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ENGENDERING UTILITIES

Strengthening Energy Utilities through Gender Equality Initiatives

USAID's Engendering Utilities program works with electricity utilities in developing countries to increase economic opportunities for women and improve gender equality in the workplace. Expanding women's participation in the traditionally male-dominated energy sector leads to tangible economic empowerment outcomes for women, such as formal employment opportunities and higher income. Additionally, increased gender equality can improve business performance and help utilities meet their bottom-line goals by enhancing employee satisfaction, reducing turnover, and driving productivity. Moreover, well-functioning utilities create stronger and more resilient national energy sectors that are critical for economic growth and promoting a path to self-reliance.

Engendering Utilities delivers a unique approach to improving gender equality in the energy sector. Through customized best practices, demand-driven coaching, and a Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program, Engendering Utilities builds the capacity of utility leaders to implement gender equality interventions in their organizations.

Engendering Utilities partners receive:

- **Global best practices to implement gender equality interventions.** USAID's *Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Utilities* provides tools and resources to implement gender equality interventions throughout the employee life cycle.
- **Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program.** Developed by USAID and Georgetown University, this 12-month certificate program empowers partner utility employees to effectively integrate gender equality initiatives within their corporate structure.
- **Demand-driven change management coaching.** Each utility is paired with an expert change management and gender equality coach who provides tailored technical support.

OUR UNIQUE APPROACH

At the core of Engendering Utilities' approach is the effective implementation of evidence-based gender equality best practices. Through a customized best practices framework, demand-driven expert coaching, and a Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program, Engendering Utilities builds the capacity of utility leaders to identify critical gender equality gaps and implement interventions that directly increase opportunities for women within the company, and strengthen utility performance.

Engendering Utilities began with a study in 2015—the first of its kind—to examine gender disparities and the role of women within electricity distribution companies. The data showed wide variation in employment practices and outcomes, and suggested that women were underrepresented in the majority of positions. The findings indicated several actionable factors impacting women's ability to fully participate in the utilities.

Acting on these findings, USAID partnered with seven electricity distribution companies in five countries—Georgia, Jordan, Kenya, Macedonia and Nigeria—to collaboratively design tailored interventions to improve gender outcomes. The utilities identified opportunities to implement improved practices for gender equity. All seven have significantly expanded talent pools for recruitment and are diversifying their organizations.

In 2018, USAID expanded the program to include nine new partner utilities in eight countries: Dominican Republic, Ghana, India, Kosovo, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, and the Philippines. At the same time, the original partner utilities will receive ongoing support to continue implementing, monitoring and evaluating their gender interventions. The program supports networking and knowledge exchange among utilities from both cohorts, and in the wider energy community.

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Results from our first cohort:

- Partner utilities are recruiting, retaining, and promoting more female employees
- Utilities have adopted or refined Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policies to create a more inclusive work environment
- Utilities are utilizing sex-disaggregated employment and employee satisfaction data, and are using this data in decision-making
- Utility HR departments are addressing pay inequity
- Flexible work schedules and child care programs are providing support for parents
- Utilities are engaging with their local communities to encourage women and girls to pursue STEM education and careers
- Partner utilities have put forward nearly \$500,000 in in-kind contributions to implement gender equality interventions

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