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## ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE BRPL, INDIA

USAID is proud to work with BSES Rajdhani Power Limited (BRPL) in their commitment to improve gender equality in the energy sector as part of their path to long-term success.

When women serve as leaders and employees of companies – including those in the energy and water sectors – businesses benefit and performance improves. **USAID’s Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy and water sectors by increasing economic opportunities for women and improving gender equality in the workplace.** In April 2019, BRPL began working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design tailored interventions that directly increase opportunities for women within the company and enhance the utility’s operations.

BRPL was formed in 2002 as a joint venture between Reliance Infrastructure Limited and the Government of Delhi. The company currently serves a distribution area of 750 km<sup>2</sup> in South and Western New Delhi, with around 2.4 million customers.

Of approximately 2,700 employees, only 11 percent are women, who hold 12 percent of the company’s middle management positions. Only two percent of female employees work in senior management, and just 21 percent of engineers and 14 percent of field/line workers are women. **BRPL recognizes the importance of gender equality, and the utility hopes to increase their gender balance and encourage more women to enter the energy sector.**

## INDIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

When India achieved independence in 1947, electricity generation and distribution was primarily provided by private utility companies. Currently, both the state and central governments participate in the development of the electricity sector. India is now the third-largest producer and fourth-largest consumer of electricity in the world, with approximately 350 gigawatts (GW) of installed generation capacity from a combination of conventional fossil fuels, nuclear, hydro, wind, solar, agricultural waste, and domestic waste.<sup>2</sup> Renewable energy is the fastest-growing source,<sup>3</sup> and the Government of India released a roadmap to install 175 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2022.

## GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIA

The Indian constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, but the position of women remains unequal. Women in India have long been subject to entrenched cultural biases that perpetuate the valuing of sons over daughters, who are often seen as an economic burden to families.<sup>4</sup> According to the International Labor Organization, India has one of the lowest women's labor force participation rates, with women making up less than a quarter of the total labor force.<sup>5</sup> Women who do participate in the labor market face an average pay gap of 34 percent compared to their male counterparts (performing the same job with the same qualifications).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Indian women are not well represented in most sectors, including business.<sup>7</sup> In fact, only roughly nine percent of firms have female top managers.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, women in India face great physical insecurity. In Delhi, the capital city, 92 percent of women reported having experienced sexual or physical violence in public spaces.<sup>9</sup> In 2013, India's parliament passed a new law to further protect women against sexual violence.<sup>10</sup>

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

Prior to engaging with Engendering Utilities, BRPL took the initiative to improve gender equality, most notably by offering internships to employees' children to raise awareness around, and provide exposure to, the kind of work being done at the utility to both girls and boys. BRPL also recruits annually from top universities, with intentional efforts to recruit with gender parity, and the utility offers maternity leave and childcare services.

BRPL is now working to assess and identify high-impact interventions that can improve gender equality within the organization. Through Engendering Utilities, USAID is supporting BRPL staff on gender equality and business best practices, and select utility personnel are participating in the Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program (GEELP) in collaboration with Georgetown University.

A dedicated change management coach provided by Engendering Utilities is working with BRPL to identify opportunities to empower women to seek leadership opportunities, to enhance the utility's gender-supportive policies, and to improve their gender benchmark ratings on a global scale. Through this coaching, the utility will develop a tailored action plan to best fit their needs. BRPL will also place a strong emphasis on engaging influential male leaders as champions of gender equality.

## IMPACT

In recruiting with gender-neutral job descriptions and advertisements, BRPL has built a strong representation of women in junior and mid-level roles. Recruitment and promotions are also carried out using knowledge and capability criteria, evaluating women on their performance and knowledge as opposed to only assessing technical awareness or field experience, which can be challenging for women to accumulate in the current societal context. For about 20 percent of women promoted, this effort has resulted in accession to a senior role.

BRPL's commitment to gender equality is further exemplified through other company programs and efforts, such as its Prevention of Sexual Harassment (POSH) Committee, which is led by a woman employee and offers a portal for women to bring forth their complaints, helping to overcome any hesitation they may feel in filing.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## NOTES

- 1 Figures provided by utility in 2019.
- 2 India Brand Equity Foundation. (2019). Power Sector in India. Retrieved from: <https://www.ibef.org/industry/power-sector-india.aspx>
- 3 Quartz India. (2018). India is now the world's third-largest electricity producer. Retrieved from: <https://qz.com/india/1237203/india-is-now-the-worlds-third-largest-electricity-producer/>
- 4 Council on Foreign Relations. (2013). Governance in India: Women's Rights. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/governance-india-womens-rights>
- 5 International Labor Organization. (2019). Country Profile India. Retrieved from [https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?\\_adf.ctrl-state=lir2h9416\\_4&\\_afLoop=1909798642168743&\\_afWindowMode=0&\\_afWindowId=null#!%40%40%3F\\_afWindowId%3Dnull%26\\_afLoop%3D1909798642168743%26\\_afWindowMode%3D0%26\\_adf.ctrl-state%3D140a0c8fiu\\_4](https://www.ilo.org/ilostat/faces/oracle/webcenter/portalapp/pagehierarchy/Page21.jspx?_adf.ctrl-state=lir2h9416_4&_afLoop=1909798642168743&_afWindowMode=0&_afWindowId=null#!%40%40%3F_afWindowId%3Dnull%26_afLoop%3D1909798642168743%26_afWindowMode%3D0%26_adf.ctrl-state%3D140a0c8fiu_4)
- 6 Oxfam India. (2019). Mind the Gap: State of Employment in India 2019. Retrieved from: <https://www.oxfamindia.org/sites/default/files/2019-03/Full%20Report%20-%20Low-Res%20Version%20%28Single%20Pages%29.pdf>
- 7 United Nations India. (n.d.). Gender Equality: Women's Economic Empowerment. Retrieved from: <https://in.one.un.org/unibf/gender-equality/>
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- 10 Council on Foreign Relations. (2013). Governance in India: Women's Rights. Retrieved from <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/governance-india-womens-rights>