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## ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE IBEDC, NIGERIA

USAID is proud to work with Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) 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.** IBEDC 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.

IBEDC was one of 11 electric distribution companies in Nigeria that were privatized in 2013. IBEDC covers the largest franchise area in Nigeria, made up of Oyo, Ogun, Osun, and Kwara States, as well as parts of Niger, Ekiti and Kogi States.<sup>1</sup> IBEDC is the largest distribution network in Nigeria with over 1.2 million customers. The utility has around 2,500 employees, of which almost 17 percent are women. Most female employees work as supervisors (27 percent) as well as in senior and middle management positions (24 percent respectively). At IBEDC almost 16 percent of line workers are women, whereas only 2.8 percent of engineers are female.<sup>2</sup> **IBEDC is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector.**

PHOTO: IBEDC

## 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.<sup>3</sup> In 2017, only 54 percent of the population had access to electricity.<sup>4</sup>

## 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.<sup>5</sup> Women make up 45 percent of the total labor force in Nigeria.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> Almost 14 percent of Nigerian firms have female top managers,<sup>8</sup> but the UNDP indicates that females are underrepresented in the higher-paid, more powerful positions.<sup>9</sup> 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.<sup>10</sup>

The country's literacy rate is 62 percent and the literacy rate among women is around 52 percent compared to 71 percent for men.<sup>11</sup> In 2011, only around eight percent of gross enrollment in tertiary education were women<sup>12</sup> and the National Bureau of Statistics in Nigeria found that almost 50 percent more male than female students were enrolled at universities in Nigeria.<sup>13</sup>

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

IBEDC 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 showed that women were excluded from most jobs within the company. For example, 84 percent of lineworker positions, as well as 97 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 impact women's ability 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 gender-equitable employee development and succession planning. IBEDC also launched initiatives that encouraged universities, colleges, and primary schools to raise awareness of IBEDC as a potential equal opportunity employer. As part of their corporate social responsibility efforts, the utility developed an after-school program designed to encourage an interest in energy for primary school girls and boys. IBEDC hopes to help increase the number of girls pursuing education in energy, thus increasing the number of qualified female candidates to hire in the future. IBEDC also wielded its influence to address gender inequity in the energy industry by



PHOTO: RTI / USAID

participating in a discussion surrounding issues related to gender mainstreaming along with other members of the Association of Nigerian Electricity Distributors.

IBEDC's HR specialists also took part in Engendering Utilities' customized Gender Equity Executive Leadership (GEELP) 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 IBEDC Team graduated from the GEELP program in 2018.

## IMPACT

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

- IBEDC drafted an equal employment opportunity (EEO) policy, which was fully implemented at all levels of the company in 2017.
- From 2015 to 2017, IBEDC more than doubled the number of HR compliance and recruiting practices from 4 to 10. These practices included reviewing and revising HR policies to ensure that each use gender-inclusive language, implementing training programs to raise the awareness of unconscious bias, using disaggregated data as a factor in decision-making, conducting corporate-sponsored forums and community initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment, and conducting an annual employee survey to assess perception of gender in the company.
- Female applicants from targeted schools nearly doubled from 2015 to 2018, from 27 to 52, with females holding nearly 50 percent of IBEDC internships.
- IBEDC developed a model to continue student engagement which operates on a continuous two-year cycle. During a primary school's first year of participation, school faculty work directly with the utility, after which, the school takes ownership of the program and conducts activities on its own. This allows for IBEDC to choose up to three new schools to work with every year, enlarging the company's impact on primary school students.
- IBEDC now requests gender statistics for all decision-making processes.
- *Engineering Digest* recognized Engr. Bilikisu Adeola Jimoh as one of the Outstanding Professional Women in the field of Engineering. She is a Manager in the Protection, Control, and Metering Unit of the Technical Department in IBEDC.
- IBEDC organized multiple DISCO for Women Conferences to expose women to different career options and address challenges affecting women in business and as professionals (1,000 women were targeted and topics covered include unconscious bias, engaging men and sexual harassment).
- Sexual harassment training has been integrated into induction programs.
- IBEDC has drafted a Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

*“Officially and unofficially, I find myself picking out staff to mentor and all of that started because of the training from Engendering Utilities. It comes naturally now. I see them responding.”*

- Temi Raji-Dawadou, Head of Customer Service, IBEDC

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## NOTES

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