

## *UN Women: Equality, Empowerment and Energy*

**From CSW to Rio+20, UN Women is promoting gender equality, women's empowerment and the voices of rural women in the fields of climate change and energy.**

**IN ITS PANEL ON THE EMERGING ISSUE OF GENDER EQUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,** the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) of 2011, highlighted the way that reduced access to resources, including energy, hinders women's full participation in a green economy. It also recognised that women and girls are disproportionately burdened by a lack of access to modern energy sources; and that therefore, significant social and economic benefits can be realised by enhancing women's access to energy such as solar power.

Global initiatives have also been drawing attention to the issue. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Advisory Group on Energy and Climate Change — composed of global business leaders and heads of UN agencies — has called for a major UN initiative to achieve universal access to modern energy services by 2030. Another such example is the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, led by the UN Foundation, which is an initiative to support the large-scale adoption of clean, safe household cooking solutions as a way to save lives, improve livelihoods, empower women, and reduce climate change emissions.

**Since the 55<sup>th</sup> CSW, UN Women has contributed to progress for women in the context of climate change and energy. Some highlights include:**

**Achievements in climate change talks, and the Durban Platform.** UN Women has ensured that gender-sensitive language is adopted in all such arenas, by working with women's constituencies and civil society groups to raise the profile of the issue, and by technically supporting government delegations. Significant gains were recorded in the outcome of the UNFCCC 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties — known as the Durban Platform, and agreed to in Durban in December 2011. This reflects the increased attention being given to gender and climate change, and the growing receptivity of governments to the issue. In particular, gender considerations were integrated into the mission and guidelines for the new Climate Technology

Centre and Network, which will help to ensure that gender is considered in the technology development and transference cycle. Similarly, five provisions of particular significance were built into the Green Climate Fund that will help to ensure that women participate as stakeholders into the fund's strategies and activities; advance gender parity in the Board and Secretariat; and that projects are gender-sensitive, including those related to energy. This is significant in that the Green Climate Fund is expected to be the channel for a large portion of the \$100 billion developed countries have pledged to mobilize annually by 2020 for climate change mitigation and adaptation activities in developing states.

**Increasing energy access in remote areas of Africa.**

UN Women is collaborating with the Barefoot College of India to advance the sustainability of

community-managed and owned solar lightening systems. Currently, 24 women from Liberia, Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda are receiving hands-on training in solar engineering in India. Upon their return, each woman ‘barefoot solar engineer’ will be provided with the necessary equipment, materials and technical support needed for them to fabricate, install and maintain solar lighting systems in their villages, and make them technically and financially self-sufficient. They will each be responsible for setting up solar panels for 60 households, as well as training other women. In the context of this initiative, UN Women will track concrete changes in women’s economic empowerment related to increased energy access and citizens’ wellbeing in participating villages, as well as in the lives of each ‘barefoot solar engineer.’ The results of the findings will help UN Women make a case for greater investments in renewable energy, and for the scaling up and replicating of similar initiatives in other villages and countries.

**Establishing the first-ever SEED Gender Equality Award.** UN Women worked with the SEED Initiative in 2011 to establish this award, and grant it to its winner: the Solid Waste Management and Community Mobilization Program in Nepal. The waste collection and recycling initiative covers over 1,000 households and businesses, and is run by a women’s environment committee and supported by a local municipality. Under the initiative, landfill waste is reduced via recycling, and biogas energy plants are fuelled with organic waste. A savings and credit cooperative has also been established to mobilize loans for 150 female members. The SEED Gender Equality Award was created to support women who advancing gender equality and are leaders in driving sustainable development.

### **Amplifying Women’s Voices in lead-up to Rio+20.**

UN Women will play an active role in promoting gender equality, women’s empowerment and rural women’s voices during the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), June 2012, Brazil. Two highlights include:

***The Women Leaders Forum:*** Hosted by UN-Women in Rio de Janeiro, this forum will be held over two days. It will include an inclusive and multi-stakeholder full-day symposium that, among other things, will highlight the voices and participation of grassroots women. It will be followed by a high-level event gathering women Heads of State and Government at Rio+20 who will raise the visibility of gender equality and women’s empowerment in the context of sustainable development.

***Global Women’s Survey:*** UN Women and the Rockefeller Foundation are supporting the Women’s Major Group to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development by conducting a global survey on sustainable development and Rio+20. The survey will gather the views, perspectives and goals of advocates around the world on the issue of gender equality and women’s empowerment. While emphasis is placed on providing input to the outcome document for Rio+20, additional information from the survey will allow for a fuller view of this issue, from all parts of the world. To complete the survey, go to: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/Rio20\\_Gender](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Rio20_Gender)