



Technical Knowledge Brief:
Reducing Gender Barriers and Advancing Policies to
Expand Women's Opportunities in the Workforce

On June 17th, members of USAID's Women's Economic Empowerment Community of Practice (CoP) attended a virtual learning event, "[Reducing Gender Barriers and Advancing Policies to Expand Women's Opportunities in the Workforce](#)." This event featured presentations from two CoP members' respective activities: Gender Expert, **Jessica Menon** from the [Engendering Utilities](#) (now *Engendering Industries*) activity, and Chief of Party, **Jacob Mathew**, from the Producer-Owned Women's Enterprises (POWER) activity. The following are resources and key learnings highlighted in the learning event.

[Presentation Slide Deck](#)

[Video: Presentation Recording](#)

Key Learnings from [Engendering Utilities](#):

*Engendering Utilities is working to expand women's participation in male-dominated industries. This activity works with **29** public and private utility companies in **21** countries to co-design gender equality initiatives at each phase of the employee lifecycle; from recruiting and hiring to retention and succession planning. Engendering Utilities uses an [evidence-based approach](#) that includes global best practices, interventions, and programs such as:*

- 1. Partnering Directly with Companies:** Engendering Utilities has been able to partner with 29+ companies to develop a tailored evidence-based approach to increase gender equality, create leadership opportunities, and develop talent within the organization. As a result of the interventions implemented thus far, all of the first cohort of graduated utilities saw an increase in the number of female employees. According to 2017-2020 project impact data:

There have been **6,105** female employees trained at partner organizations on technical and soft skills.

1,115 women hired by partner organizations through 44 recruitment and hiring initiatives (7% into leadership roles and 22% into technical roles).

995 women have been promoted into leadership roles

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- The [Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Male-Dominated Industries](#) compiles global best practices to increase gender equity throughout the employee life cycle—helping organizations benchmark their current policies, practices and operations. The Framework is divided into twelve categories, eight of which are phases of an employee life cycle, and four that represent organizational enablers to gender equity. Engendering Utilities identified the employee life cycle as a key entry point to effecting long-lasting and impactful change within partner electricity and water utilities.



2. The [Gender Equity Executive Leadership Course](#), developed by USAID and Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, empowers key decision-makers to effectively integrate gender equality initiatives across their corporate structure. As a result of the Course, the ten graduating utilities have implemented more than **190** gender equality activities, trained **3,700** women on technical and soft skills to support career advancement, and trained **730** men and **800** women on gender equality issues.
3. The [Workforce Gender Equality Accelerated Program](#) is a six-month leadership program consisting of organizational gender equality assessments, a seven-week virtual course, and four months of change management coaching. Check out the [2021 registration form](#) and the list of deadlines on the Program page. The Accelerated Program is open to companies and organizations in any male-dominated sector where

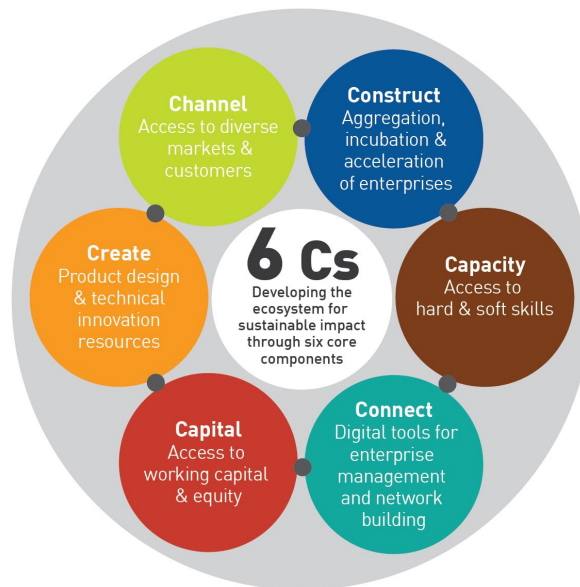
men comprise a majority of the workforce. This program prepares male and female managers to:

- Identify gender equality gaps;
- Take targeted, tangible, and strategic action to increase gender equality;
- Strengthen leadership and change management skills to create more equitable and diverse workplaces.

Key Learnings from Producer-Owned Women's Enterprises (POWER) :

*POWER builds women-owned enterprises and connects them to national and international supply chains; and is working to address restrictive social norms to increase support for women entrepreneurs. This activity aims to impact **6,800** women over three years, working across three value chains: natural banana bark fabrics, bamboo, and non-timber forest products (NTFPs) biodegradable leaf plates. POWER is creating economic opportunities and social empowerment for rural women through:*

- **Social Norms Change:** Utilizing Industree's 6Cs Framework (Construct, Capacity, Capital, Channel, Create, and Connect), the POWER activity increased women's economic empowerment by facilitating social norms change in rural communities.



- **Gender Sensitization Training:** POWER's gender sensitization training raised awareness of women's rights and empowerment and changed harmful social norms that prevented women from realizing economic empowerment. **6,800** women producers have participated in the training. A key outcome of the training is a strong support network for these women to rely on and to continue amplifying gender sensitization throughout their communities.

Additional Resources:

- [POWER Gender and Capacity Building Training Program Modules](#)
- [Delivering Gender Equality: A Best Practices Framework for Male-Dominated Industries](#)
- [Change Management Coaching for Gender Equality](#)
- [Developing a Business Case for Gender Equality](#)
- [Policy Guide: Integrating Gender Equality into Workplace Policies](#)
- [Guide: Organizational Goal Setting for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion](#)
- [Guide: Setting Strategic Gender Equality Targets](#)
- [Case Study: Paternity Leave Beneficial for Business at Indian Utility](#)
- [Case Study: Female Perspectives Raise Revenue for Indian Power Utility](#)