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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE ENERGO-PRO, GEORGIA

USAID is proud to work with Energo-Pro 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 in those sectors have higher sales rates and yield higher returns on equity and investment. **USAID’s Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy and water sector by increasing the professional participation of women.** Energo-Pro is working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design tailored interventions to improve gender equality and meet core business goals.

Energo-Pro is the largest electricity distribution company in the Republic of Georgia, covering more than 85 percent of the country, and serving over one million customers.¹ Energo-Pro is also the largest employer, comprising 6,000 professionals. However, women still make up less than 13 percent of Energo-Pro Georgia’s workforce, a figure amplified by Energo-Pro’s acquisition of Kakheti Power, an all-male distribution company.² Most women work in middle management positions (almost 19 percent of total middle management), however, not even three percent of line worker positions are held by women, and only around eight percent of engineers are female. **ENERGO-PRO is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector. The utility will focus on being perceived as a gender-friendly employer and increasing the number of female employees in field technical and engineering positions.**

PHOTO: ENERGO-PRO

GEORGIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

Georgia has limited domestic energy production, and relies on imports to cover most of its natural gas and oil consumption. Almost 80 percent of Georgia's electricity is generated through hydropower plants.³ Thus, the share of renewables in the electricity mix of Georgia is among the highest in the world (78 percent in 2015).⁴ However, most of Georgia's hydropower potential is yet untapped.⁵

GENDER EQUALITY IN GEORGIA

Georgia has made significant progress in adopting anti-discrimination legislation and numerous policies in support of the protection and promotion of human rights.⁶ For example, the national legislative framework in Georgia reflects key principles of gender equality and is in line with international commitments.⁷ However, gender stereotypes remain deeply rooted, which inhibit the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.⁸ Gender perceptions in Georgia place men in a dominant position in many areas of social, economic, and political life.⁹ Thus, 58 percent of Georgian women participate in the labor market, compared to 79 percent of men. Most women work in services (49 percent) and agriculture (45 percent), however, only five percent of the female labor force works in industry, compared to 20 percent of the male labor force.¹⁰ Moreover, only 2.4 percent of firms in Georgia have female top managers.¹¹ The gender wage gap reaches 35 percent in Georgia.¹²

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

Energopro has been working with USAID's Engendering Utilities program since 2016 to develop a tailored action plan to incorporate gender equity into its business practices. Data collected and analyzed through Engendering Utilities showed that women were underrepresented in most jobs within the company. For example, almost 98 percent of line workers and 92 percent of engineers are men. Additional findings illustrated disparities in employment outcomes and in the way the utility ran its business, both of which ultimately impact women's ability to fully participate in the company.

The action plan included targeted interventions, such as the institution of gender-equitable succession planning, and job candidate selection processes. Energopro also adopted a mentoring program and executed initiatives that encouraged universities, colleges, and secondary schools to raise awareness of Energopro Georgia as a potential equal opportunity employer.

Energopro's HR specialists also took part in Engendering Utilities' customized Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program (GEELP), in partnership with Georgetown University. The program's capstone project required participants to address methods to integrate gender equity into the HR employee lifecycle and utilize advanced change management approaches to maximize their company's cultural evolution.



PHOTO: RTI / USAID

IMPACT

Energopro Georgia's participation in the Engendering Utilities program resulted in significant and substantial progress toward a gender-equitable future for the company, including:

- An equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy was fully implemented in 2017.
- The number of female employees increased by almost 21 percent between 2015 and 2017.
- Corporate training programs at Energopro now raise awareness of unconscious bias; the HR department now collects and maintains sex-disaggregated data in line with industry standards, and uses disaggregated data as a factor in decision-making; corporate-sponsored forums and community initiatives promote women's economic empowerment; and annual employee surveys are now conducted with questions assessing the perception of gender in the company.
- Between 2015 and 2017, Energopro enacted four new payroll and administration practices, including salary data analysis and benefits data analysis to identify and address inequities.
- Between 2015 and 2017, the utility enacted new employee development practices, including individual learning plans for all employees aligned with company needs and career goals of the employee. Energopro also ensures that training and development opportunities to close knowledge, skill, and ability gaps are equally accessible to men and women through a variety of methodologies such as job rotation, conferences, job shadowing, training, and mentoring.
- Between 2015 and 2017, the utility began offering flexible hours and telework opportunities.
- In 2019, Energopro conducted their school outreach program, "Energy Sector Popularization," and visited 45 schools to meet female pupils and explain that there are no "male" or "female" professions at the utility.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"My team and I are very excited to be a part of such an important project. We believe that during these two years we have done a lot in decreasing gender gaps at our company. We also believe that this [has been] a great chance for us to deepen our knowledge—which in the future—will help us to make significant changes and develop best practices for our company."

- Giorgi Trapaidze, Head of Human Resources, Energopro Georgia

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NOTES

1 ENERGO-PRO. (n.d.). Where we are. Retrieved from <http://www.energo-pro.com/en#kdo-jsme>

2 Figures provided by utility.

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