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## ***Power to change***

*Concepts such as benefit sharing and respect of communities' rights to self-determination have a long tradition in eni's history* originating in E. Mattei's special attitude towards the countries of operations. In parallel with the process of development of the UN system of principles and guidelines eni has been building its own culture, rules and tools.

Furthermore, despite the important clarification operated by the UN framework, the distinction between companies responsibilities (respect) and States' duties (protect) is still hard to clear-cut. Issues such as communities' consultation and co-operation to local development will always be at the centre of debates between organisations, companies and civil society. In our view, local communities are entitled to take advantage of our presence and of the value we generate, not as part of a philanthropic strategy or as the price to pay to secure the licence to operate or to avoid potential conflicts.

Within this context, *eni has been focusing on access to energy due to its enormous potential to dramatically change people's capacity to enjoy Human rights*. Indeed, although energy has never been recognised as Human Right, it is now widely acknowledged that it is essential for the full enjoyment of fundamental Human Rights. Energy can also be seen as the ninth MDG, both because energy *per se* is crucial to life and health and since it is an impressive catalyst for the achievement of the seven MDGs, especially MDG 1 and 3. In fact, it is evident that access to energy contributes to fight poverty and hunger since it increases productivity, in particular in agriculture. In addition, female condition can greatly benefit from this kind of projects as access to energy is not gender neutral and we all know that improving female condition is an extraordinary multiplier for sustainable development.

Moreover, eni's strategy for access to energy means the opportunity to reach the *twofold objective of fighting energy poverty and tackling climate change in virtue of gas flaring reduction* obtained by using the associated gas to fuel power stations. The issue of gas flaring is of paramount concern, firstly because of its direct link to the fundamental right to health. As a consequence, our commitment to stop this practice is of primary importance from a Human Rights point of view since it will reduce both environmental impacts and the waste of a valuable resource such as gas.

Furthermore, in each phase of the access to energy projects we are developing we are continuously striving to achieve the goal to adopt processes and tools respectful of Human Rights. This implies that *we have to select community development projects genuinely contributing to environmental and social sustainability* and, in doing so, we have to embed Human Rights also into every phase of this kind of projects, as well. This means paying particular attention to consultation, impact assessment, transparency, performance monitoring and evaluation and taking into account communities and host country perspective in each phase of the project.

These are the most important factors in support of eni's action for access to energy. In this paper, I will describe our projects and the way we integrated Human Rights into every phase of it.