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## ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE LASURECO, PHILIPPINES

USAID is proud to work with Lanao del Sur Electric Cooperative, Inc. (LASURECO) 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.** LASURECO is working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design and implement tailored interventions that directly increase opportunities for women within the company and enhance the utility’s operations.

LASURECO is one of the electric cooperatives generating and distributing electricity on the Philippine island of Mindanao. The cooperative currently serves an area of 3,959 km<sup>2</sup>, with around 51,400 customer connections.<sup>1</sup> Of their 330 employees, 18 percent are women. In 2017, a female general manager was appointed to lead the utility. Most women (61 percent of total female staff) work in non-management/non-supervisory positions. However, a high percentage of executive management (62 percent) and senior management (75 percent) positions are currently held by women. At the utility, there are no female field/line workers and only one of the engineers is a woman.<sup>2</sup>

**LASURECO recognizes the importance of gender equality, and the utility hopes to increase their gender balance and encourage more women to enter the electricity sector.**

PHOTO: ARAI MONTEFORTE / USAID

## PHILIPPINE ENERGY SECTOR

The National Power Corporation of the Philippines owned and operated all generation and transmission assets in the country until 1987, when the government first allowed independent power producers to participate in the market. In 2001, the Philippines passed the Electric Power Industry Reform Act (EPIRA) with the goal of liberalizing and unbundling the power sector to promote competition. By the end of 2013, the power sector in the Philippines had become one of the most extensively privatized in the region. Private investor-owned utilities serve the largest cities, while electric cooperatives (smaller, member-owned, non-profit entities) tend to operate in rural locations. Across the 120 electric cooperatives in the Philippines, the quality of operations, performance, and organizational capability varies widely.<sup>3</sup>

By the end of 2016, installed electricity generation capacity reached 21.4 gigawatts (GW), with nearly half of the electricity generated from coal. However, the country is also harnessing renewable energy: its National Renewable Energy Program has targets to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030 from 5,438 megawatts (MW) to 15,304 MW. This highly ambitious plan includes technology-specific targets, such as an additional 1.5 GW of geothermal, 5.4 GW of hydropower, and 2.3 GW of wind power. Despite the country's overall progress on electrification, only 74.8 percent of the region of Mindanao has access to electricity. And, although the EPIRA has unbundled the sector, the Philippines continues to have one of Asia's highest electricity tariff rates.<sup>4</sup>

## GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines is a bright spot in Asia with regard to the status of women. In 2018, the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines eighth among 149 countries in achieving gender equality. However, the International Labor Organization reports that less than half (46 percent) of working-age women are able to access decent and productive employment, compared to three in every four males (73 percent) of working age.<sup>5</sup> In 2018, 45 percent of Filipina women participated in the labor market.<sup>6</sup> Most working women are employed in the services sector (75 percent) and only 10 percent of women compared to 24 percent of men work in industry.<sup>7</sup> However, women comprise an average of 34 percent of corporate boards in the Philippines, far surpassing the global average of 19 percent.<sup>8</sup>

Furthermore, the female literacy rate is 96.8 percent,<sup>9</sup> and according to UNDP gender disparities in education favor girls, with higher enrollment and completion rates than boys, which compromise the development of gender-equal education opportunities.<sup>10</sup> A report by UNESCO showed that 40 percent of women are enrolled in tertiary education compared to around 30 percent of men.<sup>11</sup> In 2017, the share of female graduates of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) programs in the Philippines was 36 percent.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, in 2013, 48 percent of researchers as well as almost 38 percent of technicians and equivalent staff in the Philippines were women.<sup>13</sup>

According to the 2004-2010 Report on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), one in five Filipino women or 4.6 million have experienced physical violence since age 15. Moreover, 24 percent of the reported HIV/AIDS cases are women.<sup>14</sup>

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

Prior to engaging with Engendering Utilities, LASURECO took initiative to improve gender equality, most notably in women's representation at the leadership level: LASURECO's Chief Executive Officer and five of eight senior managers are women. The utility also addresses sexual harassment in their code of ethics.

To continue building on their positive efforts, LASURECO has been working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program since 2019 to assess and identify high-impact interventions that can improve gender equality within the organization.

Through Engendering Utilities, USAID is providing tailored coaching to LASURECO staff on gender equality and business best practices and select utility personnel will participate in the 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 LASURECO to identify opportunities to improve its benefits offering and to hire more women into technical roles, with a goal of 50 percent representation. Through this coaching, the utility will develop a tailored action plan to best fit their needs. LASURECO will also place a strong emphasis on engaging influential male leaders as champions of gender equality.



PHOTO: ARAI MONTEFORTE / USAID

## IMPACT

Before a social disruption in 2017, LASURECO appointed a female Managing Director whose tenure illustrated the utility's capabilities under women's leadership. Within four months of her hiring, collections were automated and increased from six million Philippine pesos (PHP) to 18 million PHP, technical fault correction turnaround time was improved, and six municipalities that had been without power since 2013 had their electricity restored. LASURECO also mobilized key stakeholders within the community, including politicians, religious and business leaders, and NGOs.

The aforementioned achievements positively influenced men's perceptions of their female colleagues within LASURECO. The utility's male employees described their female counterparts as demonstrating strong leadership, good communication skills, commitment to success, and high productivity.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## NOTES

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2 Figures provided by utility in 2019.

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