Energizing Equality:

Unlocking the potential of women's participation in sub-Saharan African energy utilities

An IUCN EGI Brief

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Acronyms

AEDC	Abuja Electricity Distribution Company
AGENT	Advancing Gender in the Environment
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EDD	Electricité de Djibouti
EEU	Ethiopian Electricity Utility
EGI	Environment and Gender Information platform
EY	Ernst and Young
HR	Human Resources
JED	Jos Electricity Distribution Plc
KEDCO	Kano Electricity Distribution Company Plc
IBEDC	Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
IUCN GPGR	International Union for Conservation of Nature Global Programme on Governance and Rights
LEC	Liberia Electricity Corporation
REG	Rwanda Energy Group Ltd
SSA	Sub-Saharan Africa
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and math
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WiAP	Women in African Power

Key Findings

DATA FINDINGS

- Boards: From a sample of 243 energy utility board positions, governing 29 utilities in 24 sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries, this analysis found that women hold 52 —or 21% of— board positions.
- Leadership: Based on data from 47 utilities across 41 SSA countries, this analysis found that women hold three out of 47—or 6%—of top utility leadership positions (e.g. CEO, president).
- Workforce: Overall employment data from utilities included in this analysis suggests that women may comprise 16-35% of the SSA energy sector utility labor force, with the majority of these utilities reporting that women's labor force participation rate is 16-20%.

INTERVENTIONS IN PRACTICE

- Utility-led interventions aimed at promoting women's participation in the energy sector tend to include:
    - » outreach to female high school and university students to join the energy sector;
    - » affirmative hiring practices;
    - » technical training programs; and
    - » mentorship programs.

- While recruiting women is a critical first step, utilities must also design gender-responsive interventions and activities to retain women employees. Interventions to promote gender-responsive working conditions at utilities include:
    - » maternity and/or paternity leave;
    - » on-site nurseries and time allocation for breastfeeding;
    - » sexual harassment policies and grievance mechanisms;
    - » separate changing facilities for women and men while in the field; and
    - » inclusive corporate dress codes recognizing cultural and religious diversity.

POWER AFRICA

A US Government-led partnership coordinated by USAID, Power Africa brings together the private sector and governments from around the world to work in partnership to double access to electricity in sub-Saharan Africa. Power Africa has the goal of adding more than 30,000 megawatts of electricity generation capacity and 60 million new connections across sub-Saharan Africa. Promoting gender equality and female empowerment is a critical component of Power Africa, as it seeks to support projects, program and policies that strive to reduce gender inequalities and promote the effective engagement of both men and women across the energy sector.

ADVANCING GENDER IN THE ENVIRONMENT (AGENT)

Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT) is a ten-year program launched in 2014 by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The purpose of this partnership is to increase the effectiveness of USAID's environmental programming through robust gender integration and improve gender equality and women's empowerment outcomes in a broad range of environmental sectors. Recognizing women as agents of change, and the value of diverse knowledge, experiences, and capacities of women and men alike, AGENT envisions a world that approaches environmental work at all levels with gender-responsive policy and action. AGENT drives transformation toward a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

Introduction

Energy utility companies in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) are powerful drivers of economic and social development. Utilities are often among the largest employers in a community and can therefore drive socially inclusive economic development and empowerment when unlocking opportunities for women. Not only is hiring women anti-discriminatory, but effectively developing women's talent can be key in improving a utility's operational performance.[i]

Women are traditionally underrepresented in the energy sector. The World Economic Forum estimated that women comprised less than 20% of the total global energy sector labor force.[ii] Studies conducted by IUCN found that women occupy only 4% of the Chair positions on the World Energy Council and 18% of the Secretary positions, while only 10% of Energy Ministries are headed by women.[iii] When it comes to women's participation in utilities, the numbers are also stark: a survey conducted by USAID as part of its *Engendering Utilities* program found that women make up an estimated 13% of the utilities workforce in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Africa.[iv]

At the same time, a number of companies are recognizing the potential power of increasing gender equality and are employing innovative approaches to foster gender-responsive labor conditions and gender-equitable labor forces to advance national, sector and company-specific outcomes. This brief presents new baseline data from across the SSA region to understand women's roles and leadership in utilities, which will be essential to measure future progress of women's participation in the sector. Additionally, this analysis identifies some of the interventions implemented by SSA utilities, such as on-campus recruiting activities, mentorship programs, and sexual harassment policies.

This analysis was conducted in partnership with Power Africa and utilized the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Environment and Gender Information (EGI) quantitative and qualitative analysis framework[1] in order to:

- collect data on utilities' leadership composition;
- identify existing interventions;
- gather information from utilities through an online survey; and
- conduct interviews with key utilities' staff.

This research was developed under Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT), a ten-year program launched by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by IUCN.

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1 IUCN's Environment and Gender Information (EGI) platform aims—through data and analysis—to convey the value of gender-responsive environmental conservation and sustainable development. By providing evidence-based information and knowledge products, the EGI platform guides action toward a more just world. Since its inception in 2013, the EGI has evolved into a source for new knowledge creation and dissemination—and for revealing progress and challenges in meeting commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality in environmental spheres.

The importance of women's participation in sub-Saharan African energy utilities

Globally, women hold few high-level decision-making positions in the energy sector. For example, IUCN found that 10% of energy ministries globally[v] and 7% of energy ministries in sub-Saharan Africa[vi] are headed by women (2017). For energy utilities specifically, Ernst and Young's *Women in Power and Utilities* index found that women hold 5% of executive positions and 20% of board positions across the top 200 utilities, globally.[vii]

Studies from other sectors suggest that gender diversity in high-level decision making is shown to correlate with improved business performance and investment, as companies with higher gender diversity in executive management perform better in regards to their return on investment, sales, and equity.[viii] Additionally, the correlative findings of a Berkeley Haas School of Business study suggest that companies with more women on their boards of directors could help in reforming troubled utilities, as these diverse boards are more likely to be proactive in improving energy efficiency, lowering company costs, and investing in renewable power generation.[ix]

>> The 2018 IUCN and Power Africa report *Energizing Equality: sub-Saharan Africa's integration of gender equality principles in national energy policies and frameworks* found that six out of 45 energy frameworks either identify women's underrepresentation in the energy industry or propose actions to close this gap.[x] <<

Data on women's participation through all levels of utilities' workforces remains limited. However, as utilities—particularly distribution utilities—are often the largest employer in a locality, increasing women's employment in utilities may be an opportunity for women's economic empowerment and improved societal development.[xi] Improved gender diversity throughout a utility's entire workforce may ultimately improve a utility's business operations; for example, a Jamaican

electric utility's customer satisfaction jumped from 23% to 70% after increasing the number of women in customer service roles.[xii] Further research into these trends may be an opportunity to continue to build the business case for increasing women's participation toward a more productive sector.

USAID'S *ENGENDERING UTILITIES* PROGRAM

USAID's *Engendering Utilities* program represents the Agency's commitment to promote a path to self-reliance and resilience in developing countries by fostering enterprise-driven innovation, inclusive economic growth, and gender equality and women's economic empowerment. The program strengthens energy sector operations by identifying and implementing gender equity best practices by generating data, knowledge, and experience on gender-equitable interventions across the employee lifecycle in power sector utilities to facilitate approaches that improve women's participation and retention in the energy sector, helping utilities meet their core business goals.

To date, Engendering Utilities has produced baseline research across 14 global utilities analyzing the role of women in the power sector; developed tailored interventions with seven utilities to enhance gender equity in each utility's policies and operations; and conducted an executive leadership program and accompanying tools focused on global gender best practices throughout the employee lifecycle.

Engendering Utilities also partners with utilities to increase gender equality, create leadership opportunities, and develop talent. During the first cohort, the program worked with seven partner utilities, three of which are in sub-Saharan Africa: Eko Electricity Distribution PLC (EKEDP) and Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC)[2] in Nigeria and Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC).

At time of publishing, USAID is expanding the program, developing a new cohort of global partner utilities while continuing to provide tailored coaching to the first round of partners.

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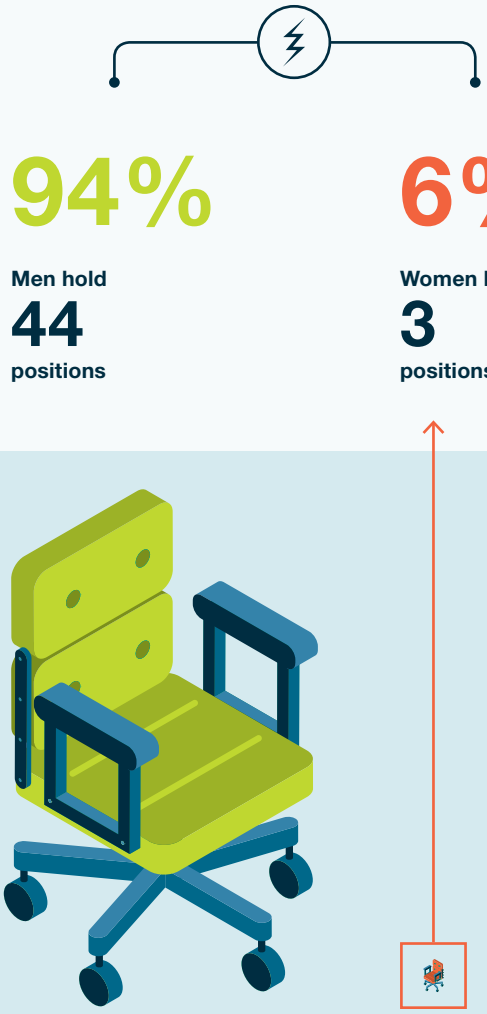
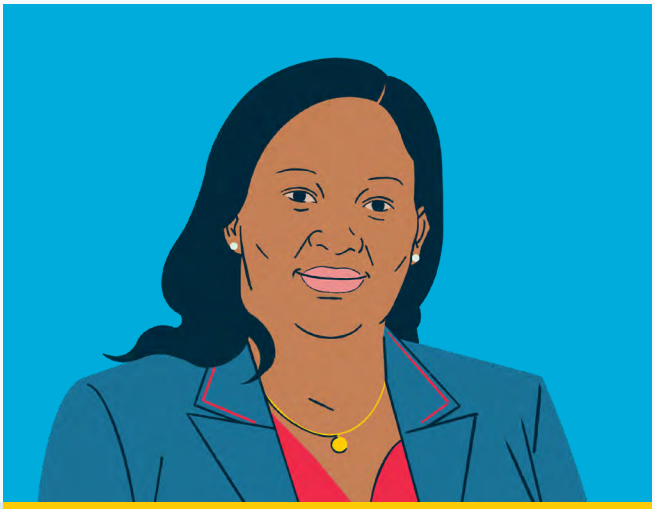
2 As well as participating in the *Engendering Utilities* Program, IBEDC has participated in the survey and interview for this study.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN ENERGY UTILITIES

Based on data from 47 utilities across 41 different SSA countries, this analysis found that women hold 6%[3] of top utility leadership positions.[4]

Figure 1: Women in executive leadership positions at sub-Saharan African energy utilities, 2018





"We still have the old myth that girls and women cannot lead and this is something that we have to break. If we can demystify this notion and get more mentorship sessions by those of us who are already in these positions, then we should be able to have more women leaders and increase the aspiration among young women to aim for the top of the corporate ladder."

-Rebecca Miano, CEO of the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen), in a 2017 interview for *The East African.*[xiii]

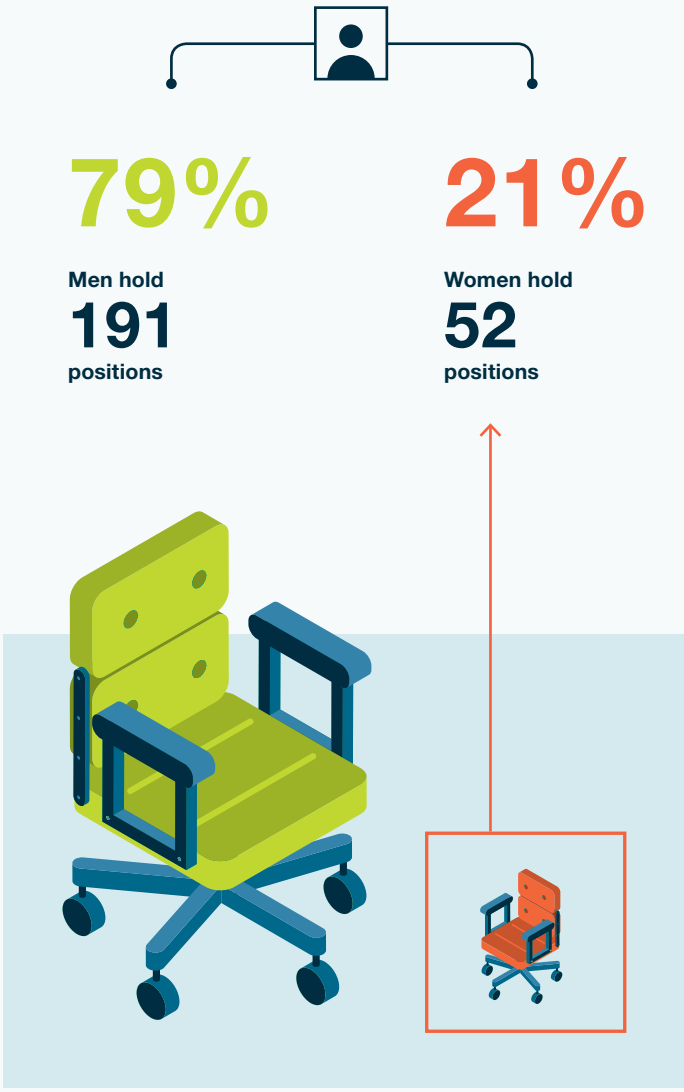
3 At the time of this analysis (March 2018), three utilities had women as Managing Directors and/or CEOs: Electricité de Djibouti (EDD), Ethiopian Electricity Utility (EEU), and the Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen).

4 Data was retrieved from utility websites, and in the instance where a working website did not exist, the names of executive leadership were found in national news sources.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN HOLDING BOARD POSITIONS AT SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN ENERGY UTILITIES

From a sample of 243 energy utility board positions, governing 29 utilities in 24 countries, this analysis found that women hold 52 board positions (21%).[5] At the time of this analysis, four of the nine board positions (44%) at Botswana Power Corporation (BPC) are held by women, the highest average among included utilities. In contrast, six utilities from six different countries have boards comprised of only men.

Figure 2: Women in board positions at sub-Saharan African energy utilities, 2018



"[Fostering a better gender balance in the boardroom] starts with removing gender stereotypes."[xiv]

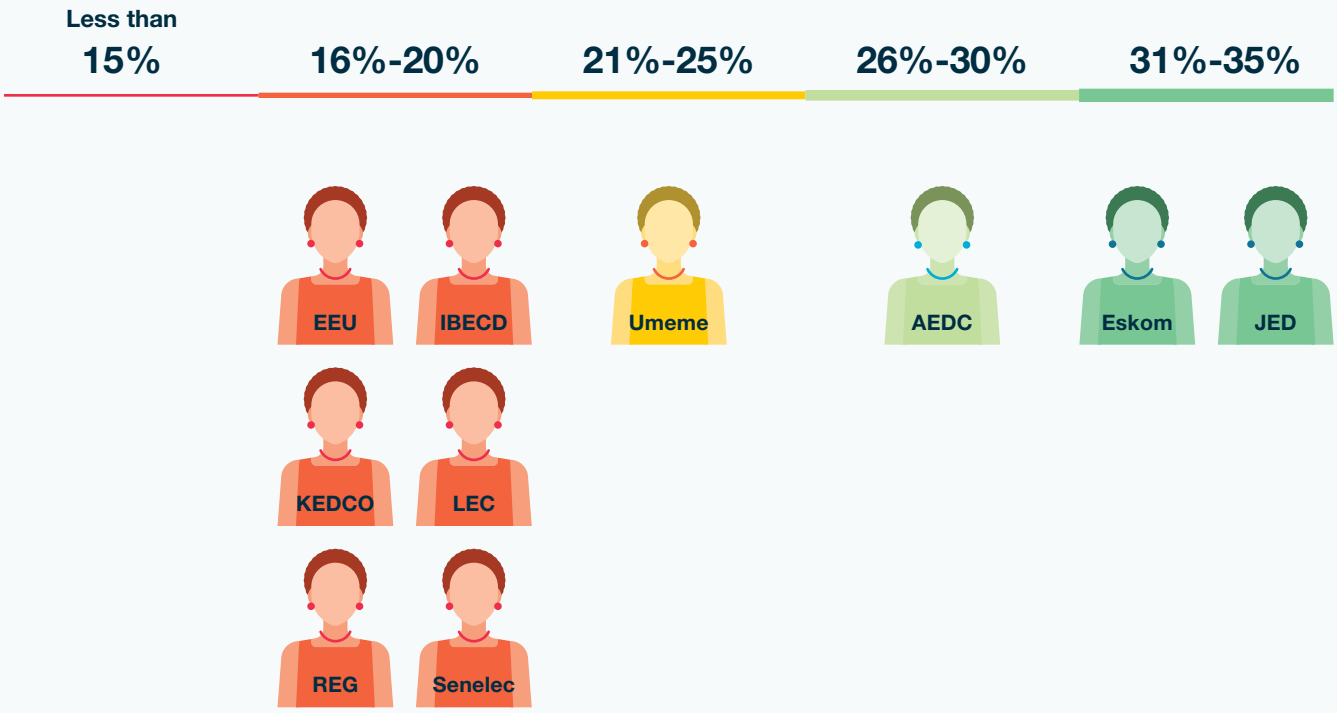
-Nelisiwe Magubane, member of the Board of Directors at Eskom, South Africa, in a 2018 interview with the United States Energy Agency (USEA).

5 This data was retrieved from utility websites.

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE UTILITIES WORKFORCE

For this portion of the analysis, IUCN prepared an online survey and arranged interviews with HR personnel and managers at utilities[6] to retrieve data on the number of women and men employed at the utility, across all job types. Respondents from the utilities were presented with a choice of five ranges to best represent the percentage of women in their workforce. *Figure 3* depicts the respondents' selections or the utilities' publicly available data matching the IUCN proposed ranges. The below data suggests that women may comprise between 16% and 35% of the SSA energy utility labor force.

Figure 3: Distribution of the percentage of women in utility workforces, across all job types



AEDC: Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (Nigeria)
EEU: Ethiopian Electricity Utility (Ethiopia)
Eskom: South Africa
JED: Jos Electricity Distribution Plc (Nigeria)
IBECD: Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (Nigeria)
KEDCO: Kano Electricity Distribution Company Plc (Nigeria)
LEC: Liberia Electricity Corporation (Liberia)
REG: Rwanda Energy Group Ltd (Rwanda)
Senelac: Senegal
Umeme: Uganda

6 The utilities included in this analysis are: Abuja Electricity Distribution Company (AEDC), Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU), Eskom - South Africa, Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC), Jos Electricity Distribution Company (JED), Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO), Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC), Rwanda Energy Group (REG), Senelac - Senegal, and Umeme - Uganda.

In addition to analyzing data on women's overall participation in the utility workforce, this analysis attempted to understand what roles women hold in this sector, beyond those related to executive and board leadership. While utilities do not often collect sex-disaggregated data and/or disclose it, information was obtained from a few utilities:

- Eskom reports, for example, that women hold 38% of middle and senior management positions—a number that drops to only 12% when looking at top management positions.
- At Senelec in Senegal, women hold 20% of middle management positions.
- At Umeme, women hold 35% of senior management positions. Additionally, 25% of the total employed women at Umeme hold administrative or customer service roles, and at the time of writing, there are no women in line work or technician positions.

That only three of the utilities included in this assessment disaggregate labor-grade data by sex reinforces the need to encourage utilities to track sex-disaggregated data in order to fully understand women's participation in and contribution to the sector.

>> Of the 200 utilities included in Ernst and Young's *Women in Power and Utilities Index* (2016), Eskom was the only sub-Saharan African utility to score in the top ten most gender-diverse utilities, in terms of leadership.[xv] <<

Interventions to recruit, hire and train women: Examples from SSA utilities

Even as global data shows that women are gaining interest in energy sector careers,[xvi] women face a series of challenges to enter, advance, and remain in the sector, including across SSA.[xvii] Throughout all stages of their tenure at a utility—referred to as the employee life cycle (see pages 10-11)—women employees may not be given the same opportunities as men; face implicit bias, discrimination, and harassment in the workplace; and/or work in environments that adequately allow them to balance work and family responsibilities given that unpaid care work burdens almost always disproportionately fall on women. Additionally, in a male-dominated sector, women face a lack of mentoring relationships that offer support or networking opportunities. Therefore, from recruitment, to hiring, to employee development and to succession planning, utilities can design interventions to promote gender equity.

First, it is important to encourage women and girls in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM), as these fields often serve as a foundation to energy careers. Making this connection, various utilities report specific activities to reach out to female high school and university students to join energy utilities, and the broader energy sector as a whole. For example, Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company (IBEDC) has created and supported energy clubs in local schools in Ibadan to introduce girls to STEM. Kano Electricity Distribution Company (KEDCO) works in girls' schools, encouraging girls to pursue careers in electricity distribution. In Uganda, after the government made science education compulsory for secondary schools and first-year university students in 2006,[xviii] Umeme established campus-recruiting programs to hire female engineers. Today, the company recruits about 25 engineers annually, a third of whom are women. In Liberia, LEC also has efforts to recruit female engineers when they are students.

Systematic unconscious bias and explicit discrimination for positions traditionally perceived as masculine are challenges in hiring women. In sectors that are traditionally male-dominated, affirmative employment practices—typically embedded in companies' human resources policies (HR)—can ensure that women receive a fair share of opportunities. For example, at LEC, if one female and one male candidate with similar qualifications interview for a position, LEC states a preference to hire the female candidate over her male competitor.

Affirmative employment practices can be an essential component of reflecting and implementing priorities of a national energy policy: South Africa's *Energy Policy* (1998) states that the Department of Minerals and Energy will develop an employment equity plan to correct gender and racial imbalances of the past.[xix] As a result, in Eskom's recruitment policy, a certain number of people interviewed for a position have to be women, and at least one woman needs to sit on the interview panel. Even in its internal day-to-day operations, Eskom practices affirmative employment practices: for example, in order for a team to pitch a project to higher management, at least one team member must be a woman.

Another reason that women join energy utilities in smaller numbers than their male counterparts is because of unequal access to technical training opportunities.[xx] Eskom hosts a formal training program for welders, intentionally recruiting a class of 50% women and 50% men. Women entering the program receive a two-day session prior to the program, where they receive hands-on training to ensure they enter the program with the same level of background knowledge as their male counterparts. In Ethiopia, with support from Power Africa and the World Bank, EEU will support STEM education and training for women employees. KEDCO, a Nigerian utility, reports a preference to send women employees to trainings, although an official company policy for this practice does not exist.

Mentorship programs provide many benefits to women employees—and therefore energy utilities—through encouragement and advice to navigate and excel in a male-dominated sector. Studies suggest that mentorship improves the retention of women in STEM careers, specifically.[xxi] The relationships developed through mentorships are key to effective succession planning, as implicit biases often hold women back from promotions and/or senior management positions. Of the utilities interviewed, IBEDC and Umeme host formal women's mentorship programs, with Umeme's intervention designed specifically for women engineers.

SSA UTILITY INTERVENTIONS THROUGHOUT THE EMPLOYEE LIFE CYCLE MODEL

The employee life cycle is a model that describes the stages of an employee's time in a company and the diverse roles the HR function plays in each of those stages. While there are numerous versions of the employee life cycle used globally, this model guides activities under USAID's *Engendering Utilities* program.[7]

Figure 4: SSA Utility Interventions Throughout the Employee Life Cycle Model

CORPORATE CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP refers to the shared values, attitudes, standards, and beliefs of a company and its members, as well as the type of leadership that inspires the corporate culture.

South Africa's Energy Policy (1996) states that the Department of Minerals and Energy will develop an employment equity plan to correct gender and racial imbalances of the past. As a result, in Eskom's recruitment policy, a certain number of people interviewed for a position have to be women, and at least one woman needs to sit on the interview panel.

SEPARATION AND RETIREMENT refers to the process of managing the voluntary or involuntary leave of employees.

SUCCESSION PLANNING AND PROMOTION is the process of identification and development of potential successors for key positions to ensure that an employee develops to fill key roles.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATION AND BRANDING addresses the efforts of a company to communicate with internal and external stakeholders, creating a positive image and positioning the company as a business partner and employer of choice.

RETENTION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT refers to the processes set into place to maintain a working environment which motivates and engages current staff.

TALENT AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT is the process set into place to identify, develop and promote future talent and leaders in the future.

KEDCO, a Nigerian utility, reports a preference to send women employees to trainings, although an official company policy for this practice does not exist.

POLICIES AND GRIEVANCE MANAGEMENT require developing guidelines to inform staff and management behavior and establishing mechanisms to address non-compliance.

Liberia Electricity Corporation (LEC) has in place a reporting grievance mechanism for employees who are experiencing harassment.

ATTRACTION AND TALENT OUTREACH is the strategy or long-term approach used by a utility to broaden the talent pool by attracting and acquiring talent for future recruiting, including showcasing the reasons why a utility is a good place for women to work and reaching out to educational institutions to identify young female and male candidates for new postings.

Umeme established campus recruiting programs to hire female engineers. Today, the company recruits about 25 engineers annually, a third of whom are women.

RECRUITING AND HIRING is the systematic processes that lead to hiring of new employees from a diverse pool of candidates.

COMPANY PERFORMANCE AND REPORTING involves tracking and delivering on its defined goals and targets, as well as communication of progress to various stakeholders through reporting.

ONBOARDING AND TRAINING refers to the capacity building provided to new personnel to support their performance, integrate corporate values and standards, and adjust to social and performance aspects of their new jobs.

PERFORMANCE MANGEMENT, COMPENSATION, AND BENEFITS addresses the communication process between management as well as the rewards provided to employees.

KEDCO ensures that women on maternity leave receive their annual performance bonus payments and are rewarded promotions and raises in salaries.

7 At time of publishing this report, USAID is reviewing its *Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Utilities.* This graphic is based on the current published version at: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1865/Delivering-Gender-Equality_A-Best-Practices-Framework-for-Utilities.pdf

Interventions to retain women in the workforce: Examples from SSA utilities

While recruiting and training women are crucial first steps to advancing women's participation in energy utilities, retaining women is the next step. Utilities' management needs to take into account that women and men experience the working conditions of utilities differently. Interventions aimed at promoting gender-responsive labor conditions can ensure that gender-based discriminations or inequities are recognized and addressed, including to ensure that women, as well as men, feel safe and supported in their working environments and can achieve a work, life, and family balance. Across the utilities interviewed, interventions targeting maternity leave, childcare, breastfeeding, and sexual harassment are the most implemented.

All of the SSA countries where interviewed utilities are located have maternity leave protected by national law, although these mandates differ by country. All nine utilities recognize maternity leave following national legislation parameters, with some of them providing additional benefits. For example, in South Africa, an employer is required to grant maternity leave, but is not obligated to give paid maternity leave.[xxii] However, Eskom grants employees 150 days of paid maternity leave, with an additional 30 days at 30% salary. Eskom employees also receive maternity leave benefits in the unfortunate incidence of a miscarriage. IBEDC's paid maternity leave of 14 weeks exceeds Nigeria's national requirements of 12 weeks.

Absence from the office during maternity leave can result in missed opportunities and experiences. KEDCO ensures that women on maternity leave still receive their annual performance bonus payments and have opportunities for promotions and raises in salaries. Paternity leave can benefit women's careers, too, because when the burden of childcare falls exclusively on the mother, wages are often depressed[xxiii] as women lose job experience or are less productive at work.[xxiv] Umeme, Eskom, and LEC report that they offer paternity leave to employees.

As women have disproportionate unpaid care and domestic work burdens, labor conditions not conducive to a work, life, and family balance limit women's retention and advancement in the sector. KEDCO offers an on-site nursery for employees' children, and EEU is considering facilities as well. JED, KEDCO, and LEC report that they allow women allocated time off for breastfeeding, and KEDCO and LEC give breastfeeding women

shorter working days. Eskom has a policy to grant employees up to 14 days to care for sick children or spouses.

Sexual harassment is prevalent across all industries, with industries dominated by men, such as the energy sector, more susceptible to incidents.[xxv] Enforcing and strengthening sexual harassment policies is an important intervention for utilities to offer employees a safe working environment. For example, LEC has in place a reporting grievance mechanism for employees who are experiencing harassment. Interventions against harassment can exist outside of formal policy as well. Umeme will provide on-site counselors to employees experiencing domestic violence in their homes. At Eskom, women working in the field are granted separate changing facilities and, in an effort to ensure women are not put in isolated or vulnerable situations, there are always multiple people traveling in the same vehicle.

SSA energy utilities are not only becoming more gender-diverse, but more diverse in terms of culture, religion, and race. Insensitivity to culture can create uncomfortable—and even unsafe—working conditions and ultimately jeopardize the efficiency and success of the utility. KEDCO's dress code allows for women to dress in conformity to their culture and religion, so they and their family members feel comfortable with them interacting in public. Cultural sensitivity is important for the success of client relationships as well. KEDCO is working to employ more women to interact with customers, as social norms dictate that women in households should only allow other women in, for example, when not in the presence of a male guardian.

ENERGIZING EQUALITY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA: KEY FINDINGS AND INNOVATIVE EXAMPLES FROM ACROSS UTILITIES

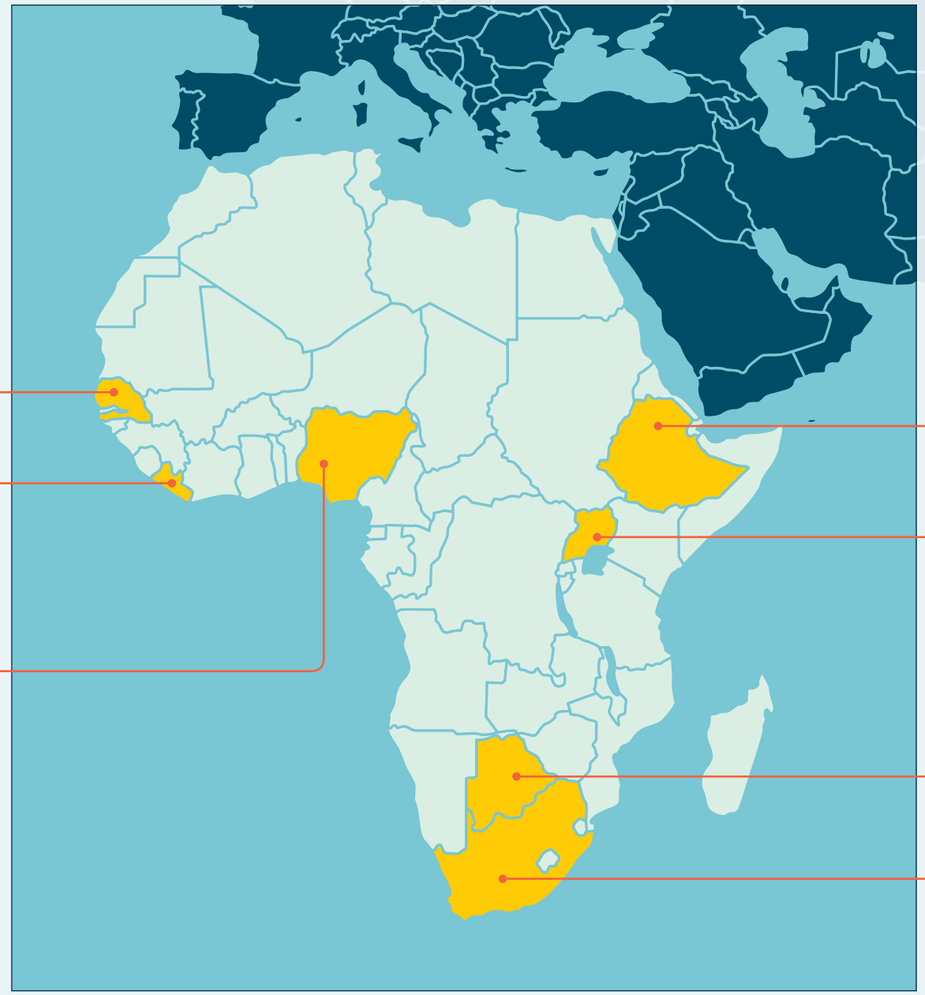
Senelec, in **Senegal**, reported that women, who represent 20% of the workforce, also received 20% of internal promotions in 2016.

The **Liberia** Electricity Corporation has in place a reporting grievance mechanism for employees who are experiencing harassment.

Kano Electricity Distribution Company Plc. of **Nigeria** has actively recruited women to join the workforce—as a result, women's participation has grown from 10% to 20% since 2016.

Jos Electricity Distribution Company, in **Nigeria**, allocates time for women to breastfeed while at work.

Ibadan Electricity Distribution Company of **Nigeria** established "energy clubs" at secondary schools for girls between the ages of 9-13. The energy clubs increase understanding of the sector, including in how to practice safety in electricity handling and how to advocate for energy efficiency.



Countries with a utility included in this analysis.

Ethiopian Electric Utility adopted a *Gender Mainstreaming Policy and Procedure* that includes goals for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and addressing institutional barriers that limit women's professional advancement.[xxvi]

Umeme in **Uganda** actively recruits female engineers from university campuses. Annually, about one-third of hired engineers are women.

Botswana Power Corporation has the highest percentage of women board members of participating utilities, at 44%.

Eskom, in **South Africa**, promotes women's participation and influence. When project teams pitch a proposal to higher management, at least one team member must be a woman.

Powering forward

Utilities stand to gain from hiring more women throughout all levels of their workforce, as greater gender diversity improves institutional performance through hiring staff from a widened qualified candidate pool, saving on employee turnover costs, increasing returns on investments and customer satisfaction, and even improving energy efficiency. To meet the continent's energy challenges, utilities must effectively engage the participation of both women and men.

This brief highlights many examples of how SSA utilities are successfully creating gender-responsive work environments, through policy, institutional change, and activities to result in a more diverse and innovative workforce.

Through the employee life cycle, interventions can suppor women's empowerment and gender equality, from recruitment to training to retention. Next-step action for utilities' senior management and human resources departments, as well as donors supporting HR reform, could be to:

- Collect and track data on women's participation in utilities, to strengthen the case for increasing women's participation in the energy sector;
- Encourage utilities to share their experiences and lessons learned at regional and international fora to increase awareness and disseminate good practices;
- Encourage women, as well as men, currently working at utilities to act as mentors, sponsors, and ambassadors for gender quality and women's empowerment;
- Support utilities in the review of their HR policies, to address gender discrimination, eradicate sexual harassment, promote flexible work hours, and family leave (encompassing both maternal and paternal leaves);
- Encourage utilities to engage with high schools and universities to inspire students—particularly girls and women—to build STEM skills and be exposed to professional opportunities in the energy sector; and
- Support women's professional networks, such as the Women in African Power (WiAP) network,[8] which offer opportunities for career development and mentorship.

8 Power Africa's Women in Africa Power (WiAP) network convenes and connects established and emerging female leaders who are working in the African energy sector, and provides a platform for networking, information exchange, professional mentorship, and exposure to new business opportunities.

BEST PRACTICES FRAMEWORK: EXAMPLES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the conclusions and recommendations of this brief, the reader can review the lessons learned through the *Engendering Utilities* program. USAID has compiled and adapted a *Best Practices Framework* to serve as a guide for increasing gender equality in energy utilities. The *Framework* identifies entry points to promote gender equity within utilities throughout the seven phases of employee lifecycle, with best practice examples including:

1. **Attracting and talent outreach**
   - Conduct outreach to educational institutions that leads to long-term attraction of both female and male candidates, as well as girls and young women being encouraged to pursue STEM studies and prepare for jobs/careers in utilities;
2. **Recruiting and hiring**
   - Design selection processes that reduce bias through behavior-based interviewing, using structured instead of unstructured interviews and diverse interview panels to promote a greater gender balance in applicant pools;
   - Conduct a diversity hiring audit to determine barriers towards achieving gender equality goals;
3. **Onboarding and training**
   - Design an inclusive onboarding process, such as assuring that women and men are introduced to important stakeholders, equally towards ensuring new hires feel welcome and fairly treated;
   - Create a training plan on sexual harassment and how to report it;
   - Create a training plan for each new employee with a focus on exposure to other work areas and gender inclusiveness to address gender gaps;
4. **Performance management, compensation, and benefits**
   - Ensure that a fair and unbiased employee performance management process exists;
5. **Talent and leadership development**
   - With a focus on business areas in which women are underrepresented, provide on-the-job learning opportunities, such as job shadowing and job rotations;
6. **Retention and employee engagement**
   - Disaggregate and analyze employee satisfaction surveys by sex to inform decisions to further advance gender equality; and
7. **Succession planning and promotion**
   - Establish and implement succession plans, including skill mapping, that are inclusive of women.

The complete list of best practices included in the *Framework* include detailed descriptions of the practice, challenges to implementation, what success could look like, and guiding resources and tools. It is important to note that not all of these best practices may be applicable in all countries.

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