



Gender Sensitivity in Energy Subsidy Reforms: Findings from Europe and Central Asia

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Rationale for Gender and Energy Research in ECA

- ▶ World Bank providing advice to over 14 states in Europe and Central Asia on implementing subsidy and tariff reforms.
- ▶ Scarce research in the region on gender issues related to energy policy overall, and subsidy reforms in particular.
- ▶ Global evidence that men and women have different needs and priorities energy use, and may be impacted differently
- ▶ Gender issues are examined, in order to:
 - ...effectively mitigate poverty and social implications of these reforms, specifically the consequences of rising energy costs;
 - ...better monitor gender impacts in all World Bank operations, including energy investments.

Objectives

Objectives are to:

Understand what we mean by 'gender sensitive energy subsidy reforms' in the ECA context.

Contribute to policies and mitigation measures that are effective help men and women adapt to the reforms.

By looking into:

- ▶ Country wide gender discrepancies that affect adaptation to subsidy reforms;
- ▶ Specific gender vulnerabilities (e.g. location, age belonging to a minority group, etc.);
- ▶ Household behaviors and social norms;



Research questions

- ▶ Are there systematic differences in the way men and women: (i) use energy in the household? (ii) save energy?
- ▶ Are there gender-specific vulnerabilities in accessing, procuring, switching between energy sources?
- ▶ Do men and women employ different coping strategies? How are they impacted by coping mechanisms?
- ▶ Are men and women equally informed and able: to access support programs? to seek their rights vis-à-vis energy providers?
- ▶ Are there gender differences in citizens' awareness and attitudes to reforms?



Evidence

- ▶ Qualitative data in 8 countries: 208 FGD, 131 KII;
 - ▶ Gender issues are highly contextual: intra-household dynamics may not be captured in household surveys;
 - ▶ Targeted questions on gender + comparing trends in responses of men and women;
- ▶ Complementary quantitative data on gender equality indicators;
- ▶ Provide an overview of the range of gender issues in energy reforms



Key Findings: Gender vulnerabilities in energy reforms are related to all of the following

1) energy affordability

→ related to income, age, migration, labor market participation;

2) energy access and use

→ ability to access cheaper sources, switch between sources)

3) household coping strategies

→ who is impacted most when households strive to save energy)

4) interaction with institutions

→ social norms affect access to services for men and women)



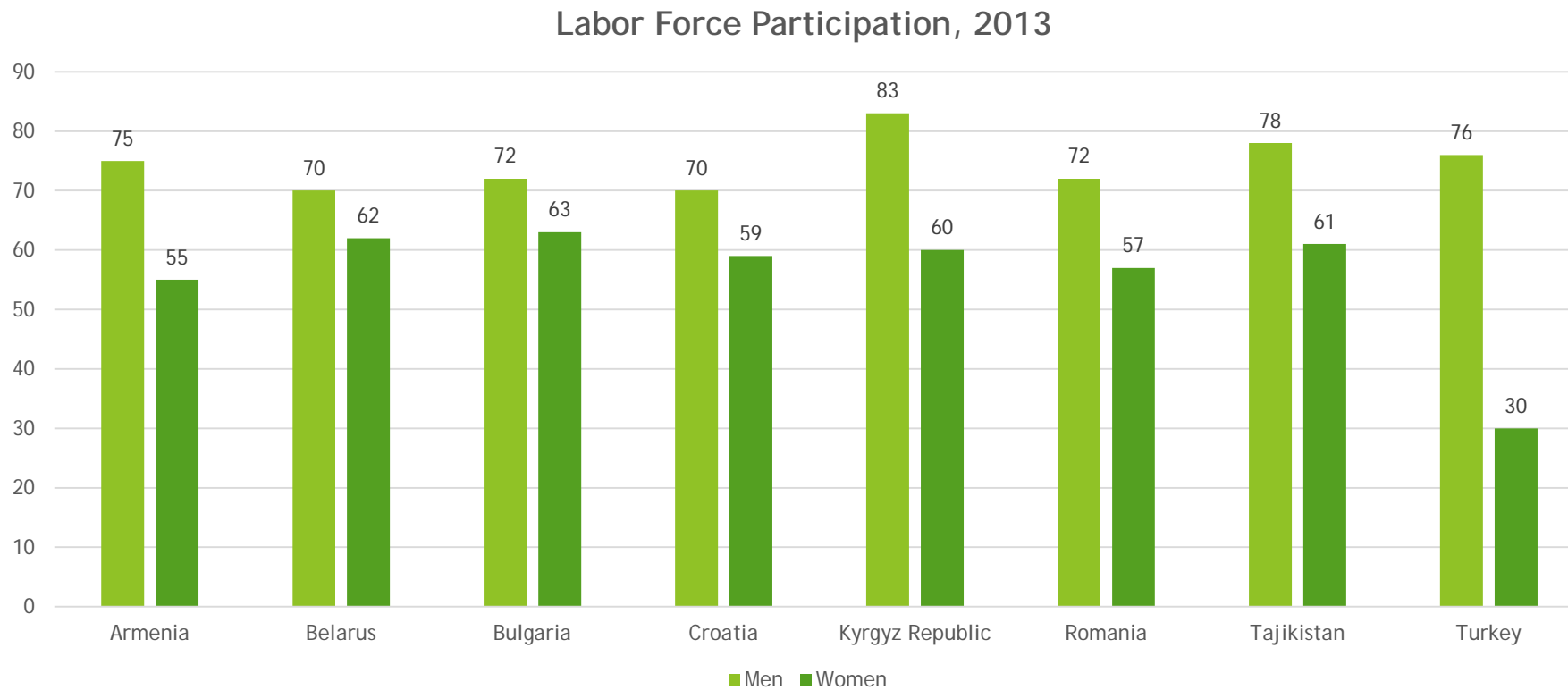
1) Vulnerabilities related to affordability

Women-headed households more vulnerable due to lower:

- Incomes;
- Pensions;
- Income security;
- Ability to generate additional income to cope with seasonal expenses;
- Remittances/migration incomes, which are strongly linked to energy payments;

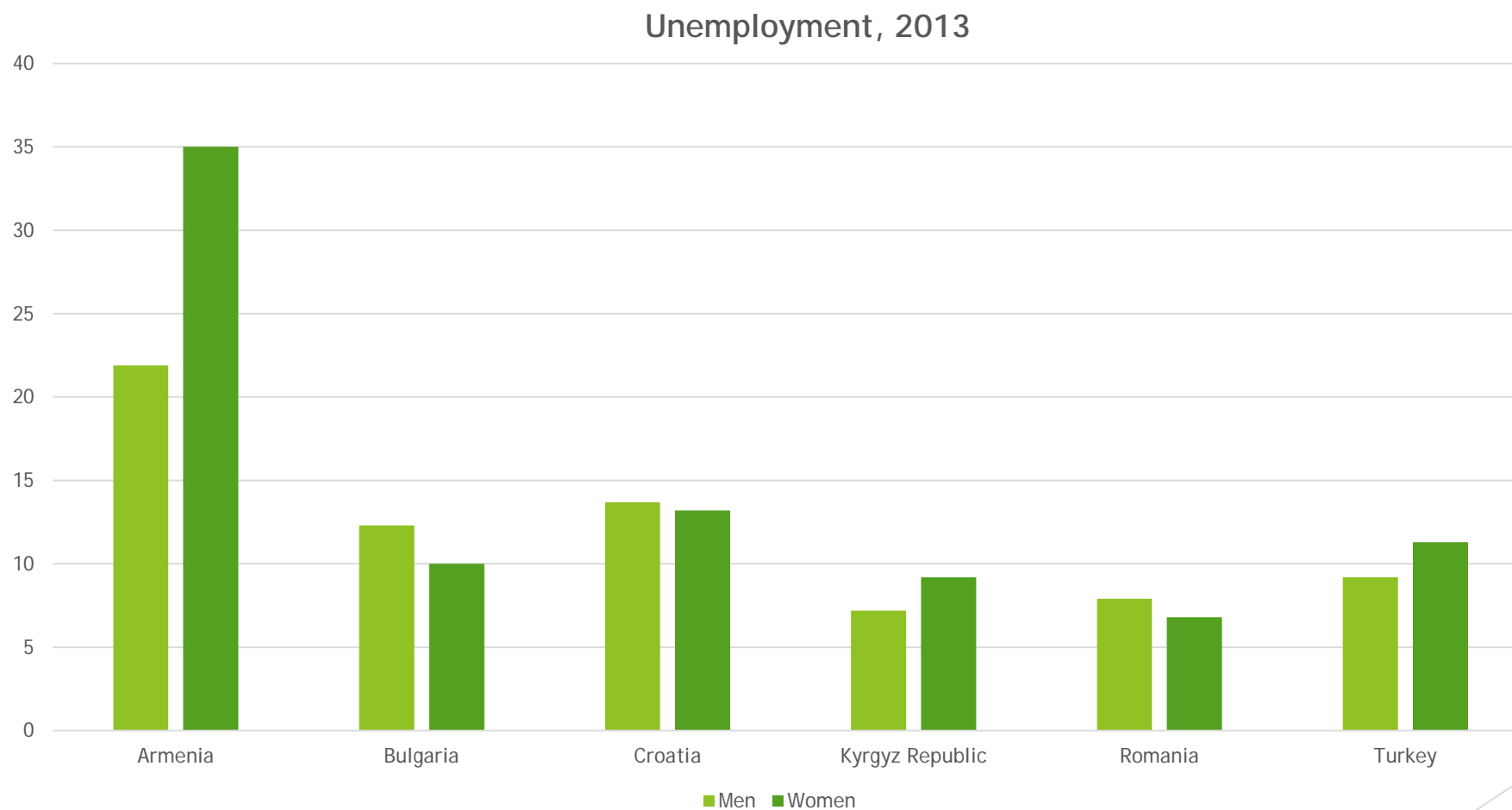


Gender differences in labor force participation



Source: World Bank. 2015. *Gender At a Glance: Europe and Central Asia*

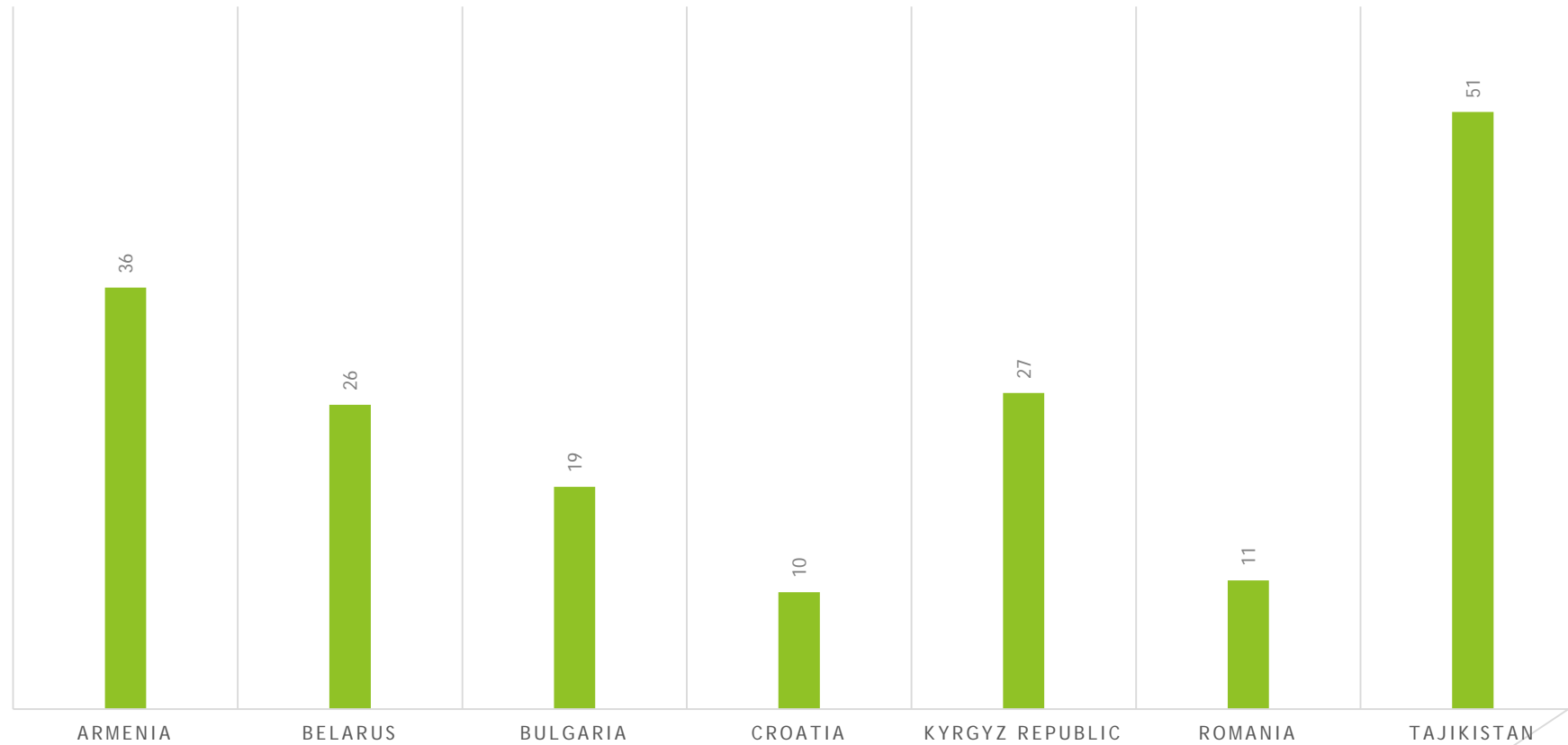
...in unemployment



Source: World Bank. 2015. *Gender At a Glance: Europe and Central Asia*

...in wages

GENDER PAY GAP, 2013



Source: World Bank. 2015. Gender At a Glance: Europe and Central Asia

Country case: Tajikistan

Women's economic dependency linked to risks of falling into poverty and ability to afford rising energy costs.

- ▶ Women work more hours than men but only 27% of their time is remunerated
- ▶ Women overrepresented in low-paying agricultural employment (approx.75%)
- ▶ High fertility rates and families with 3 or more children constitute 63% of the poor
- ▶ Informal work and migration and important for incomes and income security (47% of employed work in informal sector; 40% of GDP come from remittances); 95% of migrants are male.
- ▶ **Incomes of households with remittances significantly higher than domestic employment; remittances often timed with fall season for purchase of fuels.**
- ▶ An estimated 1/3 of migrants settle permanently in the host country.

Country case: Bulgaria

Large demographic of elderly women living alone on low fixed income.

- ▶ Women's life expectancy higher but pensions significantly lower than men's

"I spend my pension on three things: food, water bill, and the electricity bill" - rural elderly woman, Bulgaria

- ▶ Women facing stronger pressures to provide funds for payment of bills and basic expenses, and take or maintain lower-paid employment

"He avoids responsibility when he leaves all decisions on me. He doesn't work for 20 leva/day, but I have to work and find a solution." - urban woman

"I have to always find the money for everything: bills, food, for the children to have one lev when they want to go out. It is always "Mom, Mom" and Mom takes out money from somewhere...I hope he finds work sooner."

2) Energy Access and Use

Women-headed households are **less flexible in switching between energy sources.**

- women are less likely to use fuels that require physical labor or specific social network to procure, even if they are cheaper, such as bottled gas, wood, coal, installing independent gas heating, etc.

- men are in charge of acquiring information, negotiating, purchasing solid fuels.

- face extra costs to procure fuels such as wood or coal - costs for chopping, transportation, storage.



3) Coping Within the Household

Women are both more aware of and more heavily impacted by coping measures to manage higher energy bills:

- ▶ Not heating the house during the day;
- ▶ Saving on food, especially proteins (meat);
- ▶ Cutting more personal expenses (clothing, cosmetics, social activities);
- ▶ Reducing use of appliances in household work and doing it by hand;
- ▶ Staying late at night to use electricity during cheaper night tariff;
- ▶ In rural contexts: relying more heavily on secondary collected fuels (brushwood, manure, cotton stalks, etc.) collected by women.

Who is affected in the household?

Women are more likely to sacrifice their needs because of perceptions and norms that have to do with: *pride, reputation, physical needs, sense of responsibility.*

Kyrgyz Republic: it is more acceptable for women to cut personal expenses (new clothes, entertainment, social activities); for men this may signal serious financial struggle in their social circle.

Belarus: cutting meat consumption is a measure "more suitable for women than for men and children"

Romania: "In my family, my father and my husband are very different. My father is...how should I put it? Like a woman. ... If they are both left with paying bills, my father would prioritize paying the bills; he would save money from food. My husband...would think: 'Should I pay the bill or go eat? I should go eat.'"

Who makes decisions...

- on switching to cheaper sources?
- on more efficient energy use?

It varies ... but very much related to information and social networks.

Men: more informed of energy efficiency methods - due to the nature of available information and sources (specialized contractors, stores);

Women: tend to be more interested in cost and savings potential. This information not as readily available.



4) Interacting with Institutions: Energy Providers

Norms play a strong role in the absence of clear grievance mechanisms.

Men are generally seen as more successful in seeking their rights as consumers, seeking information, resolving grievances.

"He would not leave the building until he received a clear explanation. I could go as well but it would be best if he went." - young woman, Romania

"I ask them to tell me how they compute the bill. They say it's very complicated, you will not understand. I say, I am an engineer, I will understand" - middle-aged woman, Bulgaria

In other contexts, men can be at a disadvantage.

"A man would rather send a woman there because it is mostly women who work in the service sector. A man cannot argue with a woman, if she raises her tone the man will step back. Men are afraid to brawl with stranger women." - woman, Kyrgyz Republic

Interacting with Institutions: Social Assistance

- Women are more often applicants to social assistance programs:
 - Linked to qualities of patience, diligence;
 - having more flexible and 'free time' to wait and collect documents;
 - Perceived lower opportunity cost of missing part-time job opportunities
 - More often economically vulnerable
 - Eligible by categorical programs (for single mothers, for 'mother-heroine' with many children)
- There is greater stigma for men:
 - often linked to alcoholism, drug abuse, or other addiction indicating serious financial trouble.



Gender Impacts are more pronounced for Roma/Minorities

In Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia (within the sample of this study) Roma women were found to be:

- ▶ More economically disadvantaged
- ▶ More likely to experience gender discrimination
- ▶ Significantly less informed about reforms
- ▶ Less likely than non-Roma women to interact with public institutions
- ▶ Targets of specific ethnic prejudice (for example, for seeking social assistance)
- ▶ Problems of different nature than the rest of the population - access to the network, quality of housing, etc.



Policy Implications(1)

- ▶ Gender in energy not isolated from broader gender equality environment in the country
 - ▶ Energy affordability relatively more problematic and requires further support for women-headed households, for broader reasons related to incomes and income-generating opportunities;
- ▶ Coping with higher energy costs affects women disproportionately
 - ▶ These 'hidden' impacts should be taken into account in designing mitigation policies/additional support;
- ▶ Cultural norms affect men and women's ability to get information, resolve grievances with providers, access support programs
 - ▶ Stronger administrative mechanisms/rules e.g. for grievance redress can reduce institutional discretions, chance for discriminatory attitudes;
- ▶ These norms can be more pronounced in minority communities (e.g. Roma)
 - ▶ Requiring targeted outreach and training among relevant institutions

Policy Implications (2)

- ▶ Gender-sensitive communications:
 - ▶ Be aware how information needs and grievances differ across sub-groups - men and women, urban/rural women; elderly women.
 - ▶ Targeted outreach and GRM channels to reach different audiences.
- ▶ Better use of social networks to promote energy efficiency, understanding of reforms, claiming of consumer rights
 - ▶ Women less aware about EE opportunities; More information needed on economic aspects of energy efficiency;
 - ▶ Men able to name more reasons for energy reforms, not because of technical knowledge but also social networks;
- ▶ Attention to gender desegregated information
 - ▶ to monitor impacts of reform, assess effectiveness of communications, support and accountability programs.