies and create barriers to equitable access for women, disadvantaged groups, and marginalised communities in these regions and social strata.

[12] https://sdgs.un.org/publications/report-2022-sdg7-tag-policy-briefs-addressing-energys-interlinkages-other-sdgs-47727
[13] https://mecs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Gender-Framework-Report.pdf

- **Access to Resources**
    - **Unfamiliarity with usage & benefits of Clean Cooking Appliances:** A lack of awareness and familiarity with clean cooking technologies creates hesitancy among women to adopt and utilize these appliances. Many are not adequately trained or informed about the operation and benefits of such devices, leading to reluctance to integrate them into daily cooking practices. Health and environmental benefits are largely unknown.
    - **Technological challenges** pose a significant hurdle, as many women struggle with the availability, variety, and durability of eCooking appliances. A significant barrier to the sustained adoption of eCooking technologies is the lack of local technical expertise and the unavailability of spare parts for maintenance and repairs. eCooking with the absence of a suitable stove design is also a big barrier. Traditional cooking in many Indian households involves use of **large utensils** (for curries, rice, idlis, etc.) and **simultaneous use** of multiple burners therefore absence of suitable stove design tends to mismatch with local cooking habits making adoption of ecooking appliances difficult. Further, challenges of portability i.e. using of devices where there no access to electricity or solar, is a challenge.

    - **Financial Constraints:** Households predominantly lower income groups and rural ones, face significant resource limitations, with restricted purchasing power often steering them toward biomass-based cooking methods. Solid biomass such as cow dung cakes and wood are readily available at minimal cost, whereas the initial investment required for clean cooking appliances is disproportionately high relative to their income levels. Additionally, **access to credit and financial assistance** remains limited, especially for women making it difficult for households to transition to cleaner cooking alternatives. Inclusive financial arrangements, such as microfinance or SHG-based credit models, are critical to ensuring eCooking appliances are affordable.

- **Decision-Making Agency**
    - **Limited Decision-Making Authority for Women:** Women often lack decision-making authority within households, which negatively impacts decisions related to cooking appliances and utensils. Despite being at the centre of household cooking responsibilities, their needs and preferences are frequently overlooked, hindering the transition to clean cooking technologies.
    - The **program design challenges** stem from a lack of user-centric approaches, inadequate financing models, and poor alignment with local realities. Many initiatives fail to involve women in decision-making, leading to solutions that do not match their cooking habits or financial constraints. Additionally, unreliable electricity supply and limited follow-up support reduce the long-term effectiveness of these programs.
    - **Absence of Feedback Mechanisms:** There is no established feedback system to capture women's preferences, challenges, and desired improvements in clean cooking technologies. Such mechanisms could guide manufacturers in designing more user-centric products tailored to women's needs.

- **Enabling Environment**
    - **Social attitude and social behaviour** present another major obstacle. Traditional cooking practices, deeply rooted in cultural norms, create resistance to change. Gender roles often restrict women's decision-making power regarding adopting modern cooking technologies, while community perceptions about the reliability and safety of eCooking appliances further hinder widespread adoption.
    - **Policy Gaps** further exacerbate the problem. Insufficient government incentives, subsidies, and regulatory support prevent the widespread adoption of clean cooking solutions. Existing policies often fail to address last-mile connectivity and affordability issues, making it harder for marginalized communities to benefit from these innovations.
    - Lastly, **limited access to educational and training opportunities** restricts women's ability to develop meaningful careers and livelihood options in the clean cooking sector, leading to an underrepresented sector concerning gender diversity.

Key Insights – Integrating Gender and Social Inclusion mainstreaming in MECS Jigsaw Approach

The Modern Energy Cooking Services (MECS) program employs a 'jigsaw' metaphor [14] to illustrate the multifaceted process of transitioning from polluting to clean cooking fuels at scale. This approach acknowledges that such a transition is not linear but requires the integration of various components to form a complete system. The 'jigsaw' framework identifies three core areas essential for this transformation: -

- **Policy Enabling Environment**: This includes supportive policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities that facilitate the adoption of modern energy cooking solutions.
- **Supply Chain**: A robust supply chain ensures the availability and accessibility of clean cooking technologies and fuels to consumers.
- **Consumer Awareness**: Understanding and addressing consumer preferences, behaviours, existing beliefs, fuel stacking and financial capabilities are crucial for the widespread acceptance of clean cooking solutions. Women specially self-help groups (SHG) can also play a significant role here by raising awareness on clean cooking and the negative impacts of traditional cooking fuels which in turn can potentially accelerate access to modern energy cooking services and reduce gender inequalities of such services.

[14] https://mecs.org.uk/blog/mecs-and-jigsaws/

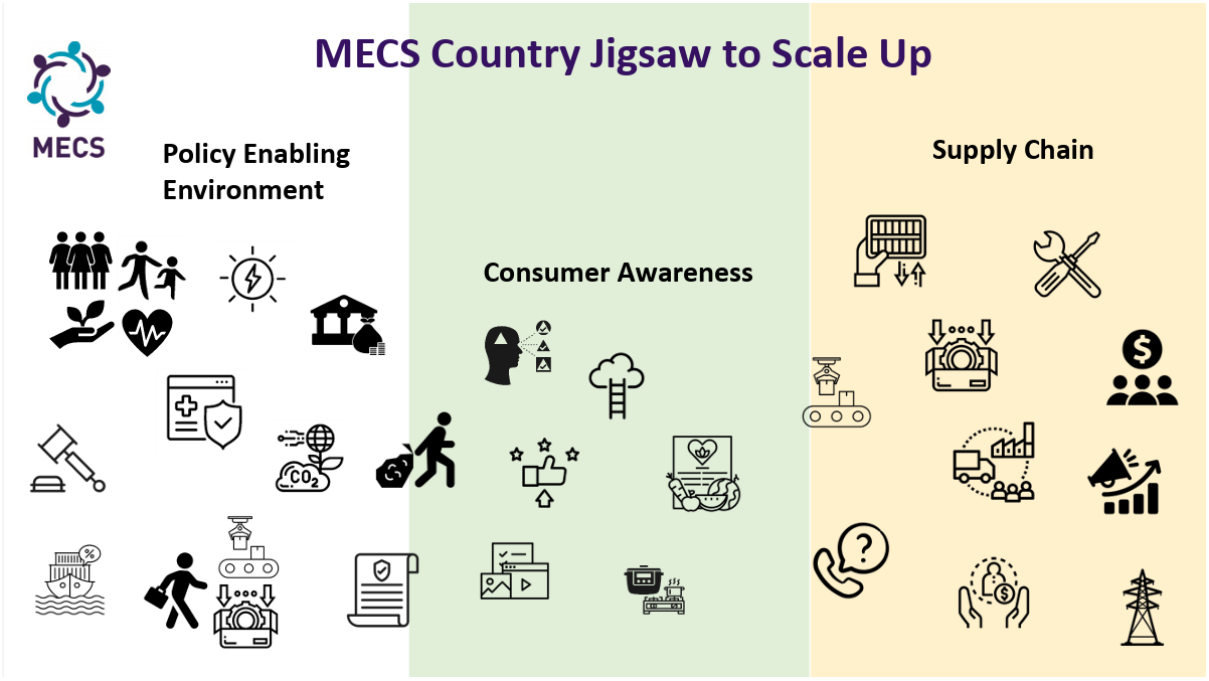


Figure 3: Interlinking SDG5 and MECS Jigsaw Approach [15]

Each of these areas comprises various elements that must align to achieve a successful transition. The 'jigsaw' metaphor emphasizes that all pieces are interconnected, and the absence or misalignment of any component can hinder progress. This approach moves beyond traditional linear models, recognizing the complexity and interdependence inherent in systemic change. In practice, the MECS team has utilized this framework to assess and strategize country-specific transitions.

Inspired by the **Jigsaw framework**, which emphasizes a holistic and integrated approach, the findings from the Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC) discussions can be categorized into **three key components**: 1) **Enabling Environment, Supply Chain & Market Dynamics, 2) Consumer Needs, Behaviour, and Awareness, and 3) Financial & Policy Support**. Each of these elements must align to create a sustainable, gender and social inclusive clean cooking ecosystem. When women have equal opportunities within the ecosystem, it leads to more responsive solutions, stronger communities, and improved outcomes across sectors showcasing the importance of gender equity across the entire value chain, not just as users but also as entrepreneurs, decision-makers, and leaders.

1. Enabling Environment: Creating a Gender and Social Inclusive Energy Ecosystem

Women are the primary users of cooking energy, yet they are often excluded from decision-making processes, entrepreneurial opportunities, and technological advancements in the sector. An enabling environment for clean cooking must be designed to actively integrate women's perspectives, economic empowerment, and leadership into every stage of the energy value chain. It is important to nurture women as entrepreneurs and leaders within the clean cooking sector.

[15] https://mecs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Gender.pdf

Further, upskilling and capacity-building initiatives is vital for enabling women to perform different roles across the value chain. Active role in decision making, high participation in workforce, entrepreneurship, livelihood and financial policies have been actively noted as key aspects for an enabling environment.

- **Gender Representation in Decision-Making:** One of the fundamental gaps identified is that women are rarely consulted in energy-related decisions—whether at the household, community, or policy level. Cultural norms, coupled with the perception that energy-related purchases are a male domain, often sideline women's voices. To address this, institutions must establish gender-responsive and transformative policy frameworks that address gender and social inequalities and actively engage **women *not just as beneficiaries but as decision-makers in clean cooking programs.***
- **Women-Led Enterprises & Workforce Participation:** To create an enabling ecosystem, it is essential to scale up women's participation in clean cooking enterprises.
    - ***Education, literacy and workforce participation*** *play an essential role* in overcoming resistance to new technologies and shifting traditional mindsets. Collaborative efforts between government programs, non-governmental organizations, and private entities can create the necessary ecosystem for women's empowerment in this sector. Mentorship and supportive organizational cultures are also critical, as diverse teams with higher representation of women tend to outperform less inclusive ones. *It was noted that some of the large energy companies in India like IOCL have successfully integrated women's role and leadership across the value chain. IOCL bottling plant in Leh, demonstrates that women can effectively manage clean energy supply chains when given the right support. It is remarkable to observe that in Leh bottling plant there is no accident/mishappening reported in the last 20 years. This is all because women there tend to work with great vigilance and employing women in any organisation brings sincerity.*
    - ***Encouraging women-led micro-enterprises*** in clean cooking technology distribution and repair services can provide ***both livelihood opportunities and enhance accessibility for last-mile consumers***. Existing networks of Self-Help Groups (SHGs), and Anganwadi centers should be leveraged as channels for awareness-building and distribution of clean cooking solutions.
    - ***Women entrepreneurship should be nurtured*** through training in technical aspects, financial literacy, leadership and business management, they can serve as trusted ambassadors of clean cooking in their communities. Programs like "woman-for-woman" marketing and self-help group (SHG) initiatives have proven effective in empowering women and fostering their role as ***entrepreneurs and market catalysts***. For example, under the SoULS (Solar Urja through Localization for Sustainability) program, women were trained to assemble and distribute solar lanterns, which not only provided them with immediate income but also enabled them to continue their entrepreneurial activities beyond the program's duration. Similarly, women entrepreneurs in the clean cooking sector bring unique perspectives, skills, and experiences, allowing them to connect better with communities, develop culturally appropriate solutions, and drive higher adoption rates of clean cooking technologies. ***Women entrepreneurs tend to be socially and environmentally conscious, excelling in collaboration, networking, and customer engagement, all of which are critical to the success of clean cooking initiatives***.

- **Aligning Clean Cooking with Broader Energy, Financial and livelihood Policies and SDG5 Linkage:** To sustain long-term adoption, clean cooking must be integrated into broader energy access and rural electrification programs. Similarly schemes of financial inclusion and livelihood generation. integrating **clean cooking into rural livelihood programs** and mentions successful models like **SHGs** each of these energy access policies should be linked with the SDG5 to develop an integrated program design. Policy frameworks must promote gender parity and provide incentives for women to enter the clean energy workforce. To address the clean cooking challenge, a holistic approach is necessary, one that includes political momentum, public support, and investments in clean cooking solutions. Clean cooking must be prioritized by political leaders, with more women represented in policy-making and decision-making processes. Policies should be designed to ease women's access to markets for clean cooking products.

Ensuring a safe workplace for women: a **safe workplace for women in the clean cooking sector** is vital, as many women are engaged not only as **beneficiaries** but also as **entrepreneurs, technicians, sales agents, factory workers**, and **field staff** in this growing sector. This industry often operates in **rural, informal, and male-dominated environments**, making safety concerns even more pressing. To address the safety of women, building gender-sensitive workplace policies and designing safe workspaces across the value chain could play a significant role.

2. Supply Chain & Market Dynamics: Strengthening Women's Role in Clean Cooking Markets

While clean cooking solutions exist, their availability, affordability, and accessibility remain key barriers, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas. Women, despite being primary users, are underrepresented in supply chain roles, limiting their influence over product design, manufacturing, distribution, sales, and after-sales support.

- **Women as Last-Mile Distributors:** Empowering women as last-mile distributors of clean cooking appliances can bridge the supply gap. Women-led sales models—such as the "Women-for-Women" marketing approach—have been highly effective in other sectors and should be replicated in clean cooking. When women entrepreneurs promote and distribute these appliances, they generate income while enhancing trust and local acceptance. Partnerships with SHGs and microfinance institutions can facilitate bulk purchasing models, allowing women to operate small-scale businesses selling electric pressure cookers (EPCs), induction stoves, and energy-efficient appliances.
- **Standardized Product Design & User-Centric Innovation:** A major challenge in supply chain efficiency is the lack of user-centered design in cooking appliances. Many available eCooking devices do not cater to traditional cooking styles, which leads to low adoption. Design considerations such as multi-burner solutions, precise temperature controls, and compatibility with regional cuisines are essential for making modern energy cooking a viable alternative to LPG and biomass. A participatory approach that involves communities and emphasizes continuous feedback will not only improve product design but also reinforce women's roles as key drivers of change in the clean cooking ecosystem. Despite their expertise in culinary practices, their contributions are often overlooked in product development, hindering optimal adoption. Tailored capacity-building initiatives, training programs, and hands-on demonstrations are vital to overcoming these challenges.
- **Scaling Institutional Clean Cooking Solutions:** Beyond individual households, community institutions such as schools, Anganwadi centers, and public kitchens represent high-impact entry points for clean cooking adoption. Most Anganwadi centers and public schools involved in mid-

day meal schemes are staffed by women. The centres have a deep influence on the awareness and understanding of the mothers and largely the families of these children and Anganwadi workers.

- **Women's Financial Inclusion in Clean Cooking:** Most women in rural, semi urban and informal settlements lack access to formal credit and financial instruments that could help them purchase clean cooking appliances. ***Women often lack access to credit or collateral due to cultural and regulatory practices that prevent them from owning assets. Despite evidence showing that women are more diligent borrowers than men, they are often perceived as riskier clients***. Solutions include fostering financial literacy, encouraging women's leadership in the finance sector, and developing policies to improve credit access for women. Microfinance schemes, pay-as-you-go models, and targeted subsidies can significantly improve accessibility. ***A structured financial inclusion strategy—similar to the LPG Ujjwala Yojana scheme—is necessary to scale eCooking.***

3. Consumer Needs & Behaviour: Overcoming Awareness, Trust, and Cultural Barriers

Even when clean cooking appliances are available, behavioural barriers often prevent adoption. Traditional biomass cooking is deeply ingrained in daily life, and many women view eCooking as unreliable, inadequate, or secondary to their primary cooking methods.

- **Women as Change Makers**: Raising awareness among society about clean cooking technologies and empowering them with knowledge is a critical step in increasing adoption. Women and children, who spend a significant amount of time indoors, will be the primary beneficiaries of these technologies. Local women changemakers or champions should lead these awareness campaigns – highlighting the benefits from switching to eCooking. We have seen a similar model for women's health and hygiene segment in India.
- **Creating Aspirational Demand Through Community Awareness:** The success of clean cooking adoption also depends on whether modern appliances are seen as aspirational and culturally relevant. Currently, LPG enjoys higher social acceptance than electric cooking (eCooking) because of sustained promotional efforts over decades. eCooking must undergo a similar narrative shift, positioning it as a modern, efficient, and desirable choice rather than a niche alternative. Community-driven models—such as peer-to-peer learning, demonstration camps, and storytelling approaches—must be actively deployed to reshape perceptions. Women-led testimonials, where users share how eCooking has transformed their daily routines, can help overcome scepticism and build trust.
- **Perceived Reliability & Cultural Norms:** A common concern among users is the perceived unreliability of electric cooking, driven by power outages and a lack of trust in electricity-based solutions. Even when households own eCooking appliances, they often use them for limited purposes, such as boiling water or reheating food, rather than for full meal preparation. To shift behavior, clean cooking interventions must integrate cultural adaptability, demonstrating that electric stoves and pressure cookers can efficiently prepare staple foods like chapatis, dal, and curries. Cooking demonstrations, combined with feedback loops where women share their experiences, can accelerate behavioural shifts.
- **Engaging Men in Clean Cooking:** Men often control household finances and energy-related purchases and will need to see the benefit of adopting eCooking if they are to support appliance purchases. It can be beneficial to involve all members of the household in discussions around

eCooking adoption in order to ensure widespread acceptance. Social and cultural norms must also evolve to facilitate a more balanced allocation of household responsibilities. Engaging men in cooking and household management is essential to reducing gendered task allocations. Successful examples include a pilot project in Tanzania, which developed cooking classes for men and challenged traditional gender norms, thereby demonstrating that cooking can be a shared responsibility.

Areas of Contribution

The consultations have one important agenda knowing how women of influence in the clean cooking sector can contribute to the WMEC community. We gave them a list of options that they were willing to contribute to. The participants were also free to add their roles as per their expertise and interests. The following is the list of those roles.

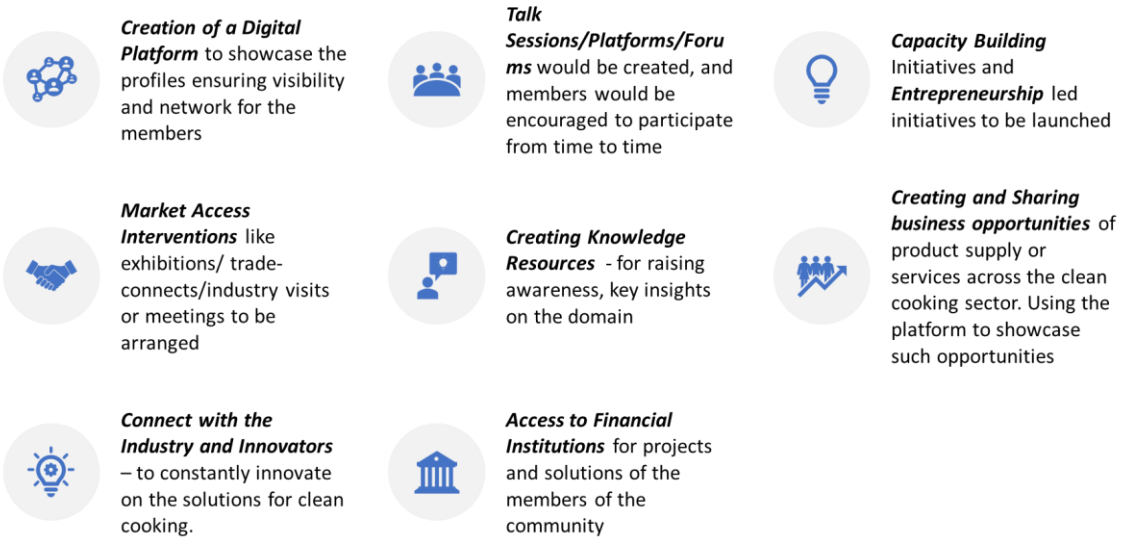


Figure 4: Possible Support Areas

Out of these roles, the participants were keen on contributing to the following roles.

- For capacity-building initiatives entrepreneurship
- Planning and strategizing for any such initiatives
- Access to financial institutions
- Enabling connections with industry and innovators

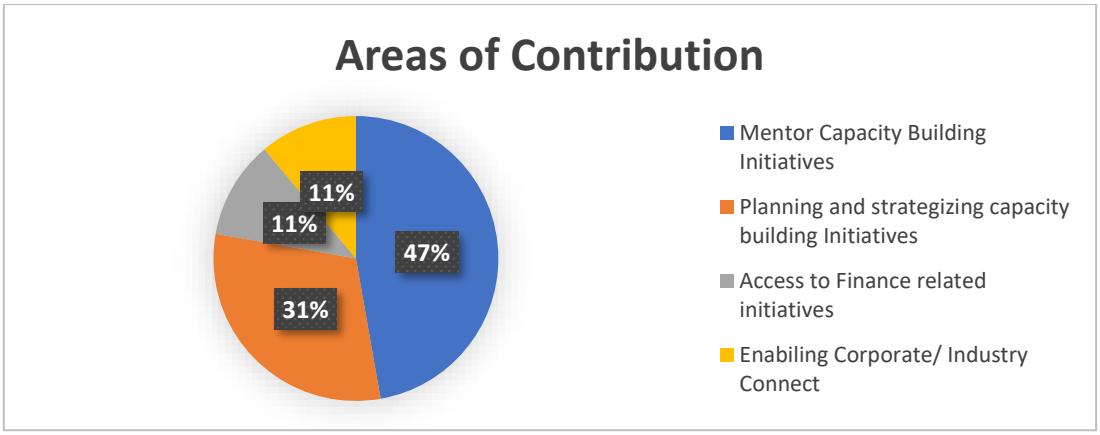


Figure 5: Responses to Question: "Kindly highlight how you can contribute?"

Conclusion

The research conducted under the Women in Modern Energy Cooking (WMEC) initiative highlights the deeply gendered dimensions of clean cooking adoption in India. While modern cooking technologies have the potential to transform household energy use, improve health outcomes, and create economic opportunities, ***systemic barriers continue to limit the participation and empowerment of women in this transition***. The findings emphasize that access to clean cooking is not just a technological issue but a broader socio-economic challenge intertwined with gender norms, financial constraints, policy gaps, and infrastructural limitations. Despite being primary users of cooking energy, women are often excluded from decision-making processes regarding energy transitions, limiting their ability to influence and benefit from clean cooking innovations.

One of the most ***persistent challenges identified through the research is the affordability and accessibility of modern energy cooking (MEC) technologies***. In rural and economically weaker sections, the high upfront cost of clean cooking appliances, coupled with unreliable electricity supply, deters adoption. Households with lower purchasing power continue to rely on biomass-based cooking methods due to their minimal cost, despite the severe health impacts and environmental consequences. ***The absence of financial instruments tailored for women and marginalised communities, such as microfinance schemes and targeted subsidies***, further exacerbates the problem, restricting their ability to transition to cleaner alternatives. Additionally, limited awareness about the benefits of modern cooking technologies, both in terms of health and economic gains, reinforces reluctance to shift away from traditional cooking practices.

Beyond financial constraints, ***deep-rooted social and cultural norms play a critical role in shaping household cooking behaviours***. Gender roles often relegate women to household labour, yet they are rarely given autonomy over purchasing decisions for clean cooking solutions. The findings reveal that many women lack the authority to influence their household's energy choices, as decisions about technology adoption are predominantly made by male family members. Furthermore, there is an absence of structured feedback mechanisms that would allow women to articulate their preferences, challenges, and needs regarding clean cooking technologies. The failure to integrate user perspectives into product design results in appliances that do not fully align with the cooking habits and expectations of the end users, further limiting their acceptance and sustained use.

Despite these challenges, the research underscores the enormous potential of women as drivers of change in the clean cooking ecosystem. ***When women are engaged as entrepreneurs, sales agents, policy advocates and involved in designing modern energy cooking solutions, the adoption of clean cooking solutions becomes significantly more effective and sustainable***. Women-led enterprises and community-based distribution networks, such as those involving Self-Help Groups (SHGs), have demonstrated success in expanding access to modern cooking appliances. Moreover, positioning women as key stakeholders in clean cooking initiatives—through targeted training, leadership development, and financial inclusion—can create new pathways for economic empowerment. This research reinforces that interventions designed with a strong gender and intersectional lens not only enhance clean cooking adoption but also contribute to broader goals of gender equity and social inclusion, including ***financial independence and workforce participation for women and disadvantaged groups***.

Another critical finding is the ***need for a more structured and research-driven policy approach for integrating gender and social inclusion principles into clean cooking strategies***. The current policy landscape lacks gender-specific indicators, and clean cooking remains largely absent from broader gender empowerment frameworks. Without explicit linkages between Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality) and Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Clean Energy for All), the gendered impacts of energy access remain poorly understood and inadequately addressed[16]. The research highlights that a gender-responsive clean energy transition requires not only financial and infrastructural support but also behavioural change initiatives that challenge existing gender norms. Engaging men, women and all groups (disabled, marginalised communities, etc.) in awareness campaigns, promoting clean cooking as an aspirational and modern choice, and integrating behavioural science into program design can significantly improve adoption rates.

Ultimately, the findings from WMEC point to the need for a systemic, multi-stakeholder approach to scaling clean cooking solutions with a strong focus on gender equity and social inclusion. By placing women at the centre of clean cooking initiatives—as decision-makers, innovators, and entrepreneurs—the clean energy transition can become not only more effective but also more equitable and sustainable.

Recommendations

The "Women in Modern Energy Cooking" (WMEC) initiative has already laid a strong foundation by identifying critical challenges and engaging diverse stakeholders. The following detailed next steps are designed to build upon this momentum, leveraging Dr. Yesmeen Khalifa's Gender Equality, Equity, and Women's Empowerment Framework to ensure a holistic, gender-transformative approach. The MECS Gender Framework is currently being tested in 47 counties across Kenya through collaboration with SCODE LTD. The Framework is also being employed to assess the awareness campaign that has been launched in Tanzania[17] last month to provide guidelines and insights that could be fed into the implementation of the National Clean Cooking Communications Strategy. The framework is also being applied to assess the eCooking supply chain in Tanzania aiming to develop guidelines to enhance gender-responsive and transformative practices within the sector.

[16] 2025-SDG7-Policy-Brief-on-SDG5.pdf

[17] https://mecs.org.uk/webinar-recording-available-developing-and-delivering-a-national-awareness-raising-campaign-for-ecooking-in-tanzania/

Key Initiatives for Finovista's Next Steps:

- **Initiatives to Advanced Skills & Leadership.**
    - **Action:** To create role models in clean cooking sector along with mentorship opportunities. This would encourage more participation from senior women in energy sector and create inspiration for young professionals and students. This would also open up opportunities for senior women leads and even middle management and managerial roles in clean cooking sector.
    - **Impact:** Directly enhances **Access to Resources** (knowledge, technology, financial literacy) and strengthens **Decision-Making Agency** by equipping women for leadership and entrepreneurial roles.
- **Initiative: Incubation & Mentorship Support – Young professionals and entrepreneurs.**
    - **Action:** Establish a structured incubation and mentorship program for aspiring women entrepreneurs and professionals in the clean cooking sector. This will involve connecting them with industry experts (as identified in consultations), providing guidance on business plan development, market entry strategies, and product innovation.
    - **Impact:** Creates **Opportunities** for women, directly contributing to their **Decision-Making Agency** and fostering an **Enabling Environment** for women-led enterprises.

- **Initiative: "Women as Last-Mile Catalysts"**
    - **Action:** Build on successful "woman-for-woman" marketing models by training and empowering women from grassroots communities (e.g., Anganwadi workers, SHG members) as local sales agents, demonstrators, and after-sales support providers for clean cooking technologies.
    - **Impact:** Strengthens **Decision-Making Agency** by creating livelihood opportunities and enhances **Equitable Access** by improving last-mile distribution and trust.

- **Initiative: "WMEC Policy Dialogue Series" & Research Dissemination.**
    - **Action:** Host a series of targeted policy dialogues with government officials, think tanks, and industry leaders, specifically advocating for the integration of gender-responsive policies, incentives, and regulatory frameworks in the clean cooking sector. These dialogues should also promote the adoption of intersectional approaches and mandates for collecting disaggregated data (by gender, age, ethnicity, disability, income level, education and literacy, geographical location, etc.) to inform more policies and equitable interventions.
    - **Impact:** Shapes the **Enabling Environment** by influencing policy and ensuring data-driven decision-making.

- **Initiative: Sector analysis and skill gap study for eCooking**
    - **Action:** Conduct a study aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current and future landscape of the ecooking sector in India. The study should analyse the existing demand and supply chain dynamics, map occupational structures through stakeholder interactions and identify prevailing skill gaps across job roles.
    - **Impact:** Supports workforce planning and training strategies but also drive sectoral growth by creating a qualified, responsive workforce emphasizing women engagement ready to support the clean energy transition

MECS is undertaking a Stocktake during 2025 to identify with partners, the key initiatives and opportunities to support eCooking scale up and this work will feed into that and help inform the next round of projects. The stock-take activity also discussed opportunities for projects and initiatives to scale-up the participation of women and disadvantaged groups in the clean cooking sector from policy and strategy development to the design and implementation of interventions, and across the value chain.

Glimpse from the Round Table

Annexure 1: Profiles of the all the stakeholders consulted through interviews/panel discussions:

1. **Ms Garima Dawer,** Director, Communications, Micro Energy Credits

Garima has 13+ years of extensive and progressive experience in leading communications across a range of industries- academic, social, corporate and start-ups. At MEC, she leads strategic communications, branding and content, perception and stakeholder relations, corporate communications, and the digital & social media program.

2. **Gunjan Goel**, Chef, Indian Federation of Culinary Associations

Gunjan Goel is a distinguished culinary expert whose career spans over 25 years, seamlessly blending ancient Indian culinary traditions with contemporary gastronomy. Known for her unique ability to revive traditional Indian cuisines in modern dining settings, she has been a transformative force in the culinary world, particularly in the face of competition from global cuisines.

A staunch advocate for sustainability, Gunjan specializes in slow foods, aligning her culinary philosophy with the nation's and the planet's needs. Her expertise in Indian vegetarian cuisine has been honed through decades in leadership roles, including her tenure at the top ranks of ITC.

Gunjan's culinary prowess has been showcased on prominent television platforms like BBC, TLC, History Channel, NDTV Good Times, and Star TV, making her a well-recognized figure in the industry. Among her notable achievements are cooking for Prime Minister Narendra Modi and an elite assembly of national and international dignitaries and pioneering the immensely popular “Delhi ka Khana” at Dilli Haat, INA (2002-2009), which drew over 50,000 attendees.

3. **Dr. Sudipta Majumdar,** Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe)

Dr. Sudipa Majumdar joined IRADe in 2024, as Director. She has been involved with interdisciplinary research areas of sustainability, gender issues, and urbanization with econometric applications. She earned her Doctorate from Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) Mumbai in 1998 and her Master’s in Economics from JNU, New Delhi. She completed her Bachelor’s Degree in Economics from Presidency College, Kolkata.

Before joining IRADe, Dr Sudipa had been Deputy Director and Professor at Symbiosis School of Economics (SSE) Pune after spending 16 years as a senior lecturer in Dubai and South Korea. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy, (United Kingdom) and a Senior Fellow at the Symbiosis Centre for Urban Studies, Pune.

4. **Neha Dhingra**, Senior Manager, CLASP

Neha Dhingra is a Senior Manager at CLASP, overseeing management and execution for India. With 14 years of experience in energy efficiency and clean energy access across India, Southeast Asia, and West Africa, she specializes in appliance efficiency standards and labelling. Her expertise includes policy and regulatory analysis, compliance policy design, and institutional capacity building. Neha fosters key partnerships with governments, civil society, donors, and international organizations to implement ambitious appliance energy efficiency policies.

5. **Dr Praveen Dhamija,**

Former Adviser- Skill Council for Green Jobs Adviser / Scientist G, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, Government of India

Dr Praveen Dhamija, a seasoned expert in renewable energy and environmental sustainability, has dedicated his career to advancing clean energy technologies and climate change mitigation strategies. With a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, he began his journey in 1984 at DRDO, where he established the Microbiology/Immunology Laboratory to enhance human resilience in extreme environments.

Since 1988, Dr Dhamija has been instrumental in national initiatives through the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy. His work encompasses the planning and execution of key renewable energy programs, including the National Biogas Programme and Women and Renewable Energy Development initiatives. A resource person for the Ministry of Women & Child Development, he has championed energy security in rural areas using biomass and other renewable sources.

Dr Dhamija's expertise extends to cutting-edge technologies like fuel cells, hydrogen energy, and geothermal energy, collaborating with state governments, academic institutions, and the private sector. His contributions to Delhi's renewable energy policies and projects, such as Solar Rooftop PV systems and biogas-to-CNG initiatives, underscore his visionary approach to urban energy solutions.

An accomplished author, Dr Dhamija co-authored environmental education materials and served as a lead author for the IPCC's Special Report on Renewable Energy Sources and Climate Change Mitigation. Currently an advisor to the Skill Council for Green Jobs, he fosters skill development in green sectors like sustainable construction, transportation, and waste management. Dr Dhamija's profound expertise and commitment to renewable energy and sustainability continue to drive transformative change in India and beyond.

6. **Ms Silvia Sartori**

Senior Project Manager, Women's Economic Empowerment, ENERGIA-Hivos

Silvia Sartori is the Women's Economic Empowerment Senior Project Manager at ENERGIA, the International Network on Gender & Sustainable Energy. She has more than 15 years of experience at the nexus of energy and environment, women's empowerment and entrepreneurship, private sector development, innovation and sustainability in the scope of many international development projects, particularly those funded by the European Commission and with a special focus on Asia. She holds a Master's Degree in SME Management and Development and a Master's Degree in Asian Studies.

7. **Dr Jyoti Parikh**

Executive Director, Integrated Research and Action for Development (IRADe)

Professor (Dr) Jyoti K Parikh, is the Executive Director of IRADe. She was a Member of the former Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change India and is a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize awarded to IPCC authors in 2007. She served as the advisor for Global Commission on Adaptation set up by the U.N. Secretary General and Gates Foundation and as an energy consultant to the World Bank, U.S. Department of Energy, EEC, Brussels, U.N. agencies and as an Environment Consultant to UNDP, World Bank and serving as an advisor to various ministries for the Gov. of India. She was on the Board of directors of Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd and NIUA, MoHUA, GoI. Her more than 250 research and publications include reports, journal papers, 25 books and

monographs in areas ranging in local and global issues of Energy access and Gender, Poverty and Gender Allevation, etc.

8. **Shalu Agrawal**

Senior Programme Lead, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW)

Shalu leads The Council's work on residential energy access, demand-side management and power sector reforms. She uses data to study the changing energy landscape and devise strategies to ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy.

Shalu recently led India's first-ever Residential Energy Survey (IRES) that covered ~15,000 households across 21 Indian states. She closely works with power utilities in India to design and implement strategies to improve operational and financial performance through innovative approaches for billing and collection, smart metering initiatives, tariff and subsidy reforms, and business models to scale energy-efficient appliances. She has played a key role in building The Council's work on sustainable solar irrigation and supports the research on sustainable cooling strategies and subsidies reforms.

9. **Minal Vivek Kabra**

Co-founder, KIVU / Kingdom of Good Food

Minal Vivek Kabra, co-founder of KIVU (Kingdom of Good Food), has a background in Dental Surgery, having completed her Bachelor's degree from Nagpur in 2009. Over the last nine years, she has become deeply involved in solar cooking. In 2019, Minal, along with her co-founder Vaibhav Dugar, launched Kivu with the vision of empowering rural women by creating sustainable livelihood opportunities. The company specializes in baking healthy food using solar energy, a practice that not only supports clean energy solutions but also promotes community development in rural areas.

10. **Dr Tripta Thakur**,

Director General, National Power Training Institute

Tripta Thakur is Director General, National Power Training Institute (NPTI), apex body of Ministry of Power, Government of India. She was earlier Head and Professor, Electrical Engineering Department at the National Institute of Technology, MANIT-Bhopal, India. She is a graduate in Electrical Engineering with Master's degree in Power Electronics from IIT-Kanpur, and has a PhD from IIT-Delhi. She has been recipient of several awards such as Commonwealth Research Scholar at University of Dundee (2005-2008), UK, Commonwealth Academic fellow at Durham University Business School (2014), UK, COFUND Senior researcher at Durham University Business School (2016), Visiting Faculty at Asian Institute of Technology, Bangkok (2010), technical member for International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), SEG4 Group, ISGF (MoP) working group member etc. She has teaching and research experience of 28 years, and has nearly 100 publications to her credit. She has also been a Consultant for evolving a possible Common South Asian Electricity Markets. She has done various consultancies for Distribution companies in India

11. **Ms Ritu Singh**,

Deputy General Manager, EESL

Dr. Ritu Singh, Deputy General Manager in Energy Efficiency Services Limited is a postgraduate in Economics and holds a Doctoral Degree. She started her career as faculty of Economics, ICFAI in 2006 and has also worked with TERI on green growth and sustainable mobility.

She joined EESL in April 2015 as the Regional Manager, Rajasthan where she implemented energy efficiency programmes such as Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA), Streetlight National Programme (SLNP), Building Energy Efficiency Programme (BEEP). She is presently a core member of the Corporate Planning division and is working for the appellate authority and risk management. In addition, she is designated as the Gender Focal Point in the organization and spearheads gender mainstreaming interventions.

12. **Ms Reena Suri**,

Executive Director, India Smart Grid forum

Reena Suri, Executive Director with India Smart Grid Forum (ISGF) since 2013, brings over 20 years of experience in the Energy Sector. Reena has contributed to the various advisory services, whitepapers, research reports, capacity building initiatives and pilot implementation projects of ISGF such as: Implementation Plan for Electrification of Public Transportation; Blockchain for Electric Utilities; Energy Storage Roadmap for India; Smart Grid Roadmap; Development of Roadmap for Implementation of Smart Grid and electric Vehicle Infrastructure in SAARC Region; and World Bank EV Project: EV Ecosystem Support for Kolkata. Reena is the founder-editor of the Smart Grid Bulletin published by ISGF since January. Reena has been leading various initiatives to increase gender diversity in the energy sector. The initiatives lead by her were helpful in enhancing networking and mentoring programs for women; creating awareness of and technology amongst women; and attracting women to technical education and showcasing role models.

13. **Ms Aarthi Kanodia**,

Director, RealFlame / Pearl Print Pack Pvt Ltd

Ms. Aarthi Kanodia studied Business Management and is the only woman manufacturer of cookstoves among 50-60 manufacturers in India. Her experience lies in establishing supply chain and deep distribution networks for stoves in India. At present, the company under her directorship has sold over 3 million cooking stoves across all Indian states, to provide clean, yet affordable cooking solutions to the rural populace.

14. **Mr Animesh Mishra,**

Chief General Manager / Head (Sales & CCPR), Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL)

His Journey at EESL, assuming the mantle of Head of Sales and PR. With a trove of two decades of experience glistening in his repertoire, he had previously graced telecom and manufacturing giants like Airtel, Sleepwell, and Vodafone. At EESL, Animesh's virtuosity shone, orchestrating triumph after triumph in the realm of campaigns. He pioneered the Channel Partner Program, expertly weaving partnerships, expanded the Distribution Network, and painted vibrant portraits of brand presence through Digital Marketing. Animesh's pièce de résistance, however, lay in his fervent commitment to advancing the Digital India program, earning him accolades across numerous platforms, a testament to his dedication in shaping EESL digital destiny.

15. **Mr Soumanil Mukherjee**,

Consultant, Office of Principal Scientific Advisor to the Govt of India

Soumanil has 14+ years of working with Industries and Government Ecosystems in Market Research, Content Writing, Product Marketing, and Business Development. His previous stints were with Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Skill

Development and Livelihood, Membership, Culture & Sports departments, and Government sectors. He has worked extensively in the K-12 and Higher Education segment and managed bulk assessments through sector skill councils for multiple employment-linked skill training schemes by the Govt of India. One of the CSR projects he delivered which were undertaken by CII was for 'Saksham' project of DFCCIL that won "Golden Peacock Award for sustainability" in the year 2016. Over the last few years, he also helped two Start-ups from SaaS Industry and large Ed-Tech companies in different capacities. Soumanil is an MBA from IMT Ghaziabad with specializations in International Business, Brand Management and Strategic Management. Under his current role in the Strategic Alliances Division, he is responsible for facilitating partnerships among State Governments, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and India's research & start-ups innovation ecosystem.

16. **Ms Akanksha Sharma**,

Head of ClimateTech and Digital Utilities, GSMA

Akanksha is the Head of the ClimateTech and Digital Utilities programmes at the GSMA. She specialises in the use of information and communications technology for social good and effective climate action. Akanksha has led key research pieces and investments focussed on tech business models linked to energy, water, sanitation, climate resilience and adaptation as well as climate finance in low- and middle-income countries across Asia and Africa.

An avid reader and a public speaker, Akanksha has been with the GSMA for over a decade. Prior to this, Akanksha worked with a power and utilities research firm in India. A psychology graduate, Akanksha did her Master's in Business Management in India, the country she was born and raised in.

17. **Ms Swetha Ravi Kumar,**

Head of FSR Global, Florence School of Regulation

Swetha is the Executive Director of FSR Global. She is responsible for the development of the research, training and policy dialogue activities of FSR Global, which focuses on strengthening the global south-south and north- south transcontinental knowledge exchange. Some of the key project areas she is currently focused on include; Smart Grid Observatory for India, Resource Adequacy Planning and Modelling for India, Digitalisation of the Power Sector, Regulation for SDG 7; Electric Vehicles – Mobility meets the Power Sector etc.

She is also the Vice President of Communications at both the International and Indian Associations for Energy Economics and chairs 'The Energy Network,' a women's platform for energy professionals. Swetha has previously worked with FMO Dutch Development Bank, Fraunhofer Institute, CII Green Business Centre, ISRO, and others. She holds a Master's in Sustainable Energy Engineering from KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden, and an Advanced Management Program from IIM Bangalore, India.

18. **Chef Divya Bose,**

Senior Lecturer, Institute of Hotel Management, PUSA, New Delhi

Chef Divya Bose is a passionate and dedicated culinary expert with over 17 years of experience in the hospitality and academic sectors. As a professional Chef Trainer (Senior Lecturer) specializing in Bakery and Confectionery at the Institute of Hotel Management, Pusa, New Delhi, she brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to her role. Chef Divya has also served as a Freelance

Food Consultant, specializing in product development and operations consulting. Her mentorship has led students to win prestigious awards, including a Silver Medal at AAHAR 2013 and the International Young Chef's Challenge in China. She began her culinary journey at IHM Pusa, winning numerous competitions, including the Best Plated Dessert award. Known for her pragmatic and analytical approach, she excels at motivating teams and fostering talent to achieve common goals.

19. **Renu Sharma,**

Dharma Life, Lead Deputy Manager- Project and Services

A development professional having a European master's degree in Comparative Local Development Studies, and PG diploma in Rural Management with more than 10 years of professional experience. Cross-functional and cross-sectoral experience of having worked with the government (at State and National level) and Multilateral organisations (UN). Experience of working for Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), a poverty reduction programme of Government of India for improving livelihoods of rural poor. Possess good experience in the areas of women empowerment, health, gender, policy advocacy, social inclusion and development, financial inclusion, capacity building, livelihood development, monitoring, learning and evaluation (MLE). Awardee of Erasmus+ Scholarship, a prestigious, international study programme by the European Union.

20. **Ms Akansha Golchha**,

Lead - Clean Energy Access & Finance, Natural Resources Defence Council (NRDC)

Akanksha leads the energy access vertical at NRDC India focusing on issues related to energy security, climate policy, finance, and green jobs. Akanksha works at the intersection of policy, technology, and finance to scale up the implementation of clean energy solutions in India. In her previous role, Akanksha has designed programmes that facilitated distribution sector reforms and enhanced energy access in India. She is an avid researcher and has published in leading journals and digital magazines. Akanksha is a qualified Chartered Accountant and is trained in public policy at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

21. **Mr Soumitra Chakraborty,**

Chief General Manager (Mktg. Strategy), Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL)

Mr. Soumitra Chakraborty, currently heading Marketing Strategy Func- tion at Marketing Division Head Office of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. This strategic vertical exclusively covers following segments

1) New business opportunities in E-Mobility, Energy storage, Battery Charging/Swapping, clean cooking etc. through strategic alliances.
2) Spearheading Advanced data analytics initiative "I-DEA" for Marketing division to generate insights for data driven business for various functions.
3) Strategy formulation of Marketing Division for strengthening the core business areas. He was also heading LPG-Strategies Function at Marketing Division Head Office of Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. Mr. Chakraborty has over 3 decades of experience in Oil & Gas Industry. He was on deputation with Indian Oil Petronas Pvt Ltd (IPPL) - a Joint Venture company between IOCL and Petronas, Malaysia as General Manager (Marketing and Operations) for 5 years during 2015-20. He holds a degree in Bachelor of Electrical Engineering & also Master of Business Administration in Human Resources.

Annexure 2: Questionnaire for the consultations:

1) What is your vision for gender equity/inclusion of women in the Modern Energy cooking sector in India? How is it different to the current situation?
2) What are the current challenges and barriers to achieving this?
3) Your suggestions, on the initiatives which are required to advance towards the vision?
4) Kindly share examples of any national or global initiatives that you think would be relevant for this initiative
5) Are you currently engaged in gender-based initiatives in the same or other sectors
6) Kindly elaborate on your specific contribution
7) Kindly highlight how you can contribute
    - As a Mentor, for any capacity-building initiatives
    - Planning and strategizing for any such initiatives
    - Access to finance-related initiative
    - Enabling corporate/industry connect
    - other – please describe