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The Impact of the NARUC Women in Energy Regulation Internship Program on Current and Former Interns



Former intern Monicah Kitili (now a full-time staff member at the Kenya Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority) during a 2018 Partnership Exchange on Time of Use Tariffs in Nairobi, Kenya. Photo Credit: NARUC

May 2020 – Recruiting, retaining, and advancing women within the labor force is key to furthering gender equity and creating a pathway to sustainable economic development. In this context, the Women in Energy Regulation Internship Program is part of NARUC’s contribution toward USAID’s mandate to “reduce gender disparities in access to, control over, and benefits from resources, wealth, opportunities, and services – economic, social, political, and cultural.”¹

The application process is competitive, and qualified young women who have recently completed undergraduate programs (or higher) in law, engineering, economics, or other relevant technical areas are carefully

selected for a six-month internship that is full time, provides a monthly stipend, and gives them substantive responsibilities.

Gaining Insight into the Perspective of Current Intern Magreth Mwita

To get a closer look at how the internship has impacted participants’ personal and professional interests, Magreth Mwita, an intern from this year’s Tanzania Energy and Water Utilities Authority (EWURA) program provided her reflections. So far, Magreth’s most valuable experience during the internship has been a recent field trip with EWURA in December 2019 that covered the field inspection of the midstream and downstream natural gas plants in Mtwara, Lindi, and Dar es Salaam.

There, she conducted field monitoring in natural gas processing plants, which she says “gave way to understanding so many things about the field” and expanded her knowledge on processing, transmission, and distribution regulations as well as licensing issues, local content issues, and Health, Safety, and Environment (HSE) management systems in Tanzania’s natural gas industry. Through this development, she was able to further recognize the importance of the regulator in ensuring quality services are provided at a reasonable price.

Magreth stated, “Working under the supervision of an international association like NARUC has been a great experience. I graduated in 2018 with a Bachelor of Science in Petroleum Engineering, but during my studies at university and after graduation I didn’t get an opportunity that exposed me to the natural gas subsector.” She continued, “In meetings, making contributions to discussions helped me build up my skills, knowledge, and confidence... the internship program has widened my professional network, as it has enabled me to interact with experts and professionals in the industry.”

In the Shoes of Former Intern Monicah Kitili

Following the internship, Magreth will join a cohort of former participants who have often gone on to pursue graduate studies and careers in the energy sector. One such participant is Monicah Kitili, who now works as an Assistant Energy Planner at the Kenya Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority

(EPRA). When we checked in with Monicah regarding the impact of the internship on her career, she stated, “This internship not only opened doors for my employment, but also helped me assess what I am good at and what positions would best fit me.... The internship experience made me stand out from the competition as a coachable student that can transition easily into the workplace.”

Monicah noted that parts of the internship were quite challenging, particularly when she was incorporated into an energy planning technical team just a month into her internship. “The team is made up of professionals and experts drawn from the sector utilities,” she said. “I felt intimidated and out of place. However, my supervisor required that I quickly match up, integrate, and provide support to the team...”

“...This called for days of tireless working, learning, and researching. Looking back on it today, I believe being part of this team gave me a competitive advantage as an intern and promoted my transitioning into an EPRA employee.”

Paving the Way for the Future of the Energy Sector

Women like Magreth and Monicah are consistently underrepresented in the energy sector – there are fewer women in oil and gas than almost any other major industry, and on a global scale only 15% of women are in senior management in the power and utilities industry.ⁱⁱ As a result, taking every opportunity to access training and build the necessary skills for success in the sector is key to gaining an advantage that will set women apart from their male counterparts entering the workforce.

For other women who are currently participating or may participate in the internship in the future, Monicah suggested, “Never disregard an opportunity, whether big or small. Always give your best. Most employers aren’t looking for experience from interns... they are looking for enthusiasm, tenacity, how fast you can be modelled into something, honesty, and adaptability. Treat every day of your internship as if it’s your last chance. Take new assignments head on... opportunities don’t give notice before they arise.”

By aiding in creating and supporting opportunities for the advancement and employment of women in the energy sector, the Women in Energy Regulation Internship continues to provide interns with the ability to fully participate as decision-makers. As a result, they can better understand and participate in future electricity regulations and decisions that will greatly influence the safety and economic growth of their communities, empower their female peers in the workplace, and serve as role models to other women.

The expansion of the internship program to Ethiopia, Senegal, and Zambia is an exciting opportunity to equip a growing number of young women throughout sub-Saharan Africa with access to mentorship, skills development, and networking opportunities that will both benefit their personal and professional growth and positively impact the future productivity and engagement of their local communities.

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ⁱ “Office of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” USAID. <https://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/organization/bureaus/bureau-economic-growth-education-and-environment/office-gender>

ⁱⁱ “Women in Energy – Gas, Mining, and Oil – Quick Take.” Catalyst. <https://www.catalyst.org/research/women-in-energy-gas-mining-oil/>