

SDG 7

ENSURE ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND MODERN ENERGY

Sustainable Development Goals seen from a feminist approach

The current global energy model has been conceived from a capitalist logic of maximizing monetary profits and relies on the mass extraction of fossil fuels and on nuclear plants.

This model has strong environmental and social impacts that result, among other things, in large gas emissions, in generating radioactive waste generation, and in a significantly unequal access to energy services. Energy is strongly linked to the tasks of care, reproduction, and sustaining life. And it is women who suffer the most from the impacts of the current model.

Does extractivism affect women and their Sexual and Reproductive Rights?

In order for energy to be reliable and sustainable for all people, it must not only be in terms of access, but also in terms of its generation. Catalonia currently has an **energy model** in which 92% of energy consumption comes from fossil fuels and nuclear power. In 2017, 75% of the energy consumed was imported.

Megaprojects that generate and transport energy (hydroelectric plants, platforms for the extraction of hydrocarbon, gas and oil pipelines) have a high **environmental, social, economic and cultural impact** on the communities that suffer from them and especially on the women and girls living in said communities. These effects have traditionally been made **invisible**, but in recent years have become relevant thanks to the leadership of women, who have established themselves as defenders of their territories.

Extractivism has a great impact on gender relations and on women's lives and it violates their **Sexual and Repro-**

ductive Rights. Mega-infrastructures have traditionally been associated with an exponential increase in **sexual violences** against women in these communities such as rape and other sexual assaults, as well as human trafficking for sexual exploitation. Intensive **extractivism** has also meant the militarization of territories, a process involving physical and sexual assault against women.

Extractive industries completely wreck the dynamics of local economies and the social reproduction of life and involve a deep **sexual division of labor**: they masculinize the concept of productivity and marginalize the care economy.

Women's response from an ecofeminist perspective is the defense of the territory-body as well as the **anti-colonial** and anti-patriarchal struggle against extractivism, which is very focused in regions in the Global South such as Latin America. The Global North must deepen its respect for the people's **energy sovereignty** and the policy coherence in the fields of business and Human Rights.

What impact does access to energy have on women?

Energy consumption is deeply linked in both rural and urban areas to the tasks of **care**, support, and reproduction of life. These tasks still mainly fall on women, who spend more time on unpaid domestic work, cook more, clean more, and reduce their paid working hours to care for their sons and daughters*.

On a global scale, 1.1 billion people do not have access to electricity; up to 75% of the population in many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. Under these conditions, close to 3 million people die prematurely each year from illnesses attributable to incomplete combustion of firewood and kerosene, mostly women and children.

* Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió survey on gender issues (Catalonia)



In Catalonia, more than 10% of the population lives in a situation of **energy precariousness**. This affects especially groups of women, such as those who head monomarental families, domestic workers, or elderly women living alone. The connection between women and care tasks especially aggravates the effects that the lack of access to energy has on their mental and physical health.

The role of women in the energy sector

The energy sector is a key factor in current geopolitics and a lucrative market that generates huge economic profits. At the same time, it is a delocalized sector with huge environmental impacts and a deeply **patriarchal** and **capitalist** operating logic that prioritizes the maximization of profit over care and sustainability of life.

Decision-making in the electric power industry is strongly masculinized: in 2016, only 5% of the executive and leadership positions on the boards of directors of the most relevant energy production and supply companies worldwide were held by women (Ernst & Young, 2016). The absence of women on executive boards is paralleled by the absence of women in the academic sector and their minority representation in relevant congresses and debates.

Even so, women are leading both the defense of their territories against the energy model in the Global South,

as well as the fight against energy precariousness and for a socially just **energy transition** in Catalonia.

Is ecofeminism the response?

Women and territories suffer the main effects of the current energy model. Only a new model based on this idea can move towards an affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all; an **energy model** that serves **life**, that respects the biophysical limits of the territory and that:

- Recognizes energy as a fundamental right.
- Prioritizes care and home energy.
- Is guided by a process of overseeing and co-responsibility in care and childhood.
- Starts with a completely democratic and local management, energy sovereignty of communities and territories, and public and/or community ownership and management of distribution networks.
- Moves from a model based on natural and social plundering to a renewable generation oriented to people, rather than to current capitalist overconsumption.
- Ensures women's participation and voice throughout the process, as well as in all energy-related decision-making.

Legislation in Catalonia

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11, 1976.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- European Convention on Human Rights, 1950.
- European Directive 2019/944 on the internal market for electricity.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 2006.
- Law 17/2015, of 21 July, on effective equality between women and men.
- Law 24/2015, of 29 July, on urgent measures to deal with the emergency regarding housing and energy poverty.
- National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, 2019.

Legislation Senegal

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 11, 1976.

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights, 1981.
- Declaration of Political Principles of the Economic Community of West African States, 1991.
- Law No. 2010-11, of 28 May 2010, which establishes absolute parity between men and women.
- Law No. 98-29, of 14 April 1998, on the electricity sector.
- Law No. 2010-21, of 20 December 2010, on renewable energy.

In **Senegal**, 58% of rural households do not have access to energy. Energy precariousness in rural areas has a strong impact on women, who are responsible for and spend hours gathering firewood, who inhale the smoke produced by burning wood in kitchens without ventilation, and who carry out care tasks under poor lighting. Recently, large gas reserves were discovered in Senegal attracting multinational companies from the energy sector. The exploitation of these reserves can have serious effects on fishing in the Saint-Louis region. Women are in charge of the fish processing and marketing, and are economically dependent on these operations.



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