

## **A PROCEEDINGS REPORT OF A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION TO DETERMINE EFFECTIVE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY AWARENESS OF & INTEREST IN ALTERNATIVE CLEAN ENERGY**



The FGD participants in addition to AFIEGO and Busara Center staff after the FGD.

**AUGUST 24, 2017**  
**HOIMA DISTRICT**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

On Thursday August 24, 2017, Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO) and Busara Center for Behavioral Economics conducted a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with eight participants from Buhimba and Kizirafumbi sub-counties in Hoima district.

The purpose of the FGD was to test assumptions made for a Theory of Change (ToC) developed by AFIEGO and Busara Center whose overall goal is, “All relevant government officials and oil companies are on-board to transition from oil to clean energy by 2020.”

The assumptions that were tested during the FGD included: i) Stakeholders have access to avenues for communicating grievances to decision makers e.g. the government and; (ii) The public has an interest in consuming alternative/clean energy options will be tested.

The FGD was conducted with the view of equipping AFIEGO staff with practical FGD facilitation and data collection skills. It was also part of activities meant to improve the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) capacity of AFIEGO staff through knowledge acquisition on the concept of ToC as an M&E tool.

The following are the proceedings and findings of the research.

## 2. PROCEEDINGS

### 2.1. Opening

The FGD was started off with a word of prayer. AFIEGO’s Senior Communications Officer, Ms. Diana Nabiruma, then introduced what the FGD was about. She told the participants that the discussion was targeted at enabling AFIEGO acquire data on the energy sources used by households in Uganda.

Ms. Nabiruma further told the participants that the other purpose of the FGD was to collect data on the communication channels used by community members. She told the participants that the information acquired from the exercise would help AFIEGO improve her work and programmes.



Ms. Nabiruma (R) and Ms. Atusinguza (C)

Ms. Nabiruma noted that participation in the exercise was voluntary and should any of the participants wish to withdraw from participating in the research, they were free to do so at any time, even during the exercise.

### 2.2. The FGD

Ms. Sandra Atusinguza, AFIEGO’s field officer, took over from Ms. Nabiruma and after restating the purpose of the research and noting that it was voluntary and answers would be kept confidential, she asked the questions in the FGD guide. The guide is attached at the end of this report.

The sections below highlight the responses from participants. However, key insights from the FGD are noted first.

### Key insights from the FGD include the following:

#### Knowledge of and interest in consuming clean energy

- (i) Participants were highly aware of the social and economic benefits access to clean energy would grant them. Women showed more awareness than men with seven out of the nine responses coming from them;
- (ii) Awareness of clean energy was however limited to hydro power and solar;

- (iii) Males/men were more likely to use solar or more expensive energy than women;
- (iv) Females/women were more likely to cite poverty as a hindrance to accessing clean energy perhaps explaining why men were more likely to use solar.

**Access to effective communication channels**

- (i) Mobile phones are the most accessed method of communication.
- (ii) Interpersonal or group communication such as meetings were recommended because they prevent distortion of the message and allow feedback.
- (iii) Using a trustworthy and authoritative source say a community leader (L.C.1) to deliver a message improves a message's effectiveness.
- (iv) Existing networks say youth groups are utilised by community members to mobilise communities and AFIEGO can harness them.
- (v) Petitioning is an effective method of lobbying and AFIEGO should continue utilising it.
- (vi) While chairpersons are a key tool for mobilisation and communication, they sometimes deter the same necessitating more engagement with them to improve information sharing especially as regards government programmes.
- (vii) There is sometimes poor involvement of leaders in government programmes necessitating more efforts to increase leaders' and citizen participation in decision-making processes especially in the oil sector.
- (viii) Knowledge is transmitted through cultures, schools, radio talkshows, trainings and AFIEGO should continue harnessing these channels to transmit information.
- (ix) Cultural barriers with husbands refusing wives to attend meetings hinders women from receiving information, participating in public life and in decision-making processes say those on compensation in compulsory land acquisitions.

**Based on the above, the following are recommended:**

- (i) There is need to increase efforts to improve awareness on clean energy.
- (ii) Programmes targeted at improving women's access to resources and clean energy should be designed and implemented.
- (iii) Cultural norms deterring women from participating in public life and decision-making should be addressed.
- (iv) More efforts to improve information access and public participation in oil sector projects by leaders and communities should be pursued.

- (v) More engagements with local council leaders to improve information sharing especially as regards government programmes should also be pursued.

AFIEGO should pursue the above through her projects (both existing and new). AFIEGO should also harness the channels of communication that have been shown to be effective.

Below is more on the research.

## 2.2. ACCESS TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

### 2.2.1. Communication channels

The following channels of communication were identified as being available to participants during the FGD:

- Mobile phones
- Interpersonal/face-to-face communication
- Meetings
- Radio
- Posters
- Publications

#### Challenges to communication

**Resource constraints:** No airtime; No money for transport to meet with message recipient or source; Lack of access to communication channels e.g phones, radios

**Technological constraints:** Poor network; Phones being off

**Infrastructural & supply barriers:** Poor access roads especially during the rainy season; Long distances between message source and recipient; Airtime stock-outs and shops are located far away

**Cultural barriers:** Language barrier; Cultural norms with some men refusing their wives to attend meetings or to deliver messages

#### Other challenges to communication identified during the FGD included:

- Failure to identify a channel that is accessed by all community members;
- Failure by recipients to provide feedback;
- Illiteracy making use of publications difficult;
- Tearing of posters placed in community or town centres;
- High expectations say of a soda at the end of the meeting;
- Late coming to meetings;
- Intimidation by those in authority or local leaders hindering discussion by community members through failing to provide requisite information say that from government or through dissolving meetings.

On cultural norms hindering communication, one participant noted the following:

Another challenge is that you might want to meet all people in the village, when you go and say you want all the people to be there, you will find some tribes that will **say my wife is not going there. As long as I go, that will be it.** He goes but the message that the wife would have picked will not be given to her, he will stay quiet about it.

On local leaders hindering discussion by community members, one participant noted:

Some local leaders, when you tell them you have information that you need to pass, he will want you to give him the information so that he passes it by himself because he expects to get something for

mobilising the people. If it is not available, then he talks bad about your message to the people, because he expected something.

The participant further noted:

We also have issues with the chairpersons. You call people and they gather but the chairperson comes and dissolves the meeting because maybe the issue you are going to talk about concerns him or he finds that it might not go well for him so he stops the meeting.

An illustration highlighting some of the challenges to communication is shown below.

**RESOURCES**  
No airtime  
No money for transport  
Lack of access to channels  
Poor network

**HELLO**  
Language barrier  
Cultural norms with some men refusing their wives to attend meetings or to deliver messages

**ABUSE OF POWER**  
Intimidation by those in authority  
Local leaders hindering discussion

### 2.2.2. COMMUNITY CHALLENGES AND HOW THEY ARE ADDRESSED

Participants identified the following as the challenges they face in communicating to their leaders:

- Leaders staying too far away from community members;
- Delays in receiving feedback from leaders;
- Intimidation by those in authority.

One participant noted the following on intimidation by those in authority:

For example, if the parish chief is the leader, if they ask people something to do with service delivery, he will say that is not a big issue to be discussed. So people are discouraged and they keep quiet. Or if it is nurses and they have talked about an issue related to the hospital and how they are not working well, they tell you to go and do it if you think they can't, and yet it is their job. So people decide not to talk about it ....

### 2.2.3. WHO ADDRESSES CHALLENGES

The following were identified as ways in which challenges are addressed:

- At household level through talking to family members and neighbours;
- Through talking to the L.C. 1 chairpersons;
- Mobilising community members for meetings to address challenges through trusted community members;
- Mobilising community members for activities say cleaning of a well through leaders such as L.C. 1 chairpersons;
- Communicating through a trusted source at meetings especially when community members will not listen to you.

Overall, local council chairpersons emerged as key in successful mobilisation and communication.

One participant noted the following about local council chairpersons: “Here in our communities, our leaders, we believe so much in them. If there is anything, for them they know.”

#### 2.2.4. HOW COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE MOBILISED

Community members are mobilised through sending messages through churches, using posters, calling a community member who mobilises others and through funeral gatherings. They are also mobilised through sending messages to parents through school children and through using leaders of groups such as youth groups.

Below is a breakdown of how community members are mobilised.



#### 2.2.5. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The most effective channel of communication was identified as the mobile phone. It was noted that in villages, calling could be cheap because discounts offered by telecoms under products such as MTNZone, Airtel Zone etc make calling less expensive. One respondent noted:

The percentage here in the villages is quite good. For [Shs] 200, you can talk to like five people. So you find that a phone is the most effective on my side.

Another respondent noted that mobile phones help in the building of relationships and creation of trust, enabling effective communication.

The goodness of the phone is that, when you call someone, they will hear something straight from you. They will trust you and put some effort saying they can't disappoint you because they talked to you. It's better than a message through the radio or the church. If they hear something from you, they respect it.

Mobile phones were also cited as an effective channel of communication because they allowed for feedback. Yet another respondent said:

I also prefer phones because when someone doesn't understand something, they ask you and you answer them. But if you put an announcement on the radio, they can't ask the radio. When you send a friend to deliver the message, the message may be altered. But if it's via a phone they will have heard something from you and they can ask you and get answers.

The following communication channels were noted to be effective for the following reasons:

- Village groups because they enable a message to reach many people;
- Churches because a message reaches many people;
- Posters because if one or two people read them, they convey the message to others;
- Direct communication because they enable one to deliver a message to people without mobile phones;
- Delivering a message through the L.C. 1 chairperson was also identified as being effective because he/she has authority;
- Community networks were also identified as being effective because they enable one to deliver a message through a trusted source;
- Petitioning.

### **2.2.6. INEFFECTIVE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION & WHY**

The following were noted as being ineffective channels of communication for the following reasons:

- Posters because most community members are illiterate;
- Letters because they may delay to be delivered;
- Sending a message through a another party is subject to distortion/messengers distorting messages;
- Chairpersons are unwilling to share some information.

One participant said of the chairperson:

I had heard some rumors and apparently they had reached the chairperson. So I took responsibility and went to the chairperson to explain to me. When I reached him, he asked me who I think I am and why I expect to know everything. Many of the chairpersons had been given some information to give to their people. So someone had told me that they had given the chairperson information to give us the people but they haven't called for a meeting to tell us? I came to the chairperson after three weeks and he asked me if I think I should be knowing everything, those are our issues as the government, not yours to know. He totally refused to give me the message so that did not work for me as a person. I know to prefer to ask other people but not that L.C.

### **2.2.7. HOW KNOWLEDGE OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS WAS ACQUIRED**

Knowledge on communication channels was acquired through the following:

- School;
- Nature because some things you just know how to do;
- Radio talkshows;
- Community networks which enable learning;
- Cultural practices with modes of communication being passed down through generations;
- Training by NGOs;
- Through experience of others who carried out successful communication.

## 2.2.8. RESOURCES & SKILLS NEEDED TO ACCESS & USE CHANNELS OF COMMUNICATION

Resources needed to access communication channels included money. Skills needed to use communication channels included training and sensitization by CSOs. The following illustration shows the resources needed to access various channels of communication including mobile phones among others.



## 2.2.9. DIFFICULTIES IN USING COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

The following were identified as difficulties in using communication channels:

- Lack of airtime;
- Lack of electricity to charge the phone;
- Poor network;
- Intimidation of by leaders;
- Cultural barriers such as husbands not wanting their wives to leave home to deliver messages.

## 2.3. KNOWLEDGE OF & INTEREST IN CLEAN ENERGY

### 2.3.1. COMMUNITY ENERGY SOURCES

Four out of the eight participants identified firewood as the most used type of cooking energy. Charcoal and grass were also identified as another cooking energy.

The following were identified as lighting energy sources:

- Solar
- Candles
- Paraffin lamps
- Paraffin stoves
- Grass torches
- Mobile phone torches

It is noteworthy that none of the participants had access to hydroelectricity.

### 2.3.2. WHY ABOVE ENERGY SOURCES ARE PREFERRED

Affordability was cited as the main reason community members use the energy sources that they do. Four out of the eight participants cited this reason.

The reasons given for using the energy sources communities do included:

- Cheap/affordability
- Accessibility of firewood
- Health reasons (paraffin irritates the eyes)
- Safety reasons (paraffin can cause accidents)
- Time saving (charcoal is time-saving)



Participants and AFIEGO's Ms. Atusinguza (R) during the FGD

### 2.3.4. AWARENESS OF OTHER ENERGY SOURCES

Other energy sources participants were aware of included:

- Hydro power
- Solar
- Biogas
- Gas

### 2.3.5. PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCES

Participants noted that they would prefer to use other sources of energy but because of lack of enough money and lack of access to hydro power “the lines are here but [we are] not yet connected” hindered their use.

The following were the preferred alternative energy sources:

- Solar
- Electricity
- Charcoal stove
- Paraffin stove

### 2.3.6. HINDRANCES TO ACCESS TO PREFERRED ENERGY SOURCE

Hindrances to access to preferred energy sources included:

- Poverty
- Competing needs say education/school fees for children

- Poor planning

One participant noted the following as regards poor planning:

Some people don't know how to plan. You might be able to do something but can't budget. You find someone who buys paraffin every day. After five months, that money could buy solar. But because of poor planning, they stick to firewood or paraffin.

### **2.3.7. AWARENESS OF CLEAN ENERGY SOURCES**

Participants' awareness of clean energy sources was limited to hydroelectricity, solar and biogas.

However, participants were aware of the negative impacts of using dirty energy. They noted the following:

[Clean energy is good.] They don't destroy the environment; it doesn't need you to cut firewood. Then biogas.

Solar is good because it has no smoke, you won't breath smoke from paraffin. When paraffin is lighting, in the morning when you use a handkerchief, it gets dirty. That means the dirty air from the paraffin entered your nose and can cause sickness.

The environment has been destroyed because we don't have electricity and the government has kept quiet!

### **2.3.8. HOW LIFE WOULD CHANGE WITH ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY**

Participants were highly aware of the social and economic benefits access to clean energy would grant them. Women showed more awareness than men with seven out of the nine responses coming from them.

The following were cited as the benefits that would accrue from access to clean energy.

- Health benefits/reduced inhalation of paraffin candle fumes;
- Save the environment;
- Improved rains and therefore farm produce;
- Improved security;
- Reduced home accidents;
- Improved communication and access to information through phone charging;
- Saving cooking time and time wasted on keeping a firewood stove (*kyoto*) burning;
- Increased economic productivity;
- Improved education standards because pupils will be enabled to read at night;
- Decreased domestic violence;
- Money-saving in case one buys a solar panel for which no daily spending on paraffin is required.

### **2.3.9. CHALLENGES ARISING FROM ACCESSING CLEAN ENERGY**

The following were identified as the challenges that could arise from accessing clean energy:

- Lack of money to replace solar battery;
- Lack of knowledge in using clean energy sources;
- Electricity accidents such as electricity shock;
- Theft of solar panel by neighbours.

### **2.3.10. BARRIERS TO ACCESSING CLEAN ENERGY**

Participants identified the following barriers limiting access to clean energy; the barriers are similar to those limiting access to the participants' preferred energy source.

- Poverty;

- Lack of sufficient is information on available alternative energy and its cost implications;
- Lack of access to hydro power;
- Poor planning which sees some families which can afford clean energy spend on dirty energy because they are unaware that they can afford clean energy.

### 2.3.11. REACTIONS TO EFFORTS TARGETED AT INCREASING ACCESS TO CLEAN ENERGY

Participants noted that they had heard of efforts to increase access to clean energy. They noted that NGOs were their main sources of information on clean energy. Private solar companies were also cited as sources of information.

Participants noted that they had a positive attitude towards clean energy and would want to transition.

They further said that they needed financial assistance to enable them access solar and they requested that shops selling solar products should be brought closer to them.

## 3. CONCLUSION

The FGD not only enabled AFIEGO to improve the organisation’s knowledge on communities’ knowledge of and attitudes to alternative clean energy sources in addition to challenges and barriers to their adoption, it also increased understanding of the communication landscape in communities.

Further, it equipped staff with skills to conduct FGDs. The knowledge generated from the FGD will be used to improve AFIEGO’s programmes and projects.

## 4. APPENDICES

### 4.1. LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

No.	Name	Sex	Village/Institution	Contact
1.	Godfrey Bagonza	M	Kyarensambya-Kiziranfumbi	0787 043581
2.	Esther Abigaba	F	Kitegwa-Buseruka	0787 435965
3.	Getrida Tabaro	F	Kidoma-Kiziranfumbi	0778 143537
4.	Mary Itegerwa	F	Kisambo-Kiziranfumbi	0775 153787
5.	Christopher Opio	M	Kyapaloni-Buseruka	0779 983101
6.	Innocent Tumwebaze	M	Nyahaira-Buseruka	0789 726114
7.	Millius Nyamuhange	F	Kabaale-Buseruka	0392 966232
8.	Ssalongo James Bachondoze	M	Kisambo-Kizirafumbi	0772 938831
9.	Charity Okaba	F	Busara Center	0774 130688
10.	Diana Nabiruma	F	AFIEGO	0782 280073
11.	Sandra Atusinguza	F	AFIEGO	0781 408192
12.	Alexis Subra	F	Azusa Pacific University	<a href="mailto:asubra14@apu.edu">asubra14@apu.edu</a>

### 4.2. FGD GUIDE

#### Introduction

My name is \_\_\_\_\_. Before I introduce the team, I would like to request someone to lead us in a word of

prayer. [After prayers, Introduce the team, colleagues, and translators] [Check for language understanding and preferences].

*We are from the Africa Institute for Energy Governance (AFIEGO). We are a public policy research and advocacy non-governmental organization dedicated to influencing energy policies to benefit the poor and vulnerable in Uganda.*

*We are conducting research to understand the energy sources members of your community commonly use for their day-to-day household and business activities, as well as to get an understanding of how members of your community communicate any issues to leaders in your community. You have been asked to participate in this study because you live in Hoima, where we are inviting residents to participate in the research. The information you provide will be helpful for our organization, as well as other organizations, to better understand the needs and aspirations of Ugandans related to energy use. In turn, these organizations will better the quality of services that they provide for you.*

*We want this to be an open discussion between everyone present. There are no right or wrong answers and you are welcome to answer in any way you like. The only request we have is that you speak one at a time so that we can make sure we capture everything mentioned. We would like to record the session on this audio recorder, so that we can go back later and review what people said. The note taker will not be able to write down every response that is given by each one of you. The recording will be our reference to enable this. The information you provide us will be kept confidential and will only be available to the researchers. You will not find your name published in papers or in advertisements. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish or to end the interview at any time*

*We will be having this discussion for about 1-1.5 hours*

*Is everyone comfortable with this?*

*[Address any concerns]*

*[CHECK: Have you secured informed consent?]*

### **Background Information**

I would like us to start by everyone introducing themselves. Could you please say your name [Write down participant's names according to their seating arrangement for easy reference to them during the focus group] and a little about yourself; Are you married? Do you have any children? What you do for a living

*First of all, I would like to ask you a few questions about ways in which you communicate.*

#### **A. Access to effective communication channels:**

1. What are some of the problems/issues affecting you and your community?
  - a. Who would you go to in your community to address these problems?

2. How do you communicate these problems to the people you have just mentioned? [**Probe** for each of the people mentioned above. *[Methods could be personal visits, writing letters, frequent public meetings, telephone-based communication, or others]*
3. Which methods have you used to communicate these problems that have been worked? Why?
  - a. Which methods of communication have you used that have not worked for you? Why?
4. How did you learn of these avenues for communicating needs to the people who could address your problems?
5. What do you need in order to access these methods of communication?
  - a. What would you need those things for?
6. Do you face any difficulties when using these methods of communication? If yes, what challenges do you face when using these methods of communication?

*Now, I would like to ask you a few questions about the energy sources that you use and are aware of.*

### **B. Knowledge of and interest in consuming clean energy**

1. What sources of energy do people in your community generally use?
2. What sources of energy do you use in your household?
3. For what purposes do you use these energy sources? (*Probe if not mentioned for lighting, heat for cooking, boiling water*)
  - a. Why do you prefer to use these energy sources you have mentioned instead of the other options? (*Probe if not mentioned: Cheap, availability, easily accessible, ease of use, less smoke, culture, Cooks faster, Safety*)
4. What other energy sources are you aware of?
  - a. Are there any of these that you prefer to what you're currently using?
  - b. What are some of the reasons why you can't access your preferred energy source?

*[FO note: Clean energy is defined as energy that does not harm the environment and has little carbon emissions that could cause global warming. Gently guide the discussion back if participants are discussing a different topic, being sure to adopt their terms]*

5. What are some of the “clean” energy options that you are aware of? (*Be careful when framing this, make sure “clean is understood”*)
6. How different would your life be if you used these clean energy sources for your household energy needs?
7. Imagine you have just bought a clean energy source, such as a solar panel.
  - a. How would this change your life?
  - b. How would this change your family's life?

- c. Would there be any new challenges or negative changes in your life, from buying this clean energy source?
  - d. What else would be different?
- 8. What are the benefits of using clean energy sources?
- 9. What are the challenges of using clean energy sources?
- 10. What are some of the barriers that limit people from using these clean energy sources?
- 11. In your local area, has the government or any other organization engaged with you about using clean energy sources?
  - a. How did you react to this effort?

***Final Comments and Thank You***

Please thank the participants for their time.

**NOTE: The FGD guide was produced by Busara Center in partnership with AFIEGO.**

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