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 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. In May 2019, LASURECO 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.

LASURECO is one of the electric cooperatives generating and distributing electricity in the Philippine island of Mindanao. The cooperative currently serves an area of 3,959 km², with around 51,400 customer connections. Of their 184 employees, only 29 percent are women. However, 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.
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 began allowing 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 more rural locations. Across the 120 electric cooperatives in the Philippines, the quality of operations, performance, and organizational capability varies widely.

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.

The International Labour Organization reports that 44.9 percent of Filipina women participate in the labor market. In this region of the Philippines, cultural norms also challenge women’s equal participation in the energy sector. Women, especially once married, are not allowed to travel without their husbands, fathers, brothers, or other immediate male relatives. Families are also mindful of the potential negative association between women who work in particular capacities; while administrative roles are largely accepted, jobs such as meter-reading and validation or any task that requires pole-climbing are all prohibited and reflect poorly upon the family.

GENDER EQUITY IN ACTION

Prior to engaging with Engendering Utilities, LASURECO took the initiative to improve gender equality, most notably in women’s representation at the leadership level: LASURECO’s Chief Executive Officer is a woman, 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 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 LASURECO staff on gender equality and business best practices, and select utility personnel will participate in a 12-month Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program 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.

**IMPACT**

Before a social disruption in 2017, LASURECO appointed a woman 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 6 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 have positively influenced men’s perceptions of their women colleagues within LASURECO. The utility’s male employees described their female counterparts as demonstrating strong leadership, good communication skills, encouragement to colleagues, commitment to success, and high levels of productivity.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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