This DFID commissioned paper provides some insights to the relationship between gender, energy and poverty. The objective of the paper is to further debate among social and energy experts on how the three elements of gender, energy and poverty affect strategic poverty targets. It is informed by a literature survey, a consultation exercise among gender and energy experts, and the authors experience.

The main premise of this paper is that when we discuss gender, energy and poverty we are constrained by three features.

The role of energy in development is not well understood by generalists. Energy programmes tend to emphasise national power sector reform of modern energy services (electricity). And yet energy underpins all livelihood activities, and can often play a small but critical role in the choice of livelihood strategy and resulting outcomes. Integrated programmes often neglect energy.

It seems that most programmes that have a significant planned energy intervention and a poverty focus have tended to focus on gender neutral actions i.e. the programmes use knowledge of the gender differences to overcome biases in development interventions, in order to ensure that interventions target and benefit both sexes effectively to meet their practical gender needs There are a few programmes which present as driven by gender-specific policies, i.e. use the knowledge of the gender differences to respond to the practical gender needs of women or men; they work within the existing gender division of resources and responsibilities. A few modern energy programmes have explicitly discussed gender strategic interests although these have not necessarily a poverty target. Therefore, there is a need for an analysis of gender strategic interests in energy poverty interventions.

There is a challenge to obtain the complex data required to analyse the impact of interventions on gender strategic interests in this area. The data needs to be embedded in the programme design, and a number of tools are available to ensure that a gender analysis can be undertaken. No single tools seems to cover all the possibilities and while most tools assist in the definition of resources and access to them, programme planners would do well to consider the tools that focus on empowerment (changes to equality) and social relations.

The full report is available to read here The Gender - Energy - Poverty Nexus - Report