

WOMEN ENERGIZE WOMEN

Blog Article

Powerful start into the new campaign year

Women Energize Women event on “Women Empowerment in Global Energy Cooperations” at the Berlin Energy Week 2023

On Thursday, 30 April 2023, just a day after the Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue 2023, Women Energize Women presented an official #betd23 partner event at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) in Berlin. This on-site event marked the start of a new series of WEW events in 2023 and brought together almost a hundred energy experts and professionals from all over the world to discuss the importance of women empowerment in Global Energy Cooperations.

A global challenge

The panel was moderated by Ellen von Zitzewitz, Deputy Director Climate & Energy Cooperation with Industrial Countries at the BMWK, who turned the floor over to Dr Franziska Brantner, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK), Ingrid-Gabriela Hoven, Managing Director at the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, and Dr Simone Peter, President of the German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE) e.V. for some welcoming words. This introduction set the stage for a discussion that covered a variety of topics, ranging from research over financial investment and networking & mentoring programs up to policy making.

Uncovering structural inequality

Dr Franziska Brantner, who was also part of the panel discussion, stressed the importance of looking at every project invested in through a gender lens, rather than focusing on detached approaches to women's empowerment. Thus, gender equality would not only be a key topic within BMWK's Energy Partnerships and within the German Foreign Policy, but measures need to be taken within the national energy landscape as well.

Panellist Christine Lins, Executive Director of the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNENET), shed some light on the situation in the German Renewable Energy sector. While the sector would already be a lot more gender equal with a share of 32% women in comparison to the oil & gas industries with only 22%, those numbers would still be considerably lower in executive positions. “Where there's no data, it's really difficult to hold politics accountable for progress”, she highlighted the importance of monitoring those numbers.

Aneri Pradhan, as the COO of New Energy Nexus, a start-up accelerating ecosystem focused on the development of locally tailored programs for clean energy entrepreneurs, could tell from her experiences that energy is ultimately a household and thus a gender issue, as she illustrated on the example of Uganda: “With 96% of the population cooking with charcoal and firewood, women have to convince women to switch to cleaner methods.” Thus, women should be in the forefront when it comes to developing climate solutions. Even though, only 2% of venture capital money is going to women entrepreneurs.

This would not be a pipeline issue, but rather a structural problem, as Pradhan explained: “I can’t tell you how many investors say they need to see more results, while a man with the same business idea would come and get money without giving a proof beforehand”. Brantner confirmed the relevance of this issue, which could be solved through quotas for female-led startups or, at least, equal gender representation on their boards when it comes to governmental funding of climate tech, following the example of the UK.

An answer to the talent shortage

The audience laughed as she added with a wink: “The fossil sector has been lost to men, but this area is still unfolding, and we can make a huge difference”. That’s why it would be also important to invest in education programmes for women as the renewable’s workforce of tomorrow.

Shorouq Abdel Ghani said that the Jordan Ministry of Energy, where she holds the position Director of Planning & Organizational Development, is setting quite a good example: Of the employees at the Ministry around 37% were women, the share would be 47% at the top management: “Unfortunately, this does not reflect the situation in the electric sector yet, with 10% only. In oil & gas it is only 1%.” To integrate more women into the sector would be important to diversify the range of perspectives and improve decision making. Concrete legal measures to train women within an Energy Academy, enhance working conditions for them, targets for the share of women in politics, economics, and education as well as gender focal points in all the ministries would be directed towards lifting those numbers in the next ten years. This could also be an answer to the shortage of talents in the renewables sector.

Teaming up for change

Eventually, attracting talents of all genders would be necessary to speed up the energy transition, says Christine Lins. Although there would be fantastic approaches in different countries such as Chile, Kenya and Fidji, we would need to “scale up and connect the dots” by reuniting different women’s networks representatives and sharing best practices globally.

Maryna Ilchuk, who is Board member of the Women’s Energy Club of Ukraine also witnessed the power of women’s networks to exchange visions on how a gender equal energy transition could be managed. Despite the ongoing and brutal war, many Ukrainians decide every day to focus on the future and start to make plans on how to not only build back but build back better in the

future. That's why this kind of exchange on experience and feasible solutions and inspiring and empowering each other is more important than ever for them, she stated.

Let them shine bright

After the panel discussion there was still a lot of room for questions, that was eagerly taken up by the participants. As Habiba Ali, the managing director and CEO of Sosai Renewable Energies Company from Nigeria noted, it is not sitting on panels but what we unleash on those panels, that makes the change: "The access that you have, you need to make sure that it trickles down to my women in the village who have set up concrete renewables solutions. Tell their success stories! Let them shine bright." Many of them could be told by the participants themselves, contributing within the following debate and even more will be highlighted within our ongoing campaign as we will continue showcasing role models and female changemakers from different areas of the renewables world. As different as the perspectives on women empowerment were, as great was the demand for exchange at the networking lunch that followed. What a great start and a multitude of ideas to focus on within the series of #womenenergize events to come!

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