

Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure

Case Studies



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STEPPING UP WOMEN'S STEM CAREERS IN INFRASTRUCTURE

CASE STUDIES



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Note: For acknowledgments and full list of abbreviations and acronyms please see main report Schomer, Inka and Hammond, Alicia. 2020. "Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure: An Overview of Promising Approaches" ESMAP Paper. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.



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INTRODUCTION: INSIGHTS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE

The five case studies detailed in this document describe a variety of contexts in which measures are being implemented to attract, recruit, retain, and advance women in STEM roles in the infrastructure sectors. The area of focus for each of these studies is as follows:

- **Recruitment:** Bridging the Skills Gap in the Water Sector: Women's Scholarship Pilot in Lao PDR
- **Retention:** Addressing Domestic Violence in the Workplace to Improve Business Outcomes: The Case of Solomon Water
- **Advancement:** Investing in Women's Leadership in Male-Dominated Sectors: Panama's Emerging Women Leaders Program
- **Attraction, Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement:** Energizing Equity in Talent: The Case of Equal Opportunities in EVN Macedonia
- **Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement: Institutionalizing Gender Equality in Project Design:** The Case of Ethiopian Electric Utility

CONTEXT

These five case studies¹—from Ethiopia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), North Macedonia, Panama, and Solomon Islands—were identified through our extensive desk review, and followed by interviews with practitioners and women's employment experts from around the world. The discussions were designed to shed light on a variety of practical ways that governments and infrastructure organizations are working together to find ways to

increase opportunities for women in the infrastructure sectors.

Globally, it is clear that few systematic measures are being undertaken to close the gender gaps explored in the report *Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure: An Overview of Promising Approaches*. Reflecting the sector's nascent focus on these challenges, most of the case studies examined are still in the pilot stage, with only preliminary results, making it difficult to share insights about their effectiveness at scale. However, by collating the insights gath-

1. The case studies are briefly described in Boxes 4, 7, 11, 15, and 18 in the main report: Schomer, Inka and Hammond, Alicia. 2020. "Stepping Up Women's STEM Careers in Infrastructure: An Overview of Promising Approaches" ESMAP Paper. Washington, D.C.: World Bank."

ered from these early initiatives, including how resources were mobilized, these case studies can share helpful information about some of the new approaches that have been tested in the infrastructure sectors.

The first three case studies profiled in this document focus specifically on recruitment, retention, or advancement. The remaining two case studies focus on organizations that are tackling the issue of women's underrepresentation holistically, in each of the crucial stages of a woman's career.

SCHOLARSHIPS TO BOOST RECRUITMENT

In the Lao PDR, scholarships are being used to recruit more female employees at the national water utility. Although a pilot, this study demonstrates that scholarships have the potential to help develop a talent pipeline. By targeting those from disadvantaged backgrounds, this approach could help increase the diversity of the workforce in water utility companies. This case study highlights the importance of providing mentors for the students, along with scholarships, to help ease their pathway from education to a job.

FOSTERING A RESPECTFUL WORKPLACE TO AID RETENTION

In Solomon Islands, the national water authority is seeking to play a role in fostering respectful workplace cultures. This has many benefits, among them a positive impact on the retention of female employees. The organization is exploring ways to prevent and mitigate the negative effects of sexual harassment, as well as domestic violence. A well-informed approach starts with genuine commitment from management; context-appropriate policies; building awareness

among staff; and coordination with external support services.

INVESTING IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP TO ENCOURAGE ADVANCEMENT

Panama has tested an approach using both female and male role models and sponsors to promote female leadership across the public sector. This study shows that high-level buy-in is essential, and that champions among leadership can accelerate the adoption of institutional change. It also shows the value of working with institutional partners who can tailor quality content for women's leadership and mentorship programs.

HOLISTIC APPROACHES TO ATTRACTION, RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND ADVANCEMENT

In North Macedonia, a comprehensive program focused on attraction, recruitment, retention, and promotion aimed to bring about meaningful changes for the country's energy provider. The program activities included conducting an assessment to generate sex-disaggregated company data, and building the pipeline through internships and scholarships, as well as projects that boost exposure to STEM careers for younger girls.

In Ethiopia, comprehensive approaches mobilized a wide cross-section of stakeholders to move the needle forward on women's employment in the energy sector. Using a sectorwide approach; analysis of fundamental gender gaps; high-level policy advice; deep engagement; and allocation of sufficient financial resources, this "first of its kind" approach shows that institutional actions can close employment gaps in STEM and professional jobs at an energy utility.



CASE STUDY 1

BRIDGING THE SKILLS GAP IN THE WATER SECTOR: WOMEN'S SCHOLARSHIP PILOT IN LAO PDR

CONTEXT

Country Overview

The landlocked nation of Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) has become one of Southeast Asia's most economically promising countries, having averaged more than 7 percent growth per year for most of the last decade (World Bank 2016). Between 1992 and 2015, poverty rates were halved, from 46 percent to 23 percent (UNDP 2018). During the 2000s, labor force participation among women increased remarkably, with women's rates growing faster than men's. In 2020, labor force participation rates between women and men are roughly on par (Box 1.1).

However, these figures mask the high level of women's participation in the informal sector, and their low participation in wage employment, which in 2018 was just 13 percent, compared to 25 percent for men (World Bank 2018). Also, 67 percent of employed women have either no education, or only a primary school education, compared to 54 percent for employed men.

Outside of urban areas, equitable access to water remains a challenge (World Bank 2010). In 2015, about a quarter of the population did not have access to improved sources of drinking water, and the gap between rural and urban areas is vast, estimated at 38 percentage points.

As the primary managers and users of household water, women in areas without access to clean drinking water bear most of the burden for water collection. A 2015 study showed that in 79 percent of households without water connections, women had the primary responsibility for water collection (UN 2015). In 2017 the Lao Social Indicator Survey reported that 49 percent of those responsible for gathering water for the family are women; and 12 percent are children under 15, mainly girls.² This takes time away from their education that could lead to better jobs, as well as income generation. Gender norms such as these contribute to women's "time poverty," which, coupled with inequalities in their access to education, results in their having fewer opportunities than men to pursue work outside the home.

2. Lao Social Indicator Survey (LSIS), 2017.

BOX 1.1 LAO PDR at a Glance**Region** Southeast Asia**Income Group** Lower-Middle**Population** 7,061,507**Labor Force Participation (Ages 15–64), 2020 figures^a** Women 80.8%: Men 82.8%**Graduates in STEM Fields (2018 figures)^b** Women 12.8%: Men 32.5%

- **Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction** Women 4.5%: Men 21.1%
- **Information and Communication Technology** Women 6.6%: Men 9.8%
- **Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics** Women 1.8%: Men 1.5%

Global Gender Gap Index, 2020 Ranking^c 43/153

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-Index** 3/153

Women, Business and the Law, 2020 score^d

- **Workplace^e** 100/100
- **Pay^f** 75/100

a. Gender Data Portal database (World Bank; modelled ILO estimates).

b. UIS database (UNESCO).

c. World Economic Forum 2019.

d. World Bank 2020.

e. Women, Business and the Law-World Bank 2020 provides scores for each economy covered. Thirty-five data points are scored across eight indicators of 4 or 5 binary questions, with each indicator representing a different phase of a woman's career. Indicator-level scores are obtained by calculating the unweighted average of the questions within that indicator and scaling the result to 100. Overall scores are then calculated by taking the average of each indicator, with 100 representing the highest possible score. Gaps in this area look at if women can get a job in the same way as men, law prohibiting discrimination in employment based on gender, legislation on sexual harassment in employment and criminal penalties or civil remedies for sexual harassment in employment.

f. Gaps in this area look at if the law mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value, if women work the same night hours as men, if women can work in jobs deemed dangerous in the same way as men, and if women are able to work in the same industries as men.

Institutional Background

In Lao PDR, water and sanitation services are the responsibility of the Department of Water Supply (DWS), within the Ministry of Public Works and Transport (MPWT). DWS is responsible for harmonizing sector policies for water and sanitation, and managing the construction, development, and operation of water supply and sanitation services throughout the country. At the provincial level, public water utilities, known

as PNPs (provincial nam papas), manage these roles. In all, the country has one water utility that serves the capital city of Vientiane, and 17 PNPs; all are financially autonomous, state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Women's employment in MPWT was under-represented, particularly in technical positions.³ According to the country's Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Human Resource Development Strategy 2012-2020, women represent

3. A study of water utilities in 15 developing countries in Africa found that women comprise an average of only 17 percent of staff in the water sector (IWA 2015).

just 11.7 percent (200) of the department's workforce of 1,700 employees, despite a 6 percent annual increase in human resources (HR) over the past decade (MPWT 2016) (Box 1.2).

However, the small number of women graduates in STEM fields limits the availability of talent for technical positions in the water sector: female graduates make up only 12.8 percent, compared to nearly 32.5 percent for men (Box 1.1).

Mobilizing Resources to Enhance Gender Equality

In 2009, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) approved the Small Towns Water and Sanitation Sector Project (ADB 2009). Financed by the multidonor Gender and Development Cooperation Fund (GDCF), this project was designed to enhance gender equality by addressing gender gaps in the sector, and to contribute to women's empowerment.

The project benefited more than 150,000 people in 13 small towns in Lao PDR, by providing increased access to piped water and improved sanitation services. The project's objectives were to (i) strengthen the urban water supply sector through better planning, management, and regulation; (ii) improve sustainability of the PNPs; (iii) develop or rehabilitate water supply systems; (iv) improve urban drainage works; (v) enhance community action and participation; and (vi) improve the capacity for project implementation, operation, and maintenance (ADB 2009).

Grant assistance of US\$500,000 from the GDCF between 2009 and 2016 supported activities to (i) improve access to educational opportunities in water supply and sanitation engineering for female high-school graduates; (ii) raise awareness about gender equality within the PNPs; and (iii) improve knowledge of gender issues in Lao PDR's urban water and sanitation sector.

BOX 1.2 Employer Snapshot: Department of Water Supply

Ownership Government

Workforce 1,700 employees
(2016 figures)

- Women 11.7%: Men 88.3%

Customer Base 150,000 water connections

Through this capacity development program the project achieved a 10 percent increase in the number of qualified women in technical and leadership positions in PNPs (Saphakdy 2020).

WHAT WAS DONE

The ADB, MPWT, and the water utilities in Lao PDR recognized that there was a country-wide gender gap in water management; and that the targets for women's participation in training or decision making were not being met.⁴

The ADB project team spoke with women engineers and reviewed differences between women and men in institutional and human resources in the sector. They found that while women could be found working in various units of water utilities, the representation of women in technical jobs was low. Most water projects were also focused on women's participation at the community level (Jain 2013). They realized that in order to increase women's representation in technical and decision-making roles, there needed to be an increase in the pool of qualified candidates. In fact, meeting any project's targets for women's participation can only be achieved by building the future pipeline of qualified female candidates (ADB 2009; Jalal 2014).

4. A gender analysis was conducted as part of the Small Towns Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Project; it revealed persistent gender inequalities in opportunities and challenges in the sector.

Gathering Data on Women's Participation in Employment

The first step for the ADB project team was to assess the current areas and levels of employment of women in the MPWT and PNP workforce; their training and capacity needs; and the constraints to increasing their participation in professional staff roles. Key findings from their capacity assessments included the following:

- Women's workforce representation in four of the surveyed PNPs was less than 25 percent.
- The PNP workforce was young: staff had a median age of 30 years, and most had not completed a university-level education.
- Female staff members were concentrated in administrative or financial management positions, and many believed they could not carry out heavy work in the field due to the limitations of their physical strength.
- Most PNP staff had not been sensitized to the specific needs and challenges of either women or men in the water sector (MPWT 2016).

Pilot Scholarship Program

The next step for the ADB project team was to implement a school-to-work pilot program, which sought to redress two interrelated challenges: (i) the PNPs' need for skilled professionals with engineering and management expertise; and (ii) the lack of women in technical positions in the PNPs, and at DWS headquarters.

The ADB project team identified a pool of promising female high-school graduates, and committed resources to supporting them financially and psychosocially through university graduation and job placement, at an estimated cost of US\$7,300 per scholar.

» Targeting the scholarship

In 2011, a government committee was established to build a strong cohort of scholars for

the pilot. Since the goal was to recruit women who could return to the provinces to work in the PNPs, the opportunity was announced through local PNP offices, and even through loudspeakers in 16 provinces. The committee screened and interviewed applicants using the following criteria:

- High-school graduation with a minimum grade average of 70 percent; or successful completion of the university entrance examination;
- Provincial applicants, with priority given to minority ethnic groups;
- Personal or family circumstances that would otherwise prevent the applicant from attending college;
- Interest of the applicant in pursuing study in the field of water and sanitation;
- An interview with shortlisted applicants.

So many candidates immediately applied for the program that DWS had to close the process within days. The pilot program awarded 26 female students four-year scholarships to complete undergraduate degrees related to water supply work in civil engineering, environmental engineering, or environmental science at the National University of Laos, or the Vocational Institution of Technology in Vientiane. Of the 26 students, 21 completed a degree in environmental engineering, 4 in civil engineering, and 1 in environmental sciences (MPWT 2016).

» Providing counseling to ensure success

Since participants had to move from the provinces to the capital city to study, many underwent an adjustment period. For most, this was their first time living away from home, and they had limited financial and family support systems in Vientiane. Some struggled to pass the university entrance exams and benefited from advice during the admissions process.

After the first year, the project team realized that the scholars would have a higher likelihood of



PERSPECTIVES

I have been empowered to fulfill my dream of becoming an engineer, and now hope to contribute to the development of the water and sanitation sector in Oudomxay province. I would like to see other young women with financial challenges have the same opportunity as me.

—Scholarship recipient, and current PNP employee



success with additional, more structured support, and a counselor was hired to coach and support the women. At first, the counselor made sporadic monthly check-ins with them, but the project team soon intensified the level of available support, scheduling weekly visits to ensure that each scholar remained on track.

» Leveraging female role models

The ADB and the government recognized that professional role models could encourage women to complete their studies. A mentorship group was set up to mentor students, and to share with them their experiences with the types of jobs possible in the sector.

Because the ADB project focused on improving the operational and financial management of PNPs, it was able to complement GDCF-financed activities. Mentors and role models included female leaders in MPWT and in the PNPs, as well as in other water-related enterprises.

Initially, the mentors were engaged as speakers for workshops and leadership events: later they were invited to become informal mentors. They facilitated discussions, and regularly followed the students' academic and personal development. Learning sessions gave the scholarship recipi-

ents the chance to engage with their role models and draw on their experience. Networking events were also organized to strengthen the mentoring relationships.

Two years after the program ended, mentors and mentees were still in touch with each other, underscoring the strong personal and professional relationships that had been fostered. ADB's follow-on project included continuing support for this mentorship group even after the scholarship program ended (ADB 2013).

» Providing access to PNP internships

During their third academic year, all 26 scholars participated in a two-month internship program at the government's project coordination unit office, as well as at the PNP offices in their respective provinces. During these internships, they put their academic studies into practice and received valuable firsthand experience working with technical staff. They carried out technical work that included, for instance, water quality testing, and installing pipes. The GDCF grant also provided each intern with a stipend that covered meals, transport, and insurance.



PERSPECTIVES

As a businesswoman, I set a goal for my life and my business, and I have committed to the development of this country. At home, as a single mother, I have tried my best to fulfill my responsibilities toward my children. At work, I hold my employees to a high standard while still treating them like my family members.

I also return my profits to society by contributing to different social events and paying compensations to people affected by challenges. I am happy to be a mentor supporting the female staff of the PNP.

—Participating mentor



» Facilitating labor-market entry

Nearly half of the scholars who participated in the program were hired by the PNPs or other water-related companies within three months of graduation: the rest had difficulty finding jobs. In response, a targeted strategy was developed to support these young women by helping them find and apply for positions. This included a concerted effort to link them with available jobs in the PNPs.

As a result, more than 90 percent of the program graduates were employed by PNPs within a year of graduation (Box 1.3). The PNPs hired the graduates to fill engineering or technician positions for a three-to-six-month trial period, after which all stayed on as permanent hires. The team had suggested this incremental approach to those PNPs that were apprehensive about immediately hiring the women on a full-time basis.

Support Beyond Scholarships

» Developing gender action plans and training

This project also supported the PNPs to prepare three-year rolling corporate plans; and the GDCF

grant supported identification and implementation of specific gender actions within these plans. As part of the overall corporate planning exercise, the PNPs allocated budget for improving the skills of their staff—both men and women.

In 2012, MPWT organized a workshop to disseminate the findings of the project's gender assessment, and to identify ways to reduce gender gaps in the workforce, including setting targets for female staffing. The workshop was attended by PNP general managers, female staff, and provincial government representatives. It was followed by planning sessions for all PNP staff, and middle management in four other provinces.

These sessions resulted in the PNPs creating 10 gender action plans (GAPs). The plans covered specific activities to help promote women's participation in the workforce, as well as targeted training for women in a variety of subjects (financial management and reporting, accounting, customer service, office management, billing systems, information technology, Internet applications, and bookkeeping); and on-the-job training in the PNPs. In 2014 and 2015, refresher workshops were held on technical and gender-equality issues, while new sessions focused on topics like AutoCAD software and English.

BOX 1.3 Intermediate Results to Date

- **Scholarships:** All 26 women, representing 11 provinces, graduated from their four- or five-year university degree programs. One year after graduation, more than 90 percent had jobs in the PNPs, and the other 10 percent were employed in water-related positions in the private sector. While this number may seem small, the average annual personnel recruitment for DWS is approximately 80 people, so 26 female graduates securing employment in the sector in less than two years is a meaningful increase. This result is particularly notable considering that the women came from resource-constrained backgrounds, and had to leave their provincial homes for the capital city to complete their studies.
- **Strategy targets:** The Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Human Resource Development Strategy 2012–2020 has specific targets for women's participation, which were disseminated among the staff (MPWT 2016).

a. Interview with Phomma Veoravanh, Director-General, Lao PDR Department of Water Supply (June 7, 2018).

» Hosting professional development workshops

In 2013–15, professional development workshops were organized in the northern, central, and southern regions of the country for 143 women employees of the PNPs (MPWT 2016). Expanding the skills and social capital of existing female talent within DWS was identified as one way to increase the visibility and influence of female leaders in the sector, thereby helping to attract new female recruits through the role-model effect.

Five professional women were invited to give presentations at three professional development workshops, which focused on aspiration gaps; women's leadership; and career development.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

1. Where the pipeline is weak, women's employment targets must be coupled with efforts to increase the participation of women in STEM.

The ADB project assisted the government in preparing its Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Human Resource Development Strategy, 2012–2020. This project provided training and scholarship grants for both men and women in the sector, including PNP staff. The GDCF grant complemented the project design by extending HR development to include help to expand the pool of qualified female engineers.

The ADB project aimed to tackle the supply-side challenge through its scholarship program, while also increasing awareness among PNP general managers of the importance of balancing gender roles in water utilities, and requesting that PNP corporate plans include GAPs, and provide more employment opportunities for women. The results of this project suggest that setting actionable goals for women's employment in technical jobs, and providing women's scholarship programs in technical fields can be mutually reinforcing.

2. Developing a pipeline of women engineers requires sustained financial and HR commitment.

A critical success factor was the considerable amount of time spent by the ADB project officer and the government's project director, as well as project consultants, government officials, and the volunteers who were involved in counseling, mentoring, and monitoring the program scholars to ensure that they completed their studies and made a successful transition from university to their STEM careers. Sustained commitment was particularly important, considering the obstacles that young women in Lao PDR face in the school-to-work transition, ranging from gender biases to teenage pregnancy.

About half of the women in the program secured jobs within three months of graduation, at which point the project team made substantial efforts to link them with PNPs and other job opportunities, leading to a far higher rate of employment. Internship programs also offered the students an opportunity to apply theory to practical work. The GDCF-financed scholarships were aligned with the Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Human Resources Development Strategy, 2012–2020.



PERSPECTIVES

There is a shift now toward openly talking about solutions for improving our recruitment of women, and engaging male managers for input. We injected the idea of talking about women with the top managers of the 18 provinces, and now they are talking about schemes to recruit more women and overcome challenges in the pipeline.

— Phomma Veoravanh, Director-General,
Lao PDR Department of Water Supply



Projects seeking to replicate this experience should consider providing additional support to potential participants in the final year of their studies in the form of job information, counseling, and placement services. It is also important to hold multiple rounds of discussions with the managers of utilities, to further raise awareness about the need to raise the level of women's participation in the workforce, and especially about the value of their contributions. Project teams must also keep in mind that some women may choose not to continue working in the sector after completing the program.

3. Extra effort is required to identify rural women candidates, and to ensure diversity.

One aim of the pilot program was to reach women from rural and disadvantaged backgrounds based on merit. However, most of the scholarship recipients were from the provincial capitals. Those from more remote areas who were accepted into the program tended to struggle with the university entrance exams, most likely due to the lower quality of education in isolated areas of the province (MPWT 2016).

Future projects might want to consider making special provisions for scholars from rural backgrounds, or partnering with universities to find ways to take their specific challenges into account; to help maintain a socially inclusive program; and to cultivate a truly diverse cohort of women water professionals from across the country.

4. Mentoring networks are especially important for supporting women, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, in order to help them stay in school and get jobs.

The female mentors who served as role models in this project offered important guidance to these young women, who were pursuing studies in male-dominated fields. Some of the mentors provided internships for scholarship recipients during their studies.

Given the low numbers of women in technical or decision-making positions, it was sometimes difficult to find female mentors; and the mentors often had to divide their time among several mentees. Future projects should allow sufficient time and resources to identify and engage mentors.

5. Securing buy-in from regional and national leaders is key to the success of women's STEM career initiatives, and appropriate project design is essential.

The ADB project and the GDCF grant helped to accelerate adoption of new strategies by both MPWT and the PNPs, including improving HR targets for gender equality. Ensuring that the grant for the work on women's employment was embedded in the overall project design, and that there was close oversight of project implementation and administration, including ongoing data collection, were key to its success.

Proactive government involvement was essential, and was very instrumental in making the program a success. Collaborative work across managers, including the sessions to develop gender action plans and other workshops, were important in engaging the interest in and support for pipeline equity among male general managers of the PNPs. The director of the project coordination unit, and its staff, were essential in ensuring buy-in for the proposed project activities.

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CASE STUDY 2

ADDRESSING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE TO IMPROVE BUSINESS OUTCOMES: THE CASE OF SOLOMON WATER

CONTEXT

Country Overview

An archipelago of 992 sparsely-populated islands in the South Pacific, Solomon Islands is a nation with a diversity of cultures and spoken languages. The country achieved political independence in 1978: it has intermittently experienced social and political tension, with the most recent conflict occurring in 2003 (World Bank Group 2018).

The 2009 census showed reasonably high literacy rates, although the rate for women was 10 percentage points lower than for men (79 percent versus 89 percent) (ADB 2015). The economy is weak, based predominantly on subsistence farming and fishing, with only a small minority of the population engaged in formal employment or cash-generating businesses (Box 2.1). At the time of the 2007 census, 60 percent of the population was under the age of 24 (ADB 2015).

The legal environment of Solomon Islands poses barriers to women's employment. The country has no provision that mandates nondiscrimination in employment on the basis of sex, including in its Labor Act (Government of Solomon Islands 1996). This means that employer discrimination

based on gender, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation, or HIV status is not prohibited by law (CEDAW 2013).

According to the Labor Act, women in Solomon Islands are restricted from entering certain professions, such as mining, and they cannot work the same night hours as men except under specific conditions (Labor Act 1996, Section 39–40). The law mandates 12 weeks of paid maternity leave, but guarantees only 25 percent of wages during this period, to be paid by the employer (Labor Act, Section 42). It is unlawful for an employer to give a female worker notice of dismissal during her maternity leave; however, no legal restrictions prohibit them from asking women about their current pregnancy status or intention to have children during the recruitment or promotion processes (Labor Act 1996, Section 43).

In addition to legal barriers, traditional cultural and gender norms influence the division of labor, property rights, and decision making, among other things (ADB 2015). Economic participation can be affected by a sense of safety, especially for women. The geographic location of job sites can also affect women's sense of security, with a greater perception of risk in remote areas. Research in neighboring Papua New Guinea found potential violence to be the biggest

BOX 2.1 Solomon Islands at a Glance**Region** Asia Pacific**Income Group** Lower-Middle**Population** 652, 858**Labor Force Participation (Ages 15–64), 2020 figures^a** Women 83.9%: Men 86.7%**Enrollment in Tertiary Education (2012 figures)^b** Women 38%: Men 62%**Women Graduates in STEM Fields^b** Women 12.8%: Men 32.5%

- **Humanities and Sciences** 31.3%
- **Industrial Development** 2.7%
- **Natural Resources** 48.2%

Women's Economic Opportunity Index (Labor Practices)^c 21.8/100**Women, Business and the Law, 2020 score^d**

- **Workplace** 25/100
- **Pay** 25/100

a. Gender Data Portal database (World Bank; modelled ILO estimates).

b. ADB 2015.

c. The Economist Intelligence Unit 2012. The Women's Economic Opportunity Index is a dynamic quantitative and qualitative scoring model constructed from 26 indicators that measure specific attributes of the environment for women employees and entrepreneurs in 113 economies.

d. World Bank 2020.

concern for women working in remote locations (Hameed 2018).

Worldwide, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 35 percent of women have experienced either physical or sexual partner violence, or nonpartner sexual violence, in their lifetime (WHO 2013). By comparison, in Solomon Islands, an estimated 64 percent of women ages 15–49 who have ever been in a relationship reported having experienced some form of violence (emotional, physical, and/or sexual) (SPC 2009) (See Box 2.2).

A 2011 study in Solomon Islands found that 73 percent of both men and women believe that violence against women is justifiable, especially for infidelity and “disobedience” when women

do not “live up to the gender roles that society imposes” (Rasanathan and Bhushan 2011). Sexual harassment in the workplace, while prevalent, is not widely reported. Survivors may not report it for fear of losing their jobs, fear of stigma, fear of being blamed for the harassment, or because they are unaware of their rights (ILO 2015).

Legal protections are insufficient to prevent and respond to domestic violence and sexual harassment. The 2014 Family Protection Act criminalized domestic violence (Ming et al 2016), but the country has no legislation to address sexual harassment in the workplace or educational system, and there are no criminal penalties or civil remedies in place to respond to it (World Bank 2018).⁵ These gaps in legal protection have left

5. Public service codes of conduct are in place that aim to deal with sexual harassment; and certain laws, such as those that criminalize sexual assault, could be used in the workplace to address some aspects of sexual harassment (ILO 2015).

BOX 2.2 Key Forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Gender-based violence (GBV). This is an umbrella term referring to violence directed against a person based on their gender. GBV constitutes a breach of the fundamental right to life, liberty, security, dignity, equality between women and men, non-discrimination, and physical and mental integrity (CoE 2012).

Intimate partner violence (IPV). This term refers to behavior by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm. IPV includes physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (WHO 2013).

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). This term is defined as any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust for sexual purposes, including but not limited to profiting monetarily, socially, or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (UN Secretary-General 2003). SEA is further defined as the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force, or under unequal or coercive conditions. In the context of World Bank-supported projects, SEA occurs against a beneficiary or member of the community.

Sexual harassment. This term refers to unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature (UN Secretary-General 2008, cited in World Bank 2014).

women in Solomon Islands at a disproportionate risk of victimization, as well as educational and economic marginalization. In fact, violence against women (VAW) has become a public health crisis in Solomon Islands. Women who have experienced violence suffer from emotional distress, and are more likely to be hospitalized or to undergo surgery. They are also more likely to commit suicide.

Furthermore, VAW perpetuates an intergenerational cycle of violence, which in turn poses a challenge to increasing the nation's prosperity (ADB 2015). The costs of domestic violence for businesses and employers include productivity losses due to both absenteeism and "presenteeism" (that is, attendance at work, but with reduced focus); reductions in workplace health and safety; and the expenses associated with employee termination, recruitment, and retraining (Hameed 2018). This risk is particularly pronounced for infrastructure projects that are located in remote areas, where intimate partners may be working at the same site.

Employers who proactively address the problem of domestic violence benefit from reduced occupational hazards and safety risks; improved concentration and long-term productivity of their employees; and the retention of talent, along with the related cost savings (ILO 2015).



PERSPECTIVES

Coming to work 'under the influence' of violence is a fit-for-work issue, much like coming to work under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

— Linda Van Leeuwen, Anitua and Papua New Guinea Business Coalition for Women



Institutional Background

The Solomon Islands Water Authority (SIWA) is a state-owned urban water and sanitation utility. Founded in 1993, SIWA is governed by a board of directors that reports to two government ministers. Despite serious operational challenges in the late 2000s, the utility is maintaining world health standards in its provision of water to most of its customers (SIWA 2017). With 147 staff members, SIWA focuses on an urban customer base, providing water to more than 110,000 people, and sewerage services to more than 20,000 in the capital city of Honiara, and 9,000 more people in three provincial centers (Box 2.3). The utility relies on donor support for major infrastructure development. Priorities include increasing the volume of water available for Honiara, and reducing water losses due to theft and leakage (World Bank Group 2018).

In 2017, as part of its Waka Mere Commitment to Action, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), in partnership with the Solomon Islands Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SICCI), launched the Respectful Workplace Program (Box 2.4). Waka Mere (Pidgeon for “she works”) is supported by the governments of Australia and New Zealand through the Pacific Partnership. Building on experience in Papua New Guinea, Waka Mere promotes business competitiveness

BOX 2.3 Employer Snapshot: Solomon Island Water Authority

Industry Water and Sanitation

Ownership State-owned enterprise

Workforce 147 employees, of which 29 are female (2019 figures)

- Women 29 (19.7%); Men 120 (80.3%)

Customer Base More than 9,000 water account holders, or 110,000 people (estimated)^a

a. Solomon Water 2017.

and women's economic empowerment.

Companies that participate in Waka Mere sign a commitment to action, and make one or more core pledges toward the goal of workplace gender equality. These pledges include (i) increasing the share of women in leadership positions; (ii) building respectful and supportive workplaces for women and men; and (iii) promoting opportunities for women in jobs that are traditionally held by men. In addition to striving to achieve these pledges over a two-year period, Waka Mere companies participate in bimonthly learning events, and share annual progress reports.

Waka Mere companies that commit to building respectful and supportive workplaces for women

BOX 2.4 The IFC's Respectful Workplace Program

The IFC's Respectful Workplace Program aims to enable companies to improve productivity and promote a respectful workplace culture by adopting and operationalizing an antiharassment policy,^{a,b} implemented through a six-step process:

1. Conducting an assessment of the workplace culture.
2. Briefing senior management.
3. Adopting and operationalizing the antiharassment policy.
4. Training line managers in the business case, policy, and assertive communication.
5. Socializing the antiharassment policy.
6. Providing monitoring and evaluation (M&E) support.

a. IFC 2018.

b. IFC 2019a.

and men (Pledge ii) are encouraged to undertake two key actions: (i) adopt and implement anti-bullying and anti-sexual harassment workplace policies; and (ii) implement a structured approach to supporting staff who are affected by domestic violence, including training a group of staff to respond effectively to disclosures of violence.

Employees who experience domestic violence are unlikely to seek support from their workplace if they do not perceive it as a safe and supportive environment. Therefore, IFC has recommended that companies stagger the implementation of these two policies, with the antiharassment policy introduced at least three months before the domestic violence policy.⁶ Materials for assessment and training are developed with inputs from company representatives and local trainers, to verify that the language and examples used resonate with Solomon Islanders. As of 2020, 13 companies in Solomon Islands, 6 in Papua New Guinea, and 27 in Fiji⁷ had begun to implement a structured approach to supporting staff who are affected by domestic violence.

Mobilizing Resources to Enhance Gender Equality

Recognizing the importance of gender equality in the workplace, in 2017 SIWA joined the Waka Mere Commitment to Action. To ensure the achievement of establishing respectful and supportive workplaces for women and men, IFC facilitated a discussion with SIWA's senior management about the scope and impact of domestic violence in Solomon Islands, and about local support services that are addressing GBV. The business case compelled senior managers to make this voluntary pledge to foster a more respectful workplace.

The utility engaged IFC for both the Respectful Workplaces and Domestic Violence programs. In keeping with IFC program policy, and in order to demonstrate their ownership of the vision, and the high value they place on protection of their staff, SIWA agreed to share the costs of training. And while grants from international donors partially subsidized IFC's advisory-service offerings to address domestic violence, SIWA personnel dedicated time to implement the activities, and paid a fee for the course.

WHAT WAS DONE

Assessment of SIWA's Workplace Culture

SIWA began this initiative with a workplace culture assessment designed to help them better understand women's and men's organizational roles; staff perceptions and experiences of workplace behavior; existing mechanisms for antibullying, antiharassment, and employee well-being; and opportunities for improvement.

An HR survey determined the share of women in leadership roles. With IFC support, SIWA also analyzed its policies to ensure that any new policies would complement already existing practices (for example, those addressing misconduct). The results of the survey were presented to the CEO and senior management in a feedback meeting. The results of the survey were presented to the CEO and senior management, and with the full participation of IFC in the discussion, they made the decision to move ahead with next steps.

6. Interview with Shabnam Hameed (June 5, 2018), and subsequent input March 2020.

7. More information on Fiji at: https://www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/region__ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/east+asia+and+the+pacific/resources/fiji-domestic+and+sexual+violence+report

Corporate-Level Actions in the Prevention and Mitigation of GBV

Based on the findings of their workplace culture assessment, SIWA took the following actions.

» **Adapting antiharassment and domestic violence policies**

IFC supported the utility in adapting a policy on antibullying and anti-sexual harassment, and later a domestic violence policy, to its unique company setting.

» **Training staff on respectful workplaces**

In a one-day workshop, 11 of the utility's managers were trained in the new antibullying and anti-sexual harassment policy to ensure they had the skills to help identify, diffuse, and end harassment at worksites. Subsequently, in a two-hour session with IFC, 81 staff members were trained in the principles of Respectful Workplaces, and sensitized to SIWA's new policy, as well as its practical implications.

» **Creating a site-specific domestic violence policy**

Based on IFC's model domestic violence policy, SIWA created its own policy, which aims to create a safe environment for employees who experience domestic violence, and offer them a pathway for seeking support. This policy ensures that employees are provided with information, and referrals to support services in the community. It also offers the possibility of work adjustments so that employees who are dealing with domestic violence can remain productive. In addition, it outlines ways in which the company intends to deal with employees who may be perpetrating domestic violence. IFC has provided

policy implementation support through tools that help companies record and monitor the application of their domestic violence policies, while maintaining confidentiality.

» **Training a domestic violence contact team**

Eight staff members, including some nonmanagers, were trained as contacts for domestic violence issues. The training aimed to equip them with the necessary skills to:

- Understand the cycle of domestic violence, and how it intersects with the workplace;
- Raise awareness about domestic violence, and explain what SIWA is doing to respond to it;
- Respond appropriately to disclosures of domestic violence;
- Assess the discloser's immediate and longer-term safety needs, and how any responses provided by the company may influence these needs;
- Support and coordinate access to available support both at SIWA, and in the community;
- Appropriately report allegations that employees may be perpetrating domestic violence;
- Implement SIWA's domestic violence policy.

The Domestic Violence contact team was also tasked with promoting the policy within the company through team discussions and workshops, as well as raising awareness of this issue through other activities.

» **Launching the domestic violence policy**

The launch of the domestic violence policy began with the contact team raising awareness in the workplace about SIWA's stand against domestic

violence. The training included guidance on how to sensitize staff to the human and financial costs of violence in an inclusive and encouraging way that addresses both female and male staff, as well as their spouses and families. The aim was to create a systematic workplace response to domestic violence by ensuring that staff across the organization understand its impacts on business, and have the know-how to support survivors and refer them to appropriate services without becoming “counselors,” or attempting to assume control over domestic issues.⁸

Stakeholder engagement included partnerships with the police, as well as community support and counseling centers, to ensure the availability of more effective external resources when staff require service referrals. The initiative fostered wider community ownership, and instilled in staff a sense of their collective responsibility for seeing the ending of violence as a local priority in their best interest, rather than a prerogative driven solely by IFC or SIWA. The SICCI has served as a strong local convening partner in this effort.

Measuring Success

SIWA is tracking the effect of this initiative, with ongoing confidential data being collected by the human resources department. The aspects that are being focused on include individual-level as well as institutional-level data collection, to capture relevant company activities and staff feedback.

As of December 2018, 81 SIWA staff members (60 percent) had been trained in the IFC Respectful Workplaces program, which lays the foundation for a violence-free workforce by addressing the issues of bullying and harassment. In addition, 11 line managers had been trained in antiharassment principles, and 8

contact persons were trained in how to respond to domestic violence as it intersects with the workplace. Anecdotal results thus far include a more active support system among female staff, who are now disclosing instances of domestic violence to contact team members, or other colleagues, in confidence.⁹

Other initiatives undertaken have helped to increase local opportunities for women in jobs traditionally held by men. For example, IFC and the SICCI have supported local companies that are addressing occupational sex segregation, including SIWA, by facilitating driver’s license training for female employees.

After participating in Waka Mere, participating companies in Solomon Islands are reporting notable advances in workplace gender equality. This includes women’s increased feelings of safety and well-being at the workplace; improved employee loyalty; improved skills and confidence among female employees; better job opportunities for women who have participated in Waka Mere activities; an increased number of women in jobs traditionally held by men; and universal adoption of new policies and practices that support gender-equal and supportive workplaces (IFC 2019b).

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

1. Securing early commitment from senior management is essential.

Securing early buy-in from senior management is essential to ensure the uptake and sustainability of any initiative that aims to challenge existing norms. One IFC client company discontinued participation in the program after its primary advocate left the company. Because high-level commitment is so important, IFC requires the CEO and all who directly report to him or her to

8. Interview with Shabnam Hameed (June 5, 2018), and subsequent input March 2020.

9. IFC had planned to undertake an endline evaluation on the impact of workplace response to domestic and sexual violence in 2020, but this has been delayed due to Covid-19.

attend the first meeting. If they are unwilling to do so, IFC will not pursue the partnership, because it believes that the program's effectiveness absolutely hinges on representation and commitment by each and every business unit.

Buy-in from senior management is also crucial for securing continued program financing. While international donors subsidize the cost of the program, participating firms must share the costs of IFC support and training: this demonstrates corporate commitment, and ensures the sustainability of actions taken under the Waka Mere platform.

2. In order to drive the initiative, it is critically important to develop a national pool of trainers.

International organizations should partner closely with local counterparts, especially when they are trying to tackle behavior change rooted in social

and cultural norms. It is of critical importance to mobilize local officials and conduct train-the-trainers (ToT) sessions in their countries of implementation, to ensure that the content is relevant, and that trust is established when broaching issues such as domestic violence. IFC has planned a new ToT workshop in responding to GBV in the workplace, to help increase the number of national trainers in the Pacific.¹⁰

It is also prudent to train selectively in order to ensure the delivery of consistently high-quality training. Engaging local police, community center staff, and other stakeholders (in this case, SICCI) can also help to ensure that the initiative has local ownership; this can be especially important in cases where senior management of the infrastructure entity includes nonnationals.

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CASE STUDY 3

INVESTING IN WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP IN MALE-DOMINATED SECTORS: PANAMA'S EMERGING WOMEN LEADERS PROGRAM

CONTEXT

Country Overview

Panama's steady economic growth over the past decade has translated into reduced poverty rates and growth of the middle class, but economic inequality has increased (Duryea and Robles 2016; OECD 2017).

Between 2005 and 2020, women's participation rate in the labor force increased slightly (from 52 percent to 58.7 percent); however, a substantial gender gap persists (with men participating at 84.2 percent in 2020) (Box 3.1). And while a higher percentage of women are now participating in the labor force than in previous years, women remain underrepresented, particularly in infrastructure sectors. In 2017, the sectors with the lowest rates of women's workforce participation were construction (6 percent); transport and logistics (13 percent); water services (14 percent); and electricity and gas (21 percent) (INEC 2018).

Panama's legal framework, beginning with

the 1999 Law of Equality of Opportunities for Women,¹¹ is generally supportive of women's economic participation. For example, the law mandates equal remuneration for work of equal value (Constitution, Article 67); however, enforcement of this provision appears weak (CEDAW 2010; OECD 2019; United States Department of State 2016).

In 2017, the following government initiatives were launched in an attempt to improve women's participation in the economy, and to increase female leadership in both the public and private sectors:

- A work plan aligned with the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) initiative to reduce gender pay gaps was introduced.¹²
- A law setting a 30 percent target for women on the boards of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) within three years (Ley 56) (El Capital Financiero 2018) was passed.
- The Gender Equality Seal program, which certifies public and private sector companies

11. Details are available at <http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/americas/panama/1999/ley--4-de-1999-igualdad-de-oportunidades-para-las-mujeres>.

12. More information on the EPIC initiative can be found at <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/equality-and-discrimination/epic/lang--en/index.htm>.

BOX 3.1 Panama at a Glance**Region** Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC)**Income Group** High**Population** 4,176,873**Labor Force Participation (Ages 15–64), 2020 figures^a** Women 58.7%: Men 84.2%**Graduates in STEM Fields (2016 figures)^b** Women 10.25%: Men 25.06%

- **Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction** Women 5.5%: Men 15.4%
- **Information and Communication Technology** Women 3.3%: Men 7.9%
- **Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics** Women 1.4%: Men 1.8%

Global Gender Gap Index, 2020 Ranking^c 46/153

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-Index** 47/153

Women, Business and the Law, 2020 score^d

- **Workplace** 100/100
- **Pay** 50/100

a. Gender Data Portal database (World Bank; modelled ILO estimates).

b. UIS database (UNESCO).

c. World Economic Forum 2019.

d. World Bank 2020.

that practice the promotion of gender equality was launched (ENRED 2018).¹³

- Three days of paid paternity leave was allocated (World Bank 2018).

In July 2018, Panama's president, supported by the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the World Economic Forum (WEF), launched the Gender Parity Initiative. The goal of this three-year public and private-sector partnership is to reduce the country's economic gender gaps, with a special focus on supporting women's participation in STEM fields.

Institutional Background

Women's participation in the leadership of Panama's public sector is low. In 2019, women accounted for less than 27 percent (4 out of 15) of the country's cabinet ministers (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019), despite representing more than 55.2 percent of the government workforce (OECD and IDB 2017) (Box 3.2).

In 2013, the Emerging Women Leaders (EWL)¹⁴ program was launched by the human resource department of the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), to help meet an internal goal for

13. The Gender Equality Seal program is sponsored by the Ministry of Trade and Development, with backing from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

14. For more information please see: <https://www.iadb.org/en/gender-and-diversity/female-leadership>

BOX 3.2 Employer Snapshot: Emerging Women Leaders Program

Sector Public

**Public-Sector Employment as Share of
Total Employment^a** 15.2% (2014)

Public Sector Jobs Filled by Women^a
55.2% (2014)

a. OECD and IDB 2017.

women to hold 40 percent of senior leadership positions at IDB by 2015.¹⁵ Codesigned and jointly delivered by a private firm,¹⁶ EWL has included the participation of more than 160 high-performing women from IDB's Washington, DC headquarters as well as country offices of the IDB. By June 2018, 42 percent of the 160 women who completed the program had been promoted. IDB's PROLEAD, a regional network that aims to promote women's leadership in the public sector, served as a platform for promoting the program and facilitating links among participants.

The rollout of EWL to the public sector was first piloted in the Dominican Republic in 2017. IDB first identified government champions, including the minister of the Office of the Presidency, the minister of Women's Affairs, and the vice president. It then identified ministries with a largely male workforce and few women in leadership positions. Priority was given to ministries with greater influence in decision making and budgetary allocations, including the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

Lessons learned include the need to carry out a rigorous selection process, with the political commitment of the ministers who nominate the

candidates; the importance of sponsorship and support from the highest levels of government as well as IDB, to give the program visibility and sustainability; and the importance of launching a media campaign, both at the beginning and at the end of the program, to promote it both locally and internationally.

Mobilizing Resources to Enhance Gender Equality

Based on the results of the pilot in the Dominican Republic, EWL was expanded to Panama. The country's vice president, Isabel de Saint Malo, who was also head of the Foreign Ministry, became an EWL champion, and the Panama program was launched in October 2017. The first cohort consisted of 30 female public servants from five ministries.¹⁷

IDB contributed the financial resources needed to cover speaking engagements by IDB executives, and the travel expenses of coaches and trainers. The PROLEAD program coordinator, who was supported by a junior consultant, administered most of the training and coaching processes, at a total cost of approximately US\$100,000 (\$3,000 per participant).



PERSPECTIVES

If we involve 100 percent of the population in our development objectives, we will advance faster.

— Isabel de Saint Malo, Former Vice President of Panama (excerpted from her speech at the EWL program launch, October 2017)



15. In 2016, IDB reported that 38 percent of its senior leadership positions were held by women.

16. The Leader's Edge.

17. The five ministries were the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Agricultural Development, and the Ministry of Public Security.

The government committed the time of its advisor to the foreign minister and vice president to bring stakeholders (including participating ministers and vice ministers) on board; to market the program to potential candidates; to nominate applicants; and to monitor the progress of finding and monitoring mentors and planning training sessions. The government also provided logistical support.

WHAT WAS DONE

As with all iterations of EWL, Panama's program began with a diagnostic exercise designed to foster understanding of the status of women in the participating ministries, including the barriers they are facing in moving up the career ladder. This exercise included key informant interviews and a desk review of relevant policies, including those pertaining to parental leave and work-life balance. It also examined the institutional culture within each ministry to see how policies were being implemented, and whether they were being well received by both female and male employees. The results were shared with the participating ministries, along with a set of recommendations.

EWL offered participants a combination of online learning, selected readings and classroom instruction, one-on-one coaching sessions, and assessment tools, as well as opportunities for mentoring, networking, and teamwork. The program's final module included a group presentation of an innovative capstone project proposal, delivered to senior management from IDB and Panama's public sector.

From the program's outset, the project team and partners set a high standard for the caliber of participants, and offered leadership training to ensure quality and lend the program the prestige that could in turn help participants progress in their careers. To ensure that participants had a genuine desire and ability to grow within their organizations, preference was given to candidates that met the following criteria:

- Potential participants held middle-management positions (participants were nominated by ministers, and had expressed interest in the program through application forms and an essay);
- Had at least two years' work experience in the public sector; and
- Completed postgraduate education, such as a master's degree (this was not mandatory, but it was considered).

A technical committee, including representatives of IDB and the Central American Institute of Business Administration (INCAE Business School), evaluated the candidates on a 5-point scale, based on their curriculum vitae; level of commitment; and leadership potential, as evidenced by their communication skills, commitment to excellence, teamwork skills, innovation, and capacity to manage change.

» Training and leadership coaching

The Costa Rica-based INCAE Business School was contracted to develop training and coaching. The Center for Collaborative Women's Leadership at INCAE had expertise in developing courses for women leaders in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). Therefore, it was well-qualified to provide training that is sensitive to the challenges women face as they advance in a male-dominated workplace with few role models or support.

Over a six-month period, participants were taken through three modules: two face-to-face modules of one week each, and one virtual module that included readings, case studies, discussions, webinars, networking, and group work. Topics covered included personal brand development, building influence and resilience, improved communication skills, and better organizational savviness and team-building skills. Participants also had individual and group coaching sessions, both in-person and

online. Buy-in from ministers was crucial, so that women could take time off from their daily work duties to complete the modules.

» Engaging men as mentors

Given that the ministries targeted by the EWL program are male-dominated, the project team believed it was essential to engage men as mentors and allies. Aware of the risk of amplifying power imbalances, the team took steps to proactively define and shape the mentor-mentee relationships. For example, a written mentorship guide was developed, and a discussion was held with mentors to illuminate issues of, power



PERSPECTIVES

Nobody was born knowing how to appear in public. That kind of confidence in itself is a muscle that is trained by doing it in practice. Our work is about creating opportunities for women to lead a project, empowering them to raise their hand and say, 'I'm willing, I want to take that position'.

— Claudia Bock-Valotta, Vice President for Finance and Administration, Inter-American Development Bank



BOX 3.3 Recommendations for the EWL Mentoring Program

Based on lessons learned from the IDB experience, and the Emerging Women Leaders (EWL) pilot in the Dominican Republic, the following recommendations were developed for the mentoring portion of Panama's EWL program:

- Select ministries and entities with less than 50 percent of women's participation in the workforce, and in the leadership;
- Seek buy-in from ministers, vice ministers, and senior staff, since they will have to approve women taking time off from their daily work duties; and they can eventually help the women develop their careers;
- Identify interested senior mentors by clearly stating the time commitment involved, and other requirements for participation in the program;
- Match mentees' interests with the positions and experience of mentors, to ensure that mentors can provide participants with the best possible advice;
- Train both mentors and mentees, and set clear expectations through a launch workshop that touches on key issues, including appropriate and inappropriate interactions, and how to manage professional male-female relationships;
- Monitor progress closely to ensure that mentors are meeting with the mentees, expectations are being met, and any issues are addressed as quickly as possible if the match does not work;
- Create and support peer mentoring and networking sessions to create a space where women can gain access to senior leaders; and
- Ensure that mentoring programs do not add to the time constraints of participants, and that they are adapted to their needs (for example, plan sessions that are not too long, and make arrangements for virtual discussions).

dynamics, and how to mitigate the risks of sexual harassment to protect both women and men from harm.

Many male senior managers, and even vice ministers, participated as mentors. Participants were able to learn about the mentors and select the one, either from within or outside of their own ministry, that they believed was the best match for their professional interests (Box 3.3).

» Role models

Special events and speaking engagements provided a platform for women role models to share their experiences with the program participants. This component of the program included female leaders from each ministry; regional leaders in the public sector; and IDB vice presidents. For example, one public sector leader was invited to talk about her leadership journey through a TED Talk-style presentation, followed by a conversation with participants; the presentation was recorded, and the video was disseminated via social media.

» High-visibility capstone initiative

To provide more visibility and additional opportunities for women to hone their communication skills and make the program gains sustainable, participants were required to form teams. Each team then developed a capstone project that they presented to the senior management of IDB, and representatives of the Panamanian government and the INCAE Business School.

Each team's initiative was required to have a social impact on their institution, or on society in general. The Panama cohort delivered their presentations in April 2018: most of the project

proposals focused on promoting either women's empowerment or gender equality.

» Sharing lessons regionally

EWL is linked to the wider PROLEAD network for women in the LAC public sector,¹⁸ which seeks to connect professional women, provide online tools, and facilitate peer mentoring. In addition to a strong social media presence, the platform has an extensive resource library, including videos featuring female role models. Program graduates were invited to write articles for the PROLEAD blog, which provides extensive visibility to the author.

» Public positioning of the program, to build prestige for alumni

Each program has a media strategy that aims to elevate the visibility of EWL and the status of its graduates, as well as raise awareness about employment and leadership gaps between women and men. The strategy uses both traditional and digital media; its social media component invites partners and individuals to join the conversation online.

Measuring Progress

The first Panama cohort engaged 30 women. A baseline survey and subsequent end-line survey measured change, and took inventory of women's perceptions of the program. The program had a high satisfaction rate, with more than 90 percent of participants reporting that they were very satisfied with the majority of the components, including mentorships, coaching sessions, and training from INCAE.¹⁹

18. www.redprolid.org

19. At the end of each module, each participant independently completed a questionnaire that measured their satisfaction with the quality and relevance of the material; the capacity of trainers and facilitators; knowledge and skills acquired; and organizational and logistical effectiveness. Responses were translated into a quality index, which scored 4.7/5.0 for all three modules in Panama.

Participants also recognized improvements in their confidence. IDB conducted a final assessment one year after the end of each cohort, to take stock of career development among participating women, including any promotions or lateral transfers. Participants indicated that on average, their confidence level had increased from 3.8 to 4.6; their ability to speak in public had increased from 3.4 to 4.6; and their ability as leaders had increased from 3.7 to 4.5.²⁰

Following the Dominican Republic and Panama programs, IDB implemented EWL in Peru in 2018, with a focus on women in the mining sector. Unlike the previous EWL iterations, the 30 women participants in the Peru program represent the private and public sectors in equal numbers.

The Peru program includes networking opportunities, and the ability to network with women in both the public and private sectors has benefited women from both sectors. The combination of public and private sectors has also provided an opportunity to create synergies between entities that have not traditionally collaborated.

The Peru program includes content specially tailored for women in the mining industry, and has built a base of women leaders in this historically male-dominated sector. In 2019 two more EWLs were launched in Latin America: a second one in Peru, this time for both the mining and energy sectors; and one in Argentina, focusing on women in local government, targeted specifically for women in the Province of Buenos Aires.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

1. Quality programs require resources that may be beyond the public sector's capacity to provide.

Despite interest from the Dominican Republic and Panama, replication of EWL in the public sector is not guaranteed. Public sector training

institutes for civil servants in low- and middle-income countries are resource-constrained. It is easier to fund leadership programs in the private sector, where companies can pay for their own participants, thereby bringing down the cost of the program.

2. High-level champions in government can accelerate the adoption of change.

In both the Dominican Republic and Panama, EWL received the support of the countries' vice presidents (who were both women), as well as of various ministers. Having high-level champions in government accelerated the formation and completion of the first cohorts, which took less than a year. Given the resource constraints, high-level buy-in was vital for program sustainability, as well as for the support of program alumni.

In the Dominican Republic, the proposed program was presented to the ministers by IDB's vice president; having such a high-level male champion of the program convinced them of the need for and benefits of such a program. High-level IDB officials gave interviews to local media outlets, sending a clear signal that EWL was a priority for them. Robust participation in and support from the highest levels of government in turn contributed to the program's visibility.

Drawing on lessons learned from the internal IDB program, in both the Dominican Republic and Panama the project team identified key individuals from government institutions that needed to be brought on board in order to achieve buy-in from public sector leadership. These leaders acted as sponsors, and lent their support at crucial moments in the implementation of these programs.

3. Projects should consider engaging men as mentors and allies.

The success of EWL hinges, in part, on the participation of male counterparts within minis-

20. The above results compare the self-reported baseline results with the one-year-after self-reported results.

tries. Engaging men in the conversation about women's empowerment, and gaining their support helps: they can serve first as allies of the cause of women's advancement, and then as mentors for the women. This creates a more supportive work environment for women, and helps to advance the goal of gender equality and women's leadership in institutions.

According to Hugo Wood, public policy advisor to Panama's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the engagement of senior male leaders in initiatives like EWL not only enables women to gain access to senior leaders; it also encourages male leaders to engage more productively with female staff, and to identify talented employees they may have overlooked.

4. The practices of a multilateral development bank can be transferred to clients if they are appropriately adjusted to fit the local context.

While the HR departments of multilateral development banks (MDBs) do not usually share knowledge with or support clients outside their organizations, the EWL program spotlighted the

internal HR practices of IDB, making it possible to leverage IDB's knowledge to provide technical assistance to participating entities. Contracting INCAE as a prestigious regional partner was important in being able to successfully adapt an internal IDB program to LAC's public sector, as well as to ensuring the program's relevance within the overall context of public sector institutions in Panama.²¹

5. Facilitating ongoing engagement with graduates has value beyond the program's duration.

Female graduates of the EWL program in Panama have stayed connected via an online network of EWL participants, which also includes women from the Dominican Republic. The graduates engage via social media, mobilize around advocacy issues, share information about upcoming events, and inspire one another through updates on their professional advancements and personal stories. They describe this community as quite important to them, and report that they had not previously been part of any similar formal or informal engagements with female public sector leaders.

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CASE STUDY 4

ENERGIZING EQUITY IN TALENT: THE CASE OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EVN MACEDONIA

CONTEXT

Country Overview

The Republic of North Macedonia has experienced a political and economic transformation since gaining independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991. But even with increased economic growth in recent decades, it remains among the poorest countries in Europe.

Women have made strides in education: by 2014, they had achieved a literacy rate of 96.7 percent versus 98.8 percent for men (World Bank 2014).²² And by 2017 they were leading the country in higher education at all levels, accounting for 56.7 percent of bachelor's degrees awarded, and the majority of master's and doctoral degrees. However, as of 2017, only 18 percent of female graduates had completed degrees in STEM fields, compared to 27.2 percent of men.²³

Direct and indirect discrimination based on gender is prohibited in the workplace (Law on

Prevention of and Protection from Discrimination, Article 3 and 5 and the Labor Relations Act, Article 7), as is discrimination on the basis of gender in job advertisements (Labor Relations Act, Article 24(2)). Additionally, women and men must be provided with equal opportunities for hiring and advancement in regard to selection criteria, recruitment, hiring terms and conditions, promotions, training, assignments, and termination of employment (Labor Relations Act, Article 6(2)).

Equal pay for work of equal value is also mandated by Article 108(1) of the Labor Relations Act, which includes a special mention of sex (OECD 2019). However, evidence of a sizable gender pay gap in the country may imply poor implementation of the law (EC 2016).

The Constitution guarantees the protection of mothers, particularly at work (Constitution, Article 42): women are entitled to nine months of maternity leave (Labor Relations Act, Article 165(1)), paid at 100 percent by the government (Law on Health Insurance, Articles 14 and 17). Paid leave due to family reasons such as child-birth is also provided for fathers for a period of

22. The latest figures available are for 2014 from the World Development Indicators.

23. In this case study, this includes degrees in engineering, manufacturing, and construction; information and communication technology (ICT); and natural sciences, mathematics, and statistics (UNESCO 2017).

BOX 4.1 North Macedonia at a Glance

Region Southeast Europe

Income Group Upper-Middle

Population 2,082,958

Labor Force Participation (Ages 15–64), 2020 figures^a Women 52.5%; Men 78.5%

Graduates in STEM Fields (2017 figures)^b Women 18.0%; Men 27.2%

- **Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction Women** 9.9%; Men, 14.6%
- **Information and Communication Technology** 4.0 %; Men 10.0 %
- **Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics** Women 4.2 %; Men 2.5%

Global Gender Gap Index, 2020 Ranking^c 70/153

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-Index** 100/153

Women, Business and the Law, 2020 score^d

- **Workplace** 100/100
- **Pay** 50/100

a. Gender Data Portal database (World Bank; modelled ILO estimates).

b. UIS database (UNESCO).

c. World Economic Forum 2019.

d. World Bank 2020.

up to seven working days (Labor Relations Act, Article 146(1)), and is also paid at 100 percent by the government (Law on Health Insurance, Article 17).

The Labor Relations Act also provides for unpaid parental leave for a period of up to three months until the child attains the age of three (Labor Relations Act, Article 170-a). And an employer cannot terminate the employment relationship of a person who is on maternity, paternity, or parental leave (Labor Relations Act, Article 101(1) (OECD 2019).

Yet, despite the fact that there are few legal barriers to employment in North Macedonia, the ILO modelled data estimates for 2020 still reveal a 26 percentage point gap in labor force participation between men and women.

Institutional Background

EVN Macedonia is an energy company that, as its primary activity, distributes and supplies power to the territory of the Republic of Macedonia: it serves about 812,000 customers.²⁴ Privatized in 2006, 10 percent of the company is still under state ownership. In 2016-17, EVN employed nearly 2,000 people, with women accounting for nearly 20 percent of the workforce, and 22.7 percent of top and mid-level management.

EVN Macedonia's parent company, the Austria-based EVN Group, has a history of implementing initiatives to provide equal opportunities and comprehensive benefits to its employees.

EVN Macedonia's leadership recognized the need to better accommodate its female employ-

24. See ENV website for further details: <https://www.evn.mk/Za-nas.aspx>.

BOX 4.2 Employer Snapshot: EVN Macedonia

Ownership 10% state-owned, 90% privately held

Workforce 1,929 employees (2017 figure)

Women's Share (2015 figures)

- **Workforce** 19.6%
- **Managers (overall)** 22.7%
- **Mid-Level Management** 35%
- **Engineers** 21.1%
- **Technical Field Operations** 1.6%
- **Finance** 71.7%

Customer Base Approximately 812,000 connections

ees in order to improve women's participation at various levels of the organization. Internal discussions on issues of equal opportunity coincided with the 2015 launch of the Engendering Utilities program of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which works to increase economic opportunities for women in electricity and water utilities of low- and middle-income countries through demand-driven coaching and a Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program.²⁵ Executive-level commitment at EVN Macedonia became a catalyst for the company's participation in this program.

Mobilizing Resources to Enhance Gender Equality

The majority of the costs associated with initiatives to promote female professionals and engineers at EVN Macedonia were covered by the company itself. Scholarship and internship programs were funded directly by the company's internal budgets in the amount of €70,000.

However, participation in the Engendering Utilities program was crucial in terms of guiding and accelerating the process of tailoring interventions for women, including the mobilization of external resources.

Over the three-year life of the program, USAID's gender-equality experts visited twice a year, and EVN Macedonia's human resources (HR) team attended Engendering Utilities workshops. USAID also sponsored EVN Macedonia's chief HR officer, and two specialists to participate in Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program certificate program.

Changing the company's hiring practices has required the commitment of considerable resources. EVN Macedonia has two psychologists²⁶ advising them on recruitment processes and interviews, and is consulting with a top-performing engineer to help design a new assessment process for middle and senior managers, based on their experience with the revised assessment process for engineers and entry-level hires.

WHAT WAS DONE

Assessment of Gender Equality and Inclusion

The Engendering Utilities program worked with EVN Macedonia to collect data on the disparities between men and women, and to understand the barriers women are facing in EVN departments at various levels. Its 2014 baseline assessment covered: (i) women's participation in employment and senior management; (ii) EVN's HR policies, outreach, and recruitment practices; (iii) the financial state of the utility; (iv) attitudes of men toward women in North Macedonian society; and (v) training of the utility's workforce (USAID 2016a).

25. Details on USAID's Engendering Utilities program is available at <https://www.usaid.gov/energy/engendering-utilities>.

26. The psychologists are part of the company's Recruitment and Development team.

The findings of the assessment showed that EVN Macedonia had not attracted enough women to work in the sector. Furthermore, women's share of employment at the utility was concentrated in three departments: customer service (85 percent); planning (79 percent); and finance (75 percent). The large numbers of men employed in technical field operations (97 percent) reflected male-dominated access to the utility's internship programs and recruitment (USAID 2016a) (Figure 4.1).

Implementing Strategies to Close Gaps Between Men and Women

To better balance the ratio of male and female employees, in 2015 EVN Macedonia began taking steps to track progress on key indicators, including the percentage of new female employees, and the number of executive management positions held by women. It also undertook specific interventions aimed at building up the

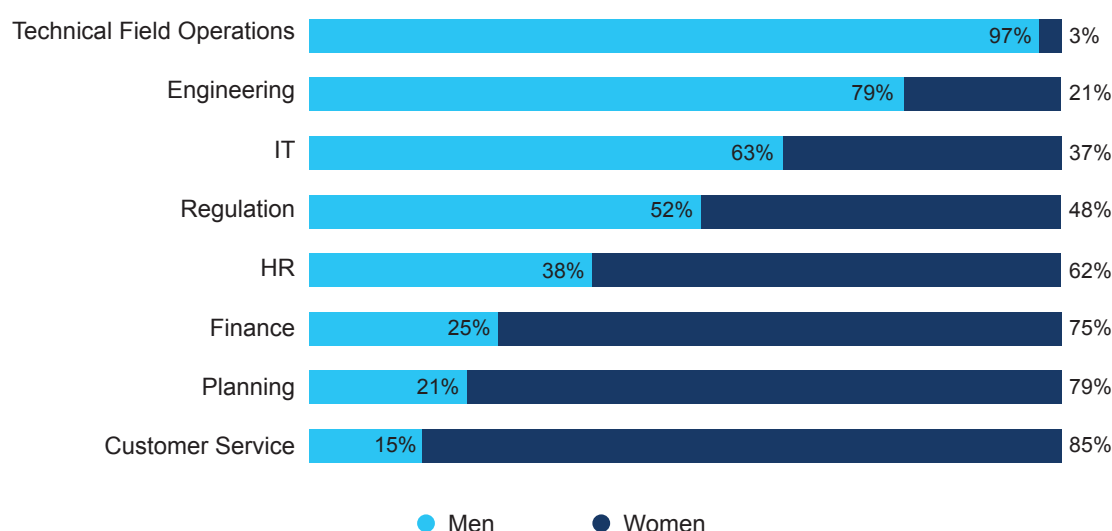
pipeline of female workers across departments, and issues concerning the company's ability to attract female employees, as well as the recruitment, retention, and advancement of women in their careers.

» Building the pipeline

Having noted the shortage of both women and men studying to be electrical fitters and engineers, EVN Macedonia worked with the faculties of technical and vocational education and training schools and universities to build support for scholarship programs and work-based learning opportunities. They also formed partnerships with several universities, technical high schools, and companies along the electricity value chain.

Establishing work-based learning opportunities for students in technical and vocational education. In 2018, electrical fitters represented more than 40 percent of EVN Macedonia's workforce;²⁷ however, only two of them were women. Through semiregular meetings with leaders of

Figure 4.1 Percentage of Women Employees in EVN Macedonia by Department, 2014



Source: USAID 2016a.

Note: IT = information technology; HR = human resources.

27. An electrical fitter installs, tests, maintains, and repairs electrical installations and wiring, and also fits, assembles, installs, tests, commissions, maintains, and repairs electrical systems and equipment.

technical high schools, EVN found that virtually no women were studying to become electrical fitters. The main challenge to achieving greater gender balance and enrollment in such programs was stereotypes about women not being suited for such work; and social biases against them pursuing vocational rather than tertiary education.

As part of its pledge, through the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, to help change the image and accessibility of vocational apprenticeships, EVN Macedonia started Project 20-20-20, to provide work-based learning for students from technical high schools who were enrolled in electricity programs, during their final two years of study.²⁸ These apprenticeships offer students an opportunity for on-the-job training, as well as a pathway to employment in the company. The company believes that this outreach campaign; the possibility of securing a job at EVN; and a new awareness of the relatively high salaries earned by electrical fitters led to more female students enrolling in the pilot electrical technical class in 2017.

Providing engineering scholarships. EVN Macedonia's goal is to reach 40 percent female engineers, compared to their current 20 percent. Since 2010, the company has partnered with university engineering faculties to award scholarships to those students who have the highest grade point average in electrical engineering, the majority of whom are female. The number of scholarships for women increased from 44 percent during the years 2010-2014 to 76 percent in the period 2015-2018. Scholars receive approximately 25 percent of the salary of a starting engineering position. They are also welcomed to the company for visits, offered a month-long internship every year of their studies, and are extended the chance to be hired.



PERSPECTIVES

We want to show you in an interesting way what your parents do every day, so by the end of the day, maybe you'll have new ideas of what you want to be when you grow up.

— Harald Dammerer, previous Vice Chairman, EVN Board of Directors, and now Managing Director, Elektro distribucija (a subsidiary of EVN AG)



Before the scholarship program was instituted, women comprised 17–23 percent of the students on this career track;²⁹ following the program's implementation, this figure has increased to more than 40 percent. EVN Macedonia believes that the reassurance of finding a job in the energy sector has encouraged more students, particularly women, to enroll in electricity-related degree programs.³⁰

EVN has also undertaken media outreach through LinkedIn; career centers at universities; and cooperation with business centers and NGOs to position itself as a good workplace for female engineers. They have also made efforts to include both women and men in their media images and job advertisements, and to note that positions are open to both women and men, sending a clear message that EVN is an equal opportunity employer. In addition, the company's hosting of an annual Women in Energy Conference and other public events signals that it welcomes and encourages women's participation.

28. This activity was in addition to the programs with several vocational education and training institutes.

29. In electrical engineering.

30. Interview with Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarski (June 14, 2018), and subsequent updates received in March 2020.

Building a trainee graduate program. EVN Macedonia also has a trainee graduate program: a one-year employment opportunity for students in their final year of study and recent graduates. In 2016, female applicants filled 40 percent of the available positions (USEA 2017). Participants rotate among several organizational units to better understand how the company works (EVN Macedonia n.d.a), and must achieve pre-defined learning outcomes in order to reach the next career level.

Previously, program participants were selected by management after being vetted by an external company. EVN says that, after moving the process fully in-house, adopting more objective criteria, and training their managers in an effort to remove bias, the percentage of women chosen has doubled, from 22 to 44 percent.

Developing future talent by boosting exposure to STEM among younger girls. EVN Macedonia is also promoting more interest among girls to study STEM by hosting Bring Your Daughter to Work Day events. In 2016, one such event gave 66 primary and secondary students the opportunity to learn first-hand about the energy sector through observing their parents' workplace (USAID 2016b). The girls learned about electricity and engaged in hands-on experiments. Positive feedback led to EVN planning additional events across all of their company locations: they are now taking place each year during the school break, and include boys as well.³¹

» Eliminating biases in recruitment

Using more objective methods. As part of its assessment, the EVN team found that its hiring processes, which included a shortlist, and a semi-structured interview by line managers, were susceptible to implicit bias. Without an

objective method for assessing the required competencies, the process was leading to skewed hiring decisions.

Supported by USAID's Engendering Utilities program, EVN's HR department developed a new methodology designed to reduce bias. This pilot project was enhanced with new approaches to validating candidate competencies, and new interview techniques. After introducing tests for both verbal and numerical reasoning, and knowledge-based tests, as well as behavioral interview techniques that include role-playing and group exercises, and blind evaluation in the testing phase, more women were selected from the short list, and were subsequently offered employment.

Decision-making power for hiring was also expanded beyond line managers to include a recruitment panel composed of employees from various areas, including human resources. The line managers initially resisted these changes; however now, after nearly three years of implementation, the company reports that as the quality of candidates in terms of knowledge and performance has increased, managers have started to accept the changes.³²

Ensuring women's participation in internships. EVN Macedonia has a one-month paid internship program that now attracts nearly equal numbers of women and men. Shortly after its launch, 44 percent of the internship students were women: during the course of the program, it has increased to more than 60 percent.

» Promoting women's professional development and leadership, and supporting flexible work arrangements

EVN Macedonia also has a summer training program for managers, and the participation rates

31. 19 branches and 3 headquarters.

32. Interview with Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarski (June 14, 2018).

of female versus male managers is considered as a factor during the selection process. As a follow-up to this program, the company has also developed a mentoring program designed to evaluate and prepare managers for new assignments. In the past two years, women accounted for nearly 30 percent of those in this program.

The company has also nominated members of their HR staff for the USAID-sponsored Gender

Equity Executive Leadership Program delivered by Georgetown University. One male and two female staff members have participated; completed the final modules; and implemented a capstone project (Box 4.3).

Promoting better work-life balance. The company allows telecommuting and a flexible work schedule, with hours ranging from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., and with a mandatory core time of only 4

BOX 4.3 Gender Equality Executive Leadership Program

Training. As part of its Engendering Utilities program, in 2017 USAID contracted professors from Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business to offer a graduate-level certificate program for key decision makers from each utility, targeting staff from HR and operations. This 10-month program included in-person and online training modules, as follows:

- Module 1 (in person): Strategic Leadership; HR Policies; Recruitment; Hiring; Employee Development; Performance Management; Succession Planning
- Modules 2–5 (online): Salary and Benefits Equity Analysis; Civility; Communication and High Potential Leadership Development; Employee Resources Groups and Teams; Role Models; Negotiations^a
- Module 6 (in person): Persuasion/Influence; Personal Leadership; Leading Others; Change Management

Tailored coaching. The program's professional coaching utilizes the Best Practices Framework. This HR tool guides utilities on actions they can take to integrate a gender-lens into seven policy areas: (i) attracting/hiring; (ii) compliance/reporting; (iii) payroll/administration; (iv) employee development systems; (v) benefits; (vi) risk management; and (vii) retirement/separation.^b

Capstone project. At the end of the program, participants deliver a final presentation to management that summarizes the strategic value of addressing gender equity, and includes actionable next steps within their workplaces. The capstone project developed by EVN Macedonia's team will build on their efforts in recruitment and retention, and move them toward the promotion of women into middle and senior leadership roles in the organization.

Source: USAID 2018.

- a. New module topics that were added include sexual harassment, childcare, and family-friendly practices.
- b. The updated Enhanced Best Practices Framework uses an integrated approach informed by a tailor-made Employee Life Cycle Model with the following stages (a) life-cycle phases: attraction and talent outreach, recruiting and hiring, onboarding and training, performance management, compensation and benefits, talent and leadership development, retention and employee engagement, succession planning and promotion, separation and retirement; and (b) company enablers: corporate culture and leadership, company performance and reporting, policies and grievance management, corporate communications, and branding.

hours, to provide a balance between the company's operational needs and employees' personal needs (EVN Macedonia n.d.b). This policy allows both men and women to better balance their work-life demands. It also helps to mitigate the "motherhood penalty" for women.

» **Considering gender equality when redesigning promotion processes**

Following their participation in the Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program, EVN Macedonia's leadership used USAID's Best Practices Framework to conduct a gap analysis of their current policies and practices. Based on this analysis, the company introduced a more equitable succession planning process, and a dual-career promotion path.

One relatively simple change required the inclusion of at least two female candidates on any shortlist for a succession plan. EVN Macedonia's HR director, Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarovski, explains how being perceived as a "token woman" can restrict advancement. "If lists have only one woman, it is statistically unlikely she'll be chosen," she says.³³ Insisting on a more diverse shortlist can help to expand the pathway to management and technical positions for women; however, additional approaches to combat biases in promotion processes are also key.

To further encourage women's career advancement, EVN developed a dual-career promotion pathway, with two sides of the ladder: management, and technical expertise. EVN Macedonia is a relatively flat organization, with a mostly young staff and infrequent opportunities for managerial promotion. On observing that men were more aggressively targeting the limited leadership positions, which pay more, the company

noticed that the overall effect was lower pay for women.

By giving technical experts the same salary as managers, and balancing the availability of leadership positions, EVN Macedonia has facilitated the upward mobility of women within the company. They encourage women to seek promotion on either of these two pathways, and plan to also offer targeted support for onboarding, mentoring, and professional development. They hope that this will help to attain greater female representation in their management and on their supervisory boards, and will create a cadre of female technical experts as well.

The company will collect data on the rollout of these practices, and will complete another survey at the conclusion of their participation in Engendering Utilities, to monitor the narrowing of gaps.

» **Engaging women in energy globally**

In 2018, EVN Macedonia and the Association of Engineering Societies at the Engineering Institution of North Macedonia organized the second International Conference on Women in Energy in Skopje. The event was cofunded by the Central European Initiative Cooperation Fund. With nearly 200 women attendees, the conference served as a knowledge-sharing platform for leaders and professionals from business and academia, as well as a way to accelerate networking and personal growth opportunities for female employees. Subsequent conferences have included the Women in Industry³⁴ workshop in 2019, which brought sector leaders from across the country together to discuss ways to advance gender equality.

33. Interview with Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarovski (June 14, 2018), citing Stefanie K. Johnson, David R. Hekman, and Elsa T. Chan, "If There's Only One Woman in Your Candidate Pool, There's Statistically No Chance She'll Be Hired," Harvard Business Review (Brighton, MA: Harvard Business Publishing, April 26, 2016). Available at <https://hbr.org/2016/04/if-theres-only-one-woman-in-your-candidate-pool-theres-statistically-no-chance-shell-be-hired>.

34. <https://womeninindustry.mk/speakers/>

Measuring Progress

EVN Macedonia uses a balanced scorecard that, as part of its operational and management indicators, tracks sex-disaggregated indicators related to employment. These include female-to-male percentage comparisons for the following:

- Employees
- New employees
- Executive management positions held
- Senior management positions (those reporting directly to the general manager)
- Middle management positions
- Supervisory positions
- Engineering positions

The Engendering Utilities program in North Macedonia is still ongoing. In initial interviews, female employees reported wanting to return to work after maternity leave, sometimes even preferring to return sooner than anticipated. They also indicated that they felt treated equally, and believed that any job in the company was open to them. Changes in the recruitment process, and overall interventions that were designed to close gender gaps, as well as internal and external campaigns, have also had spillover effects.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS

1. Sustainable change requires long-term commitment.

Sustainable corporate change takes time. As the head of HR at EVN Macedonia has noted, it may be easy to show good results at the beginning if your goal is to make quick improvements on key metrics in terms of women's employment. But if

you want the support of all relevant stakeholders, both inside and outside your company, and beyond the energy sector, it will take longer.³⁵

2. Buy-in from leadership is essential for effective change management.

Buy-in from senior leadership has been crucial in the process of change at EVN Macedonia. While there has been some internal resistance, the chief executive officer (CEO), Stefan Peter, signed a memorandum of understanding with USAID at the start of the partnership; and other internal champions joined in making the case to staff that gender equality is good for business.

Changes to the recruitment process that reduced the power of line managers faced resistance. During the change-management process, the executive team communicated the goals of the initiatives to both managers and staff: this increased the visibility of the desired change, and supported the internal champions of it with helpful resources. After three years, EVN Macedonia reports that their line managers have started to accept these changes.

3. HR departments are drivers of change toward closing the gender gap.

Though traditionally not prioritized in many organizations, HR departments can function as a core strategic partner. In both public and private sector organizations, these departments may be perceived as filling administrative, rather than talent development functions. However, as EVN Macedonia has demonstrated, HR departments that have increased their capacity in nondiscriminatory and competency-based hiring can serve an important strategic role, and may be well-positioned to promote women in STEM as well as in other professional roles.

35. Interview with Aneta Petrovska-Rusomarovski (June 14, 2018) and subsequent correspondence March 2020.

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CASE STUDY 5

INSTITUTIONALIZING GENDER EQUALITY IN PROJECT DESIGN: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIAN ELECTRIC UTILITY

CONTEXT

Country Overview

From 2000 to 2011, extreme poverty in Ethiopia was reduced by 22 percentage points—from 55 percent to 33 percent. It is now is one of the world's fastest-growing economies, with an average annual increase in gross domestic product (GDP) of 10.9 percent from 2004–17 (Salmi, Sursock, and Olefir 2017).

The government of Ethiopia has set a goal of becoming a middle-income country by 2025: this will require robust investment in agriculture and infrastructure, including roads, railways, telecommunications, and energy. To support this goal, the government wants to develop renewable-energy projects; achieve universal access to electricity; and leapfrog to energy efficient technologies in transport, industry, and construction (Salmi, Sursock, and Olefir 2017).

While the country has made notable progress in many development areas, it remains one of Sub-Saharan Africa's worst performers in terms of gender equality. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index for 2020 ranked Ethiopia 82 out of 153 countries overall:

this gap is further reflected in the lag in women's educational attainment relative to men's (with a gap ranking of 140 out of 153 countries), and women's relative economic participation (125 out of 153 countries) (WEF 2019) (Box 5.1).

In the STEM sectors, the economic gaps between women and men are even larger. Women comprise only 7.6 percent of STEM tertiary-education graduates, compared to 12.4 percent for men. These figures help to explain the current shortage of female workers in the energy sector, and point toward a future shortfall.

That said, achieving gender equality is an explicit priority of the Ethiopian government. Its 1993 National Policy on Women articulated the government's commitment to women's rights, and the 1995 Constitution, which stipulates the equal rights of women and men, reiterates this commitment.

Institutional Background

In 2016, the government of Ethiopia published its second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II), covering the period from 2016 to fiscal

BOX 5.1 Ethiopia at a Glance**Region** Sub-Saharan Africa**Income Group** Low**Population** 109, 224, 559**Labor Force Participation (Ages 15–64), 2020 figures^a** Women 76.3%; Men 87.1%**Graduates in STEM Fields (2008 figures)^b** Women 7.6%; Men 12.4%

- **Engineering, Manufacturing, and Construction Women** Women 2.8%; Men 5.4%
- **Information and Communication Technology** Women 2.7%; Men 3.0%
- **Natural Sciences, Mathematics, and Statistics** Women 2.2%; Men 3.9%

Global Gender Gap Index, 2020 Ranking^c 82/153

- **Economic Participation and Opportunity Sub-Index** 125/153

Women, Business and the Law, 2020 score^d

- **Workplace** 100/100
- **Pay** 25/100

a. Gender Data Portal database (World Bank; modelled ILO estimates).

b. UIS database (UNESCO).

c. World Economic Forum 2019.

d. World Bank 2020a.

year 2019/20.³⁶ The plan focuses on the development of the agriculture sector; expansion of industrial development; and a shift from export-driven development to broad-based, inclusive growth. It envisages empowering women to ensure their active participation in the country's political, social, and economic processes.

Key to this plan is Ethiopia's National Electrification Program (NEP). Launched in November 2017, NEP aims to deliver major reforms, and achieve universal electrification by 2025.³⁷ NEP is focused on high-impact interventions in areas already served by the network that do not require additional investment in the generation of electricity, given low levels of household consumption.

Recognizing the inherent differences in the opportunities for women and men associated with electricity services, gender equality was included as part of NEP's focus on utility reform and skills development. The Ministry of Water, Irrigation, and Electricity (MoWIE), which has oversight responsibility for the electricity sector, is leading delivery of NEP, together with Ethiopian Electric Power (EEP), which is responsible for the generation and transmission subsectors, and the Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU), the sole national entity responsible for power distribution and sales (Box 5.2).

To support implementation of the government's broader sectoral reform program, in 2018 the World Bank approved the US\$375 million Ethio-

36. The first Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP I) was linked by the government of Ethiopia to strides in real GDP growth, infrastructure development, social development, and capacity building at all levels (National Planning Commission 2016).

37. NEP 2.0, which focuses on off-grid electrification, was launched in March 2019.

pia Electrification Program (ELEAP), which has a unique focus on promoting gender equality as part of a broader, portfolio-wide engagement in the energy sector.

Mobilizing Resources to Enhance Gender Equality

During project design, the Africa Gender and Energy Program, supported by the World Bank Group's Energy Sector Management Assistance Program (ESMAP),³⁸ provided technical support to explore the drivers of gender gaps in the energy sector. This work drew on country data, combined with findings from consultations, workshops, and discussions with the government, utilities, universities, businesses, women's associations, microfinance institutions, and civil society organizations.

The gaps identified centered on employment and leadership in technical fields; access to financing for adopting clean technologies; and agricultural productivity-related activities. The gender-based violence (GBV) grant, financed under the World Bank Group's State and Peacebuilding Fund (SPF), a multidonor trust fund, leveraged additional resources to address GBV prevention and response at the project and institutional levels.

The ELEAP loan takes the form of Program-for-Results (PforR) financing. The unique features of this kind of financing include using a country's institutions and processes to link the disbursement of funds directly to the achievement of specific program results. This approach is designed to help build capacity within the country; enhance effectiveness and efficiency; and lead to the achievement of tangible and sustainable program results.

In this case, funds are disbursed based on the results of EEU's efforts to shift away from ad-hoc

actions, and toward the systematic addressing of targeted gender gaps through annual actions. Through ELEAP, US\$4.5 million was leveraged from the World Bank Group program to support gender equality and citizen engagement at EEU; the targets include increasing women's employment at the utility from 20 percent (in 2017) to 30 percent by 2023, with a focus on STEM roles (Box 5.2).

The supported activities required close collaboration with key government stakeholders, including senior leaders at EEU and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation. EEU has dedicated sizable human resources of its own to implement its Women's Affairs Policy and Procedures, and related activities. And in 2014 they established the Women, Children and Youth Affairs Directorate (WCYAD) to promote gender equality, institutionalize gender mainstreaming, and advocate for the rights of women employees. WCYAD consists of a director, an office manager, and three full-time gender experts: this underscores the perceived importance of the issue within EEU. MoWIE and EEP have also established WCYADs.

BOX 5.2 Employer Snapshot: Ethiopian Electric Utility^a

Workforce 18, 614 employees (2019)

- Women 20% Men 80%

Women's Share

- **Management** 18.5%
- **Technical Jobs** 14.5%

a. a. Data is from internal (unpublished) EEU and World Bank notes, and program documents (2019); and management figures from 2020.

38. ESMAP is a global knowledge and technical assistance program administered by the World Bank to assist low- and middle-income countries in increasing know-how and institutional capacity to achieve environmentally sustainable energy solutions for poverty reduction and economic growth.



PERSPECTIVES

It is a historic moment for EEU and the World Bank to transform the economy and, at the same time, uplift women in Ethiopia. The gaps in, for example, management roles and decision making, cannot remain as we move forward—so we are taking actions to change the situation.

— Shiferaw Telila, Chief Executive Officer,
Ethiopian Electric Utility



WHAT WAS DONE

Assessment of Gender Equality and Inclusion

At the beginning of the project, extensive in-country engagement by the World Bank Group with EEU led to the identification of key institutional priorities and policy gaps, as well as an examination of the state of gender equality and inclusion in the EEU workplace. The assessment identified the following key issues:

- The collective bargaining agreement offered protection for some women's rights in the workplace, such as maternity leave and medical health coverage for women who give birth.
- WCYAD did not have sufficient financial resources, which was hindering the implementation of Directorate activities and policies.
- There was no overarching affirmative action policy for recruitment.
- The training curriculum for capacity building lacked appropriate content on gender-related issues. There was little reference to the company's Women's Affairs Policy and Procedures; and mid- and senior-level management had received little or no training on these

issues, which limited their ability to champion related initiatives.

- The absence of a sexual harassment protocol left employees at risk and unable to report misconduct.
- Multiple interviewees expressed a need for childcare facilities within the utility's headquarters and regional offices.

The EEU data for 2017 showed that women were underrepresented across the workforce, especially in decision-making positions. Women comprised only 20 percent of the workforce, including just 5.8 percent of management-level positions, and 12 percent of technical positions. It also highlighted a large skills gap by gender: the share of female staff with undergraduate or postgraduate degrees was just 30.45 and 13.64 percent, respectively.

The data for 2018 found that women accounted for 5–37 percent of STEM-related participant training, including in basic computer skills, geographic information systems (GIS), and electrical safety. The differences between men's and women's STEM-related skills levels are particularly important, since these can exacerbate future gaps, as technical skills become increasingly important in job functions.

Eliciting Buy-In, and Institutionalizing Gender Equality

» Engaging partners to promote gender equality

Along with the data collection efforts, the project team began an in-depth engagement with client organizations to support the government's commitment to deepening understanding of what it will take to reach gender equality at the utility. These engagements included the following:

- **Gender and Citizen Engagement Workshop.** This workshop, held in February 2017, brought

together 20 staff members from EEU, EEP, the World Bank Group, and USAID to discuss citizen engagement and gender equality in the energy sector, and best practices. The workshop sought to identify specific actions that could be developed in collaboration with EEU and EEP staff, including mechanisms designed to engage citizens in energy projects.

- **STEM Deans' Roundtable.** To strengthen links between energy institutions and universities, the project team held a roundtable meeting in June 2017 with the seven deans of Addis Ababa University's STEM degree programs, and staff from its academic departments focused on gender equality and Gender Office.³⁹
- **Women and Youth Forums and Staff Discussions.** The project team met with Women and Youth Forums organized by EEU to discuss gender-issue developments, and priorities in the energy sector (for example, planning for International Women's Day celebrations, and policy updates). The team also held informational interviews with women and men across the energy value chain.

Additional engagement with stakeholders included meetings with women's affairs directorates across the energy sector and EEU department managers, as well as the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, the Organization for Women in Self Employment, the Consortium of Christian Relief and Development Associations, ENAT Bank, and representatives from microfinance institutions and private sector enterprises.

» **Building capacity to implement women's affairs policy and procedures**

Once an initial institutional mapping and stakeholder engagement was completed, structures were put into place at EEU to ensure that the core objectives of the Women's Affairs Policy and Procedures, and commitments made under the World Bank Group's US\$375 million ELEAP program would be supported. These included the following:

- A Gender Steering Committee (GSC) chaired by the chief executive officer (CEO) was established in March 2018;
- The GSC guides the Gender Technical Committee (GTC), the implementing arm, which is led by the WCYAD director, and includes department and unit heads and representatives of the labor union.⁴⁰ In 2020, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were added to all of the regional CEO performance metrics, to ensure progress on gender equality;
- The EEU Women's Forum, which includes five female representatives, is convened on a monthly basis, to provide a venue for employee feedback and inputs;
- A network of full-time gender focal points for each EEU region serves as a point of contact for promoting gender equality and receiving grievances related to workplace harassment and other issues; and
- A gender expert hired with World Bank funding was onboarded to provide EEU with additional technical support.

With these institutional structures and support in place, strategies are being rolled out across EEU to institutionalize gender equality, including the increased recruitment, retention, and promotion of female employees.

39. These Gender Offices are focused on institutional gender equality issues.

40. Terms of reference for both the steering and technical committees are available from the World Bank Group Energy and Extractives Global Practice.

» **Recruitment, retention, and promotion of female talent**

Prior to 2018, EEU had no measures in place for the recruitment of female talent, and no skills development programs specifically targeting female employees. Extensive in-country engagement has revealed that female staff face a host of challenges, including (i) gender stereotypes and norms; (ii) explicit or implicit biases in the workplace; (iii) lack of mentors; (iv) limited women's networks due to small numbers of women working in the sector; (v) issues related to maintaining work-life balance and the care burden; and (vi) sexual harassment and safety concerns.

In July 2018, the EEU board adopted a five-year Gender and Citizen Engagement Work Program with a target of increasing women's employment to 30 percent by 2023 (from the 20 percent baseline), and improving women's participation in STEM-related roles, and in mid- and senior-level management positions. The company is also rolling out interventions to ensure that more women with STEM backgrounds are able to enter the workforce.

A road map for women's employment. A road map has been designed to guide EEU in taking steps to increase the number of women employed over the next four years, through targeted efforts in recruitment, retention, and women's access to professional development.

HR data collection has been improved and standardized across the utility, with a focus on technical versus nontechnical staff, grades, and employment background; updated data was collected from June–August 2019 and will continue to be collected on an annual basis going forward. The data show that progress has been made in female leadership, with the percentage of female senior managers rising from 5.8 percent in 2017 to 18.5 percent in 2020. Female employment overall has increased from 20 percent to 22.5 percent.

A unique partnership between EEU, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE), and 12 Ethiopian universities has been established in order to increase women's employment in the energy sector by providing STEM courses aimed at women. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between EEU and MoSHE was signed in August 2019 by the State Minister and the CEO of EEU. The MoU includes the following key elements:

- Every year 40 female graduate students in STEM fields are expected to participate in internships in the regions served by EEU; on completing their internship service, EEU will offer these students employment opportunities.
- To strengthen the knowledge and skills of the current EEU workforce, 44 women employees per year will be offered full scholarship opportunities to attend university courses. In addition, 55 women per year are expected to participate in short-term, on-the-job training.

EEU senior management has also approved a new HR policy mandating that 50 percent of new hires over the next three years should be female, in order for the utility to meet its 30 percent overall target by 2023.

Establishment of a women's mentorship program. Recognizing the value of role models and coaches in shaping career aspirations, EEU is also developing a one-year women's mentoring program to match midlevel managers with senior managers. Mentees will need to submit a formal application that includes a statement about their motivation for participation in the program, and their career goals. Partnership with the Ethiopian Women's Legal Association and the Ethiopian Women in Energy Network is being explored for program roll-out.

» **Creating an equitable and safer workplace**

Provision of childcare services. EEU is actively working to establish childcare facilities

in Addis Ababa and across its eleven regional offices. A childcare expert has been hired to outline best practices in childcare-service provision in Ethiopia and beyond; list relevant laws and policies; conduct a needs assessment in each potential childcare-service site, including details on the standards and risk factors; undertake a cost-benefit analysis for the operationalization of childcare service at the sites identified; develop a childcare-service implementation plan; analyze the level of decision-maker support; and set childcare options.

To date, the challenges have included shortage of qualified childcare workers, and limited national regulations. Thus far, the key progress achieved is as follows:

- EEU has conducted a childcare service needs assessment at key EEU sites in Addis Ababa and other regions to identify the existing needs of female and male employees. The assessment includes details of EEU's institutional setup that will impact the establishment and scope of childcare services—for example, the staffing numbers in regional offices. Eleven regional childcare centers are being established: six have been completed to date.
- Based on location, specific criteria and standards have been outlined for the provision of childcare services, with details regarding staffing needs, equipment and facility aspects, safety regulations, a learning curriculum for children aged 0 months–4 years old, transport, and nutrition.

Strengthened institutional response to sexual harassment in the workplace. In the past, the prevalence and occurrence of GBV in Ethiopia's energy sector was unacknowledged, and was therefore not addressed through any mitigation or response measures. In 2013 a nationwide assessment conducted by the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs found that almost one in two women (49.6 percent) reported having experienced at least one type of violence in the workplace.

Today the evidence confirms that GBV can impact women employees' participation in leadership and decision-making roles. It also helps to explain why Ethiopia's energy-sector environment and industries remain male-dominated. With the help of a GBV grant under the SPF, coordinated with ELEAP preparation and implementation, an assessment of GBV was conducted at EEU, to identify gaps to be addressed through policy formulation, the development of a legal framework, and capacity development of key EEU management and technical staff. Highlights of the achievements to date include the following:

- Completion of an institutional review, to identify key gaps and challenges in GBV prevention and response at the utility;
- Assessments undertaken on the training needs and gaps among EEU management, technical, and support staff who are responsible for implementing GBV prevention and response measures;
- Establishment of a legal framework, and development of instruments to be used for the adoption and institutionalization of GBV prevention and response at EEU;
- Delivery of capacity-development training for 282 key staff members (129 female and 153 male) from EEU management, technical, and support staff;
- Development of educational communications materials to be used for GBV prevention and response (See Figure 5.1).

EEU also adopted and institutionalized three key legal instruments on GBV prevention and response in a meeting held on March 21, 2019. EEU's Gender Steering Committee (comprised of senior management, including the CEO); its Gender Technical Committee (consisting of department and directorate heads); and staff and labor-union representatives were in attendance. The legal instruments adopted were (i) a

Figure 5.1 EEU Poster on Sexual Harassment Mitigation and Response

Note: Image depicts EEU workers pledging to be good role models with regards to conduct around sexual harassment at the workplace.

Sexual Harassment Policy; (ii) a Code of Conduct for Addressing Sexual Harassment; and (iii) a Sexual Harassment Grievance Redress Mechanism (World Bank 2020b).

Creating a female-friendly workplace. EEU's employee policy is focused on creating a workplace that is more welcoming to and supportive of women. A collective bargaining agreement offers protection for women's rights in the workplace, especially with respect to maternity leave (Box 5.3).⁴¹ The agreement also includes provision for women's preferential treatment in promotions: that is, if a male and a female candidate each receive equal points in a job assessment, priority for promotion is given to

the woman. Other EEU policy reforms underway include those addressing recruitment policies and the prevention and mitigation of sexual harassment.

Measuring Progress

Each year, EEU reports on progress made in its gender and citizen engagement program. This includes reporting on both the approval and implementation of policies and training (for example, the establishment of GBV protocols), and progress made toward closing employment gender gaps in leadership and technical roles.⁴²

41. A collective bargaining agreement is an agreement "through which employers and their organizations and trade unions can establish fair wages and working conditions. It also provides the basis for sound labor relations. Typical issues on the bargaining agenda include wages, working time, training, occupational health and safety, and equal treatment. The objective of these negotiations is to arrive at a collective agreement that regulates terms and conditions of employment. Collective agreements may also address the rights and responsibilities of the parties, thus ensuring harmonious and productive industries and workplaces. Enhancing the inclusiveness of collective bargaining and collective agreements is a key means for reducing inequality and extending labor protection." (ILO n.d.).

42. See video Creating Opportunities for Women in Ethiopia's Energy Sector available at <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2020/02/04/creating-opportunities-for-women-in-ethiopias-energy-sector>

BOX 5.3 EEU Collective Bargaining Agreement: Maternity Benefits

The Ethiopian Electric Utility (EEU's) collective bargaining agreement between management and the EEU labor union includes the following maternity-related provisions:

- Temporary or permanent transfers for pregnant women, with doctor's confirmation of the inability to perform their usual work.
- Priority for employee transfers to women in EEU regional offices.
- Leave with pay for prenatal care, on presentation of a doctor's confirmation of the visit.
- Leave with pay for medically-prescribed bedrest during pregnancy.
- 120 days of maternity leave, 30 of which may be taken before giving birth; and 10 days of paternity leave, in line with the revised national legislation.
- Three months' leave without pay is optional for breastfeeding mothers who request it.
- Breastfeeding mothers who work shifts are relieved of working the night shift for a year.
- Pregnant women are relieved of night and overnight shifts from the sixth month of pregnancy until the day they give birth.
- The company covers all expenses related to medical care, including the costs associated with the birth of the child.
- Insurance is provided for accidents related to pregnancy or giving birth.
- Two hours per day of paid leave can be used for breastfeeding for up to six months after the child is born.

One notable mechanism instituted by ELEAP is the fact that the disbursement of funds (between US\$500,000 and US\$1 million per year), is based on the results of EEU's efforts to shift from ad hoc actions to address gender equality within its workforce to an institutional approach to closing key gaps per areas outlined in the case study.

So far, US\$2 million has been disbursed, based on the adoption of the EEU Gender and Citizen Engagement Work Program, which was

approved in July 2018, and was reported on in the January 2019 and January 2020 progress reports. While it is the responsibility of WCYAD to deliver the annual reports, each department (for example, Human Resources, and Training and Development) is responsible for delivering key actions, collecting data, and monitoring progress. EEP has begun replicating this program, and is starting by focusing on issues around GBV, the provision of childcare, and women's employment.

DESIGN IMPLICATIONS.

1. Financing gender equality work within a larger infrastructure loan is possible with early and sustained engagement from stakeholders.

Financing the US\$4.5 million focus on gender equality and citizen engagement under the World Bank's ELEAP loan rather than through a grant signals the Ethiopian government's long-term commitment to closing gender gaps in the sector. From the early stages of program design, their gender equality work has required close collaboration between the World Bank, EEU, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation. One key success factor was that the World Bank allocated staff time for a gender specialist on the ELEAP project team, as well as the financial resources needed to ensure the specialist's regular participation in in-country engagements; this helped to keep gender equality as a top priority.

2. In order to implement effective interventions, it is essential to assess women's participation in the workplace as well as their challenges; and to identify gaps in their technical skills.

The assessments conducted were unique in investigating not only women's participation in the workforce, and barriers to various roles, but also their technical and leadership capacities. One lesson learned was the importance of ensuring that assessments review and harmonize institutional documents across the utility. For example, a closer look at EEU's collective bargaining agreement showed a strong focus on women's role as caregivers, but little attention paid to their career advancement.

3. Having a gender equality policy is important, but it is not enough.

Having a gender equality policy is a critical but insufficient condition for success. Even though EEU had established WCYAD in 2014, and approved the Women's Affairs Policy and Procedures in 2016, many managers were unaware of the policy's stipulations; and resources were limited for champions who were seeking to implement related activities. Furthermore, several of the EEU policies on recruitment, retention, and promotion, which influence women's participation in the labor force, are still not gender-neutral.

Without affirmative action measures, company policies (for example, on recruitment) can indirectly discriminate due to structural or unconscious biases within an institution. This is particularly relevant in Ethiopia, where the completion of tertiary education is lower for women owing to economic, social, and cultural factors (USAID 2017). Putting KPIs in place for EEU's regional CEOs is helping to keep gender equality work on track.

4. Targeted initiatives for women in STEM and technical roles are needed.

Since women represent a smaller share of STEM graduates in Ethiopia, EEU is designing "upskilling" initiatives to help develop the technical and leadership skills of female employees. Scholarship opportunities, and the women's internship initiative, will help develop a talent pool from which to recruit and promote qualified women in the future.

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