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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE EKEDC, NIGERIA

USAID is proud to work with Eko Electricity Distribution Company (EKEDC) in their commitment to improve gender equality in the energy sector as part of their path to long-term success.

When women serve as policymakers, executives, employees, and entrepreneurs, evidence shows that energy and water policies are more effective, utility products have higher sales rates and yield higher returns on equity and investment. **USAID's Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy and water sectors by increasing the professional participation of women.** EKEDC has been working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design tailored interventions to improve gender equality outcomes and meet core business goals.

EKEDC is one of 11 electric distribution companies (DISCOs) in Nigeria that were privatized in 2013. The utility is responsible for the distribution and sale of electricity in the southern part of Lagos State, as well as Agbara in Ogun State.¹ In 2018, women made up 20 percent of the company's workforce, compared to 15 percent in 2013. At EKEDC on average 29 percent of employees with supervisory and management responsibilities are women.² However, the number of female lineworkers and engineers is very low (1.6 percent and 2.4 percent). **EKEDC is now committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector. In the coming years, the utility will focus on addressing the skills gap between women and men.**

PHOTO: EKEDC

NIGERIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

Nigeria is the largest economy in sub-Saharan Africa, but limitations in the power sector constrain growth. Currently Nigeria has the potential to generate 12,522 megawatts (MW) of electric power from existing plants, but most days is only able to generate around 4,000 MW, which is insufficient.³ In 2017, only 54 percent of the population had access to electricity.⁴

GENDER EQUALITY IN NIGERIA

Nigeria has a national gender policy that focuses on the empowerment of women and advocates against any form of discrimination against women. However in daily life women still experience significant gender gaps.⁵ Women make up 45 percent of the total labor force in Nigeria.⁶ In 2018, the labor force participation rate for middle income was 45 percent for women compared to 76 percent for men. Most Nigerian women (almost 62 percent of female employment) work in services and only 13 percent of working women are wage and salaried workers compared to 23 percent of men.⁷ Almost 14 percent of Nigerian firms have female top managers,⁸ but the UNDP indicates that females are underrepresented in the higher-paid, more powerful positions.⁹ Moreover, Nigeria's gender pay gap is one of the highest in the world: On average a man earns 54 percent more than a woman.¹⁰

The country's literacy rate is 62 percent and the literacy rate among women is around 52 percent compared to 71 percent for men.¹¹ In 2011, only around eight percent of gross enrollment in tertiary education were women¹² and the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria found that almost 50 percent more male than female students were enrolled at universities in Nigeria.¹³

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

EKEDC is working with USAID's Engendering Utilities program to develop and implement a tailored action plan to incorporate gender equity into its business practices. Data collected and analyzed through Engendering Utilities found that women were represented at all levels of management, with varied gender parity. For example, 26 percent of senior management positions are held by women, however, almost 98 percent of engineering positions are held by men. Additional findings illustrated disparities in employment outcomes and in the way the utility ran its business, both of which ultimately impacted the ability of female employees to fully participate in the company.

The action plan included targeted interventions, such as the institution of gender-equitable job candidate attraction and selection processes, competency-based hiring processes to reduce gender bias, and the institution of gender-equitable employee development and succession planning. EKEDC also launched initiatives that encouraged universities, colleges, and primary schools to raise awareness of EKEDC as an equal opportunity employer. As part of its corporate social responsibility, the utility developed an after-school program designed to increase primary girls' and boys' interest in energy. EKEDC hopes this program will increase the number of girls pursuing education relevant for energy sector work, thus increasing the number of qualified female candidates in the future.

EKEDC invested resources in revitalizing its company culture, with the goal of hiring female line workers. The utility worked to change assumptions and biases that women did not want line worker positions or were not physically qualified. Heightened awareness led to a proactive search for women who were capable of and desired to do the work. EKEDC's gender action plan also included outreach to

the National Business and Technical Examinations Board (NABTEB). The utility shared an opportunity to explore women-only courses to pre-qualify women for line worker positions in the company.

To codify the culture change, the utility changed the job title from “lineman” to “line worker” and renamed the “Office of Manpower Planning” the “Office of Workforce Planning.”

EKEDC’s HR specialists also took part in Engendering Utilities’ customized Gender Equity Executive Leadership (GEELP) certificate program, in partnership with Georgetown University. The program’s capstone project required participants address methods to integrate gender equity into the HR employee lifecycle and utilize advanced change management approaches to maximize their company’s cultural evolution. Participants then presented their recommendations to the utility’s top leadership. The executive course was complemented by customized expert coaching, as well as the development of a global employee life cycle best practices framework and an equity scorecard to document lessons learned and track progress. This approach provided a model that can be applied to other corporate settings. The EKEDC Team graduated from the GEELP program in summer 2018.

IMPACT

EKEDC’s participation in the Engendering Utilities program has resulted in significant and substantial progress toward a gender-equitable future for the company, including:

- Most recently, the utility conducted a focused search to identify and increase female line workers. As a result, EKEDC hired its first four female line workers in 2018.
- In 2017, EKEDC dedicated human and financial resources support to implement an equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy and related programs that promote gender equity.
- EKEDC more than tripled the number of HR compliance and recruiting practices between 2015 and 2017. The practices include (1) collecting and maintaining sex-disaggregated data that meet industry standards, (2) using disaggregated data as a factor in decision-making, and (3) making disaggregated data continuously available.
- EKEDC instituted a whistleblower policy and process for employees to confidentially report violations, including sexual harassment.
- In 2019, EKEDC conducted a successful company-wide Sexual Harassment Policy Awareness Campaign. Training sessions on the policy were held and 603 employees were reached through the campaign. The training impacted 38 percent of the female population of the organization.
- EKEDC started a 12-month mentoring scheme for the Eko Distribution Training Program (EDTP) graduates (in total 89 mentees, 32 of which are female). Out of the 39 mentors from Senior Manager grade and above, a total number of 13 are female. Considering the male to female ratio in the utility, this reflects an increase in the total number of female employees empowered to lead and also positioned for career progression.



PHOTO: EKEDC

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I know now how to sponsor and foster an ‘I can do it’ attitude among women and drive policies—like a fully developed sexual harassment policy. Engendering Utilities opened my eyes about these issues, and I will function well in a team addressing gender policies.”

- Alero Olayiwola, Team Lead of Learning and Development, EKEDC

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Amanda Valenta
Energy Specialist
Office of Energy and
Infrastructure,
USAID
avalenta@usaid.gov

Corinne Hart
Senior Advisor for
Gender and Environment
Office of Gender Equality and
Women’s Empowerment,
USAID
cohart@usaid.gov

Jessica Menon
Program Manager
Tetra Tech
Jessica.Menon@tetratech.com

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NOTES

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