



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



National
Association of
Regulatory
Utility
Commissioners



**POWER
AFRICA**
A U.S. GOVERNMENT-LED PARTNERSHIP

Women in Energy Regulation Internship Program Works to Advance Gender Equity in Africa



Two African Schoolgirls. © Riccardo Niels Mayer / Adobe Stock

May 2020 – According to the World Economic Forum in 2020, gender parity will not be attained for another 99.5 years.ⁱ While there has been significant improvement in gender gap prospects over time, women in emerging and developing economies continue to face setbacks when it comes to accessing the education and developing the skills they need to succeed in the current and future job market.

With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and Power Africa, NARUC is working to address this issue by advancing the cause

of gender equity within the energy regulatory community.

In 2017, NARUC launched a Women in Energy Regulation Internship pilot program with two main objectives – fostering interest among young women in energy regulation, and providing interns with the skills and knowledge they would need to pursue a career and become attractive candidates for employment within regulatory agencies. The program was originally launched with two interns each at the Kenya Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) and the Tanzania Energy and Water Utilities Regulatory Authority (EWURA) during its pilot phase. Subsequently, its positive impact of both increasing the interns’ skill set and participating commissions’ gender inclusivity in the workplace aided its growth and continuity.

Since its launch, the internship has continued to operate in regular increments with placements lasting six months each. In 2019, the program expanded to include additional commissions by placing interns at the Ethiopian Energy Authority (EEA) and the Electricity Sector Regulation Commission (CRSE) of Senegal. In 2020, the program expanded further by establishing positions for interns at the Energy Regulation Board of Zambia (ERB). So far, Kenya has hosted six interns, Tanzania has hosted three interns, Ethiopia has hosted two interns, Senegal has hosted one intern, and Zambia is hosting two interns for a total of 14 interns supported by the program.

Empowering Women in the Workforce

There are many benefits to increasing women’s professional participation on a global scale. Statistically, women make up half of the world’s population.ⁱⁱ Consequently, a gender-diverse workforce pulls from a wider pool of talent, and better represents an organization’s customer base.ⁱⁱⁱ In addition, the participation of women in the workforce has been shown to broaden perspectives, increase creativity and innovation, and improve the process of decision-making.^{iv} In the context of the African population, the African Development Bank states that eliminating gender inequality and empowering women could raise the productive potential of one billion Africans, and deliver a huge boost to the continent’s development potential.^v

Some African countries already have gender equity firmly on their agendas; Rwanda and Tanzania have introduced constitutional requirements for their legislatures to include a minimum percentage of women^{vi} and institutions such as Kenya's National Gender and Equality Commission and Uganda's Equal Opportunities Commission have been set up to monitor and influence their respective states of gender equity.^{vii}

However, a majority of women in Africa still face a number of considerable barriers to achieving professional success, including gender segregation in the African labor market. Many women work primarily in low-paying occupations, and within the formal sector women earn on average two-thirds the salary of their male peers.^{viii} Additional barriers to participation within the workforce include a lack of basic skills, a lack of access to financial services, and widespread cultural gender norms that force women to choose between business and domestic obligations.^{ix}

Why Integrating Women into the Energy Sector Furthers Gender Equity

Alongside these obstacles, the energy sector is widely regarded as one of the least gender diverse parts of the global economy. According to a survey conducted by the World Economic Forum, women make up 19% of the sector's workforce,^x with varying gaps of labor across sub-sectors. While data on women's participation in the African energy sector is limited, it is generally regarded as male dominated.^{xi} With this in mind, policies and regulations that shape electricity rates and power reliability significantly impact women's opportunities related to health and development, education, and workforce participation, and can address issues such as time poverty and energy poverty in rural and urban areas.^{xii}

By integrating women into the energy sector as decision-makers and stakeholders, regulatory commissions can include more diverse perspectives in the decision making process, uncover the impacts of policies on men vs. women, and enact new policies to mitigate those impacts.^{xiii} As the NARUC Women in Energy Regulation Internship Program expands to include additional regulatory authorities within Africa, the education and training it offers will benefit the young women it supports by arming them with the experience they need for professional advancement. Given the opportunity, they will undoubtedly go on to make progress toward equal representation in the workforce, provide women with more decision-making agency on energy issues, and help to broaden gender perspectives throughout the energy supply chain.

This story is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of NARUC and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

Photo Credit: © Riccardo Niels Mayer / Adobe Stock

ⁱ "Mind the 100 Year Gap." World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

ⁱⁱ "Population, female (% of total population)." The World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?end=2018&start=1960&view=chart>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Practical Guide to Women in Energy Regulation." June 2018. <https://pubs.naruc.org/pub/CAA05EA6-CDCE-3F80-DBF6-56F3A3C31C8F>

^{iv} "Gender Equality in Decision-Making Positions: The Efficiency Gains." Intereconomics.

<https://www.intereconomics.eu/contents/year/2017/number/1/article/gender-equality-in-decision-making-positions-the-efficiency-gains.html>

^v "Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action. Africa Gender Equality Index 2015." PDF file. May 2015.

https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Publications/African_Gender_Equality_Index_2015-EN.pdf

^{vi} "Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action. Africa Gender Equality Index 2015."

^{vii} "Why Public Policy Matters When It Comes to Gender Equality for Sustainable Development." IISD. <https://www.iisd.org/blog/public-policy-gender-inequality-sustainable-development>

^{viii} "Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action. Africa Gender Equality Index 2015."

^{ix} "Empowering African Women: An Agenda for Action. Africa Gender Equality Index 2015."

^x "The Industry Gender Gap: Women and Work in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. PDF file. January 2016.

http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FOJ_Executive_Summary_GenderGap.pdf

^{xi} "Energizing Equality in the African Energy Sector." Medium. <https://medium.com/power-africa/energizing-equality-in-the-african-energy-sector-cd1a3174fb9a>

^{xii} Morkyte, Milda. "Women in Energy Regulation Internship Program." PowerPoint presentation, March 2019.

^{xiii} "Practical Guide to Women in Energy Regulation."