

Least Developed countries are disproportionately impacted by lack of energy access. The African LDCs in particular, were not making good progress on SDG 7 before the pandemic and progress is likely slowed by the pandemic. This will impact their progress on other SDGs. Within the LDCs, women have been severely affected by lack of energy access and by the pandemic due to longstanding inequalities. However, women have also been change agents in the energy sector, and pillars of resilience during the pandemic. Energy and gender must therefore be centred as accelerators for progress on the SDGs to ensure “no one is left behind”. This requires creating an enabling environment for addressing the interlinkages in the nexus of energy, gender and the SDGs. Specifically this would mean:

1. **Providing energy for ending poverty** by deploying efficient appliances that reduce women’s time poverty and increase their productive capacity. Instruments could include targeted subsidies, and flexible paying schemes.
2. **For ending hunger**, energy access must target transforming of food systems; Women produce 60% to 80% of the food consumed in LDCs but often lack energy and equipment for irrigation, processing etc and must therefore be a particular target.
3. **Access to energy is essential for effective health care facilities and healthy homes**, and lack of modern energy services has impeded COVID-19 responses in LDCs. Electrification plans must thus prioritise electrification of health facilities. For healthy homes, there is need to integrate clean cooking solutions in Nationally Determined Contributions and national energy plans to address household air pollution from traditional biomass use which is responsible for almost 4 million death each year, mostly women and children.
4. **Decent Work and Economic Growth** are crucial for LDCs to reduce global and in-country inequalities and graduate out of poverty. IRENA estimates that renewable energy, and energy efficiency could add 30 million jobs globally by 2030. Enabling LDCs to fairly benefit from these jobs will require targeted training and skills development, and STEM education especially for women and youth, and creating inclusive workplace policies in the energy sector.
5. **In terms of inequalities**, in several LDCs, access to electricity is higher in male-headed households compared to female-headed households, and higher in rural areas compared to urban areas. Addressing inequalities must be central to recovery and stimulus plans through mandatory targets and increased financial commitments.
6. **Under climate action**, supporting sustainable energy in LDCs can catalyse progress towards global climate targets. Climate finance for the energy sector must be made more accessible to LDCs and more responsive to women’s energy and business needs.
7. Cutting across all SDGs is the **need for peace, justice and strong institutions** to provide the foundations for successful sustainable energy programmes that are just and inclusive. Institutions however can only be strong and fully supportive of the SDGs if they include women in their leadership and decision-making structures and if they are responsive to women’s needs.
8. **Transformational partnerships** will be needed to drive progress on the SDGs with SDG7 and gender at the heart of these efforts. Member states and the international community must come together to increase the investment, funding and innovation that support a just and inclusive energy transition.
9. Finally, as the World is rapidly re-imagining so many new realities in the context of the pandemic and recovery, including visualizing energy access futures, the moment should not be missed to give new impetus to reset and put in place bold actions to transition to sustainable energy access for all and to open opportunities for women’s and men’s empowerment in the transition. 2021 provides a unique opportunity to catalyse such actions through The High-Level Political Forum, the UN Decade on Sustainable Energy for All, the High-level Dialogue on Energy, and COP 26.