

# SAWIE

NEWSLETTER, Vol 1, October 2020

## SOUTH ASIA WOMEN IN ENERGY (SAWIE)

*SAWIE, a joint initiative of U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), aims to promote women's empowerment and gender sensitization in the energy sector in South Asia region.*

*Connecting, inspiring and empowering women professionals in the energy sector*

## WOMEN IN ENERGY

The energy sector remains one of the most gender imbalanced sectors and gender equity still holds a greater challenge in the India's energy sector. The skewed women participation can partly be attributed to the social and perception barriers about dominance of field-based activities, geographical mobility and shift-based working, which have been traditionally considered as negative for women participation.

During the 2nd International Conference on 'Large-Scale Integration of Renewable Energy in India', 2019, Edgard D. Kagan, Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy New Delhi launched the USAID supported "South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE)" under its Greening the Grid (GTG) Renewable Integration and Sustainable Energy (RISE) Initiative.

USAID's GTG-RISE Initiative is committed to further USAID agenda of having a more balanced access to opportunities to strengthen women participation primarily at the leadership positions. USAID under its GTG-RISE Initiative commits to establish 'South Asian Women in Energy (SAWIE)' Forum to promote women's participation and strengthen gender diversity and equity in the energy sector.

SAWIE aims to provide a platform for women to form a collaborative and strategic approach towards reaching gender equality goals and building strong pillars across

the energy sector. This platform will bring together women leaders across the energy sector to work together on designing interventions in outreach and recruitment; mentorship and leadership; and professional development that can help bridge gender gaps. Furthering this commitment, SAWIE shall aim to strengthen a regional network of Institutional partners across public and private sector utilities across South Asia Region.



“USAID is committed to maximize women's participation and to strengthen gender diversity and equity in the energy sector and today (September 4th, 2019) we feel proud to launch the regional chapter called 'South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE)' from this platform.

Edgard Kagan  
Chargé d'Affaires, U.S. Embassy New Delhi

## Message from USAID India

BY KAREN KLIMOWSKI

*Indo Pacific Office Director and Deputy Mission Director (A) USAID/India*

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Nearly a year ago, USAID, in partnership with the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), established the South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE) - a collaborative platform for women professionals in the energy sector. Our aim was to bring together women leaders and help them connect, inspire, and empower each other.

We have come a long way since then. SAWIE today has over 100 members along with ten steering committee members. Four working groups (leadership, entrepreneurship, mentorship, and networking) have been set up - each led by a steering committee member. Various events have been organized by SAWIE to deliberate on a range of issues such as women entrepreneurs, clean cooking and gender equity in the power sector. In a short span of time, SAWIE has established itself as the leading advocate for gender equality and women's empowerment in the power sector.

USAID has a long history of supporting gender equality. We believe that long-term, sustainable development is possible only when women and men enjoy equal opportunities. Our work over the years has reinforced our belief that development outcomes are more lasting when women are included. This is more critical in male-dominated sectors such as energy.

Evidence shows that increased participation of women professionals across the value chain of the energy sector has a direct impact on efficiency along with higher returns on equity and investment. What we need are enabling platforms, supporting policies, institutional frameworks, etc. that can unlock opportunities for women and facilitate their professional journey in the sector.

I am delighted that SAWIE's convenings and thought leadership is contributing toward the development of transformative solutions to reduce the gender gap in the energy sector, particularly at the leadership level. USAID is pleased to partner with USISPF on this initiative and looks forward to working with all stakeholders to ensure a substantial commitment to gender equality in the power sector.





# Expanding Participation of Women in Energy Sector

BY VAISHALI NIGAM SINHA

Chief CSR, ReNew Power Chairperson, SAWIE

Despite global energy transition gathering pace, it is disturbing to see the gross under representation of women in this sector. As per a 2018 survey, women form 32% of the global workforce in renewable energy and only 20% in overall energy sector. Of these, majority are in lesser paid non-technical and administrative jobs. The gap is much worse at the top. A 2016 EY index showed women hold a paltry 16% of Board seats in the world's largest power and utility companies. By 2050, there will be a fourfold increase in energy sector jobs. It will be a pity if companies continue to ignore the wide pool of talent and knowledge that women represent for these openings. Fairness apart, there is now a well-established business case for gender diversity – women have a different thought process which fosters innovation and boosts productivity.

Historically, the low participation of women in energy can be attributed to a host of interwoven factors. Perceptions of gender roles driven by entrenched socio-cultural norms are a formidable entry barrier. Many women still need to shoulder the primary responsibilities of household chores and caregiving and find it difficult to balance these with the demands of a full time job, especially if it entails long hours and mobility requirements. Skill is also a constraint. Mentally conditioned to treat STEM subjects as “masculine topics”, most girls end up with little or no confidence and willingness to enrol for these courses, thus losing out on the higher paying jobs in energy. Further, there is little awareness of the complete range of job requirements and the fact that energy sector is not for engineers and scientists alone. Many recruiters have an unconscious bias against hiring women in this sector. Those who still make it through, run into the proverbial glass ceiling. Workplace inflexibilities, lack of gender sensitive policies, pay disparities and inadequate training and mentorship lead to many women dropping out at the junior and middle level.

Various stakeholders need to act in a coordinated fashion to remove these barriers and pave the way for higher women participation in energy. We must challenge socio – cultural norms and prejudices that stereotype women's competencies. Here are some measures that can make the sector more gender diverse:

- Govt. must encourage more girls to consider STEM careers through scholarships, tweaking the curriculum and pedagogy and mandating minimum enrolment rates for engineering and technology institutions. Universities must work with energy companies to better align courses offered to business needs. They should ensure more internships and vocational training opportunities for woman graduates in energy companies to give them a first-hand feel.
- The industry must make itself more visible through a robust outreach plan. This should include regular publishing of job openings in online portals, presence in career fairs and placement drives, site tours, temporary projects and mentors and career counsellors

pitching the sector more aggressively to women. The scope for non-STEM careers in energy should be prominently highlighted.

- Organizations must adopt gender diversity as a strategic goal and this must be top driven. Clear mechanisms must be established to track and report progress. Companies must ensure equal access to growth opportunities and equal pay for same work. Women employees must be provided custom training to develop required skills and mentoring by experienced colleagues for career development and dealing with other workplace challenges. Recruitment and performance appraisals must be free of biases and gender based job segmentation must be avoided.
- Workplaces must foster a more enabling environment for women. This should be in the form of flexible timings, part time jobs, child care support, adequate paid parental leaves (not limited to women) among others.
- The Govt. and industry should celebrate the accomplishments of existing women leaders in the sector and showcase their achievements, through institution of awards and recognitions. Role models can serve to inspire budding woman professionals to choose a career in energy.
- Woman entrepreneurs in energy can play a big role in correcting the poor gender ratio as they are likely to recruit more women in what we call a virtuous cycle. They should be supported via access to easy funding including targeted grants, striking the right partnerships to aid upscaling of operations and of course access to professional networks for mentoring and exchange of ideas and experiences.
- Last but not the least, women themselves need a shift in mind-set. They need to possess self-belief, confidence, eagerness to learn and perseverance to compete with men on an even keel and have a successful career in energy

Improved participation of women will not only catalyse energy transition but also foster sustainable and inclusive growth. Women typically are worst sufferers of energy poverty. More women inside the energy sector will help better address this issue and deliver fitting solutions that are duly gender sensitive.



# SAWIE WEBINAR SERIES

## Women in Energy: Best Practices in Clean Cooking across South Asia



Gender-responsive clean energy is widely acknowledged as a crucial lever for women's empowerment and economic advancement. Translation of this recognition into concrete action has a huge transformative potential for the millions of rural women in South Asia who do not have access to clean energy and the opportunities it can bring for them as consumers and entrepreneurs. Some key aspects of this issue were tackled in a webinar the South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE) platform hosted on May 15, 2020, on the theme 'Women in Energy: Best Practices in Clean Cooking across South Asia'. SAWIE is a joint initiative of the USAID and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), aimed at promoting women's empowerment and gender sensitization in the energy sector in South Asia region. USAID is supporting the SAWIE platform through its GTG-RISE initiative.

Key stakeholders from the energy sector — women leaders from the sector, senior representatives from the Government of India, program implementers, and subject matter experts — joined the webinar to share experiences and perspectives on promoting clean cooking technologies. Michael Satin, Director of the Clean Energy and Environment Office in USAID/India, moderated the discussion and highlighted the imperative to make clean cooking technologies accessible to women across South Asia. Anand Kumar, Secretary at the Government of India's Ministry of Culture (formerly, Secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy), reiterated this imperative in his keynote address. Calling renewable energy "the future to which we all belong", Anand Kumar highlighted the role women must play at all levels in the energy sector, including as advocates for clean energy in their own homes.

The webinar enabled a rich exchange of information and insights on improving access to and uptake of clean

cooking. There was consensus that there could be no 'one size fits all' solution for clean cooking, for example, in a country like India with its diverse regional cooking traditions and resources. The need, as Dinesh Jagdale, Joint secretary, Ministry of New & Renewable Energy, succinctly summarized was for "clean cooking solutions that meet diverse cooking needs and aspirations of end users".

The question of what is needed to promote adoption of clean cooking was explored further through an in-depth presentation by Amit Jain, Senior Energy Specialist, at World Bank (WB). He presented insights from a WB initiative that had reached 2 million women in Bangladesh with clean cooking stoves. It underscored the need for winning the trust of women and the importance of person-to-person networks and engagement with local entrepreneurs. These insights resonated in the views of webinar's other participants who stressed on keeping the rural women and their needs firmly in view when designing and promoting clean cooking solutions. Rural women must be treated as dignified customers and offered a range of clean cooking options that are affordable, necessitating a market-driven, customer-centric approach.

Collaboration between multiple stakeholders, public and private, is necessary to ensure clean cooking options reach rural homes. As a champion of women's rights in the energy sector, SAWIE is focused on bringing all stakeholders together, supporting partnerships between NGOs and the private sector to scale up initiatives, and having women lead efforts to address women's issues. As a next step, a white paper will be developed with policy recommendations for clean cooking in India and strengthening opportunities for women entrepreneurs.



# Role of Gender in International Energy Engagement

## On the side-lines of the U.S. India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) Ministerial

Date: JULY 15, 2020.



While gender equality has made numerous big and small gains in many industries, the power sector remains disconcertingly male dominated. As nations prepare to seize the opportunities of energy transformation, creation of a gender-responsive clean energy ecosystem with growing opportunities for women to formally participate at all levels in the energy sector will be pivotal. This area of critical relevance to the growth journey of India and the South Asia region was discussed at length in a virtual event, held on July 15, 2020, with the theme ‘Role of gender in international energy engagements’. The high-level dialogue was conducted on the side-lines of the U.S. India Strategic Energy Partnership (SEP) Ministerial. The event was organized by South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE), a joint initiative of USAID and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF). The SAWIE promotes women leaders and mainstream gender discussions in the energy sector.

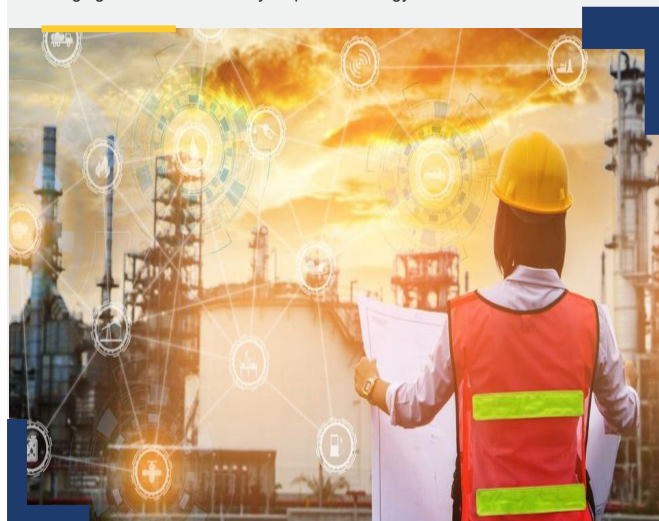
Women leaders from public and private, conventional and renewable energy sectors joined the deliberation, alongside development partners, implementing agencies, and other energy sector experts, to discuss simple and creative ways to bridge the gender divide in energy. The webinar also marked the release of a knowledge paper **‘Bridging the Gender Diversity Gap in the Energy and Industrial Sector: Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming’**. Developed by SAWIE’s knowledge partner Spencer Stuart, the paper presents insights on key best practices that when replicated can help create an enabling environment for a gender balanced workplace. BSES Yamuna Power Limited (BYPL), a SAWIE member, shared its experience, success and further commitment in replicating some best practices from the paper presented to mainstream women in its operations.

Calling gender equality the catalyst for transforming women’s agency, families, communities, and nations, Michael Satin, Director of the Clean Energy and Environment Office in USAID/India, highlighted the need for integrating women at all levels. “As we look to diversify the workforce, we must ensure it happens both at the top of the power sector pyramid as well as the bottom, at the end user level, with women in households and communities,” Satin stressed. Powerful solutions to this end were suggested by women leaders in the esteemed panel: Vaishali Nigam Sinha, Chief CSR, Sustainability



### Best Practices in Gender Mainstreaming

Bridging the Gender Diversity Gap in the Energy and Industrial Sector



& Communications Officer, ReNew Power, Chairperson SAWIE; Meagan Fallone, CEO, Barefoot College International; Kathleen Alana McGinty, Vice-President, Global Government Relations, Johnson Controls; and Nishi Vasudeva, Former CMD, HPCL. Championing women at workplace, providing them paid internships and role models, setting up a portal for women to access job openings at energy companies, encouraging assertiveness, and use of gender diversification as a metric to rank companies and management performance were among the key suggestions. To ensure change at the last mile, the need for giving non-formally educated women the competence, confidence, and self-belief to operate as energy sector entrepreneurs was also highlighted.

Conducted just before the U.S.-India Ministerial, the webinar proved a timely and critical discussion on what is needed to bridge the gender gap in the power sector. In addition to the rich insights it generated, the webinar also enabled a reaffirming of resolve by key stakeholders to take the gender dialogue forward. This commitment was reiterated in the keynote address by the Chief Guest, Elizabeth Urbanas, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE): *“The U.S. Government has had a long-standing engagement with India. As we work to address the energy problems of both countries, we will continue to push for ensuring more women in the power sector.”*

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*The U.S. Government has had a long-standing engagement with India. As we work to address the energy problems of both countries, we will continue to push for ensuring more women in the power sector.*

**Elizabeth Urbanas**

*Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of Energy*



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*Giving non-formally educated women the competence, confidence, and self-belief to operate as energy sector entrepreneurs has a transformative impact, not only on their agency but also on the community.*

**Meagan Fallone**

*CEO, Barefoot College International and Founding Member, SAWIE*



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*Paid internships, championing women at workplace, providing them role models, and crucially, making gender diversification a part of the metric to rank companies and performance of managers can take this issue from aspiration to determination.*

**Kathleen Allari McGinty**

*Vice-President, Global Government Relations, Johnson Control*



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*The Pandemic has heightened the urgency of global energy transition. As the clean energy sector blossoms during post COVID recovery, let's also create huge opportunities for women in energy.*

**Vaishali Nigam Sinha**

*Chief CSR, ReNew Power Chairperson, SAWIE*



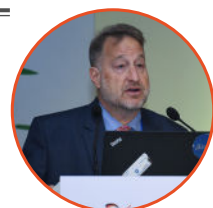
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*As we look to diversify the workforce, we must ensure it happens both at the top of the power sector pyramid as well as the bottom, at the end user level, with women in households and communities*

**Michael Satin**

*Director, CLEEO, USAID/India*



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# Delivering Equality: Utility Experience in Making Change to Achieve Gender Equality and promote Women in Leadership

On June 17, 2020, SAWIE along with USAID hosted and moderated a webinar at a side event during Asia Clean Energy Forum's (ACEF). The webinar was titled "Delivering Equality: Utility Experience in Making Change to Achieve Gender Equality and Promote Women in Leadership"

The webinar was moderated by Shalini Sarin, Co-Chair, SAWIE and included following speakers and panelists: Amanda Valenta, Senior Energy Specialist at USAID;; Jasmine Boehm Tetra Tech, Lead Change Management Coach (Engendering Utilities) at Tetra Tech; Saima Usman, Head of Member Section Division at LASURECO; Shivani Kumar, General Manager at BSES Radjhani Power Ltd.; Puneet Jain, General Manager – HR at BSES Radjhani Power Limited (BRPL); Pramod Mishra, Head Central Engineering Services (Distribution Planning)

& Project Management Office BRPL at BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd.; Amita Sharma, Zonal Manager at TATA Power Delhi Distribution Limited and Bharat Chhabra, Head of Department – Talent Development (HR) at TATA Power Delhi Distribution Limited

SAWIE Co-Chair Shalini Sarin mentioned that the energy sector remains one of the most gender imbalanced sectors. The participation of woman in power sector is highly skewed. Gender equity still holds a greater challenge in the power sector, which partly be attributed to the social and perception barriers about dominance of field-based activities, geographical mobility and shift-based working, which all have been traditionally considered negative factors for women's participation. Ms. Sarin mentioned that SAWIE aims to bring together leaders,



## ASIA CLEAN ENERGY FORUM 2020

### DELIVERING EQUALITY: UTILITY EXPERIENCE IN MAKING CHANGE TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY AND PROMOTE WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

SIDE EVENT

ON JUNE 17, 2020

TIME: 8:00 AM - 9:30 AM EST / 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM IST

#### ESTEEMED SPEAKERS



SHALINI SARINI,  
CO-CHAIR, SAWIE  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ELEKTROMOBILITÄT  
MODERATOR



AMANDA VALENTA  
SENIOR ENERGY SPECIALIST  
USAID



JASMINE BOEHM  
LEAD CHANGE MANAGEMENT  
COACH, TETRA TECH



NORDJINAL  
DIPATUAN-DUCOL,  
GENERAL MANAGER  
LASURECO



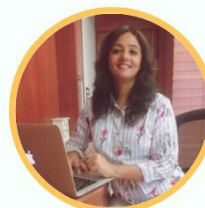
SHIVANI KUMAR  
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CUSTOMER CARE,  
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PUNEET JAIN  
GENERAL MANAGER – HR  
BSES RADJHANI POWER  
LIMITED



PRAMOD MISHRA  
HEAD CENTRAL  
ENGINEERING SERVICES  
& PROJECT MANAGEMENT  
BSES RADJHANI POWER  
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AMITA SHARMA  
ZONAL MANAGER,  
TATA POWER DELHI  
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BHARAT CHHABRA  
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT –  
TALENT DEVELOPMENT  
(HR),  
TATA POWER DELHI  
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particularly women leaders, across the energy sector to design interventions focused around leadership, entrepreneurship, mentorship and networking that can help bridge the gender gap.

Webinar presentations showcased the best practices from USAID's Engendering Utilities program, which works with 29 energy and water utilities around the globe to improve gender equality. The expert panel deep-dived into ground level realities, gender challenges and shared best practices to help create an enabling environment for a gender balanced workplace. Panelists and partners also discussed lessons learned from USAID's Engendering Utilities program and best practices for creating equal opportunities for female utility employees to thrive, grow, and lead. Overall, the panelists shared their opinions and the best practices they have adopted as well as maintained

within their organizations for women. They have also highlighted the challenges faced by women in the energy utility sector and how they have supported women to overcome problems.

The presentations also mentioned that the benefits of a diverse workforce are clear with over 65 percent of companies surveyed by the International Labor Organization in the Asia Pacific region reporting that gender diversity and equality initiatives enhanced business outcomes, including profitability and productivity. Most surveyed companies increased profits by 10 to 15 percent. SAWIE aims to continue working with USAID's Engendering Utilities Program and key utilities to facilitate greater gender mainstreaming and realize the benefits for utilities in the energy sector.

## SAWIE Chief Human Resource Officer (CHRO) Virtual Round Table

The energy sector remains one of the most gender imbalanced and gender equity holds a greater challenge in India's energy sector. Women comprise less than 6 percent of technical staff and less than 1 percent of top managers. As per a study conducted by IEA – 'Women working in the rooftop solar sector' (2019), women account for an estimated 11% of the workforce in the rooftop solar sector in India, significantly less than the global average of women in the renewable sector, at 32%. In other energy sectors of India like coal, oil and gas companies, and electricity utilities, this figure further steepens low to 10%.

On May 11, SAWIE organized a roundtable of Chief Human Resource Officers (CHRO) from leading energy and industrial companies to discuss gender challenges

and share best practices to help create an enabling environment for a gender balanced workplace.

The panel discussed that skewed women participation can partly be attributed to the social and perception barriers about dominance of field-based activities, geographical mobility and shift-based working, which have been traditionally considered as negative for women participation.

As a direct outcome of this roundtable, SAWIE will work with its Knowledge Partner Spencer Stuart to prepare a Recommendation Paper listing Best Practices in gender mainstreaming to share with corporate and HR leadership to help companies in implementing the same to achieve the goal of greater gender balance.







## Join the initiative

*SAWIE membership is open to individual and corporates who affirm to the objectives and vision of SAWIE*

## For further information, please contact:

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