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The impact of load shedding on gender relations in heterosexual households in Mkoba north, Gweru, Zimbabwe: Implications for sustainable development

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Abstract

This study explored the impact of load shedding on gender relations in heterosexual households. 20 couples were selected through judgmental sampling that was followed by network referencing; bringing the sample to 40 participants. Study was descriptive in nature. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. Study reveals that load shedding have ripple effects in the social fabric of sustainable development through its impacts on gender relations. Load shedding is proving to be reproducing and maintaining gender relations of inequality, thus holding back sustainable development. Women are deprived control of areas that traditional belongs to them like the decision and control of energy use in the household giving men more power over women. Load shedding is increasing men's time in the public sphere while women are tied more to the private sphere. For sustainable development to be achieved, household relationships should uphold the principles of sustainable development and gender equality is one of them. Empowerment of women and men in household energy uses will aid in opening up their 'functioning space'. An understanding and appreciation of gender equality in the household will help men and women to be influential in the larger society leading to sustainable development.

Keywords: Load shedding, Gender relations, Practical gender needs, Strategic gender needs, Sustainable development

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1. Introduction

Sustainable development involves improving people's opportunities in life by expanding their skills, capabilities and abilities so that they can set their own agendas in life. It entails increased autonomy in addition to freedom as observed earlier by Sen (2000). From the standpoint of this paper it would mean women and men having equal and increased access to, and extended control of energy use in the household. According to Clancy et al. (2007:241), energy is an enabling factor in development because nothing works without energy. To many of us load shedding is nothing more than an inconvenience but this author believes it can have far reaching consequences on sustainable development. This paper, therefore, seeks to explore how limited access to energy by women and men in households through load shedding is impinging on gender equality which is a precursor to sustainable development. Oparaocha and Dutta (2011) argue that energy services are linked to well being and have the potential to impact almost every area of human life from increased economic activity to improved child literacy, safe drinking water and women's empowerment.

2. Background

One of the key objectives of the World Summit on Sustainable Development is to improve people's lives. This article therefore aims to contribute to the developing area of scholarship on energy as a key variable in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women towards the achievement of MDG 3 and sustainable development. Worth noting in this argument are the assumptions made in existing literature that expanded access to energy services will enable women to follow literacy and numeracy classes; have more leisure time; more access to information through radio and television making them more aware and empowered and that improved energy services will change the gendered division of labour in the home as men will take up more domestic responsibilities (Dutta et al., 2005). Electricity is the main source of energy for women to meet their practical gender needs in urban settings. The study therefore seeks to examine how load shedding in urban areas which is also known as demand side management impinges on the attainment of MDG 3 through an assessment of its impacts on gender relations and how it cascades onto sustainable development. According to Annecke (2002) access to energy has become a marker of the differences between the poor and rich, men and women. It is against this backdrop that this study explored how the occurrence of load shedding at Mkoba north impinges on gender relations to map out the aforesaid gap between men and women and show how this practice is holding back the fulfilment of MDG 3 and sustainable development. Gender dimensions become particularly important when practical gender needs are no longer fully met due to loadshedding. Knowing how men and women participate in the household energy system and how they differ in priorities, access and control over energy needs to be analysed. Cecelski (2004) argues that household energy problems exist and strategies to prioritise gender issues alongside household energy are necessary. These strategies can only be developed with a deeper understanding of how gender relations are affected by this service delivery

Many studies linking gender and energy have been conducted the world over. Karekezi, Banda and Kithyoma (2002), looked at the gender perspective in improving energy services for the poor in Africa. Dithale and Wright (2003) investigated energy use in rural Botswana to see if the gender of the decision makers in households affects the choice of energy and they concluded that female decision makers are more likely to opt for modern energy. Chukuezi (2009) looked at how increased attention to renewable energy and gender linkages can help promote development as well as work towards meeting the target set out in the millennium development goals. He argues that increased access to renewable energy sources of rural women can contribute to empowerment of women. Mahat (2011) looked at gender, energy and empowerment in a rural energy development programme, whereby he reports that intervention in rural energy takes place without considering the needs, roles, interests and potential of rural women. Clancy et al. (2007) noted that in rural and low-income urban households, energy is a women's business in that they collect fuel and use it for domestic chores and productive activities. Looking at all these studies they were earmarked for the rural women and see women in this set up as the primary users and managers of rural energy resources (Mahat, 2011). The studies are silent to the issue of gender relations thus announcing a point of departure from this study which targets an urban set up and specifically looks at the impact of load shedding on gender relations and the implications it holds for sustainable development. Electricity is the main source of energy for women to meet their practical gender needs in urban settings. Kelka and Nathan (2005) looked at gender relations and the energy transition in rural Asia which was still a rural set up. This study wants to look at an urban set up and at the situation that obtains in a situation where load shedding takes place. Yahaya et al. (2007) looked at the gender energy and environment nexus in female farmers in Nigeria and they concluded that females were exclusively responsible for fuel wood collection and were equally responsible for taking decision in the cooking energy system.

Green (2003) conducted a study to find out the gender impacts of various renewable energy technologies in South Africa where it was found out that the impact of energy technologies was predominately on women. Amartya and Shrestha (1998) concluded that unless women's practical and strategic gender needs are internalised by policy makers and unless gender based programmes are planned and implemented rural energy interventions are likely to remain ineffective and unsustainable. The study therefore seeks to unveil the state of events in the households, to show how load shedding is reproducing, perpetuating or challenging the gender relations status quo, and the implications it is posing for sustainable development.

3. Definition of terms

Load shedding is what electric utilities do when there is a huge demand for electricity that exceeds the available supply. It is an intentionally engineered electrical power shut down where electricity delivery is stopped for non-overlapping periods of time over geographical regions. It is also known as demand side management or load management. It was implemented to save money and pollution.

Gender relations on the other hand refers to the range of gendered practices such as the division of labour and access to and control over resources and the gendered ideologies such as ideas of acceptable behaviour

for men and women” (Bridge report no 55:18). They determine what is socially acceptable and what is socially inappropriate and work in most cases to subordinate women hence holding back sustainable development. In this study gender relations will be taken to mean what is considered socially accepted and appropriate for men and women to do in order to fulfill the duties that they normally do with electricity in times when electricity is not available. It seeks to interrogate how the adopted strategies are impacting on the gender relationships by trying to map out the cooperation, connection, support or conflict in face of load shedding. This study therefore seeks to find out the impact of load shedding on gender relations to see whether it is reproducing, maintaining or challenging these gender relations towards the attainment of sustainable development. Gender asymmetrical relations have been shown to be one of the major hindrances to the development process (Tsanga et al., 2004). Gender relations are taken in this article as the structural relationships and power distribution between men and women in a given heterosexual household that has an influence in the creation and reproduction of systematic differences in the positioning of men and women in the wider society, thereby holding back sustainable development due to gender inequality brought about by the subordination of women. These will be understood through an analysis of the adaptation and coping strategies that men and women have devised to meet their practical and strategic needs that need electricity.

Practical gender needs are those needs which, when met, would assist women in their current activities (Moser in March et al., 1999:57). In this study they are taken to mean availability of energy for women to perform their reproductive roles such as cooking, ironing and in this situation inadequacies are evident due to load shedding hence sustainable development can be achieved if men and women are empowered to realise that these needs are for the household not specific needs of women. Strategic gender needs refer to the needs which, if they were met would enable women to transform existing imbalances of power (Moser, 1993), and in this case relates to access, control and decision making over the use of alternative sources of energy in households that are experiencing load shedding.

In dealing with gender relations issues of access and control of resources are important. Access in this paper refers to the opportunity that men and women have to make use of the alternative sources that are secured as a response to load shedding. Control on the other hand is taken to mean the power that men and women in households have as individuals to decide about how the alternative source of energy will be used. The study evaluates who between husband and wife has the ultimate power to decide and control the use of alternative sources of energy in households and what implications this distribution of power poses on sustainable development.

4. Theoretical framework

Amartya Sen’s capability theory was used as the theoretical framework to understand how load shedding is hindering women’s freedoms and capability to use and manage household energy and how their capability in this area could be enhanced for the purposes of sustainable development. According to Amartya Sen in Elliot (2007:142), development consists of the “expansion of capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value and have every reason to value ‘.Based on this approach sustainability issues facing the people of the

world today is a deprivation of capability. Issues of food insecurity, poverty, Hiv/Aids, lack of access to energy among others have assumed a feminine face as a result of deprivation of capability, thus showing that empowerment as a strategy that results in the expansion of one's capability is a necessary precondition for sustainable development. The study therefore, uses this theory as a theoretical framework to understand how load shedding at Mkoba residential area is depriving women and men of their capabilities and freedoms and its implications on sustainable development.

As gender relations are social relations that include the resources people use, the study used the social relations approach of gender analysis as a tool of analysis to understand how load shedding is creating and reproducing gender relations of inequalities at household level and what must be done at this institutional level if sustainable development was to be achieved. The social relations framework which conceptualise gender as central to development thinking not an add on was chosen because it enabled an analysis of the impacts of load shedding on gender relations focussing on the distribution of power, responsibilities to show how these are reworked as a result of load shedding and how they are limiting human well being as the final goal of development. The framework was chosen because it helps to understand how things get done (rules)? In the presence and absence of electricity, who does what (activities)? With what alternative sources (resources), who is in or out (men and women) in the securing of alternative sources and who decides (power) on the use of the alternative source, thus, uncovering processes of impoverishment and empowerment?

5. Research purpose

The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between load shedding and sustainable development using gender relations as a wedge.

5.1. Research objective

The objective of the study was to find out whether load shedding has an impact on gender relations and sustainable development.

5.2. Main Research Question

How does load shedding impact on gender relations in households and sustainable development?

5.3. Sub-Research questions

In coming up with a response to this research question, the study sought answers to the following sub research questions

1. Are the uses of electricity in the home gendered?
2. What coping and adaptation strategies are used by men and women in response to load shedding?

3. Do men and women have the same access and control to use of energy in the household?
4. What is the impact of load shedding on gender relations?
5. What implications does all this have on sustainable development?

6. Research methodology

6.1. Study area

Mkoba north is one of the high density residential areas located in the western side of Gweru town in Zimbabwe in sub Sahara Africa. Gweru is the third largest city of Zimbabwe located 275km from the capital city of Zimbabwe and 164km from Bulawayo. Gweru has both heavy and light industrial sites and Mkoba 17 is along the light industrial site. The area is selected as the study locale because it is hard hit by load shedding more than the Mkoba south which is along the heavy industrial sites. The fact that it is located in a region (Sub Sahara Africa), a region that is facing significant gender equity challenges, with the highest level of poverty which contributes to the prevailing low levels of appropriate energy services (Karekezi et al., 2002) makes it an ideal area to map the impacts of load shedding as it has not escaped the myriad experiences of load shedding that characterise sub Sahara Africa. The study reviews the gender –load shedding nexus with special emphasis being placed on gender relations, empowerment and sustainable development.

6.2. Participants

Study targeted married couples staying together in Mkoba North households in Gweru urban in Zimbabwe from May to July 2012 because these are the types of households where gender relations are more clearly defined due to the differences in the roles that men and women are supposed to play in society. Their practical gender needs are clearly defined in terms of their existing roles in the households as it relates to how they fulfill them using electricity as the main source of energy in an urban set up. *De Facto*, where females act as heads of households because of the absence of the male head; under such circumstances the woman becomes a provider with husband having little responsibility and very little decision making. *De jure* households as households headed by females who never married, divorced and widows as well as child headed families were not included in this study because it was felt by the researcher that in such households gender relations are a bit obscured. The study looked at how load shedding was shaking that expected gender division of labour at household level, which is, addressing their strategic gender needs. A study sample of 20 couples participated in the study bringing the number of participants to 40 (20 men and 20 women) from this sample 8 couples were interviewed by the researcher. All the 40 participants filled in the questionnaires. Sampling was done judgmental at first and then through network referencing to connect to other couples staying together in the residential area. Participation in the interviews was arranged with the respondents the very day that the questionnaires were left in the households for filling in.

6.3. Data collection

The study employed a descriptive survey design to map out the impacts of load shedding on gender relations. The design was chosen because as this was an explorative study it enabled an in depth assessment of the impact of load shedding on gender relations by allowing the researcher to gather a wide range of data that could be generalised to the target population (Sarantakos, 2005). Qualitative paradigm was adopted because it enabled the researcher to get an in depth description of the impacts of load shedding on gender relations through interaction with respondents through face to face interviews and through open ended questionnaires. Questionnaire and interviews were used to gather data from the couples.

Questionnaires enabled the researcher to gather data from a large sample over a larger geographical area within a short space of time. Questionnaires targeted heterosexual households assumed to have concrete information on daily survival activities in the face of load shedding. Information solicited included employment status ,their use of electricity in the home, alternative sources of energy in response to load shedding, challenges met, adaptation and coping strategies. Questionnaires were left open ended to give respondents a chance to narrate their experiences and the researcher to gather as much detail as possible concerning the impact of load shedding on gender relations. Questionnaire was the main data gathering instrument. Questionnaires were used because they enabled the researcher to gather information that was not influenced by the researcher's personal attributes as respondents answered the questions on their own. Questionnaire assured anonymity hence details such as clashes that occur due to divergent expectations were forthcoming despite being confidential information. Use of a questionnaire therefore contributed to the validity and reliability of the data gathered in this study. Interviews were done so as to corroborate the data obtained through questionnaires. Interviews also enabled the researcher to probe further, thus leaving no gaps in the data collected.

The instruments were pilot tested on 5 couples in Mkoba south a residential area in Gweru town which is outside the study area to check on feasibility of the designed questionnaire and interview guide items. The questionnaires were physical handed to the households that were having husbands and wives that stayed together as referred by the other respondents. The researcher verbally asked for the respondents' consent to participate in the study after explaining the purpose of the study. Keeping in view of the misconceptions that can occur in interpreting questions by the respondents the researcher negotiated for a possible interview with the respondents during questionnaire distribution. In households where consent was granted the researcher left the two questionnaires to be completed by the mother and the father in that particular house .This was done to avoid combined effort in the completion of questionnaires in houses where more than one family resides. The researcher noted down the house numbers where questionnaires were left as well as those couples that agreed to be interviewed, noting the time and the dates for interviews in a diary.

6.4. Data Analysis

The results for the study were analysed using both statistical analysis where necessary in which the responses were counted and the frequency converted into percentages some open ended questions in the questionnaire and interview questions were analysed using interpretative explanation in which the responses were characterised by themes.

7. Research findings

To ascertain the characteristics of the respondents, question one was included to map out the employment status of the participants. Table 1 below gives a summary of the findings

Table 1. Employment Status of respondents by Gender

Gender	Formal Employed (%)	Self Employed (%)	Not Employed (%)
Male	14(70)	4(20)	2(10)
Female	7(35)	8(40)	5(25)

Findings on the research questions are presented according to sub research questions that revolve on the following themes

- Gendered uses of electricity
- Gendered coping and adaptation strategies
- Men's and women's access and control of energy in the household
- Impact of load shedding on gender relations

7.1. Gendered uses of electricity

To find out whether the use of electricity in the household is gendered item 2 was included in the questionnaire and table 2 below summarises the findings.

Table 2. Uses of electricity in the household by Gender

Men's uses of Electricity	Women's uses of electricity
Driving gadgets (e.g.welding,computers)	Cooking
Entertainment	Lighting
Lighting	Entertainment
Reading/studying	Ironing
Doing office work	baking

A follow up to the question was made to find out the problems occurring in the household due to load shedding and the most common responses was that as husband and wife, load shedding leads to tension in the house over: delayed meals, cold food clothes not ironed.

When asked how load shedding affected their daily life women were more concerned about their failure to meet their reproductive and community duties in time as well as not getting enough time for rest as some

women reported. They have to be up during the night to prepare meals for the next day, no leisure and family time as use of alternative sources was time consuming and at times they had to forego church services, especially on those days that coincided with the days when there will be no electricity as they have to make sure the ironing is done and the food is prepared.

Men on the other side reported failure to accomplish productive related duties such as: office work that they carry with them home or failure to study, failure to see news on television or through the internet and failure to watch their favourite match or sport.

7.2. Gendered coping and adaptations strategies and their implications on gender relations

To map out the implications of the coping strategies to load shedding question 3 was designed and table 3 below summarises the findings.

Table 3. Other coping and adaptation strategies for load shedding by gender

Men's strategies	Women's strategies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going out to pubs, clubs • Visiting friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sleep early without cooking • Wait for the power to be back • Preparing all meals when there is electricity • Use of flasks and cold eaten foods • Go for uncalled for fasting • Buying takeaways • Cooking only when there is electricity

The question above was followed up in the interview session to find out how the other coping strategies were impinging on relations at households level and it came out that sometimes there are quarrels whenever the strategies employed are not convergent such as when children go to bed without eating, "you are seen as not being a caring mother," as one women acknowledges the quarrels that stem from divergent coping and adaptation strategies. Women also reported that quarrels arise on cold food and untimely meals and when the clothes the men want to put on are not ironed

7.3. Access and control of energy in the household

To establish men and women's access and control over energy in urban households question 4 and 5 were designed. Question 4 required respondents to list down the alternative sources they use in place of electricity and the following alternative sources were mentioned: Firewood, paraffin stove, generator, candles, gel stove and rechargeable globes

To ascertain men and women's access and control over energy related decisions in the household question 5 required the respondents to answer questions as to who has the responsibility for securing,

financing, deciding on the use and control of the alternative source of power and table 4 below summarises the findings.

Table 4. Access and control of energy by men and women in the household

	Who is responsible for securing the alternative source? (%)	Who is responsible for financing for the alternative source? (%)	Who decides on the use of the alternative source? (%)	Who controls the use of the alternative source of energy? (%)
Men	40	80	60	50
women	50	12	30	40
Both	10	8	10	10
Total	100	100	100	100

Further probing on this question was done to find out the challenges faced because of this arrangement in the family and it come out that in cases where men provide the finance for the payment and buying of the alternative fuel they tend to:

- Overemphasise on the wise use of the alternative source
- Decide on the meal to cook especially that uses less energy (e.g. no beans can be cooked using the primus stove)
- Verbally rebuking spouse, maid and children if he suspects that there was no budgeting on the rate of use and at times may refuse to provide money for the source if he suspects reckless use of the alternative source
- May refuse to source more firewood if it gets finished
- Complain a lot when the spouse asks for money to buy fuel.

7.4. Impact of load shedding on gender relations

To map out the impact of load shedding on gender relations questions 6 was included in the questionnaire to find out whether husbands and wives' expectations were convergent or divergent and the problem that arise due to divergent expectations, and table 5 below summarises the findings respectively.

7.5. Problems arising due to divergent expectations

These expectations were divergent in many of the cases and the following were reported as the problems that arise due to the divergent expectations.

- Men are not prepared to help in the supply of fuel
- If they supply fuel they tend to over control its use
- Males complain of delayed meals and cold food and quarrels may arise from this.
- Men are not quick to provide for the fuel hence no time to rest as the cooking and ironing is done late

- Men refuse to cut the wood and make the fire as it is viewed as a women’s department.
- Men may come home late leading to quarrels as women feel they are inconvenienced by this practice
- No quality family time as the men tend to spend out their time out with friends as the home becomes boring due to lack of entertainment and women are always busy, taking more time to complete their duties.

Table 5. what husbands and wives expect from each other when there is no electricity

What husbands expect from their wives	What wives expect from their husbands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have to make sure food is ready in time through improvisation • Provide ironed clothes always 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the alternative source(e.g. firewood, gel, petrol) • Gathering and preparing the firewood into manageable size • Connect the generator • Buy the alternative source(e.g. fuel for the generator, matches, gel) • Provide money to buy or pay for the alternative source • Make the fire

8. Discussion

From table 1 it can be inferred that data was collected from heterosexual dual worker households as well as heterosexual single sex worker household thus making it easier to compare the issue of access to and control over resources in these different types of households. Findings of the study however, reveal that although 75% of women who participated in this study were engaged in some productive work that gave them some income that did not warrant them some control and decision making over alternative source of energy as shown by the higher percentages of respondents who said decision making related to use of alternative energy sources and their control lies with men (Table4).

Table 2 shows that uses of electricity in the household are gendered. Women use it albeit mostly for their reproductive gender roles to sustain the family rather than personal activities, while men use it for their own personal development .For example studying, watching world events like soccer through televisions, computers and listening to news which is likely to widen men’s horizons in terms of information, current issues which in turn can be used to dominate women. Few women use electricity for studying and other developmental work as compared to men. This contradicts with assumptions in existing literature that access to energy services would increase women’s access to information as revealed in this study that if women were not using the available electricity to improve their social standing, this could be due to the socio economic standing of the respondents ,thus calling for further research on the uses of energy according to socio economic status of women and the need for developmental projects aimed at empowering women to focus on conscientisation of women on the benefits they can accrue by utilising electricity in the home to access information not only focussing on fulfilling their reproductive and practical gender needs but should

also aim for meeting their strategic needs which can come with exposure to the outside world linked by gadgets in the home such as television ,computers and radios that uses electricity.

Women although they have access to the energy sources they seem to having limited control over the sources (table 4). From the study only 10% of respondents indicated that they were in a shared control of energy in the household while 40% indicated that control lies with women and 50% admitted that control of energy use lies with men. Thus contradicting earlier findings in rural set ups whereby women are in control of energy management at household level as noted by Cecelski (2000) and Skutsch (1995 in Mahat, 2011). Involving men in the financing (which is a valuable resource) of alternative energy sources in the households takes the power of control and decision making from the women over the energy sources thus strengthening patriarchal thinking that men have control over valuable resources leading men to takeover even the decision making related to energy use in the household. This affirms earlier findings by Hooper-Box et al. (1998) that men control finances and make and enforce decisions, thereby making poor urban women ,as compared to their rural counterparts lack decision making and purchasing powers on fuel This shift of events function to maintain and perpetuate women's subordinate position and their inability to improve their own conditions this is likely to hold back sustainable development because gender equality which is a precondition to sustainable development is unlikely to be achieved unless women's subordinate positions change.

Load shedding is reported to be estranging gender relations as quarrels are caused in the home due to lack of electricity. It can be inferred from table 4 that women expect a shift of roles due to load shedding but their expectations seem to be divergent to those of men who see it as a women's prerogative duty to see to it that practical gender needs of the family are met despite the looming load shedding hence women suffer harassment and domestic violence in the form of quarrels due to these divergent expectations brought by load shedding hence there will be no true gender equality, thus holding back the attainment of MDG 3 and sustainable development. Load shedding seems to be worsening the burden of traditional proscribed roles of women as the study reveals that men are reluctant and not willing to assist their spouses in the face of load shedding instead they find this as an opportunity to visit friends and other social places for fun and entertainment thus revealing that load shedding is increasing men's involvement with the public sphere while women remain confined in the private sphere trying to meet their practical needs. This confirms Annecke (2005) who found that men continue to see helping in this area as a favour they can withdraw at will.

Load shedding has increased the subordination of women as men are now controlling the domain that used to be perceived as a female domain. Men are now deciding on how fuel is to be used in the household, the type of food to cook which was considered a female preserve. These gendered hierarchal power relations in the household function to maintain and perpetuate women's subordinate position and their inability to improve their own functioning capabilities thus disempowering women. It has also widened the gap between men and women by causing unnecessary conflicts over divergent coping and adaptive strategies. Gender division of labour seem to have shifted a bit as men are now also involved in securing sources of energy unlike in rural areas where the task lies entirely on women contradicting earlier findings (Yahaya et al.,

2007; Cecelski, 2000; Skutsh, 1995). This difference could be caused by the fact that in rural and farming environments where these studies were done fuel wood is for free.

9. Implications for sustainable development

There is consensus among scholars that gender equality is a precondition for sustainable development as it is a prerequisite to the achievement of all the Millennium development goals (MDGs) (Unterhalter, 2007; Shumba et al., 2008) and a serious consideration of any discussion of sustainable development is the role of gender (Ansell, 2000). Women need not to be discriminated when it comes to decision making in household energy uses as this limits their empowerment, their substantive freedoms, increasing their subordination thereby buttressing gender inequality in society which in turn is holding back sustainable development. Equal participation of men and women at household level holds opportunities to open up capabilities of men and women to work side by side thereby transforming society into a just society, for empowerment starts at a lower level. Relational empowerment at household level is of paramount importance as it forms a foundation for collective empowerments in the wider society. To achieve community empowerment for sustainable development, men and women need to uphold an ethic of gender equality and this should start with household relational empowerment. Renewed attention in empowerment programs therefore, must focus and emphasis on equal participation of men and women in household decision making and sharing of power in relationships. For it is the beginning of empowerment for men and women at household level that is likely to establish the agency and attitudes for equality that will culminate in sustainable development. Empowerment leads to high self esteem and a strong sense of self worth hence can enhance the ability of men and women to help them and to contribute to the world. Greater freedoms according to Sen (2000) enhance the ability of people to help themselves and also influence the world. This implies that by maintaining positive relationships, greater freedoms are created and these will enhance men and women's ability to be effective and influential. This means that any approach to development should aim to improve men and women's freedoms and expand their capabilities by enlarging their freedoms to lead valuable and flourishing lives Sen in Fukuda-Parr (2011) not as linked to their practical gender needs but also their strategic gender needs thus bringing about women's empowerment and this should start at household level. It must build solidarity, reciprocity and autonomy in access to and control of resources.

10. Recommendations

Expansion of men and women's capabilities and functioning spaces as it relates to empowerment and sustainable development should start at household level Empowerment intervention strategies in this sector should aim at increasing women's location in relation to men's decision making on domestic fuel management Load shedding is limiting women's freedom more than that of men. Providing energy services that challenge structural power relations at household level will go a long way in contributing more to the goal of gender equality leading to greater freedoms as positive relationships are maintained which will in

turn enhance men and women to influence the world which is subsequently going to lead to sustainable development. Household energy management is one central factor where sustainable development strategies should not underestimate women's roles and responsibilities by focussing more on energy users rather than energy use.

11. Conclusion

Women have practical needs in terms of meeting their daily household energy requirements but they also have strategic needs in terms of gaining self confidence and independence by having more time and increased opportunities in the public sphere .Ignoring gender impacts in a public policy such as load shedding puts women at a disadvantage since women provide more labour and long hours in managing the household energy system resulting in them being confined more to the private sphere than the public due to increased workloads, this drains their time and strength to participate in developmental activities It has led to limited access and control of energy sources by women in households as they now depend upon relationships of patronage and dependency for alternative sources of energy, thus subordinating them further, hindering them to have an equal stand point with men, hence I contend that sustainable development which goes well beyond considerations of material needs to strategic needs and as a process of expanding freedoms and the reason to value cannot be attained if women's subordinate position in households remain unchanged. Load shedding in this study has proved to be a source of 'unfreedoms' leaving women more trapped in the roles proscribed by patriarchy thus challenges to patriarchy remain unabashed.

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