



STORIES OF CHANGE: SPOTLIGHT ON PATRICIA

TRANSFORMING ADVOCACY FOR CLEAN ENERGY THROUGH THE USE OF ROBUST EVIDENCE SYNTHESSES AND EMPHASIZING EQUITY IN POLICYMAKING

Contributors: Sandra Y. Oketch, Henry Neondo, and Violet Murunga

In the world of policy-making, evidence is often the critical link between research and practice. For Patricia, a leader in a regional energy advocacy organization based in Kenya focused on clean cooking, electrification, and decentralized renewable energy systems, the journey of turning evidence into actionable policy change began with a training on evidence-informed and equity in policymaking (EIP). This training, offered in April 2024 by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and the Makerere School of Women and Gender Studies through the Alliance for Evidence and Equity in Policymaking in Africa (AEEPA), not only reshaped her organization's approach to advocacy but also ignited a ripple effect that promises to influence policy decisions, strengthened coalitions, and build more equitable systems.

The EIP training provided a focus on evidence synthesis, policy formulation, and the equity dimensions to be considered in policymaking, and opened Patricia's eyes to the potential that lay within her organization's existing data. ***"We've done advocacy efforts before, developed policy briefs and fact sheets,"*** she explained. The training emphasized the importance of gathering evidence and packaging it effectively for the key stakeholders in decision-making processes. For Patricia and her team, this meant learning how to access, appraise, and synthesize evidence in a way that resonates with policymakers, ensuring their advocacy work could influence strategic decisions at the national and international levels.

The Alliance for Evidence and Equity in Policy-making in Africa (AEEPA) was established by the African Institute for Policy Development (AFIDEP).

AEEPA is one of three Africa LEEPS initiatives who lead technical capacity strengthening and policy engagement activities.

The Alliance aims to accomplish the following objectives:

- Strengthen institutional and individual EIP technical capacity at local and national levels to enhance decision-making in policy and programs with initial priority to reproductive health and clean energy
- Integrate gender equity in EIP processes at program and institutional levels with initial priority given to reproductive health and clean energy
- Nurture EIP networking and learning within countries and across the region
- Stimulate improvements in reproductive health and clean energy programmatic interventions in Kenya and Nigeria

One immediate application of this new approach was in her organization's work with multinational development banks (MDBs), such as The World Bank and the African Development Bank (AfDB). The MDBs develop Country Strategic Papers (CSPs), which outline their financial priorities for each nation. For Patricia, influencing the development of these CSPs was crucial, as they would dictate future investments in energy access projects in countries across Africa. The training equipped her team to consolidate robust evidence that could be used to advocate for changes in these critical documents. By tracking financial flows within the regions, analyzing the impact of energy investments, and synthesizing this data into coherent advocacy messages, Patricia's organization could make a strong case for equity-focused energy policies.

The training also profoundly impacted Patricia's role in national policy discussions. She was co-opted into Kenya's technical working groups for clean cooking and electrification, critical areas in the country's ongoing energy policy review. Here, Patricia applied what she learned about embedding gender considerations into policymaking. Gender equity, she realized, was crucial for clean cooking initiatives because women are often the primary users and managers of household energy in many communities. Incorporating gender equity throughout the policy development and implementation cycle—beyond just the composition of working groups—ensures that women's needs, perspectives, and challenges are adequately addressed. This includes aspects like designing solutions that fit their daily realities and ensuring that budgets account for initiatives that empower and benefit women directly. This insight led to a key recommendation in the ongoing energy policy review: that gender be factored into all resource allocation decisions. While still under consideration, Patricia's input represents a vital step towards a more inclusive energy policy framework.



The ripple effect of Patricia's learning extended beyond her immediate organization. As part of a coalition of civil society organizations (CSOs), Patricia played a key role in capacity-building for regional partner organizations. Her organization is developing a live portal in partnership with another group, a resource that will house both primary and secondary research data. This portal and standardized templates for research protocols will ensure that all coalition members have access to the evidence and tools they need to strengthen their advocacy work. *"The training highlighted the need for a more seamless approach to issues,"* Patricia explained, *"and now we are developing tools that can standardize how we approach evidence and advocacy across our regional partners."*

Although the full impact of the EIP training is still unfolding, its influence is already clear. Patricia and her team are in the planning stages for their next five-year strategy, and the insights gained from the training guide their approach to evidence generation and advocacy. By strengthening their internal research processes, building the capacity of their partners, and applying these lessons in national and international policy discussions, Patricia's organization is positioning itself as a powerful voice in the global push for equitable energy access. The power of the EIP training lies in its ability to transform the way advocacy organizations like Patricia's operate—helping them collate and synthesize evidence and use it strategically, ensuring that their work has a lasting, positive impact on policy and practice. The training was more than a professional development opportunity for Patricia—it was a catalyst for change, opening doors to more effective advocacy, more inclusive policies, and, ultimately, a more equitable world.