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# USAID ENHANCING EQUALITY IN ENERGY FOR SOUTHEAST ASIA

## BACKGROUND

**USAID is improving gender equality in the transitioning energy sector throughout Southeast Asia in order to advance women’s economic empowerment and strengthen energy institutions.**

Women are underrepresented in the workforce across Southeast Asia, particularly in male-dominated industries like the energy sector. As energy is a crucial driver of economic development, healthcare, education, and commerce, this disparity is more than an equity issue. It is a missed economic opportunity for countries, companies, and communities. Expanding women’s participation in energy-related fields can result in tangible economic empowerment, including prospects for formal employment and higher income.

USAID Enhancing Equality in Energy for Southeast Asia (E4SEA) expands regional knowledge around gender equality in the energy sector to transform attitudes and eradicate biases. Based on best practices and resources developed by USAID’s Engendering Industries program, E4SEA partners with educational institutions and energy sector employers to attract and retain women through organizational change and leadership development initiatives.

## PRIORITIES

### INCREASE NUMBER OF WOMEN AND GIRLS PURSUING ENERGY SECTOR CAREERS

Many girls and young women who want to pursue careers in the energy sector either do not know where to begin or are discouraged by entrenched socio-cultural norms that limit gender roles. E4SEA increases the awareness of energy-related career opportunities, aiming to reverse negative perceptions about women in energy sector jobs and increase internship and mentorship opportunities for women by equipping partner organizations with the tools to address the unconscious biases that prevail in the male-dominated sector.

### IMPROVE RECRUITMENT, RETENTION, AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN IN ENERGY

Through E4SEA, USAID coaches energy sector employers to change organizational cultures and expand early career opportunities for women. Using best practices, it partners with energy sector employers to implement interventions that help hire, promote, and retain women as key contributors.

### STRENGTHEN GENDER INCLUSIVE SCHOLARSHIP AND INTERNSHIP PROGRAMS

E4SEA engages its partner organizations, both tertiary-level educational institutions and energy entities in Southeast Asia, to increase workplace diversity by supporting gender-inclusive energy internships and scholarships. The initial three-year program has been expanded to provide scholarships and internships for Laotian students at Thai universities and energy entities. [Learn more here.](#)

## KEY OUTCOMES

- Partnered with seven energy entities and nine tertiary educational institutions across Southeast Asia to implement interventions to hire, promote, and retain qualified women at energy workplaces.
- Provided the Workforce Gender Equality Accelerated Course and coaching support to four partner energy entities to develop and implement their Gender Equality Action Plans for the adoption of reformed policies and best practices in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Conducted a Training of Trainers (ToT) on Unconscious Bias for 17 organizations in four Southeast Asian countries to respond to the need for energy sector workplaces to challenge bias and welcome women as equal partners in a changing workforce. As a result, two partner energy companies institutionalized the Unconscious Bias Training within their organizations and Key Performance Indicators.
- Launched the pilot for Southeast Asia's first-ever Gender Inclusive Regional Energy Internship Program in partnership with Thammasat University, placing 39 tertiary education student interns from six countries in eleven energy companies across four Southeast Asian countries.
- Prepared an *[Assessment of Women's Participation in the Energy Sector in Southeast Asia](#)* Report that identified gender gaps in the energy sector in Southeast Asia and informed interventions to overcome them. Identified needs include more female role models, mentorship for retention, and internships for career entry.