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ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE IDECO, JORDAN

USAID is proud to work with the Irbid District Electricity Company (IDECO) 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 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.** 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 a generation, transmission, and distribution company in northern Jordan, providing energy to approximately 25.6 percent of the country.¹ The utility has around 1,300 employees, however women only make up six percent of the company's workforce. Most female employees work in supervisory positions (26 percent). Currently, the utility does not employ any female line workers and only around 23 percent of engineers are women.² **IDECO is committed to increasing their gender balance and encouraging more women to enter the electricity sector. The utility will focus on tackling established stereotypes and traditions that prevent women from applying for technical positions such as technicians or meter readers.**

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

IDECO is working with USAID's Engendering Utilities program to develop and implement a tailored action plan to incorporate gender equity into its business practices. Data collected and analyzed through Engendering Utilities found that only around six percent of the total workforce are women and that no female technicians, meter readers, or drivers work at IDECO. 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 childcare. "Bring Your Child to Work Day" had the added aim of exposing more young girls to the energy field to promote future study.

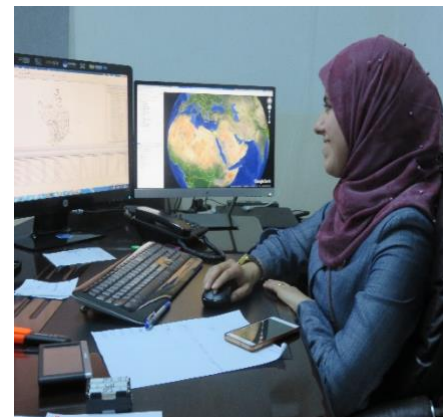


PHOTO: RTI / USAID

IDECO's HR specialists also 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 IDECO Team successfully graduated from the GEELP program in 2018.

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:

- In 2018, IDECO completed the company's Code of Conduct to aid in the establishment of a gender-equitable company culture. Furthermore, the utility developed a gender equity statement.
- Job advertisements were systematically revised to include gender-equitable language.
- 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.
- IDECO increased the break time to allow women and men to visit their children in the nursery/to leave earlier at the end of the day.
- Husbands of female employees were included in health insurance benefits.
- 10 university scholarships were provided for women employees' children.

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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NOTES

1 Kingdom Electricity Company. (n.d.). Irbid District Electricity Distribution Company. Retrieved from <http://www.kec.jo/irbid-district-electricity-distribution-company-ideco>

2 Figures provided 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>

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9 Kwar, M. (2019). Jordan's Government adopts Women Economic Empowerment Plan. Retrieved from <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/jordans-government-adopts-women-economic-empowerment-plan>