ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE
EDESUR, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

USAID is proud to work with Edesur Dominicana, S.A. (EDESUR) 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 sector – businesses benefit and performance improves. USAID’s Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy sector by increasing economic opportunities for women and improving gender equality in the workplace. In May 2019, EDESUR 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.

EDESUR was formed in 1999 after the unbundling of the Dominican Electricity Corporation. EDESUR’s main functions are to distribute electricity throughout the southern part of the country. The company currently serves over 822,000 customers, and nearly 600,000 have 24-hour reliable access to electricity. Of their 3,239 employees, around 37 percent are women. EDESUR recognizes the importance of gender equality, and the utility hopes to increase their gender balance and encourage more women to enter the electricity sector.
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC’S ENERGY SECTOR

Electricity in the Dominican Republic was supplied by the Dominican Electricity Corporation, a state-owned vertically-integrated utility, until 1999 when a law divided the public utility into seven entities: three generation companies, one transmission company, and three distribution companies. By 2011, the government had established a competitive market to promote private sector participation in the electricity sector.

The National Interconnected Electricity System (SENI) currently has around 3,700 megawatts (MW) of installed capacity. Most generation capacity is driven by conventional fossil fuel plants (coal, natural gas, diesel). Around a quarter of SENI’s capacity is renewable (18 percent hydropower, 4 percent wind, and 1 percent solar). In 2010, the National Energy Commission unveiled the second National Energy Plan (2010-2025), with five strategic objectives: increase energy capacity, lower the cost of energy, develop energy security and reliability, increase energy efficiency, and protect the environment. In 2019, the Commission’s executive director announced the reopening of requests for provisional concessions for wind and solar energy projects to revitalize investments in the renewable energy sector.

The International Labour Organization reports that 49.2 percent of Dominican women participate in the labor market. The Dominican Republic also has a low ratio of girls enrolled in school, and few study STEM subjects. At the university level, women’s dropout rate is greater than that of men’s, which stymies the development of a gender-balanced talent pool.

GENDER EQUITY IN ACTION

Prior to engaging with Engendering Utilities, EDESUR took the initiative to improve gender equality, most notably through its dedication to addressing sexual harassment in its code of ethics, as well as its media promotion of women staff as role models. Additionally, EDESUR is establishing on-site facilities to improve the comfort levels of, and create convenience for, women returning from childbirth.

To continue building on their positive efforts, EDESUR is working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to assess and identify high-impact interventions that can improve gender equality within the organization. Through Engendering Utilities, USAID is providing tailored coaching to EDESUR staff on gender equity and business best practices and select utility personnel will participate in a 12-month Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program in collaboration with Georgetown University.

A dedicated change management coach provided by the Engendering Utilities program is working with EDESUR to identify opportunities to address perceptions around obstacles women face in career advancement, including their comfort level with technical jobs and a weak talent pipeline. Through this coaching, the utility will develop a tailored action plan to best fit their needs. EDESUR will also place a strong emphasis on engaging influential male leaders as champions of gender equality.
**IMPACT**

EDESUR is a regional leader in women’s representation at the management level, and their commitment to gender equality is further exemplified through its desire to more broadly improve conditions for women in the Dominican Republic. “EDESUR envisions being a national and international model in the distribution and commercialization of electricity,” said Giuseppe Fanizzi, CEO of EDESUR. “Consequently, we are interested in being a model of gender equity, in a way that we can inspire other companies in the sector.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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