

# Breaking the Barriers



Women in southern Ethiopia sell refrigerated water as part of a solar-powered kiosk income generation project.

## Background

Over the past decade, Christian Aid and its partners have worked with communities without access to energy across Africa and Latin America.

We have achieved this through the installation, distribution and integration of sustainable energy products and technologies in our programmes. We provide innovative financing models, as well as business and technical assistance.

Sustainable energy technologies and products have been used in agricultural enterprises as well as at household level. For example, we have helped to provide lighting and mobile phone charging via Pico Solar, and cleaner, energy-saving stoves for cooking.

Now, we are scaling up our previous energy interventions with an EU-funded programme, 'Breaking the Barriers: Promoting Women Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Energy Value Chains'. The project aims to increase women's access to the production, marketing and distribution of sustainable energy products and services, and to influence environmental and sustainable energy policies.

## Breaking the Barriers

The Breaking the Barriers programme aims to increase rural women's employment and income in the sustainable energy sector, improve working and living conditions, promote gender equality and strengthen women's social status.

This programme is being implemented in Burkina Faso, Malawi, Ethiopia and Honduras. The total budget is €6,173,615, of which 80% is funded by the European Union, with the remainder funded by Christian Aid.

This three-and-a-half-year programme started in February 2018 and was officially launched on 8th March to celebrate International Women's Day.

## Our approach - working with WLSEEs

Breaking the Barriers is modelled around helping existing village savings and loans associations (VSLAs) to establish women-led sustainable energy enterprises (WLSEEs) and provide them with a mix of technical and financial assistance.

Enterprise developers will provide business skills training to established WLSEEs, so that they can develop business plans for setting up the enterprises.



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Institutions that are competent in energy technology will train WLSEE staff and members on energy issues related to the technologies and products that the WLSEEs will promote.

An innovative financing model will ensure access to affordable capital for the enterprises as well as loans for individual women. The model comprises a grant (70%), a low-interest-rate loan (25%) and a contribution from the women in the form of share capital (5%). Women can also access loans, through their VSLAs, to purchase sustainable energy products for their homes or their small businesses.

Finance generated through loan repayments will be used to establish a revolving fund that will be central to the project's sustainability and expansion beyond the funding period.

WLSEEs will also be trained in lobbying policy makers at national and local levels. This will help WLSEEs to push the authorities to support sustainable energy enterprises - for example, by reducing taxes on imports of sustainable energy products.

### Programme impact

It is estimated that upwards of 3 million people will benefit from the programme.

Once established, the 201 WLSEEs will substantially increase access to affordable and sustainable energy products and related services.

The aim is for measures taken by local and national authorities to improve the environment for women's participation in the sustainable energy sector. These measures should contribute to increased access to sustainable energy, and also lead to the creation of more jobs for women in under-served rural areas.

Access to sustainable energy products will enable communities to spend less on unsustainable energy sources, such as wood, kerosene and batteries, while increasing their income by selling preserved foods at a better price when there is low market supply.

Sustainable technology, such as solar-powered irrigation, will allow women to cultivate larger areas, increase yields and spend less time gathering water.

### Breaking the Barriers and The Big Shift

The Big Shift campaign is an initiative supported by more than 40 organisations in the global North and South. It calls for a shift in investment from fossil fuels to renewable energy, and promotes access to energy for all.

Breaking the Barriers is a practical example of this shift. The project will enhance awareness of sustainable energy and the role of women in the sector.

Women's enterprises in the food processing industry will use renewable energy technologies, rather than traditional energy sources that rely on biomass or fossil fuels and are unsustainable in the context of climate change. We aim to support increased access to clean and sustainable energy in rural communities in the four countries where we are working.

### Programme at a glance

Burkina Faso, Malawi, Ethiopia and Honduras

42 months, starting in February 2018

Programme value: €6,173,615.03

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### Contact us

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