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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 and water sectors – businesses benefit and performance improves. **USAID’s Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen these sectors 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. Its main function is to distribute electricity throughout the southern part of the country. EDESUR currently serves over 822,000 customers, and nearly 600,000 have 24-hour reliable access to electricity.¹ Of their approximately 3,290 employees, almost 37 percent are women. Most female employees work in middle management (39 percent) or senior management (31 percent) positions. At EDESUR, 35 percent of technicians and 31 percent of field/line workers are women, yet there exist no female engineers.² **EDESUR recognizes the importance of gender equality, and the utility hopes to increase their gender balance and encourage more women to enter the energy sector. In the coming years, the utility will focus on empowering female leaders and to make a difference in the community through outreach programs targeting women.**

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.³ The National Interconnected Electricity System (SENI) has around 3,700 megawatts (MW) of installed capacity. Most generation capacity is driven by conventional fossil fuel plants (coal, natural gas, diesel).⁴ Around a quarter of SENI's capacity comes from renewable sources (18 percent hydropower, four percent wind, and one percent solar).⁵ In 2019, the National Energy Commission announced the reopening of requests for provisional concessions for wind and solar energy projects to revitalize investments in the renewable energy sector.⁶

GENDER EQUALITY IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

In 2010, the country's constitution was amended to incorporate important elements for the advancement of gender equality. Furthermore, the Dominican Republic's willingness to work towards gender equality is reflected in the National Development Strategy 2030, which includes an objective to build a culture of equality and equity between men and women.⁷

Women and girls have made strides in education, but gaps still remain in employment. According to the International Labor Organization, 49 percent of Dominican women participate in the labor market compared to 76 percent of men.⁸ Despite the relatively high female participation rate, only nine percent of females compared to 26 percent of males were employed in industry, which indicates that sectors such as energy are still male-dominated. Furthermore, female unemployment is double that of male unemployment,⁹ which indicates persisting inequality and barriers that inhibit young women from finding gainful employment, despite educational gains. Currently, the gender wage gap is 44 percent in the Dominican Republic, leaving many women without economic agency.¹⁰



In regard to Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects, Dominican teenagers underperform and remain under the average regional standards.¹¹ At university level, women represent 61 percent of the students¹² and according to the World Bank, the share of female graduates of STEM programs in the Dominican Republic was 40 percent in 2017.¹³

GENDER EQUALITY 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 comfort levels 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 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 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. 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 Radhamés del Carmen, 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."

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NOTES

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