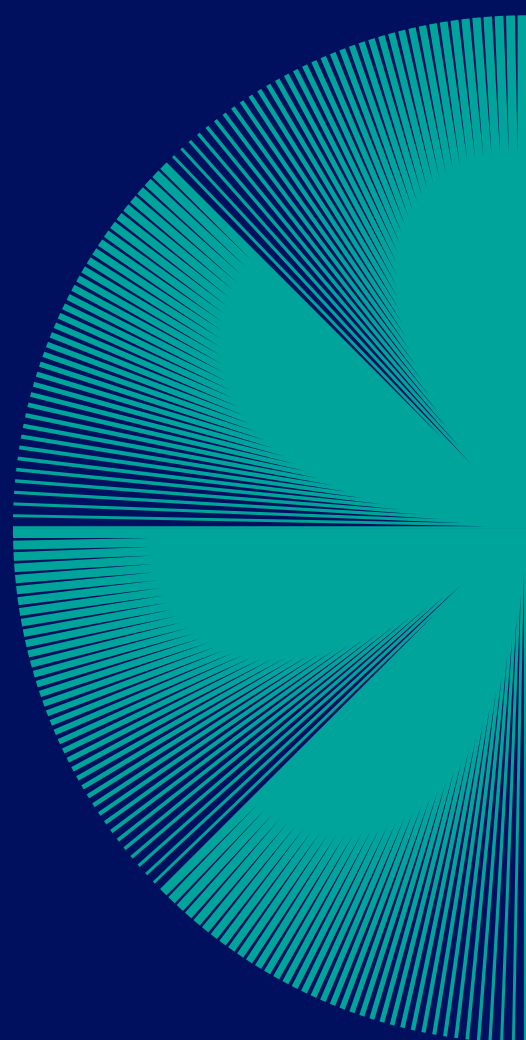




# Leaving no one behind: from framework to operationalisation

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## ABBREVIATIONS

<b>BDS</b>	Business Development Services
<b>BMZ</b>	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>CREE</b>	Community Rural Electrification Entity
<b>DSS</b>	Demand-side subsidies
<b>EnDev</b>	Energising Development
<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>GIZ</b>	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced People
<b>LNOB</b>	Leave No One Behind
<b>MAIP</b>	Multi-Annual Indicative Programming
<b>MFI</b>	Microfinance Institution
<b>MSME</b>	Micro-, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>PAYGO</b>	Pay-As-You-Go
<b>RBF</b>	Results-based Financing
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SI</b>	Social Institution
<b>SIINC</b>	Social Impact Incentives
<b>SNV</b>	Netherlands Development Organisation
<b>TA</b>	Technical Assistance



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# 1 Executive Summary

Energising Development (EnDev) is a global programme that promotes access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy services for households, social institutions, and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in developing countries. To date, EnDev has supported energy access for 33.9 million people in more than 20 countries across Africa, Asia, and Latin America, contributing to inclusive development, and building resilient, sustainable energy markets.

While reaching disadvantaged and underserved populations has long been part of EnDev's DNA, in 2023 EnDev adopted the Leave No One Behind (LNOB) principle as an explicit objective for the 2023-25 programming cycle. This was operationalised through the Multi-Annual Indicative Programming (MAIP), which outlined EnDev's interventions across more than 20 countries and set ambitious LNOB targets. Since then, EnDev has disaggregated LNOB-specific interventions and results across its portfolio, ramped up implementation, and further scaled successful initiatives with Top-Up Programming funds. By the end of 2024, EnDev had reached 976,900 people from LNOB groups – 56 % of the total target of 1,751,830 people by the end of 2026. Additionally, over 2,770 MSMEs and 690 social institutions operating in LNOB contexts gained access to energy.

EnDev's interventions are tailored to context and designed to address the specific barriers facing disadvantaged groups – namely, the poorest of the poor, those affected by displacement and fragility, socio-economically disadvantaged women, or other groups facing marginalisation. These interventions span supply, demand, and enabling environment activities, and include mechanisms such as results-based financing, business support, demand-side subsidies, behavioural change campaigns, and policy engagement. In doing so, EnDev addresses energy access disparities for customers that commercial markets have failed to reach, as well as contributes to broader development outcomes – such as increased agency, improved livelihoods, and gender equality – linking energy access with progress toward multiple SDGs.

Against this backdrop, this paper presents EnDev's LNOB Framework: Leaving No One Behind – From Framework to Operationalisation. It defines how EnDev interprets the LNOB principle and outlines the programme's approach to designing, delivering, and monitoring inclusive energy access interventions. Drawing on country-level experiences, the paper showcases how EnDev has put these principles into practice, with in-depth case studies from Ethiopia and Nepal. The approaches and lessons shared aim to inform LNOB programming across the energy sector, helping ensure that progress toward SDG 7 includes those most at risk of being left behind.

## 2 The global commitment to leaving no one behind

Persistent inequality not only limits the impact of economic growth on poverty reduction, but also threatens the long-term sustainability and inclusiveness of that growth. Addressing inequality entails tackling structural barriers, redistributing power and resources, and challenging discriminatory laws, policies, social norms, and stereotypes. Who is left behind – and why – is shaped by the interplay of five key factors: discrimination, geography, governance, socio-economic status, and shocks and fragility (UNDP, 2018). These drivers of inequality vary across countries and population groups, and often intersect in ways that deepen exclusion. Without deliberate action, the poorest and most marginalised – especially those facing the most complex and intersecting barriers – will continue to be left behind.

### Key challenges implementing the LNOB Agenda:

- High costs of reaching those furthest left behind, particularly in remote, fragile, or conflict-affected settings
- Difficulty identifying groups facing overlapping and context-specific forms of exclusion
- Lack of reliable, disaggregated data on marginalised communities
- Limited political will or competing priorities at the national level

In 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a dual ambition: not only to end poverty, but also to tackle rising inequalities within and among countries (UNSCEB, 2017). At its core lies the commitment to achieve the goals and targets **“for all peoples and for all segments of society,”** ensuring

that no one is left behind. This principle – Leave No One Behind (LNOB) – is the Agenda’s central, transformative promise. It represents the unequivocal commitment of all UN Member States to eradicate poverty in all forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce the inequalities and vulnerabilities that leave people behind. Crucially, the Agenda also pledges to “reach the furthest behind first” in achieving the SDGs, reaffirming the need for targeted and inclusive action (UNSCEB, 2017).

The 2030 Agenda explicitly recognises a range of vulnerable populations, including: people living in extreme poverty, women and girls, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced people, minorities, stateless people, people affected by complex humanitarian emergencies and conflict, and people living under colonial and foreign occupation. It envisions a world in which women and girls experience full gender equality, free from the legal, social, and economic barriers that restrict their participation and empowerment.

In the context of SDG 7 – which aims to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all – substantial progress has been made in recent decades. Yet those still lacking access are increasingly hard to reach, often living in remote areas, in extreme poverty, or in fragile and crisis-affected settings. With current trends, by 2030 an estimated 660 million people will remain without access to electricity and 1.8 billion will still rely on polluting cooking fuels and technologies, impacting both health, livelihoods, and the environment. These populations are largely concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and in least-developed countries, where ongoing crises or systemic inequality persist (IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO, 2024).

Within this context, EnDev seeks to improve the lives of the most vulnerable through access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy, thereby driving social, economic, and environmental change while ensuring that no one is left behind.

# 3 EnDev’s LNOB framework: the commitment to leave no one behind

## 3.1 The ambition

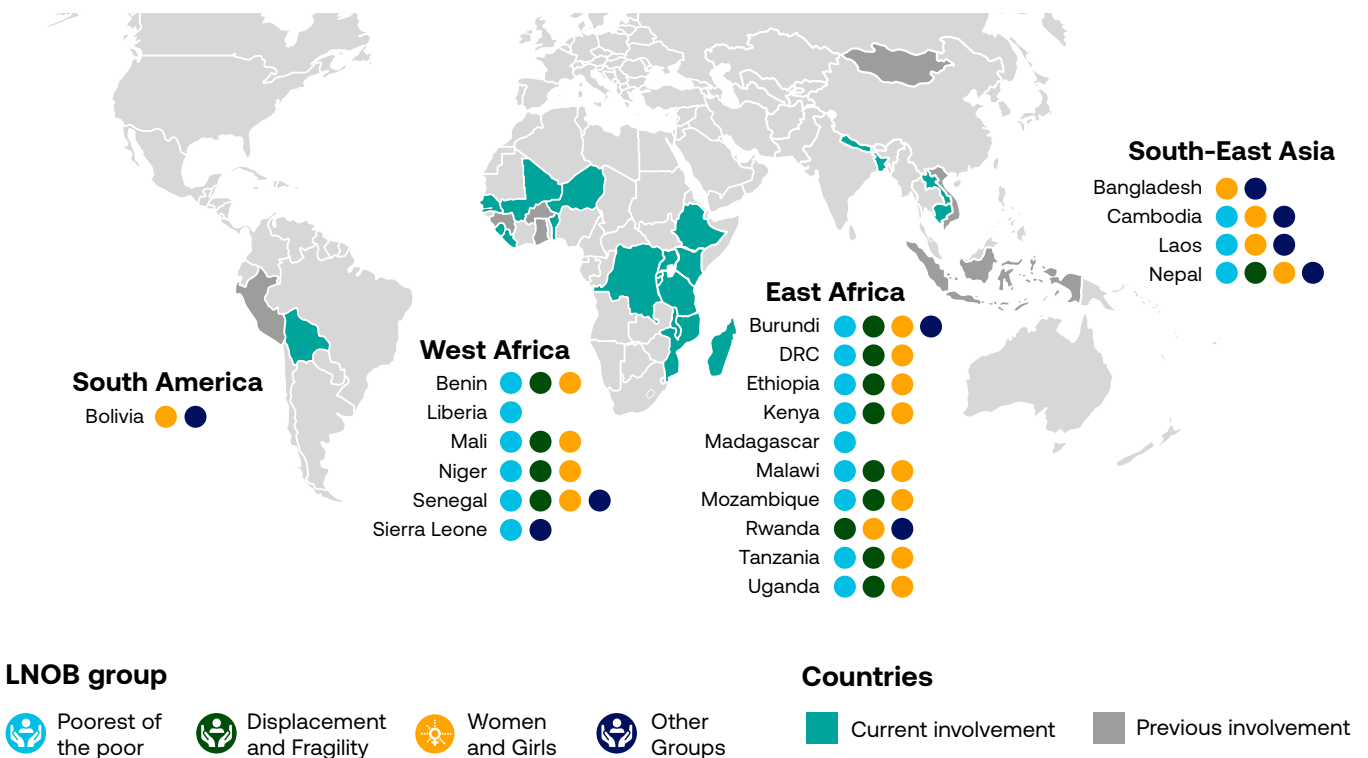
Drawing upon the LNOB concept outlined by the United Nations, EnDev defines its LNOB objective as the programme’s commitment to address discrimination, exclusion, and inequalities of certain vulnerable groups through context-specific approaches and measurable results. EnDev considers those ‘left behind’ as vulnerable groups who, for social, economic, religious, ethnic, legal, or other reasons, are not yet able to access or fully benefit from energy markets.

This commitment is reflected in EnDev’s [Strategy 2019 to 2025 ↗](#) as well as EnDev’s [Gender Strategy ↗](#),

which serves as a cornerstone for integrating gender-responsive and transformative approaches across the portfolio.<sup>1</sup>

While EnDev has long worked to support energy access for vulnerable populations, LNOB became one of two key strategic focus areas – along with Higher Tier Cooking (HTC) – in the 2023-2025 programming cycle, with ambitious targets set across the entire EnDev country portfolio. Through its interventions, the programme aims to reach 1,7 million people by the end of 2026.

Figure 1. LNOB groups targeted across EnDev's portfolio



1. Gender-transformative approaches go beyond simply improving women’s access to energy—they aim to shift underlying societal norms and power structures that reinforce gender inequality. This means challenging traditional roles, increasing women’s participation in decision-making, and ensuring their voices are heard in the energy sector ([EnDev’s Gender-Transformative Approaches: A Path to more Equality ↗](#)).

## 3.2 Target groups

EnDev focuses its interventions on population groups that are consistently excluded from energy markets due to structural barriers such as poverty, displacement, gender-based inequality, or discrimination.

To support this, EnDev identifies LNOB target groups along the following four categories:

- **Poorest of the poor:** People living in extreme poverty are among the least likely to have energy access, given their limited ability to afford energy products. In 2025, over 800 million people still live in extreme poverty—most of them concentrated in Sub-Saharan Africa and areas affected by conflict and fragility, where around half the population lacks access to electricity and sanitation (World Bank, 2025).
- **At risk communities in fragile contexts:** Some of the most vulnerable people are those affected by conflicts. Many are forcibly displaced, including internally displaced people (IDPs), refugees, and their host communities. As of mid-2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 122.6 million people were forcibly displaced, representing an increase of over 100% in the last decade (UNHCR, 2024). Displaced persons often lack shelter, legal identity, and legal protection, and at the same time face discrimination due to language, religion, culture, or ethnicity. Energy is essential in such settings, yet refugees, IDPs, and host communities are some of the furthest left behind in terms of energy access. An estimated 94% of displaced people in refugee camps do not have access to electricity and 81% rely on firewood and charcoal for cooking, with many using traditional three stone fires (GPA, 2022). Women are particularly affected: inadequate lighting in public spaces increase their vulnerability to violence (Lahn and Grafham, 2015), and sexual and gender-based violence when venturing outside camps to collect firewood is well documented.

### Key definitions surrounding humanitarian contexts and forcibly displaced people

**Internally displaced people** (also known as "IDPs") are "persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border" (OHCHR, 2024).

**Refugees** are persons fleeing the general effects of armed conflict and/or natural disaster. A crucial requirement to be considered a "refugee" is crossing an international border. Persons forcibly displaced from their homes who cannot or choose not to cross a border, therefore, are not considered refugees, even if they share many of the same circumstances and challenges as those who do (OHCHR, 2024.)

**A host community** refers to the country of asylum and the local, regional, and national governmental, social, and economic structures within which refugees live (UNHCR, 2011).

**Returnees** are refugees or IDPs who have returned to their country or area of origin but are yet to be fully integrated.

- **Women and girls:** Socio-economically disadvantaged women, and households led by women, are disproportionately affected by poverty and limited energy access (UN Women and UNIDO, 2023). Due to their roles in household chores such as cooking and fuel collection, women and



children experience the greatest health risks from polluting energy sources. In 2020, household air pollution caused an estimated 3.2 million deaths, including over 237,000 deaths of children under age five (WHO, 2024). In households that cook with solid fuels, girls spend an average 18 hours per week gathering fuel. Limited energy access also undermines health services: only 41% of healthcare facilities in low- and middle-income countries have reliable electricity, affecting maternal and child services (EnDev, 2025). Furthermore, women are under-represented in the renewable energy sector—accounting for only 32% of the workforce in renewables, and 22% in the energy sector overall (IRENA 2019).

- **Other groups:** EnDev recognises that vulnerability is multi-faceted and context specific. Therefore, in addition to the categories above, EnDev country projects can identify additional marginalised groups that are left behind in terms of energy access. These groups may face exclusion due to social, religious, ethnic, legal, or geographic factors. Examples include: ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, Dalits, ex-bonded

labourers, persons with disabilities, people living in extremely-remote areas, or disaster-affected communities.

### Intersectionality and multiple layers of deprivation

In practice, most people face more than one kind of deprivation, disadvantage, or form of discrimination. Intersectionality is the theory that various forms of discrimination centred on race, gender, class, disability, sexuality, or other forms of identity, do not work independently but interact to produce particularised forms of social oppression and exacerbate inequalities.

EnDev therefore employs an intersectional approach within its LNOB framework, recognising that those most likely to be left behind are groups whose marginalisation intersects along different dimensions and across LNOB group categories.

# 4 Operationalising LNOB: putting those left behind first in practice

## 4.1 LNOB in practice: conceptual framework

EnDev’s approach to Leave No One Behind is rooted in its operational mandate: to address energy access disparities and promote inclusive and sustainable solutions. It does so by supporting three types of end-users: households, social institutions, and MSMEs. This tri-pronged focus recognises that sustainable, long-term inclusion must include the individual level as well as strengthen the broader ecosystems – schools, clinics, and enterprises – that support community resilience, build energy markets, and boost economic and social development.

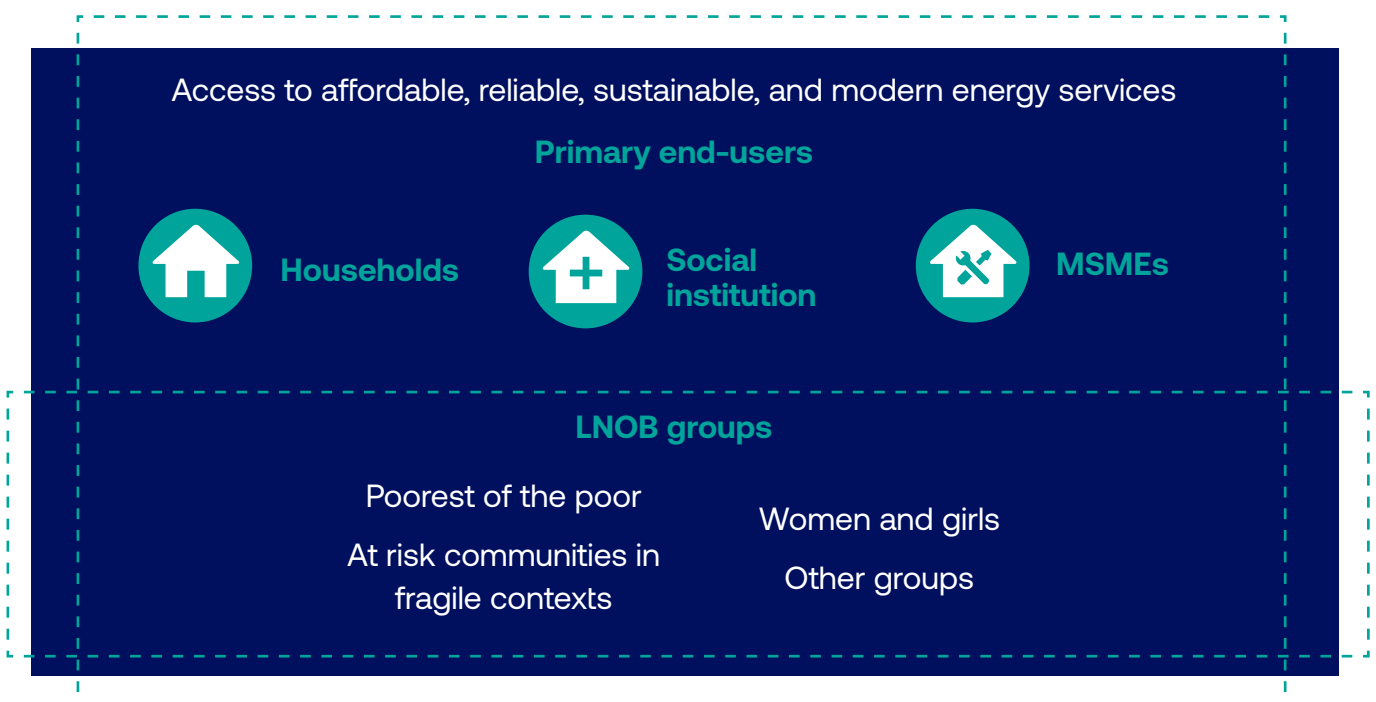
EnDev’s LNOB work is embedded within this existing framework. For each primary end-user type, EnDev identifies particular vulnerable populations and tailors energy access interventions to address their specific needs. Figure 2 below illustrates this conceptual framework.

To distinguish LNOB-specific programming from general access interventions, EnDev applies three key criteria:

- **1. Clearly defined target groups:** vulnerable groups are identified and mapped, including analysis of the underlying causes of their exclusion and assessment of their specific needs and aspiration.
- **2. Tailored interventions:** activities are designed and implemented to directly address energy access gaps and reduce disparities affecting these groups.
- **3. Measurable results:** a monitoring framework is established from the outset to track progress and assess results for these target groups.

The next three sections explore how EnDev operationalises these criteria: by mapping LNOB target groups (4.2), designing tailored interventions (4.3), and monitoring results through disaggregated data and feedback mechanisms (4.4).

Figure 2. Conceptual framework for EnDev's LNOB approach



### Best practices for mapping LNOB groups:

- Gather and analyse data from a range of sources to identify sub-populations and/or geographic areas where LNOB communities are concentrated, including both quantitative and qualitative data. In each context, there may be specific vulnerable sub-groups within the broader LNOB categories (see Table 1 for suggested definitions and data sources).
- Engage relevant stakeholders – including institutions with expertise in development, human rights, conflict, and inequality – to enrich the analysis and validate assumptions.
- Conduct community consultations to understand which sub-populations are left behind, as well as their needs and desires. Focus group discussions with affected populations, local leaders, and organisations representing at-risk groups can provide valuable insights into lived experiences, social dynamics, and barriers to access. This step is particularly critical if data is limited or outdated.
- Triangulate data sources – quantitative, institutional, and community-based – to develop a comprehensive and context-specific picture of exclusion and marginalisation.

## 4.2 Mapping: who is left behind and why

EnDev’s efforts to target LNOB communities begin with a clear understanding of who is being left behind, how, and why. This requires going beyond surface-level causes to examine the underlying structural and intersecting barriers that perpetuate marginalisation over time. Key questions include:

- **Who lacks access to energy products and markets, and for what reasons?**
- **What data and evidence exists to identify these groups?**
- **Which populations face overlapping disadvantages that place them furthest behind in terms of access, opportunity, and outcomes?**





Mapping these dynamics is a critical first step to ensure interventions are accurately targeted, locally relevant, and responsive to the realities of the those being left behind.

EnDev country teams apply a contextualised approach to identifying target groups, in line with the four LNOB group categories. These categories are aligned with UN definitions and adapted to reflect energy-access realities in each context.

EnDev does not rely on a single source or methodology to map LNOB communities. Instead, teams have a range of options at their disposal, from using existing national and international datasets – such as poverty registries, census data, or refugee records – or collecting primary data through surveys along with local consultations and government inputs. In Ethiopia, for example, EnDev worked with data from government counterparts and development partners to identify six key LNOB communities, including refugees, IDPs, conflict-affected populations, female-headed households, and households under the government’s Productive Safety Net (PSNP) Programme. Local government actors corroborated the data with on-the-ground insights into conflict and vulnerability.

Table 1 summarises the LNOB categories used across EnDev’s portfolio and highlights the types of data sources used to define and identify these groups.



Table 1. Mapping LNOB target groups: possible definitions and data sources

EnDev's LNOB target group	Possible definitions	Data sources
 <p><b>Poorest of the poor</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defined by the project, in coordination with local stakeholders</li> <li>• National poverty thresholds or criteria from partner governments</li> <li>• International benchmarks such as the World Bank extreme poverty line (\$2.15/day PPP) or UNDP's Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National statistical offices (e.g. census, household, or expenditure surveys)</li> <li>• Civil society and community-based organisation</li> <li>• International organisations (e.g. World Bank, UNDP)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>At risk communities in fragile contexts</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government-designated categories such as host communities or conflict-affected areas</li> <li>• Definitions given by international organisations, e.g. definitions given by UNHCR or OHCHR</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government registries or datasets (e.g. of internally displaced people)</li> <li>• International organisations (e.g. UN-HCR and IOM datasets)</li> <li>• NGOs working in displacement or conflict settings</li> <li>• Primary data collected by the project</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Women and girls</b></p>	<p>Includes women and girls facing overlapping vulnerabilities due to age, disability, marital or employment status, or location. Sub-groups include elderly women, widows, women with disabilities, or female-headed households.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government registries or datasets (e.g. of female-headed households)</li> <li>• International organisations (e.g. UN Women, WFP)</li> <li>• NGOs or community organisation working with vulnerable women</li> <li>• Community-based data collected through participatory methods</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Other groups</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project specific (defined by the project)</li> <li>• As defined by the partner government</li> <li>• As defined by local or international organisations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government registries or datasets (e.g. disability records)</li> <li>• NGOs working with marginalised groups</li> <li>• Primary data collected by the project</li> </ul>

Mapping efforts also extend beyond households to include micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) and social institutions that serve LNOB populations. For instance, schools, clinics, and women-led

businesses operating in underserved areas are included within LNOB programming based on their relevance to marginalised communities. These actors are also mapped, with definitions and data sources shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mapping MSMEs and social institutions in LNOB context

End user category	Possible definitions	Data sources
 <p><b>Social institutions in LNOB context</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public or community institutions situated in and serving LNOB populations. Examples include:</li> <li>• Schools in remote or conflict-affected regions,</li> <li>• Health centres in displacement settings, maternal wards</li> <li>• Community centres or shelters serving marginalised groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government registries or datasets</li> <li>• NGOs working with the target group or in targeted areas</li> <li>• Project-level mapping and stakeholder consultations</li> </ul>
 <p><b>MSMEs in LNOB context</b></p>	<p>MSMEs that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are owned or led by individuals from LNOB groups</li> <li>• Primarily employ people from LNOB groups</li> <li>• Operate in or directly serve LNOB populations (remote markets, refugee-hosting areas).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government registries or datasets</li> <li>• NGOs and local economic development partners</li> <li>• Project-level enterprise mapping and field work</li> </ul>

### 4.3 Taking action: designing interventions to reach LNOB groups

Once vulnerable groups have been identified, interventions must be designed to directly address their specific energy needs, barriers, and contexts. For EnDev, this means going beyond standard models to develop context-specific activities that prioritise those at greatest risk of being left behind.

In LNOB settings, this often involves adapting delivery models, subsidy structures, and implementation mechanisms to reflect the realities of target groups. Addressing inequality also involves, wherever possible, challenging gender norms and strengthening the voice, representation, and empowerment of LNOB groups within the sector.

#### 4.3.1 Understanding market gaps

Designing inclusive energy access interventions starts with understanding why vulnerable groups are excluded. Typically, unserved populations face two types of barriers that limit their access to energy products and services:

**a) The accessibility gap**, where end-users face physical or logistical barriers to obtaining energy products. This often affects remote, sparsely populated, or displacement-affected areas where energy markets have not developed due to high distribution costs, poor infrastructure, or other restrictions (for example,

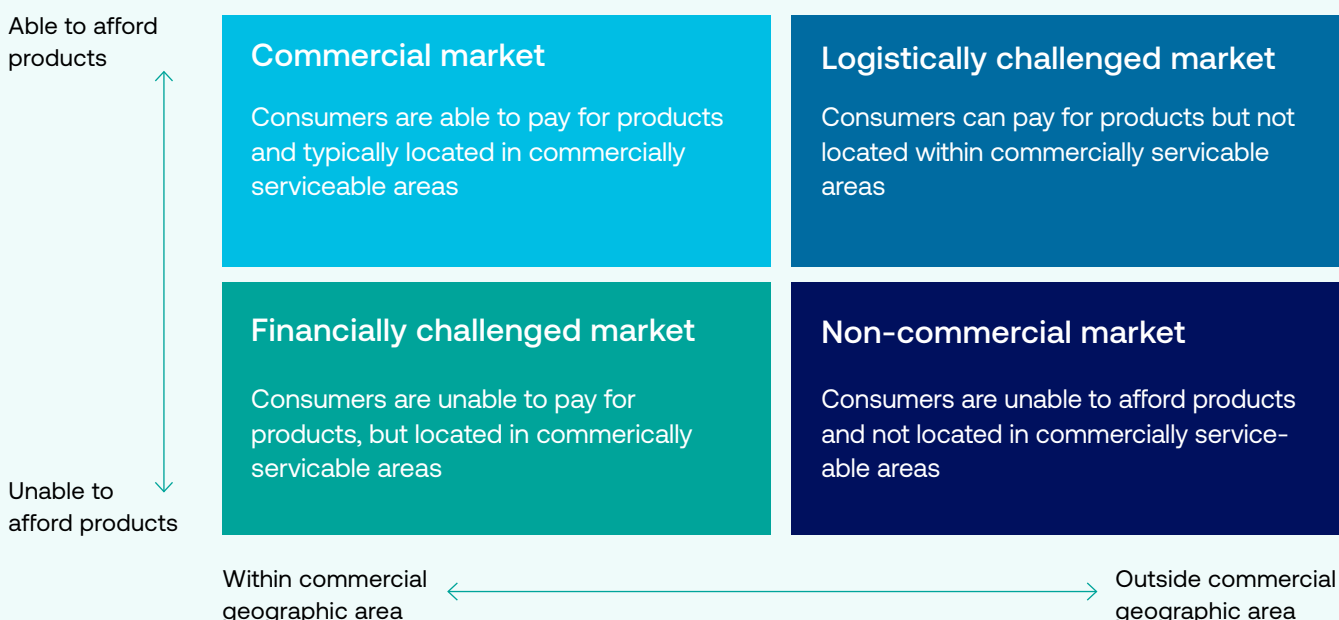
obtaining licenses to operate in refugee settlements). In some cases, social marginalisation – due to gender or disability – or limited awareness about energy products can also impede access.

**b) The affordability gap**, where end-users may live in areas served by energy markets, but cannot afford the products or lack access to appropriate financing mechanisms. These gaps are especially acute for low-income and highly vulnerable people. For example, less than 22 % of people who currently lack electricity access can afford the cost of a Tier 1

solar home system, even with pay-as-you-go (PAYG) financing—a figure that drops even further in remote areas (ESMAP, 2024).

These two dimensions – geographic reach and ability to pay – can be visualised in a simple typology (see Figure 2). The quadrant distinguishes between four market contexts, ranging from fully commercial markets (top left), where little intervention is needed, to non-commercial markets (bottom right), where consumers face both affordability and accessibility barriers and are most at risk of being left behind.

Figure 3. The access and affordability gaps for unserved populations (Lighting Global/ESMAP, 2024)



This framework helps to clarify where different types of interventions are most needed:

- In logistically challenged markets, interventions may focus on building supply chains, awareness raising, removing regulatory barriers, or results-based finance (RBF) incentives.
- In financially challenged markets, interventions

may require demand-side subsidies, consumer financing, or community-based models.

- In non-commercial markets, combined strategies may be needed.

Understanding where LNOB target populations fall within this matrix is a critical step in designing effective, tailored interventions.



### 4.3.2 Designing LNOB interventions

EnDev follows a market-based approach centred around three types of interventions: supply-side, demand-side, and enabling-environment measures. In LNOB contexts, these elements often need to be adapted to overcome structural barriers and to reach populations that commercial markets have failed to serve.

The following subsections highlight successful LNOB interventions across EnDev’s portfolio.

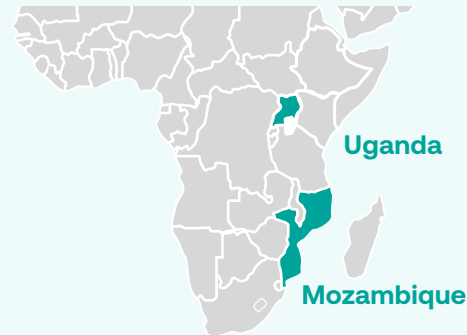
#### a) Supply side interventions

In many LNOB contexts, energy providers face significant disincentives to operate due to geographic remoteness, high distribution costs, or low purchasing power. To mitigate these barriers and close accessibility gaps, EnDev has implemented a range of supply-side instruments – including results-based finance (RBF), business development support (BDS), and technical assistance – tailored to help enterprises reach vulnerable populations as well as boost inclusion within the value chain.

**Results-based finance (RBF)** is a mechanism in which funds are disbursed only after agreed-upon results are achieved. In LNOB contexts, RBF is used to incentivise companies to operate in underserved markets or reach marginalised customer segments – such as female-headed households, remote areas, or displacement-affect communities. It also can be used to shape market behaviour by linking disbursement to results that promote inclusion, such as offering flexible payment options like PAYGO, or achieving specific social impacts (see also: [EnDev’s SIINC pilot ↗](#)).

RBF can be further used to embed LNOB objectives at the company level – for example, to employ marginalised groups, provide inclusive workspaces for people with disabilities, or increase the percentage of female employees. For more on EnDev’s experience with RBF for LNOB, see: [RBF Projects that Leave No One Behind ↗](#).

#### Example Results-based finance (RBF)



In Mozambique, EnDev’s FASER (Results-Based Financing Fund for Sustainable Access to Renewable Energy) facility introduced a humanitarian window to respond to the 2019 Cyclone Idai, and subsequently the ‘COVID-Plus’ and ‘COVID-PAY’ windows to support struggling households during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2024, it introduced a dedicated LNOB window, adjusting incentives to encourage companies to focus on the most vulnerable, including families living in remote areas, IDPs, and female-led households. See also:

 [How a nonprofit-run fund kickstarted a green technology market in tumultuous times - EnDev ↗](#)

As part of its LNOB-focused RBF, EnDev Uganda offers additional incentives to reward companies for gender-related actions. Participating entities can receive an additional 10 % bonus on top of the total incentive, if:

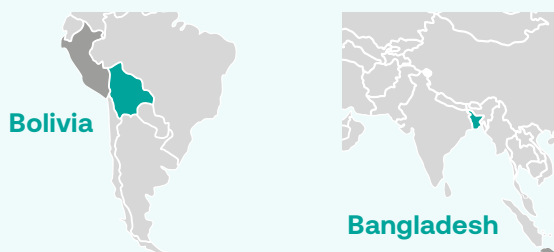
- at least 60 % of customers are women or women-led households
- at least 40 % of staff involved in RBF management or distribution are women
- the entity provides gender and equality training for staff. See also:

 [From last mile to last household: How results-based financing reached Uganda’s most excluded - EnDev ↗](#)

**Business development support (BDS)** enables LNOB individuals to participate in and benefit from energy value chains. Depending on the context, this may include skills development, leadership training, financial literacy, or support in accessing finance. EnDev uses BDS to strengthen capacities of sales agents and last-mile distributors among LNOB groups, as well as support female-led or refugee-led enterprises. Depending on the context, this may also include tools to mitigate and address sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

Beyond financing, EnDev supports companies and implementing partners with **technical assistance** to develop, refine, and implement LNOB strategies. This includes assistance to build distribution channels in remote areas, train local sales agents, develop inclusive marketing strategies, or establish service centres near target groups. Further, technical assistance can involve equipping companies to mitigate gender-based violence and developing gender-inclusive HR practices, such as road maps to increase the ratio of female employees in traditionally male-dominated areas. In addition to supporting companies, technical assistance may also support implementing partners to adapt delivery models in order to better reach marginalised populations.


### Example Business development support (BDS)



In Bangladesh, EnDev worked with AVA Development Society and Ashrai to train disadvantaged women from rural, ethnic-minority communities as sales agents, technicians, and maintenance experts within their. From 2023-2025, over 400 women were trained. The initiative not only fosters local employment opportunities but also ensures that marginalised groups have locally-rooted access to sustainable and clean energy solutions. See also:

 [How upskilling Santal women sparks lasting cultural shifts in clean cooking ↗](#)

In Bolivia, EnDev's Fondo Energía Mujer (FEM) initiative supported rural, women-led enterprises – particularly among indigenous communities – by providing financial and technical assistance for solar-powered productive use technologies. Beyond improving income and employment opportunities, FEM aimed to strengthen women's entrepreneurial skills and dismantle traditional gender norms and stereotypes. See also:

 [From llamas to shampoo and bees: how women energised rural business ↗](#)

### Example Technical assistance



In Kenya, the Market-based Energy Access (MBEA) project helped solar and clean cooking companies expand their operations into Kakuma refugee settlement and its host community in Kenya's Turkana County. The project supported companies to set up distribution channels, trained local last-mile entrepreneurs, established local stove production units comprised of refugee and host community artisans, and introduced alternative cooking fuels to the settlement. See also:

 [Promoting Market Based Energy Access for Cooking and Lighting in Kakuma Refugee Camp ↗](#)

## b) Demand side interventions

Even when energy markets exist, affordability and awareness barriers often prevent uptake among LNOB groups. Demand-side interventions are therefore critical to ensure that everyone can access and fully benefit from energy solutions.


**Demand-side subsidies (DSS)** are designed to reduce consumer prices and close the affordability gap for specific target groups, without eliminating the price completely. Subsidies can be delivered directly to customers (via cash, mobile money, or vouchers), or indirectly through companies via an RBF mechanism, provided that the end-user price is reduced accordingly. These instruments are especially effective in reaching target groups with low purchasing power. When combined with supply-side incentives, DSS can further catalyse market growth into otherwise non-commercial areas. For more, see: [Demand-Side Subsidies ↗](#).

**Awareness-raising and behavioural change campaigns** also play a crucial role in driving demand. For consumers, they increase knowledge about energy products and services; for suppliers, they help activate new markets. Beyond driving demand, awareness raising activities can also educate about consumer rights, such as after-sales services or warranties. To be effective in LNOB settings, awareness campaigns must be tailored to the specific characteristics of the target groups, using trusted communication channels, accessible language, and culturally relevant messaging. Such efforts also pose an opportunity to challenge traditional gender norms around household roles and energy use.

DSS

### Example

#### Demand-side subsidies (DSS)



In Malawi, as part of the Demand-Side Subsidies (DSS) component, EnDev provided subsidies lowering the consumer price of solar home systems and improved cookstoves. The programme targets households classified as ‘poorer’ and ‘poorest’ in the United Beneficiary Registry (UBR), a nation-wide social registry system hosted by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. See also:

**How a stove is transforming lives in Malawi ↗**


Rwanda’s Pro-Poor RBF followed a tiered approach for DSS, using the government’s national registry: the highest demand-side subsidy for the poorest household categories, a modest subsidy for medium-income households, and no incentive for better-off households. See also:

**How shifting to a pro-poor approach accelerated energy access in Rwanda - EnDev ↗**

♀♂

### Example

#### Awareness-raising and behavioural change campaigns



EnDev Tanzania supported the transformation of traditional gender roles by engaging men as allies and advocates in clean cooking. The awareness campaign encouraged men to take an active role in household cooking decisions, and to participate in community discussions on adopting better cooking practices. This gender-transformative approach sparked change in energy use, household well-being, and community engagement. See also:

**Men in Cooking: Transforming Gender Roles for a Just Energy Transition ↗**



### c) Enabling environment measures

In many contexts, barriers to energy access are not solely financial or logistical, but institutional. Structural exclusion is often embedded in planning processes, data systems, financing regulations, and capacity constraints at the national and local level. Strengthening the enabling environment is therefore essential to removing such barriers and creating the conditions for inclusive energy markets to emerge and scale.

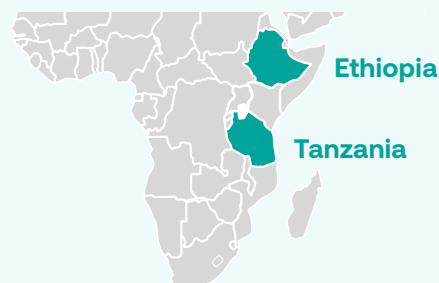
Enabling-environment interventions under the LNOB agenda include a broad range of activities. In displacement contexts, EnDev has supported the integration of refugee and IDP communities into national energy planning, and worked to embed gender provisions – such as targets for women-led enterprises or increased female employment – into national strategies. Other efforts include improving disaggregated data collection and supporting its use in rural electrification strategies, last-mile subsidy schemes, or national monitoring frameworks. These efforts are often paired with technical assistance to support governments in designing and implementing inclusive programs.

In addition, EnDev strengthens inclusive participation through support to stakeholder platforms – such as women’s energy associations or refugee committees – to strengthen their representation in policy discussions or regulatory processes. EnDev also supports cross-sectoral coordination, for example, by aligning humanitarian and energy actors in fragile contexts or linking social protection systems with energy access initiatives.

These enabling-environment interventions help anchor LNOB considerations across policy, planning, and delivery systems – supporting not only greater energy access, but also the voice and agency of LNOB groups within national and subnational processes.

#### Example

#### Enabling-environment interventions



In Ethiopia, EnDev supports the Ethiopian Women in Energy (EWiEn) Association, formed in 2019 to connect and empower women professionals in the energy sector. Annual networking events co-organized by EnDev offer women opportunities for leadership, visibility, and professional development. This represents a strategic effort to strengthen institutional capacity and create pathways for greater LNOB inclusion across the sector. See also:



**How women and girls are combatting climate change by working towards sustainable energy solutions ↗**

In Tanzania, EnDev, in partnership with the Tanzania Gender and Energy Network (TaNGSEN), supports the TACCS Women Chapter, an initiative established to promote gender equality and empower women in the clean energy field. The chapter aims to increase women's participation and leadership in the clean cooking industry and related energy initiatives. See also:



**Bridging gender gaps throughout the energy supply chain ↗**

### Navigating trade-offs in LNOB programming

Implementing LNOB programming often involves difficult trade-offs. Decisions about who qualifies as disadvantaged, what level of subsidy is justified, and how to balance equity with cost-efficiency are rarely clear cut. These choices depend heavily on country contexts and available resources. Moreover, LNOB interventions tend to incur higher costs, especially where subsidies are involved. Nonetheless, EnDev integrates LNOB groups into its programming in order to ensure inclusive energy access, while refining approaches to increase both the impact and cost-effectiveness of LNOB interventions.



## 4.4 Tracking results: ensuring quality of LNOB data and information

Delivering on the LNOB agenda requires robust measurement, analysis, and reporting of progress to ensure that no one is left behind. Tracking progress involves improving the availability of disaggregated data, and monitoring disparities and inequalities between groups over time.

Since 2023, EnDev disaggregates LNOB-specific interventions and results. This involves separating LNOB interventions from those targeting non-LNOB end-users, as well as ensuring the quality of reported results. In addition to establishing a clear conceptual framework during the design phase, EnDev ensures credibility through two key quality control steps:

- **1. Results verification:** confirms that the LNOB target group has truly been reached, providing quality assurance of LNOB results.
- **2. The LNOB ‘eligibility check’:** provides a final layer of confirmation that LNOB interventions and results have followed all criteria and are clearly disaggregated.

### How to credibly count LNOB results: the LNOB ‘eligibility check’

As part of EnDev’s annual monitoring cycle, the LNOB ‘eligibility check’ verifies whether reported results genuinely qualify as LNOB. The check is directly aligned with the three core building blocks of LNOB programming presented in this paper: identifying disadvantaged groups, designing tailored interventions, and disaggregating results. To report LNOB results, country projects must demonstrate:

#### 1. Target group identification

The vulnerable group is clearly defined, supported by data that explains who is left behind and why.

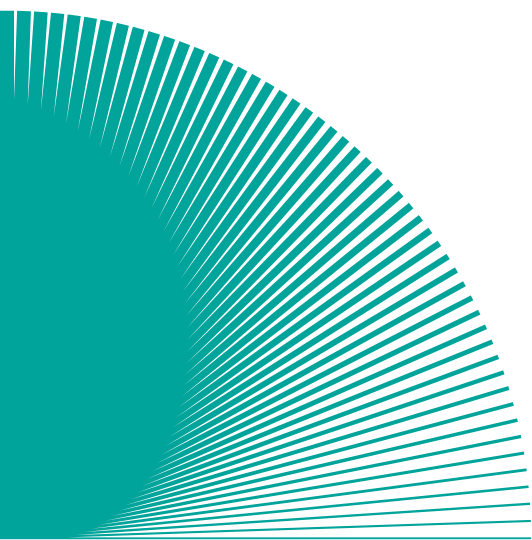
#### 2. Tailored design

The intervention is specifically designed to address the unique barriers and challenges of the identified group.

#### 3. Measurable results

Results are measured separately from non-LNOB beneficiaries, with clear documentation.

These criteria help ensure that reported LNOB results are credible, consistent across countries, and grounded in EnDev’s programmatic logic. They also foster learning and strengthen accountability across the portfolio.



## 5 Case studies: EnDev Ethiopia and EnDev Nepal

The following case studies illustrate how EnDev has applied its LNOB programming approach in two country contexts: Ethiopia and Nepal. These case studies highlight how interventions have been tailored to address specific vulnerabilities, whether due to displacement, conflict, remoteness, or structural poverty. Together, they offer concrete insights into the challenges and opportunities of delivering inclusive energy access in diverse contexts.

## 5.1 Energy access in fragile contexts

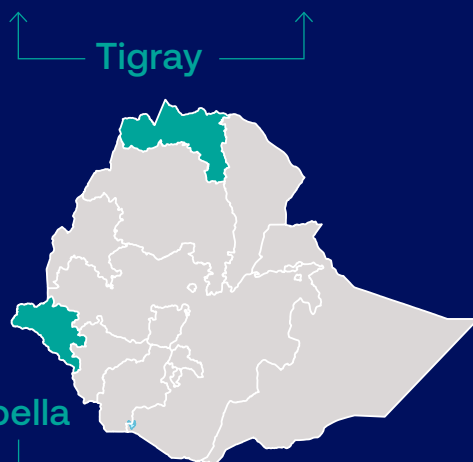


### The context

**930,000**

refugees and asylum seekers  
resided in Ethiopia

**1 million** internally displaced people  
**100,000** Eritrean refugees



**Gambella**

**400,000**

South Sudanese refugees

Ethiopia hosts the second largest refugee population in Africa. As of July 2023, more than 930,000 refugees and asylum seekers resided in the country, the majority originating from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea (UNHCR, 2025). In addition, armed conflict broke out in November 2020 between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front, a regional rebel force. The conflict resulted in thousands of deaths and the internal displacement of millions of Ethiopians. While a peace deal was signed in November 2022 (UNHCR, 2025), post-conflict challenges persist.

EnDev has been working with forcibly displaced populations in two regions: Tigray and Gambella. Tigray in northern Ethiopia hosts over 100,000 Eritrean refugees living in four settlements, as well as nearly one million internally displaced people (IDPs), accounting for 42% of the country’s total. Most of Tigray’s electricity, telecommunications, and other infrastructure has been destroyed, severely limiting humanitarian response efforts. In Gambella, located in remote western Ethiopia, a renewed influx of refugees from neighbouring South Sudan has occurred following escalating conflict and climate crises there. The region now hosts nearly 400,000 South Sudanese refugees, many of whom are women and young children (Oxfam, 2025).



### The LNOB approach and objectives

EnDev Ethiopia supports access to clean cooking and electrification for households, MSMEs, and social institutions among displaced populations and their host communities. Its activities are aligned with the government’s Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework and undertaken in collaboration with the local government authorities and agencies. In addition to targeting conflict-affected and displaced populations, EnDev also targets female-headed households, women-led enterprises, and beneficiaries of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP)—the government’s flagship social protection initiative.



## Key interventions and LNOB measures

- **Supporting local energy production and supply chains:** In Gambella, EnDev helped establish a charcoal briquette production plant and supported women-led ICS cookstove production cooperatives through technical and business training, material inputs (e.g. kiln, shed, production materials), and market linkage facilitation. Production facilities were strategically located near refugee settlements to ensure accessibility and consistent fuel supply.
- **Incentivising private-sector expansion in displacement settings:** Business development support, marketing assistance, and supply-side RBF incentives were provided to companies selling solar PV systems for lighting and phone charging in Gambella and Tigray, encouraging operation in remote and underserved refugee areas. In Tigray, RBF is used specifically to help re-establish energy markets destroyed by the conflict and to mitigate private-sector risk.
- **Improving affordability through demand-side subsidies:** a voucher-based demand-side subsidy mechanism is being introduced for clean cooking technologies in both regions, offering subsidies of up to 80% for the most vulnerable households, including female-headed households, large families, and those identified through the government's refugee authority. Subsidies are disbursed to retailers via local banks, which act as fund managers.
- **Enhancing energy access for social infrastructure:** In partnership with World Vision, energy-efficient institutional cookstoves and solar-powered electricity were introduced in schools in Gambella refugee settlements. Solar installations are also underway for public institutions such as farmer centres and health posts.
- **Raising awareness and driving behavioural change:** Awareness campaigns were conducted in both refugee and host communities across Gambella and Tigray to increase understanding and improve adoption of clean cooking solutions.
- **Strengthening implementation through local partnerships:** EnDev works closely with Regional Energy Bureaus, local community councils, and local energy associations for demand creation, voucher distribution, on-the-ground monitoring, and verification of results.

## Challenges faced in implementation



- Security constraints in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Tigray, have limited staff mobility and created challenges for on-site monitoring, verification, and programme delivery.
- Tensions between refugee and host communities – driven by competition over scarce resources such as fuelwood – posed social and operational difficulties. Host communities often face the same levels of poverty and vulnerability as refugee populations.
- Decreasing humanitarian funding and shifting donor priorities have reduced support services, creating additional pressure on development actors like EnDev to fill critical gaps.
- Affordability remains a barrier, even with subsidies, particularly for large or female-headed households with no income sources beyond food rations.
- Severe infrastructure damage in Tigray following the 2020–2022 conflict resulted in the destruction of local energy markets and supply chains, requiring significant efforts to rebuild markets from the ground up.

Case study: EnDev Ethiopia





## Results

**50,000+**

students are being fed through 24 school feeding centres in refugee settlements in Gambella, with access to clean institutional stoves.

Access to clean cooking for

**1,000**

businesses with a focus on women-led businesses.

Access to electricity for

**20**

schools and food distribution centers in refugee and host communities of Tigray and Gambella

Access to energy for

**7,260**

people among displaced and host community members, and

**247,240**

people in conflict affected areas



## Lessons learned

- **Include host communities alongside refugees:** host communities often face similar vulnerabilities and resource constraints to refugees. EnDev's experience underscores that designing inclusive activities from the outset strengthens social cohesion and avoids reinforcing perceived inequalities.
- **Plan for disruption:** in volatile political and humanitarian settings, adaptive programming is key. Designing modular activities, budgeting for delays, and planning contingency options in advance enables faster adaptation when security or political conditions shift.
- **Work through local partners:** Working with subnational governments, regional energy bureaus, and community-based organisations significantly improves implementation in conflict-affected and fragile settings. Their involvement can enable nuanced targeting in the absence of available data, project monitoring when access to conflict-affected areas is restricted, and legitimacy when trust-building among communities is essential.
- **Consider persistent affordability gaps:** market-based approaches may not reach the poorest households, especially among displaced populations with limited income-generation opportunities. LNOB interventions must recognise where market-based models are most appropriate and where additional support mechanisms, such as targeted demand-side subsidies, are needed.
- **Leverage institutional entry points:** Partnering with education and school feeding programmes expanded reach cost-effectively, benefiting large populations and creating visibility for clean cooking solutions.

## 5.2 Addressing challenges of remoteness and poverty



### The context

**93,4 %**  
rural electrification

**cooking energy**  
access to clean fuels & technologies

**40 %**  
nationwide

**24.7 %**  
rural areas



Approximately 94% of Nepal's population has access to electricity, but significant disparities remain: rural electrification remains at 93.4%, and provinces such as Karnali and Sudurpaschim continue to report low coverage. For cooking energy, access to clean fuels and technologies remains limited—only 40% nationwide, and just 24.7% in rural areas (IEA, IRENA, UNSD, World Bank, WHO, 2024). Even in electrified areas, marginalised groups often remain unconnected.

Nepal's 2015 constitution enshrines gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) as core principles, and requires the participation of excluded groups in policies and programmes. Importantly, the Government of Nepal maintains formal classifications of disadvantaged groups – such as Dalits, indigenous communities, female-headed households, or mountainous remote areas – which are reflected in official identity documents and used to guide national and local programming.

In this context, EnDev – implemented by GIZ, SNV, and Practical Action – has been active in Nepal since 2009. Its efforts are closely aligned with national inclusion policies, and its targeting of LNOB groups is guided by the Government of Nepal's formal classifications.



### The LNOB approach and objectives

EnDev Nepal's LNOB approach builds on the country's constitutional commitment to social inclusion and local government's formal classification system for disadvantaged groups. EnDev seeks to expand sustainable energy access for these structurally marginalised populations, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

EnDev uses a multi-pronged approach under three components. The first is the on-grid component, supporting Community Rural Electrification Entities (CREEs) with a specific grid densification component enabling access for LNOB groups. The second is an off-grid component, supporting electrification for remote communities through a Micro-Hydro Debt Fund, which provides technical and financial assistance to the private sector to set up mini-/micro- hydropower projects for last-mile communities. The third is the clean cooking component, promoting clean cooking through targeted subsidies for LNOB households.



## Key interventions and LNOB measures

- **Grid densification:** EnDev provides demand-side subsidies through an RBF mechanism for marginalised social groups to connect to the grid. The initial cost of the electricity meter is provided by the project, with differentiated subsidy levels for households and MSMEs, while any additional costs for house wiring are borne by target groups. If needed, local cooperatives or governments step in to cover remaining affordability gaps.
- **The Micro-Hydro Debt Fund:** targeting 23 extremely remote districts – defined by the government – the fund offers fixed subsidies (linked to plant capacity) to incentivise private investment in off-grid hydropower projects and mitigate risks for commercial banks. Subsidy levels vary depending on the vulnerability mix of the target area, encouraging investment in unelectrified, hard-to-reach communities.
- **Electric cooking:** A behavioural change and demand-generation campaign accompanies a targeted subsidy package covering wiring improvements and energy-efficient appliances (e.g. induction and pressure cookers) for LNOB households. Additional discounts on cooking utensils are offered. Women are engaged as local change agents, playing a key role in uptake and use of electric cooking.

## Challenges faced in implementation



- Affordability remains a persistent challenge to electric cooking. Even with subsidies, many poorer households remain unable to afford the utensils or upgrades required for electric cooking.
- Political dynamics can influence how local authorities prioritise LNOB targeting and resource allocation.
- Data collection, monitoring, and verification of LNOB communities in extremely remote areas has proven cumbersome and costly, limiting the feasibility of extensive data collection.



### Results

Access to electricity for  
**18,580**  
vulnerable households  
through the grid densifi-  
cation subcomponent

Access to  
electricity for over  
**220**  
MSMEs and social  
institutions in LNOB  
contexts

Access to electricity  
through the micro-  
hydro subcomponent for  
**12,480**  
vulnerable households

Access to electricity  
through the micro-hydro  
subcomponent for

**86 + 60**  
MSMEs      social institutions  
in remote areas

Access to e-cooking for  
**23,980**  
vulnerable households, including  
indigenous people, the poorest  
of the poor, and female-headed  
households



### Lessons learned

- **Weigh formal vulnerability classifications against context:** While local government classifications of disadvantaged groups provide an important foundation for targeting, they may not always reflect on-the-ground realities. Earthquakes, fuel crises, and floods eroded livelihoods for a large number of Nepali families, creating new pockets of energy poverty that fall outside of formal classifications.
- **Tailor behavioural change communication (BCC) campaigns to local norms:** BCC campaigns are critical for the adoption of e-cooking among LNOB groups, especially when materials are codeveloped with community actors and designed for local language and culture.
- **Use community representatives as change agents:** Community representatives – especially women – can serve as powerful advocates and change agents, helping to overcome social or informational barriers to adoption.
- **Balance subsidy targeting with administrative feasibility:** Uniform subsidy levels across households simplify management, but may not sufficiently meet the diverse needs of LNOB groups. Future programming should explore different targeting approaches to accurately bridge affordability gaps for LNOB target groups.
- **Engage local governments:** Local governments can play an important role in targeting, verification, and data handling, especially in hard-to-reach areas. Overall, local government and community partnerships are vital for implementation, trust-building, and sustainable results.



## 6 Conclusion

The Leave No One Behind principle remains at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including SDG 7 on clean and affordable energy. With less than six years remaining to achieve the SDGs, deliberate action is needed to accelerate progress – especially for those furthest behind.

EnDev's continued commitment to LNOB ensures that even those beyond the reach of standard market mechanisms gain access to modern energy. This paper has outlined how EnDev's LNOB approach provides a practical framework for identifying and responding to the needs of disadvantaged groups across diverse country contexts. Through tailored interventions, strategic partnerships, and inclusive delivery models, EnDev is operationalising the LNOB principle as a core part of its programming.

The case studies from Ethiopia and Nepal illustrate how this approach can be tailored to very different environments: from displacement-affected regions

with fragile security conditions to remote mountainous communities facing structural barriers to access. Across these contexts, several consistent themes emerge: the importance of well-calibrated subsidies, the need for robust data and verification systems, the role of local actors in ensuring relevance and trust, and the value of embedding LNOB efforts within national policy frameworks.

Critically, reaching LNOB groups is not only a matter of ethical commitment, but also essential to ensuring the long-term sustainability and equity of energy transitions. Vulnerable populations often face the greatest risks from energy poverty and climate impacts, while standing to benefit most from improved access. Designing interventions for these groups can accelerate progress toward universal energy access, while also contributing to broader development goals such as poverty reduction, gender equality, and climate resilience. LNOB is not a parallel agenda – it is central to achieving inclusive, lasting impact.



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