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**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND**

**SOUTHERN AFRICA**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE (TORs) for the development of THE COMESA MODEL POLICY ON GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ENERGY ACCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**Accelerating Sustainable & Clean Energy Access Transformation Program using the Multiphase Programmatic Approach (ASCENT MPA)**

**P180547**

**2025**

1. **Overview of ASCENT**

The Accelerating Sustainable & Clean Energy Access Transformation Program (ASCENT) objective is to increase access to sustainable energy services in East and Southern Africa. Today, 365 million people are without electricity access in the region and 558 million people without clean cooking access. Eastern and Southern Africa accounts for more than half of the world’s unelectrified population (675 million) and nearly a quarter of the global population without access to clean cooking (2.4 billion). Accelerating energy access progress in the region is essential not only to help unlock its potential and deliver on its development goals, but also to help the world achieve SDG7 (and other SDG goals) and address global challenges including climate change, resilience, and fragility.

 ASCENT is expected to provide life-transforming opportunities for 100 million people across 20 countries in Eastern and Southern Africa, placing the region on the path to universal energy access. It will align the comparative advantage of all parts of the World Bank (IDA, IFC, MIGA) and build on the proposed IDA funding envelope of $5 billion to leverage an additional $10 billion from public and private financing through strategic partnerships. ASCENT’s programmatic approachwill allow the World Bank to dedicate significant resources over a longer time horizon (seven years) and to provide a platform across both national and regional levels that will offer opportunities for collaboration with development partners and a focus on unlocking private capital.

While East and Southern Africa experiences a lack of access to reliable electricity services, this deficit is more pronounced in rural areas. The effects of the region’s energy challenges affect disproportionately the lives of men and women. In areas where wood is the primary alternative fuel, women are seen to suffer more as a result of energy poverty. In the rural and peri-urban areas, women, who are mainly responsible for procuring and using cooking fuels, experience more directly the negative effects of the lack of access to clean and modern forms of energy. Exposure to respiratory diseases as a result of indoor air pollution from cooking with traditional biomass, safety issues encountered while gathering fuelwood and less time available for productive ventures are some of the challenges faced by a larger number of women in the COMESA region.

1. **BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

The AFE region’s steady progress of past decades in ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity on a livable planet has been upended by a series of global shocks. The region’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has been disrupted by food shortages, soaring energy prices, and global and regional macroeconomic turbulence. Impacts have been exacerbated by adverse climate events hammering the region, including the worst drought in the last four decades and the longest-lasting tropical cyclone ever recorded in the Southern Hemisphere. Lack of energy access hinders the AFE region’s economic recovery, resilience, and faster progress toward poverty reduction. Only 48 percent of the overall AFE population, and just 26 percent in rural areas, has access to electricity.

Lack of access is constraining inclusion, social resilience and perpetuating gender inequalities. With electricity access deficit concentrated in the two bottom income quintiles, lack of energy access is threatening to exacerbate inequalities and undermine resilience for the most vulnerable populations, including women. Women in the energy sector play a significant role as users, entrepreneurs, employers, employees, and decision makers; however, they face discrimination and other barriers that limit their potential contributions to the energy sector. At the household level, women in the AFE Africa region are the primary users and producers of energy, but the sources of energy for most rural households are more likely to be unclean biomass and fossil fuels. Traditionally, women in Africa are more likely to be assigned the role of searching for cooking fuels and water, resulting in working longer hours to complete household chores and caregiver roles, which, in turn, inhibits women from pursuing economic empowerment activities. Furthermore, women are underrepresented in the energy sector as entrepreneurs and energy service providers, as well as in employment, especially those requiring science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) backgrounds.

Despite these negative impacts on women, efforts towards expanding energy access are rather male dominated, in the decision making and technical arena. Women, who are largely affected by the energy crises, are rarely involved in the development and implementation process of strategies applied to end energy poverty. It is worth noting that for energy interventions to be effective it must be tailored to the needs of the beneficiaries. Thus, when women, a large part of the society, are not actively engaged throughout the process the interventions can rarely produce effective results2.

COMESA recognizes the critical role of gender mainstreaming in achieving inclusive and sustainable development. Energy access remains a key enabler for economic growth, social well-being, and environmental sustainability, yet women and marginalized groups in the region face significant barriers in accessing energy resources. Particularly, SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) rely on integrated approaches. Trend analysis ensures alignment with global and regional frameworks, such as the African Union's Agenda 2063, and global agenda for sustainable development.

To address these challenges, COMESA aims to develop a Model Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access, accompanied by an actionable Implementation Plan, to guide member states in ensuring gender equality in energy systems and policy frameworks. The goal of the COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access is to address existing barriers including limited capacity on gender integration in energy that may hinder the equal participation of women and men in expanding energy access in the AFE region.

These terms of reference are focused on the development of a COMESA Model Policy on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access.

1. **OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSIGNMENT**

To develop a regional COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access and an implementation strategy that will support the regional goal of universal access to modern energy services.

1. **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**
2. To review and analyse the current state of affairs or existing conditions vis-à-vis gender mainstreaming in energy access in the COMESA Region. Areas of interest include access at household, enterprise, and institutional levels. National policies to close access gender gaps also need to be reviewed. The review should also include underlying constraints of the gender gaps in those areas instead of the overview only. Policy recommendations would be more effective if underlying constraints are addressed. This should result in a good overview of the main barriers and gaps to gender mainstreaming in energy access, of the gaps in gender and energy expertise within the implementing institutions, and of the opportunities available.
3. To develop a policy on gender mainstreaming in energy access for the COMESA region, which will include measures to overcome the barriers and gaps that will be identified in the Situation Analysis phase of this assignment. The policy will be concise, have clear objectives and strategic areas of intervention, which will be used as an overall framework and will be implemented by the COMESA Division Gender, the Member States and other actors.
4. To develop a comprehensive implementation plan that will put into practice the model policy on gender mainstreaming in energy access. The implementation plan will include the main activities under the policy’s strategic areas of intervention, the implementing actors, the time schedule, key indicators against which progress can be measured, and a budget.
5. Validation of the Model Policy and Implementation Strategy by the COMESA energy and gender experts and their adoption by the Energy Ministers.
6. **SCOPE OF WORK**
   1. **Activity 1: Inception report**

The consultant(s) will have a debriefing meeting with the COMESA ASCENT PIU and the Division of Gender to discuss the assignment in detail and achieve a common understanding of the work ahead and the deliverables required.

The consultant(s) shall then proceed to develop an Inception Report within 2 weeks, which will describe the clear and detailed concept, trend analysis, analytical framework, methodology, and execution plan for undertaking this assignment. The report will also include a list of documents, data and information needed to analyse the status of gender mainstreaming in energy access in the AFE region, as well as a list of key stakeholders to be consulted and/or interviewed, and the sample countries to be selected for a scoping mission. THE ASCENT PIU and the COMESA Division Gender shall provide comments on the report. The Final Inception Report shall be the guidebook for the assignment onwards after approval by ASCENT PIU and the COMESA Division of Gender.

* 1. **Activity 2: Situation Analysis**

Following the methodological framework laid down in the Inception Report, the Situation Analysis is to give an overview of the current state of affairs within the AFE region on gender mainstreaming in energy access. It will look at the gaps and barriers that exist to achieving equal access to energy services and technologies (which include both renewable and non-renewable energy including clean cooking technologies) by men and women, assess the current expertise levels within the implementing institutions and ministries to implement a gender and energy access policy and action plan, and look at past and existing interventions of mainstreaming gender into energy access policies and actions. More specifically the situation analysis should include:

1. Assessment of existing gender expertise and competence gaps, and identify required capacity building/development with the implementing institutions and national ministries
2. Assessment of currently ongoing gender mainstreaming efforts and their results within COMESA and its member countries, as well as key lessons learnt from past efforts.
3. Identify barriers that female energy entrepreneurs as users and producers face, and their needs to become fully competitive in their work
4. Identify the barriers to access for male and female headed households
5. Identify cultural and social barriers for equal participation of men and women in the energy sector as employees and how societal norms and roles restrict women’s participation in the energy sector.
6. Identify gaps in national policies, budgets, and practices in achieving equal access to modern energy services and technologies by men and women.
7. Identify existing gaps within countries in the region of equal access by men and women to key resources, including finances, land, technology and national Ids. and how this links to energy access.
8. Assessment of trend analysis both qualitative and qualitative data analysis on the status of women and men in the energy workforce, as well as of gender-disaggregated data to inform energy policy-making.
9. Present recommendations for the way forward.
   1. **Activity 3: Policy Development**

Based on the Situation Analysis, develop a practical and concise COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access. The policy should be aligned with international frameworks like SDGs, AU Agenda 2063 and regional goals for gender equality and energy access. The policy will serve as the overall framework for implementation at the regional level by the COMESA Division of Gender and at the national level by the energy ministries. ASCENT PIU will have a supportive role, providing assistance to the implementing parties and making sure that the COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access is aligned to the overall objectives of the regional Model Energy Policy. The final policy document will be validated at the COMESA energy experts workshop. Thus, under this activity, the consultant(s) shall:

1. Develop a concise policy that is in line with the outcomes of the Situation Analysis and hence proposes objectives and measures to address the main gaps and barriers to gender mainstreaming in energy access that were identified in clearly identified strategic areas of intervention.
2. Develop the institutional framework under which the policy will be placed, with a clear definition of roles and responsibilities between the various parties involved.
3. Manage the policy validation process in close consultation with the COMESA Division of Gender and the ASCENT PIU. The validation process will consist of several rounds of comments:
4. A consultative workshop presentation of the first draft policy to the project stakeholders for comments;
5. Developing a second draft policy based on the comments received from the consultative workshop stakeholders.
6. Validation workshop presentation of the final draft policy for final comments and questions by the same stakeholders as the consultative workshop.
7. Developing the final policy based on the comments received from the validation workshop stakeholders
8. Presentation of the Policy Framework to the Technical and Ministerial Committee for the adoption of the Policy Framework
   1. **Activity 4: Develop the Implementation Strategy**

Also based on the Situation Analysis and in line with the COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access, develop a practical Implementation Plan that puts the policy into practice. The Implementation Strategy will serve as the guidebook for actions to be taken to achieve the policy goals and objectives. The COMESA Division of Gender will lead the management and monitoring of the implementation Strategy, with support from ASCENT PIU. Thus, under this activity, the consultant(s) shall:

1. Develop a concise, clear and practical implementation plan, to emphasize the importance of actionable strategies to achieve inclusive energy solutions which is in line with the policy document and the strategic areas of intervention identified. The Implementation Strategy will for each of the areas of intervention list their objectives, the actions to be taken, the responsible actors, and the timeframe and deadline. Set a baseline and develop key indicators for each of the strategic areas of intervention to be able to monitor progress.
2. Provide an estimated break-down budget for the actions to be taken under the Implementation Strategy.
3. The Implementation Strategy will be developed alongside the policy document and will be part of the same validation process as the policy document. Both documents are to be validated by COMESA technical experts and adopted at the COMESA Energy Ministers.
4. **DELIVERABLES**

The consultant is expected to deliver the following:

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|  | **Deliverable** | **Timeline** |
| 1 | Inception Report | End - May 2025 |
| 2 | Draft Situational Analysis | End -July 2025 |
| 3 | Final Situational Analysis | End -August 2025 |
| 4 | Draft COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access | Mid - October 2025 |
| 5 | Final COMESA Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access | Mid December 2025 |
| 6 | Draft Implementation Strategy | Mid-October |
| 7 | Final Implementation Strategy | Mid - December 2025 |

1. **TIMELINE OF ASSIGNMENT**

The assignment is expected to take about 200 days, starting in May 2024. The consultant would propose an appropriate project implementation plan for effectively completing this assignment.

1. **QUALIFICATIONS OF THE CONSULTANT (FIRM)**
2. The consultant should provide a Team Leader, a Gender Expert and an Energy Access Expert, each with
3. Team Leader – 5 years in Managing Teams, experience working on gender/energy issues, with minimum educational qualifications of master’s degree in management, Business, Economics, Energy, Engineering
4. Gender Expert – minimum 5 years working experience in gender issues and academic qualifications of master’s degree in Gender, Economics, Development Studies or related.
5. Energy Access Expert – minimum 5 years working experience on energy access issues and academic qualifications of master’s degree in engineering, Energy, Economics or related relevant qualifications.
6. The consultant should be able to demonstrate the following qualifications/qualities:
7. Significant and demonstrable previous consultancy in a related field(s), with a minimum of five years experience expected.
8. Demonstrable knowledge and experience of the gender-energy nexus,with demonstration of actual assignments undertaken on the subject;
9. Demonstrable experience in conducting primary research;
10. A presence/network in key off-grid markets in Africa would be preferable;
11. Excellent written and verbal communication in English.