



## ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE OSHEE, ALBANIA

USAID partners with Operatori I Shpërndarjes Së Energjisë Elektrike (OSHEE) to improve women's participation in Albania's energy sector.

When women serve as leaders and employees, businesses benefit and company performance improves. **USAID's Engendering Utilities program works to increase women's participation in the energy and water sectors globally.** In January 2020, Engendering Utilities partnered with [OSHEE](#) to design workplace initiatives that will expand job opportunities for women and enhance the utility's performance.

OSHEE is a government-owned energy utility in Albania, and the country's largest employer. Yet only 30 percent of OSHEE's 6,000 employees are women, the majority of whom serve in traditionally female-dominated customer care roles.

**Recognizing that diverse teams build better businesses, OSHEE partnered with USAID to increase gender balance across the company and encourage more women to enter Albania's energy sector.**

## ALBANIA'S ENERGY SECTOR

Recent investment in hydropower has increased energy production in Albania, but an over-reliance on hydro has left the country vulnerable to drought, which is increasing in frequency. Nearly all (97 percent) of Albania's electricity is generated by three hydropower plants along the Drin River.<sup>1</sup> In 2017 a protracted drought caused water levels to drop, forcing Albania to import nearly 80 percent of its electricity. The Prime Minister of Albania subsequently signed the country's [National Energy Sector Strategy](#), which seeks to diversify Albania's energy sources in an effort to provide consumers with a more reliable and affordable energy supply.<sup>2</sup> The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), which is part of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) project, is currently under construction and will significantly increase Albania's capacity to produce and distribute natural gas across the country and region.<sup>3</sup>

**Engendering Utilities' work with OSHEE will ensure women can capitalize on increased investment in Albania's energy sector as the industry and labor force continue to grow.**

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ALBANIA'S WORKFORCE

A complex web of contributing factors prevents women in Albania from joining the formal workforce, particularly the male-dominated energy sector. This industry represents an economic growth area in Albania, and the exclusion of women from opportunities in this market deepens Albania's gender equality divide.

While 70 percent of Albanian women pursue a tertiary-level education (compared to 40 percent of men),<sup>4</sup> only 56 percent of Albanian women participate in the formal workforce (compared to 75 percent of men).<sup>5</sup> Despite their higher level of education, women are less likely to occupy higher paying positions. In 2013, only 30 percent of middle and senior management positions in Albania were held by women.<sup>6</sup> In 2008 the government sought to address this issue by enacting the Law on Gender Equality, which mandates that 30 percent of all government-appointed positions be reserved for women. Today, women hold half of the cabinet positions and 30 percent of seats in parliament,<sup>7</sup> but leadership representation in other industries—including the energy sector—remains low.

Harmful cultural practices and gender norms further impact a woman's ability to join the formal workforce in Albania. Albanian women are responsible for most household tasks, with women performing seven hours of paid and unpaid work a day, compared with five hours for men.<sup>8</sup> When employment policies and practices are inflexible, women are unable to balance the responsibilities of work and home.

Violence against women in Albania compounds these issues. Nearly half of Albanian women have experienced intimate partner violence, including psychological, physical, or sexual violence. Additionally, nearly 20 percent of women have experienced non-partner physical and/or sexual violence.<sup>9</sup> Domestic violence has real costs for companies. One study estimates that violence against women costs \$1.5 trillion in direct costs and lost productivity, globally.<sup>10</sup> Employers that work to reduce and mitigate violence and harassment both at home and work improve the well-being and productivity of men and women at work.

**Engendering Utilities supports companies—like OSHEE—to consider and respond to factors that reduce women's workforce participation by building inclusive policies and practices that benefit men, women, and businesses in the energy sector.**

## GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION AT OSHEE

Engendering Utilities uses an [evidence-based methodology](#) to support women's participation in Albania's energy sector. The program supports OSHEE to increase opportunities for women by introducing gender equality initiatives at each phase of the employee lifecycle: from reducing gender bias at the hiring stage, to creating strategies that will help retain female talent and improve corporate culture change that benefits both women and men. Using a globally recognized [framework](#) for change, Engendering Utilities is supporting OSHEE in its goal of becoming the employer of choice for women in Albania.

A dedicated change management coach supports the utility and works directly with three staff to become agents of change within OSHEE. A baseline assessment is conducted to identify gaps and opportunities for improving gender equality across the company. The findings are used to develop a strategic action plan that will facilitate OSHEE's gender equality goals, including achievement of a national mandate for 30 percent of company employees to be women. This is supplemented by the program's partnership with the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, which delivers the [Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program](#) (GEELP) to three utility employees. The GEELP is a best-in-class 12-month executive course that empowers decision-makers to integrate gender equality initiatives into their corporate structure.

Engendering Utilities will support and accelerate existing gender equality initiatives already underway at OSHEE as part of the broader strategic action plan, including the finalization and implementation of OSHEE's draft gender strategy, which seeks to increase recruitment of female talent as well as professional opportunities for women across the utility.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## NOTES

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