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## ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE VIETNAM ELECTRICITY (EVN), VIETNAM

USAID partners with EVN to improve women’s participation in Vietnam’s energy sector.

When women serve as leaders and employees, businesses benefit and company performance improves. **USAID’s Engendering Utilities program works to increase women’s participation in the energy and water sectors globally.** In 2020 Engendering Utilities partnered with [EVN](#) to design workplace initiatives that will expand job opportunities for women and enhance the utility’s performance.

EVN is the largest utility in Vietnam, producing and supplying nearly 60 percent of Vietnam’s energy. EVN business goals are to provide adequate power supply, accelerate socio-economic recovery and development, promote investment, and provide consistent power.<sup>1</sup> EVN has nearly 100,000 employees, but just over 20 percent are women.<sup>2</sup>

**Recognizing that diverse teams build better businesses, EVN partnered with USAID to increase gender balance across the company and encourage more women to enter Vietnam’s energy sector.**

## VIETNAM'S ENERGY SECTOR

The energy needs of Vietnam—a country of 90 million people—increases by ten percent annually. The country's rapid economic growth has been powered largely by gas and coal, causing an increase in emissions. Hydropower is approaching maximum utilization in Vietnam, and a growing reliance on coal could undermine continued economic growth in the country.<sup>3</sup> While Vietnam is currently considered to be a relatively low carbon-emitter, future emission projections from energy production, transportation, and industry will be significant unless measures are taken to develop clean energy.<sup>4</sup> If current trends continue, carbon dioxide emissions are expected to grow by more than three-fold between 2012 and 2030.<sup>5</sup>

To address these issues the government is pursuing an energy diversification strategy that maximizes the use of local energy reserves—including oil, coal and hydropower<sup>6</sup>—while increasing investment in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and clean-technology.

**Engendering Utilities' work with EVN will ensure women capitalize on increased investment in Vietnam's energy sector as the industry and labor force continue to grow.**

## GENDER EQUALITY IN VIETNAM

A complex web of contributing factors prevents women in Vietnam from joining the formal workforce; particularly the male-dominated energy sector. This industry represents a growth area for Vietnam, and the exclusion of women from opportunities in this market deepens Vietnam's gender equality divide.

Like many countries around the world, gender inequities in Vietnam begin at birth. Unfavorable attitudes towards girls and a widespread preference for boys drives the common practice of aborting female fetuses. The male birth rate in Vietnam is higher than in other countries, and the gender gap is widening between boys and girls.<sup>7</sup> Inequities continue in the education system, where Vietnamese men are provided more opportunities to receive vocational training than women. The Vietnam Women's Union has made efforts to establish vocational centers for women, but the number of trainers and classrooms are limited.<sup>8</sup> These factors contribute to various forms of gender discrimination in the workforce, including wage disparities and inequities.<sup>9</sup>

Violence against women in Vietnam compounds these issues. One study found that nearly 35 percent of married women in Vietnam had experienced physical or sexual violence from their husbands, and that women feel they must tolerate abuse for the sake of family harmony. Domestic violence has real costs for companies. One study estimates that violence against women costs \$1.5 trillion in direct costs and lost productivity, globally.<sup>10</sup> Employers that work to reduce and mitigate violence and harassment both at home and work improve the well-being and productivity of men and women at work.

**Engendering Utilities supports companies—like EVN—to consider and respond to factors that reduce women's workforce participation by building inclusive policies and practices that benefit men, women, and businesses in the energy sector.**

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION AT EVN

Engendering Utilities uses an [evidence-based methodology](#) to support women's participation in Vietnam's energy sector. The program supports EVN to increase opportunities for women by introducing gender equality initiatives at each phase of the employee lifecycle: from reducing gender bias at the hiring stage, to creating strategies that will help retain female talent and improve corporate culture change that benefits both women and men. Using a globally recognized [framework](#) for change, Engendering Utilities is supporting EVN in its goal of increasing gender equality across the company's business practices.

A dedicated change management coach supports the utility and works directly with three staff to become agents of change within EVN. A baseline assessment is conducted to identify gaps and opportunities for improving gender equality across the company. The findings are used to develop a strategic action plan that will facilitate EVN's gender equality goals. This is supplemented by the program's partnership with the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, which delivers the [Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program](#) (GEELP) to three utility employees. The GEELP is a best-in-class 12-month executive course that empowers decision-makers to integrate gender equality initiatives into their corporate structure.

Engendering Utilities will support and accelerate gender equality initiatives already underway at EVN as part of the broader strategic action plan, including:

- **Implementation of the 2016-2020 Gender Action Plan**, which focuses on Improving the quality of human resources to support equality; ensuring equal rights and quality of life for employees in the workplace; capacity building for the Committee for Women's Advancement; and increasing women's representation in management and leadership.
- **Addressing ongoing challenges to gender equality** identified by EVN including balancing work-life responsibilities, changing prevailing perceptions about women's ability to succeed in leadership roles, and occupational segregation within in the utility which leads to fewer promotional opportunities for women.
- **Supporting ambitions of the utility** to develop clear, measurable indicators on issues such as the talent pipeline, hiring and promotion procedures, absenteeism and inclusive workplace policies; improve and strengthen EVN's Women in Leadership program; and analyze and strengthen current workplace policies to better encourage the development, retention and promotion of female employees.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> EVN. (2014). Annual Report. Retrieved from: [https://www.evn.com.vn/UserFile/User/tcdl/BCTN%202015\\_Fi\\_Final.pdf](https://www.evn.com.vn/UserFile/User/tcdl/BCTN%202015_Fi_Final.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Kingdom of the Netherlands (n.d.). Renewable energy in Vietnam.

<sup>4</sup> USAID/Vietnam. (2013). Country development cooperation strategy (CDCS). Retrieved from: [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/CDCS\\_Vietnam\\_2014-2019\\_final.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/CDCS_Vietnam_2014-2019_final.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Kingdom of the Netherlands (n.d.). Key sectors in Vietnam. Retrieved from: <https://www.netherlandsworldwide.nl/countries/vietnam/doing-business/key-sectors/energy>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> JICA. (2011). Country Gender Profile: Vietnam. Retrieved from: [https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our\\_work/thematic\\_issues/gender/background/pdf/e10viet.pdf](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/gender/background/pdf/e10viet.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Copenhagen Consensus Center. Retrieved from: <https://www.copenhagenconsensus.com/publication/post-2015-consensus-conflict-and-violence-assessment-hoeffler-fearon>