POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Advancing Inclusive Participation in Wind Energy Through Integrating Energy Justice Principles

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As countries accelerate their transition to renewable energy, ensuring that the process is both inclusive and just has become critical. Wind energy projects, in particular, have faced criticism for inadequate community engagement, especially in projects led by large private developers. Drawing on evidence from over 300 global case studies, this brief highlights the role of participatory practice, especially those driven by social innovations such as cooperatives and grassroots initiatives, in achieving fairer and more transparent project outcomes. It outlines actionable steps to enhance public participation and social legitimacy in wind energy development. Despite the growing number of wind energy projects, meaningful community participation is often limited. Legal requirements tend to focus on formal consultation without ensuring real influence over decisions. At the same time, participatory practices vary widely in quality and scope, with many communities feeling excluded, inadequately informed or lacking in power to influence decisions. Social innovation initiatives demonstrate promising alternatives, but these often remain under-supported and face legal and financial obstacles. Cooperatives tend to offer more inclusive participation, but mainly invest in small-scale projects. The challenges vary across the globe, but rural and indigenous and traditional communities are most affected by large-scale wind energy projects that fail to include them in planning processes and may overlook their needs

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

For Policymakers

- Introduce mandatory participation requirements at key stages of project planning and implementation.
- Support a diverse landscape of social innovations by adapting regulations to enable community ownership models.
- Promote energy democracy through inclusive policies—for example, by requiring a percentage of local community or cooperative ownership in all new projects.
- Strengthen legal frameworks to protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples and marginalised communities in energy planning processes.

For Energy Operators

- Shift from one-off consultations to long-term, cooperative engagement models.
- Collaborate with local energy cooperatives to benefit from their social networks and local knowledge.
- Increase transparency by sharing project data and decision-making criteria with stakeholders.
- Adopt and promote voluntary standards or labels that demonstrate a commitment to high-quality engagement.

For Energy Cooperatives

- Broaden participation by reducing entry barriers and involving a wider cross-section of the community.
- Seek strategic partnerships with municipalities or private actors to scale up successful projects and find new opportunities to invest in large-scale installations
- Advocate collectively for national and regional energy policies that recognise and support cooperative-led renewable energy initiatives.
- Continue innovating with governance structures that combine transparency with effective decision-making.

OTHER PROJECT OUTPUTS

Database of Participatory Practices

All Outputs

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