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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE EDCO, JORDAN

USAID is proud to work with the Electric Distribution Company (EDCO) 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 in those sectors 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.** EDCO is working with USAID through the Engendering Utilities program to collaboratively design tailored interventions to improve gender equality outcomes and meet core business goals.

EDCO is one of three distribution companies that emerged after privatization of Jordan's power sector in 2002.¹ It serves 55 percent of the country and has around 1,400 employees. However, women make up less than eight percent of the company's workforce. Most female employees work as engineers (almost 15 percent) and in middle management positions (10 percent). Currently, only six percent of senior management positions are occupied by women.² **EDCO is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector. The utility will focus on increasing women's participation in certain locations or job groups.**

PHOTO: RTI / USAID

JORDAN'S ENERGY SECTOR

Jordan has very limited domestic energy resources and imports almost 96 percent of the energy it consumes. As a response to Jordan's reliance on energy imports, the government introduced the Energy Master Plan (2007-2020), which focuses on maximizing the use of domestic resources from the current four percent to 40 percent by 2020, particularly oil shale; encouraging energy conservation and awareness; generating electricity from nuclear energy; and promoting the development of renewable energy projects.³ 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.⁴

GENDER EQUALITY IN JORDAN

According to UN Women, Jordan has one of the lowest female labor force participation rates (14 percent) regionally and globally.⁵ Most women in Jordan (83.5 percent of female employment) work in services. However, only 15 percent of the female labor force works in industry, compared to almost 27 percent of the male labor force.⁶ Moreover, only 2.4 percent of firms in Jordan have female top managers.⁷ Women in Jordan experience a large gender pay gap: men working in Jordan's private sector earn on average 41 percent more than women.⁸ To address the country's difficulties regarding gender equality, Jordan recently adopted a five-year Women's Economic Empowerment Action Plan, which aims to increase women's labor force participation rates to 24 percent by 2025.⁹

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION

EDCO has been working with USAID's Engendering Utilities program since 2016 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 underrepresented in most jobs within the company. Only roughly eight percent of employees with supervisory and management responsibilities are women and most technical positions, such as engineers (94 percent) or lineworkers (85 percent) are occupied by men.



PHOTO: RTI / USAID

The action plan included targeted interventions, such as implementing gender-equitable job candidate recruitment processes and publishing profiles of women working at EDCO on the utility's website to attract female candidates. EDCO also adopted a mentoring program and launched initiatives that encouraged universities and colleges to raise awareness of EDCO as an equal opportunity employer. EDCO hosted events for female students to increase the number of female engineers in the company.

EDCO plans to continue its progress by increasing the percentage of female employees. The utility expects that its flex time for mothers and childcare assistance programs will help attract more women applicants. EDCO is also continuing the Women's Leadership Program and related mentorship.

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

IMPACT

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

- EDCO fully implemented their Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) policy in 2018.
- EDCO instituted an annual survey to determine employee attitudes on gender equity.
- 21 female EDCO employees participated in leadership training for the first time.
- EDCO held Bring Your Daughter to Work Day in 2016 and Mother's Day celebration in 2019 (including a mentoring meeting for 111 female employees).
- EDCO now has a formal gender-balanced communication strategy. The company reviews policies and documents to ensure gender-inclusive language and holds corporate-sponsored forums and community initiatives that promote women's economic empowerment.
- Childcare benefits and flex time for mothers, as well as a written change management plan, have become a priority for EDCO.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"[Engendering Utilities] helped me gain power within my job. I also value myself more as a woman in the company. We now have a chance to explain our needs."

– Suha Rebhl Al-Zer, Manager of Supply and Stores Department, EDCO

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Amanda Valenta
Energy Specialist
Office of Energy and
Infrastructure,
USAID
avalenta@usaid.gov

Corinne Hart
Senior Advisor for
Gender and Environment
Office of Gender Equality and
Women's Empowerment,
USAID
cohart@usaid.gov

Jessica Menon
Program Manager
Tetra Tech
Jessica.Menon@tetratech.com

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NOTES

- 1 Energypedia. (n.d). Jordan Energy Situation. Retrieved from https://energypedia.info/wiki/Jordan_Energy_Situation#Introduction
- 2 Figures report by utility.
- 3 Rahim, N.A. (2015). The energy sector in Jordan. Retrieved from <http://invest-export.brussels/documents/16349/1140680/2015+-+Jordan%27s+energy+sector.pdf/920340a4-ee7d-4022-a386-947dd8bdbe96>
- 4 USAID. (2017). Jordan energy sector capacity building activity. Retrieved from <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/fact-sheets/usaid-energy-sector-capacity-building-activity>
- 5 UN Women. (n.d.). Women's Economic Empowerment. Retrieved from <https://jordan.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/womens-economic-empowerment-2018>
- 6 World Bank. (n.d.). Gender Data Portal. Retrieved from <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/jordan>
- 7 USAID. IDEA Country Dashboard. Retrieved from <https://idea.usaid.gov/cd/jordan/gender>
- 8 ILO. (2013). Gender Pay Discrimination in Jordan: A Call for Change. Retrieved from https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/features/WCMS_213754/lang--en/index.htm
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