



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Limitada existencia de procedimientos para un ambiente seguro para las mujeres.

	Política equidad género	Área promueve equidad de género	Política contra acoso sexual y laboral	Acciones RSE atracción mujeres	Acciones conciencia equidad género	Acciones conciencia violencia y acoso	Procedimientos denuncia violencia y discriminación
Generación	44	44	67	11	44	67	67
Transmisión	100	0	100	0	0	0	100
Distribución	33	33	67	67	67	67	67
Comercialización	33	33	67	33	67	67	67
Instituciones	100	100	50	0	100	100	50
Contratistas	31	15	69	31	38	62	31

USAID DEL PUERTO DE LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DE AMÉRICA
DELSUR Grupo epry
iiE

Using Data to Advance Gender Equality in Male-Dominated Industries

Lessons from Engendering Industries’ partners, [DELSUR](#) and [SENELEC](#)

Men hold [78 percent of jobs](#) and occupy most technical roles in the global energy sector. Many companies overlook the importance of attracting new female talent and do not use recruitment strategies that diversify the talent pool, which can improve business performance. Understanding the size of the existing female talent pool in a particular labor market is a critical first step in creating effective outreach and recruitment strategies to increase the number of women in technical roles. But gathering data on the gendered breakdown of technical staff in a specific industry can be challenging. While some sex-disaggregated labor force statistics are available from organizations like the [International Labour Organization](#) and the [World Bank](#), the data are often outdated or not sector-specific, limiting their tactical value.

In support of the U.S. Strategy on Women’s Economic Security, the [United States Agency for International Development’s](#) (USAID’s) Engendering Industries Program uses evidence-based programming and decision-making to enhance gender equality and improve business performance in male-dominated industries. Engendering Industries’ [Best Practices Framework for Male-Dominated Industries](#) (BPF), combined with change management coaching and training, supports partners to use data to advance equality at each phase of the employee lifecycle. The BPF’s companion guide, [Using Surveys to Advance Workforce Gender Equality](#), illustrates how to use surveys to generate the data needed for gender-responsive planning and decision-making. These surveys include employee satisfaction surveys, employee engagement surveys, and organizational culture surveys. It also addresses how to

DATA AND GENDER EQUALITY

When organizations survey their employees and use the data to make positive workplace adjustments, they improve employee engagement, increase retention rates, lower absenteeism, and improve productivity.

When leadership conducts surveys, they signal their interest and commitment to employee wellbeing while gaining valuable insights into their employees’ workplace experience. If designed correctly, surveys provide valuable data on gender equality and social inclusion in the workplace and identify entry points to introduce gender equality initiatives. [See our guide to using surveys to advance gender equality here.](#)

When organizations seek to improve equity in their attraction, talent outreach, recruiting, and hiring practices, it is important to develop a nuanced understanding of the local talent pool so that interventions match actual conditions. With a baseline understanding of the labor market, organizations can identify opportunities to either expand the female talent pool or capture a larger share of the available female talent.

- Attraction and talent outreach: strategic and long-term approaches to broaden the talent pool by attracting and acquiring talent for future recruiting.
- Recruiting and hiring: systematic processes that lead to the hiring of new employees from a diverse pool of candidates.

conduct market research on local labor markets to better understand barriers or opportunities for women studying STEM. By collecting and analyzing quality and accurate data on the female talent pool, companies can develop effective outreach and recruitment strategies to bring more women into the workforce and close the gender gap.

This case study illustrates how Engendering Industries collaborated with its partners in El Salvador and Senegal to collect, analyze, and use labor market data to advance gender equality in talent outreach and recruitment efforts in the energy sector.

USING ENERGY SECTOR DATA TO MEASURE THE TALENT PIPELINE AT DELSUR

When El Salvador's Electric Company, Distribuidora De Electricidad Delsur S.A De C.V (DELSUR), joined USAID's Engendering Industries Program in 2019, less than 20 percent of the company's employees were women, and there were no women employed as technicians,

line workers, in-grid dispatchers, or system operators. Engendering Industries often advises companies to use available talent pipeline data to set realistic hiring targets for women, but this was not possible since there was no current industry-level data available since a study that the General Superintendent of Electricity and Communications had carried out in 2012. Without knowing how many women were in the talent pipeline, it was difficult for DELSUR to develop a hiring strategy and set realistic targets.

In 2021, Engendering Industries provided DELSUR with a grant to conduct a labor market study and assess employment prospects for women pursuing technical careers in El Salvador. DELSUR used this funding to hire a Salvadorean consulting firm specializing in diversity, equality, and inclusion to conduct the study. Their objectives were to update sector-level employment data by gender, assess energy sector growth prospects over the next decade, and map these factors against the pipeline of people pursuing a STEM education. DELSUR then used these data to develop recommendations for improving outreach, attraction, recruitment, and hiring practices.

The survey team contacted 83 companies across the energy sector value chain in El Salvador, including generators, distributors, and prime contractors. However, motivating companies to share confidential employee data proved challenging, and the response rate was initially low.

"We were asking other companies to share their private information and needed to reassure them that information would be kept confidential and that DELSUR would not receive the raw data," explained Lorena Hernández, DELSUR's New Business and Strategic Marketing Specialist. To address these challenges, DELSUR created a confidentiality policy, used the data collection firm as a firewall, and only received results in aggregate without company identifying information.

DELSUR's CEO also sent a letter to each company, explaining the objective and requesting participation. In the end, 32 companies shared their employment data.

The results showed that the proportion of women in the energy sector increased from 12 percent in 2012 to 18.7 percent in 2021. Despite this, the study revealed that women held only 3.9 percent of technical positions. Interestingly, the women in technical roles had more advanced educational qualifications than their male counterparts, with a larger proportion of women having completed undergraduate and graduate degrees.



Photo: DELSUR El Salvador

In terms of the talent pipeline, women represented only 21.1 percent of the total number of students pursuing an education that could lead to a career in the energy sector. Both male and female students consistently agreed that technical jobs were “masculine.” Female students reported that even their families questioned why they were taking courses meant for men. The results painted a picture of few women studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), an equally low percentage of women working in the energy sector, and even fewer women occupying technical roles.

DELSUR used the data to develop new outreach and recruitment strategies with confidence. “The results highlighted the need to continue to develop programs to encourage women to join technical careers and study STEM,” Lorena Hernández said. The company held an internal session to share the survey results with human resources employees and then added language encouraging women to apply to all job postings alongside gender equitable photographs. They also joined the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology to launch a program to break down gender stereotypes for women STEM that has so far reached more than 3,500 girls in 24 public schools.

DELSUR also took its advocacy one step further by organizing a national conference to disseminate its study findings to other companies in El Salvador's energy sector. Twenty-nine senior leaders and regulators worked together to form a roadmap for gender equity in the industry and committed to establishing a permanent, sector-wide gender equality committee to discuss progress regularly. This will likely have a positive impact on gender equality in the industry as a whole and position DELSUR as a national leader on gender equity in the energy sector.

DATA REVEALS BIASES AGAINST WOMEN AT SENELEC

When the Société Nationale d'Électricité du Sénégal (SENELEC) joined the Engendering Industries Program in 2020, only 22 percent of SENELEC's employees were women and women held only four percent of technical roles. To deepen its understanding of the underlying causes for the underrepresentation of women in technical roles, the SENELEC Engendering Industries team conducted qualitative data collection and paired this with an analysis of existing quantitative data from labor market surveys. Early in the Engendering Industries' engagement with SENELEC, a change management coach from the program supported the company to hold focus groups with employees

that revealed underlying misperceptions and biases about women’s representation and role in technical careers. Focus group participants shared their perceptions that the company was unable to recruit women for technical positions because women were underrepresented in STEM programs, lacked interest in technical careers, and were less capable of succeeding in such fields.

Mohammed Al Mansour, Head of the Operations and Technical Management of SENELEC’s Power Distribution Department and an Engendering Industries participant, suspected that those perceptions were not based in fact and were having a negative impact on the utility’s recruitment and hiring efforts and practices. “Some thought that there weren’t many women available in the talent pool, and there was a perception that women weren’t interested in being recruited for technical roles,” Al Mansour explained. However, he also remembered there were numerous women in his own university classes as well as many female interns that he had mentored at SENELEC. Al Mansour set out to find quantitative data to test his colleagues’ biases against his observations. In 2022, Al Mansour conducted two analyses, first collecting publicly available data to determine the number of female students in the talent pipeline and then using data about scholarships that SENELEC provided to university students to assess the success of women in STEM fields.



Photo: SENELEC Senegal

In the first component of the study, Al Mansour’s use of open-source university data came with some limitations. He gleaned publicly posted lists of applicants and those accepted to STEM programs at local universities and then worked to disaggregate the data by gender. But Al Mansour had to infer the gender of the students from their names, where possible, and excluded students with gender-ambiguous names. Both practices slightly increased the study’s margin of error. Additionally, using these data sets did not allow Al Mansour to ask questions of the universities or the students. However, the method also had advantages, allowing Al Mansour to move quickly and to conduct the study using available quantitative data.

Ultimately, this first analysis allowed him to identify notable trends that disproved his colleagues’ beliefs in STEM studies and were not interested in taking jobs in technical fields. Looking at data from 2020 and 2021, he determined that 45 percent of university applicants and 40 percent of those accepted to STEM programs were women. While this showed some potential bias in the admissions process, it also demonstrated that women were interested and widely present in STEM courses. These statistics were in line with SENELEC data that showed that 37 percent of applicants to SENELEC were women. The data supported Al Mansour’s hypothesis that women were studying STEM in significant numbers and potentially interested in working in technical roles at SENELEC.

Next, Al Mansour further analyzed additional company quantitative data to determine whether women were successful in STEM studies to address his colleagues’ belief that women were not successful in such fields. Each year, SENELEC awards scholarships to select employees’ children based on their high school grades. Those with the highest scores are awarded scholarships. Al Mansour analyzed six years

BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Understand the objectives of your labor market study.** Organizations can use a range of methods to conduct labor market studies. In some cases, like at SENELEC, data can be drawn quickly from existing public resources. In other cases, independent data collection may be necessary as was the case for DELSUR. In either case, it is important that the scope and scale of data collection and analysis match the desired outcomes. **Engendering Industries Best Practice: Understand your resources and align this with the purpose of the survey.**
- **Confidentiality and anonymity are critical.** In the case of DELSUR, protecting confidential company employment data was paramount to enhance study participation. **Engendering Industries Best Practice: Guarantee anonymity or confidentiality to protect respondents and increase response rate.**
- **Communicate survey results internally.** Create a plan to disseminate results to the appropriate stakeholders at your organization to maximize their effect; particularly as they can be effectively used to shift gendered stereotypes, attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions about women working in male-dominated fields. SENELEC used the evidence generated by the study to prove that women could successfully fill technical roles to stakeholders across the organization. **Engendering Industries Best Practice: Share the results strategically and as widely as possible.**
- **Buy-in from leaders is critical.** Executives are influential stakeholders who can use their position to motivate other leaders to participate in a study or use data to advance gender equality. DELSUR's CEO used her position to motivate others in the industry to participate in the labor study. **Engendering Industries Best Practice: Ensure senior leadership buy-in for the survey.**
- **Ensure participants understand the objective.** Participants should be informed about the study's goal, how the data will be used, and why the study will benefit them. This amplified the impact of DELSUR's study. **Engendering Industries Best Practice: Identify and communicate the purpose of the survey.**

of awards data and found that SENELEC provided more than half of the scholarships to women. Looking at awardees that had enrolled in STEM programs, he found that 61 percent of scholarships went to female students. Though the data were limited only to employees' children, it confirmed that women are not only present in these university programs but also likely to be top students.

The data analysis points to women's interest in STEM and their high levels of acceptance into STEM programs, with some earning high marks in those programs, suggesting that the talent pool of women for technical positions at SENELEC might be larger than previously assumed. Despite these facts, there is a gap between the 37 percent of women who applied for positions at SENELEC and the 21 percent of women who held entry-level positions at the utility, pointing to a need to address biases at the company and reassess recruitment practices.

Since Al Mansour conducted the study, an Engendering Industries change management coach has supported the team of SENELEC participants to develop a strategy to improve its attraction and talent outreach, recruitment and hiring practices. So far, they have secured leadership buy-in to rewrite job ads with a statement encouraging women to apply. Moving forward, the plan is to implement unconscious bias training for hiring managers and establish a gender-balanced selection committee. Additionally, they hope to focus outreach efforts on students, including developing a scholarship fund for women in STEM fields and partnerships with universities where they can promote opportunities for women at SENELEC. Al Mansour and his colleagues believe that these efforts will increase the proportion of women in technical roles to 10 percent by 2025 and grow the number of women across all fields in the company. And Al Mansour plans to present his study's findings to SENELEC's leadership to shine a light on biases within the company. "I think we can convince them. When they see the data, it can disprove their beliefs, and it can lead things to change," he explains.

CONCLUSION

By supporting DELSUR and SENELEC to study female talent pools in their countries, Engendering Industries helped both companies develop actionable insights that formed the basis of their strategic attraction, outreach, recruitment, and hiring plans. Though the two studies varied in scale and cost, both generated valuable data. DELSUR was able to position itself as a leader in gender equality by organizing a national-level study and convening leaders from across El Salvador to disseminate results. While SENELEC's study was smaller in scope and relied on open-source information and data in the company archives, it was still valuable, uncovering biases in the hiring process and catalyzing interest in recruiting women in technical positions.

Making data-driven decisions is a key component of the Engendering Industries approach because it can help accurately target interventions and check biases. The best practices to develop surveys and market studies can be applied at any scale to meet an organization's needs.



Photo: DELSUR El Salvador

ABOUT ENGENDERING INDUSTRIES

USAID's Engendering Industries program increases economic opportunities for women in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Expanding women's workforce participation in male-dominated industries leads to tangible economic outcomes for women, such as formal employment opportunities and higher income. Increased gender equality in the workforce also improves business performance by increasing employee retention and satisfaction, reducing turnover, driving productivity, and enhancing an organization's resilience to crises and economic shocks. USAID's Engendering Industries program works with 98 organizations across 38 countries to improve gender equality in male-dominated sectors. Engendering Industries uses a comprehensive approach to improving gender equality in male-dominated sectors and supports organizations to implement gender equality initiatives at each phase of the employee lifecycle. In addition, Engendering Industries supports companies in designing and implementing survivor-centered approaches to preventing and responding to workplace sexual harassment and other forms of GBV.