

WOMEN ENERGIZE WOMEN

Blog Article

Women, Gender Equality And The Energy Transition – Why It Matters

'There is a special place in hell for women who don't help other women'

Madeleine Albright

Women and girls represent half of the world's population and therefore also half of its potential. Yet gender inequality continues to persist everywhere. In 2019, women only held 28 percent of managerial positions worldwide. Regardless of where you live, gender equality is a fundamental right. Closing the gender gap in the energy sector is essential for a successful energy transition. The renewable energy sector holds out high hopes when it comes to the role of women.

There is huge unleveraged potential for more equitable participation in the stakeholder structure in renewable energy policymaking and implementation. Gender equality is a prerequisite and key driver for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, men still outnumber women in key functions in technical, managerial, and policymaking positions. Even though women hold a larger proportion of jobs in renewables than in the fossil energy sector – they remain underrepresented with only 32 % of the share in the workforce. This compares to a 22 % share reported in traditional energy industries like oil and gas.

What are the barriers for women to enter the renewable energy sector?

The three main barriers are the perception of gender roles, the cultural and social norms, and the prevailing hiring practices. Girls and women are systematically tracked away from science and math throughout their educations, limiting their training and options to go into these fields as adults. Skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) are critical to many career paths in renewables, but because of prevailing views of women's abilities, they continue to have a limited presence in these fields. The lack of equal representation of females in decision-making roles is described as the "glass ceiling", where invisible barriers keep women from rising to influential positions, regardless of their qualifications. Moreover, prevailing cultural and social norms, the lack of flexibility in the workplace, and the lack of mentorship opportunities are also factors that influence the gender inequality in the energy sector. Women still face the double burden of balancing work and family. This issue generates wage inequities between men and women since working mothers are often forced to work part-time. Therefore, a work-life balance through adequate, high-quality childcare is needed. In summary, the barriers to gender equality are very diverse and encompass different dimensions.

The way to the future

For this reason, the measures and responses to this problem must be diverse and interdisciplinary. Boosting gender awareness and equity is a win-win proposition. Women's contributions – their talents, skills, and views – are critically important in supporting this growing industry during a momentous transition towards a more sustainable energy system benefiting all of humanity.

For too long the stage view for energy-related events has been male-dominated. All male panels and all male guests can now hopefully be relegated to history. With the communication initiative for the global empowerment of women in the energy sector "Women Energize Women" we want to inform, mobilize, inspire and connect women around the world who are working to advance the Energiewende – and be part of the way forward for more gender equality.

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Sources:

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) (2019): Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective. Abu Dhabi.