



by Robert Mandeya

The Engendered Safety Implications of LPG consumption

In Africa, access to clean cooking energy is particularly gendered issue, because women are primarily responsible for cooking in virtually all cultures. About 1.3 billion people lack access to electricity, more than double that number about 3 billion people, mainly in South Asia but also in Africa, parts of Latin America and elsewhere still rely on solid fuels for cooking and heating. Access to clean and safe cooking energy will certainly be a key contributor to meeting sustainable development goal 5 on gender equality and to reducing poverty.

Given the foregoing, increasing household use of LPG is one of several alternatives to meet the objective of universal access to clean cooking and heating solutions by 2030, which is one of the three pillars of the UN Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative. With the rise of fossil fuel consumption in Africa, there has been also a rise in challenges necessitated by carbon emissions from fossil fuels impacting on climatic changes and global warming.

There is a serious need to transition people from traditional fuels to LPG. Women being at the centre of the, “access to clean cooking energy campaign,” should be prioritised in the LPG safety educational and awareness initiatives. The “cooking for life” campaign launched by the World Liquid Petroleum Gas Association (WLPGA) must be emulated in the different jurisdictions around the globe particularly African countries. The campaign seeks to communicate the health benefits of switching communities from wood, charcoal, dung and other traditional fuels to LPG for cooking.

LPG is a clean-burning, efficient, versatile and portable, produced as a by-product of natural gas extraction and crude oil refining. It can be up to five times more efficient (high calorific value) than traditional fuels, produces less air pollutants than kerosene, wood or coal, and emits about 20% less carbon dioxide than heating oil and 50% less than coal; it also reduces black carbon emissions.

Currently, the main hindrance to wider LPG use in developing countries is affordability and availability. LPG is currently used predominantly by the upper half of the income groups in low- and lower-middle-income countries and especially urban and suburban households. However, increasingly in Zimbabwe, LPG is penetrating to lower income households particularly in urban settings. There is a deliberate need for African governments to promote the establishment of proper LPG infrastructure, pricing and equipment packages that make LPG accessible everyone and even rural areas, to mitigate against impact of deforestation. It is clear that there are still many households in Africa without access to clean cooking energy, who could afford to switch to LPG if other obstacles could be reduced.

LPG promotion has the major role in this multi-pronged search for solutions to access clean and safe energy, for cooking for women in developing countries.

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