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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE GRIDCO, GHANA

USAID is proud to work with the Ghana Grid Company Ltd. (GRIDCo) 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 the energy and water sectors by increasing economic opportunities for women and improving gender equality in the workplace.** In April 2019, GRIDCo 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.

GRIDCo was established in 2006, with the intention of developing and promoting competition in Ghana’s wholesale power market. GRIDCo’s main functions are to economically dispatch electricity, manage the wholesale power market, and provide metering and billing services to bulk customers.¹ Of their 890 employees, only 15 percent are women. Most women at the utility (95 percent of female staff) work in non-management/non-supervisory positions. Moreover, women are underrepresented in technical positions – around 14 percent of engineers are female, whereas only six percent of technicians are women.² **GRIDCo recognizes the importance of gender equality, and the utility hopes to increase their gender balance and encourage more women to enter the electricity sector. In the coming years, the utility will focus on remaining the employer of choice, and on achieving or exceeding a 40 percent target for female representation.**

GHANA'S ENERGY SECTOR

After Ghana achieved independence in 1957, electricity was prioritized as a state-run endeavor to support the country's massive industrialization goals. By 1994, power sector reforms opened the market for competition and began to regulate power generation, transmission, and distribution. To attract independent power producers, a competitive wholesale electricity market was established in 2008.³

Ghana has nearly 4,400 megawatts (MW) of installed generation capacity,⁴ with 61 percent from thermal power plants (fueled by crude oil, natural gas, and diesel), 38 percent from hydroelectric plants, and less than one percent from solar.⁵ However, actual electricity availability rarely exceeds 2,400 MW due to hydrological conditions, inadequate fuel supplies, and dilapidated infrastructure.⁶ Other challenges for the sector include high levels of technical and commercial losses, resulting in a lack of revenue.⁷ Still, Ghana's electricity access rate is currently around 83 percent, one of the highest in sub-Saharan Africa.⁸

GENDER EQUALITY IN GHANA

The Government of Ghana declared a strong commitment to strengthening gender equality, which is already showing improvement when it comes to some of the gender challenges Ghana is facing – such as low representation and participation of women in decision-making, lack of gender parity at all levels of education, harmful cultural practices such as early and forced marriage and pregnancy, sexual and gender-based violence, and maternal mortality, etc.⁹

According to the International Labour Organization the labor force participation rate in 2018 was 71 percent for men and 64 percent for women. Most women in Ghana work in services (54 percent), however, even more women (19.5 percent) compared to men (17.8 percent) work in industry.¹⁰ Moreover, 14.9 percent of firms in Ghana have female employees in top management positions (compared to the world average of 18.1 percent).¹¹ However, the gender pay gap in Ghana remains: On average, a man earns 42 percent more than a woman.¹²

Gender gaps in secondary and tertiary education also exist (64.5 percent boys and 35.5 percent girls). Likewise, girls' enrollment in polytechnic and science and technology fields is even lower (69.5 percent for boys and 30.4 percent for girls),¹³ and the share of female graduates of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs in Ghana is approximately 23 percent.¹⁴

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

Prior to engaging with Engendering Utilities, GRIDCo took initiative to improve gender equality, most notably by drafting a company Sexual Harassment Policy. GRIDCo is also committed to Ghana's National Policy on Gender Equity and seeks to align itself with this policy, specifically in relation to the affirmative action goal of 40 percent female representation at all levels of government.

To continue building on their positive efforts, GRIDCo 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 GRIDCo staff on gender equity and



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business best practices. Select utility personnel will participate in a 12-month 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 GRIDCo to identify opportunities to address what the utility sees as their main challenge: the talent pipeline. GRIDCo also wants to prioritize increasing the number of women in technical staff, where there is the greatest gender disparity. Through this coaching, the utility will develop a tailored action plan to best fit their needs. GRIDCo will also place a strong emphasis on engaging influential male leaders as champions of gender equality.

IMPACT

In addition to their Sexual Harassment Policy, GRIDCo's commitment to gender equality is further exemplified through their Affirmative Action Recruitment program, which was created in 2015 during a recruitment surge of 40 vacancies for engineers and technicians. The utility set a goal to employ an equal number of men and women and gave all candidates the same entrance exam. The candidates were then placed in a three-month orientation and training program, followed by 21 months of on-the-job training. After the three-month orientation program, assessments showed that the female candidates scored the highest marks (where previously they had scored the lowest on the entrance exam). These women are still employed at GRIDCo and have consistently received positive performance evaluations.

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NOTES

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- 2 Figures provided by utility in 2019.
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