USAID is proud to work with the Irbid District Electricity Company (IDECO) in their commitment to overcome gender inequity 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 policies are more effective, energy products have higher sales rates, and utilities have higher returns on equity and investment. USAID’s Engendering Utilities program seeks to strengthen the energy sector by increasing the professional participation of women. IDECO 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.

IDECO is one of three companies that emerged after privatization of Jordan’s power sector in 2002. IDECO is a generation, transmission, and distribution company in northern Jordan, providing energy to approximately 25.6 percent of the country. While women make up less than 6 percent of the company’s workforce, IDECO is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector.
JORDAN’S ENERGY SECTOR

Jordan’s power sector has undergone significant transformations over the last 20 years. In 2002, Jordan passed a national electricity law that called for an independent regulator and privatization of state-run electric distribution companies. In addition, USAID’s ongoing Energy Sector Capacity Building project is promoting the practical and efficient use of alternative and renewable energy sources to decrease dependence on imported oil and gas.

From a gender equity perspective, however, transformation of the energy sector has been slower. Though most Jordanian women are educated, and represent 60 percent of all university graduates in the country, women comprise just 13 percent of active labor market participants, and even fewer in the energy sector.

GENDER EQUITY IN ACTION

IDECO is working with USAID’s Engendering Utilities program to develop a tailored action plan to incorporate gender equity into its business practices. Data collected and analyzed through Engendering Utilities found that the male labor force had dramatically increased over time, whereas the number of women working in the company had remained stable. From 2010 to 2014, the total number of women in the company increased from 5 to 66, while the number of men in the company increased by 116 to 1,106. 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 leadership development that includes women, the institution of gender-equitable succession planning, and job candidate selection processes. IDECO also adopted a mentoring program and encouraged universities, colleges, and secondary schools to raise awareness of IDECO as a potential equal opportunity employer. IDECO also self-funded construction of a nursery at the company’s headquarters and the celebration of “Bring Your Child to Work Day.” Both initiatives were implemented to encourage women to continue their career at IDECO and counteract societal pressures that give Jordanian women the sole responsibility of child care. “Bring Your Child to Work Day” had the added aim of exposing more young girls to the energy field to promote future study.

IDECO’s HR specialists also took part in Engendering Utilities’ customized Gender Equity Executive Leadership certificate program, 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. 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.
IMPACT

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

- IDECO promoted three women in 2016, as opposed to none in 2015.
- Women employees increased from 68 in Fiscal Year (FY) 14/15 to 80 in FY17/18.
- IDECO completed the company’s Code of Conduct to aid in the establishment of a gender-equitable company culture. The utility also developed a gender equity statement. Both initiatives were completed by the first quarter of 2018.
- Job advertisements were systematically revised to include gender-equitable language in the job title and the description of duties.
- IDECO adopted a company-wide gender-equitable communications strategy.
- IDECO reported that from 2015 to 2017, the number of female employees increased from 72 to 80, representing an overall change of 11.1 percent.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“I have become more confident in my own ability and the abilities of other women. It was also good to meet with others from other countries facing the same issues and opportunities for growth. We have become friends and will continue to share with each other.”

- Seham Al-Zoubi, Head of Training and Development Section, IDECO

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