

Application Form submitted by the initiatives to participate in the Transformative Cities People`s Choice Award

GENERAL INFORMATION	
Location:	Gaza, West Bank, Palestine
Title of the Transformative Initiative:	“Empowering Women as Sustainable Energy Leaders”
Name of organization:	PENGON-FOE Palestine
Type of organization:	The Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (Friends of Earth Palestine) coordinates joint campaigns and activities between 16 Palestinian environmental organisations.
Website:	http://www.pengon.org/
Category and Edition:	ENERGY. Transformative Cities Award 3er edition (2020).
STORYTELLING	
Summary	
<p>Empowering Women as Sustainable Energy Leaders brings women together to transform the energy system in Palestine. The scheme brings solar energy into women’s hands and empowers women to be active in the clean energy sector decision-making processes.</p> <p>Building the technical capacities, improving lobbying skills, creating virtual body unifies women to influence in policy making and lead the change.</p>	
Context and problem definition	
<p>In Gaza , the beneficiaries more than 800,000 .Through the initiatives we’ve targeted near 20 women CBOs, and 25 Palestinian organizations.</p> <p>PENGON coordinates efforts to resist and highlight Israel’s control over natural resources and violations against the environment in Palestine. This means coordinating a group of 16</p>	

Palestinian environmental NGOs. In recent years this has included lobbying and advocating for clean energy, building the capacity of Palestinian environmental groups and visiting communities affected by energy scarcity.

While implementing these activities, it became understood that there are differentiated impacts of energy scarcity on women, and that women's participation in the renewable energy sector as a whole was not visible nor supported, with women remaining under-represented in decision-making bodies and processes.

This project was set up to support women's participation and leadership in the context of low social acceptance and little State support for women taking on such roles. This project gives the women space to build their skills at community level and organisational level, and to be more active in lobbying and advocacy spaces for influencing gender laws and energy policies.

Whereas much of the capacity and many resources already existed, they were scattered in different projects across the member organizations. PENGON brought them together for this initiative.

Currently, the political situation in Palestine gave the initiatives an added value, the forced annexation decision and its consequences of increasing the Israeli pressure on Palestinians to cut off the supplied energy to Palestinians, that makes investments in clean energy sector more priority to increase the energy indecency.

In 2016 – 2017, PENGON project coordinators were working with communities most affected by energy scarcity and they realised that the most active organisations in these communities were women's organisations (either women-run or mixed but with a significant role for women). Coordinators learned about the differentiated impacts of energy scarcity on women, and as a result of these findings and this growing understanding, PENGON / FoE Palestine realised the importance of a specific focus on women's participation and leadership in the clean energy sector and planned the 2018 project accordingly.

In 2018-2020, therefore, they have chosen to continue to work with these women CSO and CBOs, in this way collectively empowering the women within these organizations and also giving them visibility. PENGON/ FoE Palestine works at institutional level to strengthen women role in their institutions and empower them to be active and influence in their positions.

The project has been funded by the Dutch programme Fair, Green and Global (FGG). The project is carried out by PENGON with assistance and monitoring from Friends of the Earth International.

Design and Implementation

Social acceptance of women in leadership roles in Palestinian society is very low – especially in the Bedouin communities – and subject to resistance from male family members and leaders. This could act as an obstacle to the carrying out of activities. To address this, women-only capacity building spaces have been organised, where women feel able to participate freely and to interact with each other. Also, the project organisers are also organising workshops with the communities to discuss the importance of women’s participation, with the aim of strengthening social acceptance for this role and of discussing the kinds of actions that are supportive of this role.

Furthermore, women’s organisations and women are participating from the very beginning of activities – for example, in initial workshops for the ‘Resource Guide’ and ‘Legal Review’, in interviews for the factsheet, in interviews for the video – and therefore women’s experiences, analyses, needs, demands and ideas will input strongly into the processes and discussions that will determine the content of the communications products and the recommendations that will be presented.

Social and legal change takes time in all societies, and the short project period represents a significant challenge to achieving its gender justice objectives.

Currently, all Palestinian cities were under lockdown since March 2020, this resulted in delaying in solar energy projects implementation, which we started working on them directly after the government open the cities with some protection measures.

Results achieved and Evaluation

The “Empowering Women as Sustainable Energy Leaders” is very ambitious in its overall objective of empowering women to be active in the clean energy sector decision making processes. The project aims to build on the capacity and learnings from previous energy scarcity projects in the region and to further support women’s participation and leadership. From a gender justice perspective, the evolution of clean energy projects in the region, from a service-providing initiative to one which places women’s participation and protagonism at the center, is one key result.

The project has given visibility to women's CSO and CBOs working on energy scarcity, which have become an institutional reference from a gender justice perspective for other environmental organisations.

Given the collective input of women, the recommendations put forward in the activity outputs are potentially transformative in nature, because the process of developing them recognises and gives strength to women's agency, and the recommendations themselves support and give visibility to women's demands and their knowledge and ideas for solutions and alternatives. The ideas and content of these recommendations are built into the key political messages and demands for PENGON's mobilization and advocacy strategies, and communications materials open up dialogue with society.

Network of women CBOs were created and enacted to raise the women needs and demands, this network is linked to the decision makers and business incubators to motivate working in this sector. Furthermore, the targeted women CBOs presented clean energy initiatives, mainly these initiatives aim to empower women economically depending on clean energy source, or solving environmental problems depending on clean energy source.

Currently, depending on electronic communications in different activities was a response on the spread of COVID-19, that makes more bodies get involved and we could reach deferent community levels, with diverse input.

Political Strategies

Capacity-building advocacy workshops were carried out with all project stakeholders - communities, women's organisations, and environmental organisations / PENGON members. From these workshops a Resource Guide was developed, to act as a reference document for energy practitioners and professionals, with the objective of supporting them to mainstream gender in their programmes, policies and projects, throughout the project cycle, and includes information on gender responsive budgeting and gender planning and tools in the energy sector.

PENGON also organised workshops and community meetings and interviews that focused on energy demands, ways to decrease the impact of energy scarcity on women and how to increase energy accessibility for women. From this, a Clean Energy Factsheet has been produced, focusing on the gender-based dimensions of energy scarcity and clean energy such as the impacts of energy scarcity on women, women's role in saving energy, the gender perspective in energy planning, etc. Based on the information given in the interviews, the factsheet also includes recommendations for the government that are expected to include financing for women in their communities to support their role as clean energy leaders.

In addition, PENGON hired a consultant to carry out a legal re- view of energy laws, regulations and policies from a gender perspective, and make recommendations for the Palestinian authorities on how to guarantee this perspective. This has been used as a lobby tool with the government.

PENGON has also mobilized women's groups to take part in Friends of the Earth International's Global Week of Action for Climate Justice, in cooperation with the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Slogans and political messages were inspired by the demands of the materials produced during the project. The action included a lobbying activity, with prioritization of women's participation.

In 2020, PENGON focused on the most marginalized people mainly women in Gaza, who suffers from energy scarcity due to Israeli siege and Palestinian division, so we tried to influence in the national clean energy laws, as the Palestinian division is a limit for influencing the laws in Gaza. So, we have targeted the political parties to push the energy file to be included in the Palestinian negotiations.

Communication and Cultural Strategies

Since the beginning of the project in 2018, different activities were promoted at local level using different media tools. National events were organized in order to widen the network and linking women with decision makers, private sector, and donors the best 5 women clean energy initiatives promoted in different ways, a special booklet was published to promote these initiatives. Tv interviews were made in order to disseminate the impact of the activities, in addition to media articles that highlight women initiatives.

PENGON is working on a film that will reflect the impact of this project for 3 years on women mainly how it empowers them and strengthen their participation in decision making process, how they are aware more about gender mainstreaming in policies, programs and how this project developed their lobbying skills. This film will be ready in Aug. 2020.

Resources, Financing and Transformative Economy

Through our initiatives, the electricity bills reached to zero cost by depending on clean energy source, through our projects we have targeted poor people with low income so these projects support these families indirectly. In addition to that in Gaza , there is a huge problem in energy access so by implementing our initiatives, gives hundreds of families and institutions energy access.

Main part of the initiatives is capacity building for the targeted communities. Technical capacity building was organized , how to operate their projects and maintain them.

So we give them the power and train them to operate the power. Other part is capacity building in lobbying and influencing in the national polices, we have focused on women to raise their voices and be able to raise their needs, by influencing in the national polices, a national network was built , this network included, WCBOs, ENGOs, private sector, and related governmental bodies in addition to interested donors.

Related legislations

Many of the activities have been designed in such a way that they include participation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Energy and Natural resources. Governmental ministries are considered to be a key stakeholder of this project, and through workshops and lobbying efforts trust and understanding has been built. As a result of the lobbying work, in 2020 Ministry of women affairs took an active part in building the capacity of the gender unit in the Energy Authority to be active and influence in the planning and national clean energy strategy to be sensitive to women needs. There are successes in modifying the bylaws in the clean energy law, motivations and some criteria were considered to mainstream gender in the strategic planning. Some changes, ministries will take forward the policy or law changes recommended in the Legal Review.

Ecological Transitions

Briefly describe how your initiative takes part in the broader transitions to reduce inequalities, ensures democratic control over natural resources, takes exploitation of workers and nature into account, and changes the way we can manage our public services and common goods.

How does your initiative include environmental questions during the design and implementation? How is your initiative fostering harmony between society and nature?

PENGON and its members brought people powered electricity to more than 270 households in Gaza Strip. These communities are suffering from energy scarcity in addition to that the source of energy came from Israel which depends on burning coal. by this initiative a clean energy source was created and promoted. PENGON is also moving towards changing legislatives to save the environment by increasing Palestinian dependence on clean energy source, and emphasize the gender dynamics in this field by focusing on the role of women in environmental sustainability and clean energy.

Lessons learned

1. Energy scarcity impacts on women in different ways to men, yet women are very rarely consulted on energy solutions
2. Tackling this inequity should not be understood as simply promoting improvements to women's lives within their traditional roles, but by also challenging the patriarchal structure of society
3. Societal change takes time, and the whole community must be involved in order to accelerate the acceptance of women in decision-making processes

In 2018, PENGON took part in 2 "Women and Energy" webinars organized jointly with Friends of the Earth International, which were open to the FoE Federation and allied organizations from all over the world. These webinars functioned as an information and skills-share, where campaigners learned from one another about the impacts of climate and energy injustice on women, and shared strategies to address these issues.

Furthermore, in 2019, PENGON has produced a film with FoEI and Real World Radio showcasing the initiative, so that learnings have been shared with a wider international audience.

Conclusion

This initiative was a creative solution for energy scarcity, giving the power to the most marginalized group, Palestinian women has become leaders towards the change for sustainable energy raising the power vertically from down to up.

EXTRA INFO

Supporting documents

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp-v_SJSw8l&t=12s

<http://web.pengon.org/map/map.html>

Covid-19 outbreak impact

This (optional) section has been added to take into account the rapid and significant changes experienced in much of the world since the Covid-19 outbreak. Briefly describe any impacts the Covid-19 crisis has had on your initiative and your most important responses. What new possibilities and dangers does the crisis have for your work going forward?

All Palestinian cities were under lockdown since 3 months, this resulted delaying in solar energy projects implementation, which we start working on them directly after the government open the cities with some protection measures,

- the spread of corona virus makes the progress of lobbying work moves slowly, and we return work hardly since the first of June.
- what is positive is depending on electronic communications in different activities that makes more bodies to be included and we could reach deferent community levels, even the students in the universities, this gave us a new input which was positive in making integrity between different parts. and encourages youth to present new initiatives in this sector.