

GIZ India Application for GIZ Gender Competition 2024

Category: GE1 Application

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| Country | GIZ in INDIA |
| Full Name of the program | Indo-German Energy Programme - Access to Energy in Rural Areas (IGEN ACCESS) |
| PN (complete 12 digits) | 17.21661.1-001.00 |
| AV / Program Director | Nidhi Sarin |
| Name of Team Members | Yeswanth Duraiswamy; Yashika Murly |
| Project Reach (states / region) | Across the Eleven States of India |
| Duration of program | 2019-2024 |

1. Rationale of Intervention - Setting the Context

Around 700 million household in India had access to electricity between 2000 and 2018, reflecting strong and effective policy implementation by Government of India (International Energy Agency, 2021). However, providing reliable and consistent quality power remains a challenge, particularly for rural households. In the context of India's international commitments of achieving 50% non-fossil fuel based installed electricity capacity by 2030, it is important to address the challenges within the off grid/Decentralized Renewable Energy (DRE) ecosystem.

Some of the key challenges include absence of a supportive ecosystem, lack of access to finance for enterprise and end-users, and access to a pool of skilled, qualified human resources. Moreover, energy policies often have a significant impact on social equality as society ascribes differential roles to men and women, which influences their relationship with energy access and use. In India, where there is an ever-growing strong presence of women networks, women self-help groups (SHG) and federations provide a solid opportunity to bring a gender perspective into the clean energy sector. This is also an opportunity to ensure that new businesses and markets that rely on clean energy contribute not only to fighting climate change but also to moving towards closing the gender gap within society.

To address the challenges mentioned above, the IGEN Access to energy in rural areas II program has conceptualized, designed, and implemented its gender responsive activities by focusing on rural women. With this application, we aim to highlight the achievements and project impact with focus on different aspects of gender equality.

2. IGEN Access II - Brief introduction

The Indo-German Energy Programme, Access to Energy in Rural Areas (IGEN Access - II), is a bilateral cooperation project carried out by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Indian Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE). IGEN-ACCESS seeks to create a conducive environment for rural renewable energy enterprises to make energy services easily accessible to the rural population especially women, minority groups and trans*persons (Transgenders /The Third Gender)

The program builds upon three strategic pillars (1) private sector development and innovation (2) access to finance, and (3) public support programs and follows a feminist development approach that encompasses gender responsive measures, focusing on rural women.



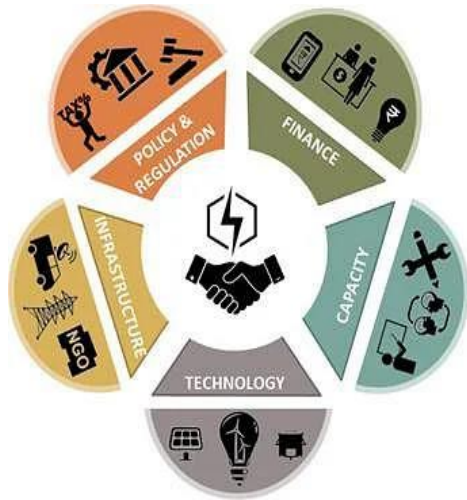


Figure 1: IGEN ACCESS II – Program Focus

The interventions are concentrated around energy in value chain including farm and nonfarm activities, rural electrification, and productive uses of energy in livelihood promotion and enhancement. The initiative aims to impact stakeholders from the public sector, renewable energy enterprises, training institutions, financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and rural households, with the priority of rural women. It is also a knowledge-building program, and one of the key outputs is dedicated to pilot demonstration of projects in specific conditions.

IGEN-ACCESS also creates awareness and confidence in using Distributed Renewable Energy (DRE) technology for productive income-generating activities, primarily to improve the quality of life and enhance value. This involves the empowerment of **women entrepreneurs with digital technology for business skill development.**

3. Results in Field / Specific Impact Achieved

1. **Capacity building** – Capacitation of **5749 women entrepreneurs** across 11 states of India with focus on building business skill for DRE products.
2. **Unlocking Finance** – Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with **eight** formal financial Institutions (Nationalized Banks, Regional Rural Banks) and **three** microfinance Institutions, Non-Banking Financial Institutions (MFIs – NBFCs) to design and lend DRE focused business loans for energy meagre end-users. **Three business model tested and scaled up in new geographies.**
 - a. About **100,000 women end-users** facilitated with loans to access DRE products, including for use in home lighting and enhancing the livelihoods. The average size of the loan is **INR 6,800 (Euro 78)**.
 - b. **1200 women entrepreneurs** facilitated with a business loan from formal financial institutions for the integration of clean energy application/technology in their existing livelihood and for value enhancement, reduce drudgery purpose. The average size of the loan is **INR 68,000 (Euro 764)**.
3. **Digital Technology** – ‘Digital Akshay Urja Training for Women Entrepreneurs’ – Online training helped save resources, mainly time spent on physical travel and to suit the requirements of women attending the training as per their convenience. This addressed the issue of mobility of women, given the patriarchal gender norms prevalent in India.
4. **Policy and Regulation** – **GIZ India** Supported ministry to develop white paper titled “DRE-powered application for Livelihood Promotion and Value enhancement” for sharing with relevant stakeholders. Sensitized and facilitated IGEN Access partner organization to focus more on women end-users, and prioritizing women in accessing loans for DRE products and identifying and capacitating interested women into successful business entrepreneurs.
5. **Infrastructure**–**Developed open-source** knowledge repository for DRE applications/technologies available in multiple languages to reach more customers across different geographies. Easily accessed at <https://ireap.thecleannetwork.org/>



4. Promoting gender equality within the program – Approach undertaken for gender mainstreaming with focus on Right; Resources and Representation

Empowerment of women entrepreneurs engaged in the Renewable Energy Product Business:

The programme works closely with interested village women identified across different geographical locations, providing them with training and capacity to become individual entrepreneurs. These trained women entrepreneurs serve as a vital link between the product suppliers and potential end-users, primarily to raise awareness and encourage the use of clean energy products among potential users. Based on the demand identified at the field level, relevant Decentralised Renewable Energy (DRE) products and suppliers are recognized. The capacity of women entrepreneurs is primarily developed concerning product knowledge, guidance on running a business, creating financial plans, and utilizing communication materials for awareness and business promotion. With the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, physical training underwent restructuring, leading to the introduction of an innovative digital online training program. This program has reached [2,500 women](#) across 11 States in India.

Digital Akshay Urja Training for Women Entrepreneurs: Comprises four components.

- ✓ **Saksham** – Focus on core entrepreneurship aspects and the curriculum is approved by Skill Council for Green Jobs, Government of India. This training is done with the help of smartphones and digital applications such as MS Teams.
- ✓ **Akshay Urja online training** - Focus on DRE products and services, business skills, and communication.
- ✓ **On the Job Training** – Handholding done by field staff in the field within 2 weeks of completion of online training.
- ✓ **Refresher Training** – Opportunity for DLE to share experience, seek clarification and resolution of issues encountered in the field.

Under the Akshay Urja Trainings, over **5749 village-level entrepreneurs across 11 states in India have received training.**

Promoting Gender Responsive Measures by Increasing Access to Clean Renewable Energy Products:

IGEN-ACCESS focuses on women end-users, particularly through partner organizations formed as Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and women's networks. The project places 'Women' at the center and aims to encourage their utilization of DRE-powered applications for productive activities both in farming (such as solar dryers and solar cold storage) and non-farming endeavors (including eateries, sewing machines, blacksmithing, and pottery).

The project emphasizes access to clean energy products at the household level as a catalyst for local economic development and for resource (asset) creation. In addition to illuminating household rooms, Distributed Renewable Energy products are also employed to power livelihood activities, thereby providing flexibility to work at convenience and opportunity to extend the hours of work resulting in increasing income of the women and the household.



125,00 women end users reached.



Three business model developed.



1200 business loan for women entrepreneurs unlocked



53 % noted positive change in standard of living.



Commitment to SDG 5, 7, 13



5749 women entrepreneurs digitally capacitated



Project Impact and Contribution to Sustainability: IGEN ACCESS program aims to unlock finance for DRE applications and technologies to end-users living in rural areas and support rural businesses that directly influence the women household members. The objective of the program directly addresses the United Nation's SDG goal - **7: Affordable and clean energy; Goal 5: Gender Equality and Goal 13 Climate action**. The above is in line with the India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) and the target of providing energy access to all and promoting clean energy.

Gender-sensitive monitoring system - Measuring the standard of living of women entrepreneurs engaged in Renewable Energy Product Business: IGEN ACCESS program has developed a detailed 'Result Based Monitoring' system with a focus on key indicative points that help understand the reach and over the period change of end-users particularly women. Structured gender analysis and assessment based on the baseline and end-line survey was carried out mainly to understand the impact at the household level. To understand the impact, gender disaggregated data was calculated using a five-point scale largely covering the following:

- Participation in family decision making (Children's education, marriage)
- Confidence/skill in managing their own business, and contribution to household income.
- Ownership of personal assets, Confidence to communicate (with internal and external stakeholders) and Leadership in terms of participation in public activities.

About **53 per cent of the women entrepreneurs** surveyed noted a 2-point increase in the scale. Field learnings was shared at international and national events with State government departments mainly to scaleup the initiative across India through State promoted Women Self Help Groups.

5. Sharing Learning at National Forum / Events

On India's 75th Year of Independence, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), Government of India, and GIZ India collaborated to present and share experiences and lessons learned from off-grid solar and Decentralized Renewable Energy (DRE) programs and initiatives across India. On the 25th of August 2021, a session on 'Akshay Urja Trainings' was conducted as part of the event. The session highlighted the contributions towards an "Atma Nirbhar Bharat," (self-sufficient India) wherein rural women were trained in capacity building, promoting DRE products using a digital platform. These women entrepreneurs were invited to share their experiences with officials from various departments and other key stakeholders.

The program has documented [case studies](#), household stories, short videos with focus on women entrepreneurs to ensure that the representation and voices of rural women are made visible, which further is used as communication material for sharing information.

6. Transforming Lives of Rural Women

IGEN ACCESS II is an ideal candidate for this award because the program places rural women of India at its core, considering gender dynamics and social roles in rural India to address inequalities and promote business models that generate economic opportunities for women. This project focuses on empowering women by enhancing their capacity to become reliable green energy entrepreneurs, thereby improving their business skills, decision-making capabilities, financial independence, and confidence to participate in public sphere. While achieving financial autonomy is crucial, it has been observed that rural women have been able to transform their lives. Moreover, many of these women are the primary earners in their families for the first time, and their success has served as an inspiration for other women and girls within the communities. The prize money will aid the program in extending its learnings to other potential states with the assistance of the partner ministry.

File link:

https://gizonline-my.sharepoint.com/:f/r/personal/yeswanth_duraiswamy_giz_de/Documents/Gender%20Award_IGEN%20Access%20II%20Application?csf=1&web=1&e=LTqBcD

