



ENGENDERING UTILITIES PARTNER PROFILE MIYAHUNA, JORDAN

USAID partners with Miyahuna to improve women’s participation in Jordan’s water sector.

When women serve as leaders and employees, businesses benefit and company performance improves. **USAID’s Engendering Utilities program works to increase women’s participation in the energy and water sectors globally.** In 2020, Engendering Utilities partnered with [Miyahuna](#) to design workplace initiatives that will expand job opportunities for women and enhance the utility’s performance.

Miyahuna provides water and sanitation services across four areas of Jordan, including Amman, Zarqa, Madaba and parts of Al-Balqa. Serving nearly one million water subscribers and over 700,000 wastewater subscribers, the utility provides drinking water, operates and maintains water systems, and manages sewage collection from sewage networks and treatment plants. While the utility employs over 2,300 people, only nine percent are women.

Recognizing that diverse teams build better businesses, Miyahuna partnered with USAID to increase gender balance across the company and encourage more women to enter Jordan’s water sector.

JORDAN'S WATER SECTOR

Jordan, a middle-income country, has limited natural resources and is one of the most water-scarce countries in the world. Rapid population growth, changing rain patterns, and drought have put a strain on the country's water supply, and groundwater in Jordan is used twice as quickly as it is recharged.¹ While the water supply in Jordan is safe, the supply is intermittent and the use of rooftop tanks to store water—which is delivered once a week on average—is common.² The government has adopted an integrated strategy for managing available water resources,³ which focuses on supplying water for human consumption, operational efficiencies, conservation, and resource mobilization.

Engendering Utilities' work with Miyahuna supports women to enter Jordan's water sector as the government seeks to increase water availability and access across the country.

GENDER EQUALITY IN JORDAN'S WORKFORCE

A complex web of contributing factors prevents women in Jordan from joining the formal workforce; particularly the male-dominated water sector. Despite Jordan's remarkable achievements in gender equality in health and education, limited gains have been made in women's economic empowerment. Only 22 percent of women in Jordan participate in the formal labor force—one of the lowest rates of women's economic participation in the world.⁴ Harmful cultural practices and gender norms impact a woman's ability to join the formal workforce in Jordan. Nearly 60 percent of unemployed women say they wish to work, but over 75 percent say they face obstacles, including structural, societal, religious, and cultural norms that pressure women to remain home and care for children and other household responsibilities.⁵

Violence against women in Jordan compounds these issues. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is common in Jordan, but due to the taboo nature of the topic, statistics on IPV vary. According to Demographic and Health Surveys, 20% of women and girls ages 15 and older had been subjected to physical, sexual, or psychological intimate partner violence in the last 12 months.⁶ These trends are perpetuated by the lack of reporting on gender-based violence. According to the same study, only one in five women (19%) who have experienced any form of physical or sexual violence sought help to stop the violence. Two-thirds of women never reported or told anyone about the violence.⁷

Engendering Utilities supports companies—like Miyahuna—to consider and respond to factors that reduce women's workforce participation by building inclusive policies and practices that benefit men, women, and businesses in the water sector.

GENDER EQUALITY IN ACTION AT MIYAHUNA

Engendering Utilities uses an [evidence-based methodology](#) to support women's participation in Jordan's energy sector. The program supports Miyahuna to increase opportunities for women by introducing gender equality initiatives at each phase of the employee lifecycle: from reducing gender bias at the hiring stage, to creating strategies that will help retain female talent and improve corporate culture change that benefits both women and men. Using a globally recognized [framework](#) for change, Engendering Utilities is supporting Miyahuna in its goal of increasing gender equality across the company's business practices.

A dedicated change management coach supports the utility and works directly with three staff to become agents of change within Miyahuna. A baseline assessment is conducted to identify gaps and opportunities for improving gender equality across the company. The findings are used to develop a

strategic action plan that will facilitate Miyahuna's gender equality goals. This is supplemented by the program's partnership with the Georgetown University McDonough School of Business, which delivers the [Gender Equity Executive Leadership Program](#) (GEELP) to three utility employees. The GEELP is a best-in-class 12-month executive course that empowers decision-makers to integrate gender equality initiatives into their corporate structure.

In 2018, Miyahuna participated in a comprehensive gender study of women working in Jordan's water sector, as part of the USAID Water Management Initiative (WMI) project. Fourteen women and thirteen men from Miyahuna participated in focus group discussions, which raised important recommendations for improving the participation of women in Jordan's water sector. The *Gender Study on Women Working in the Water Sector* set the foundation for the first gender policy to be proposed at the national governmental sector level. This policy, titled the *Water Sector Gender Policy*, was formally adopted into Jordan's National Water Strategy in June 2020.

Engendering Utilities will support and accelerate gender equality initiatives already underway at Miyahuna and support the utility to uptake corporate policies and practices that reflect the new national gender policy related to the water sector. Miyahuna staff have identified many opportunities for improving gender equality at the utility, including:

- **Improving Training Opportunities** for women, including shifting the hours of training to enable more women to benefit from the career growth opportunities provided by the utility.
- **Enhancing Maternity and Paternity Benefits**, and the establishment of onsite daycare as a preferred alternative to daycare allowances.
- **Changing Corporate Culture** to create more acceptance of women in both leadership and technical roles. Miyahuna will also place a strong emphasis on engaging influential male leaders as champions of gender equality through the development of a male engagement strategy.

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NOTES

¹ USAID. Investing in a Water Secure Future (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.usaid.gov/jordan/water-and-wastewater-infrastructure#:~:text=Jordan%20is%20one%20of%20the,as%20it%20can%20be%20recharged.>

² Miyahuna. (2018). Who We Are. Retrieved from: <https://Miyahuna.com.jo/en/page/Who-We-Are-2>

³ Ibid.

⁴ The World Bank. (2014). Women in Jordan - Limited economic participation and continued inequality. Retrieved from: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2014/04/17/women-in-jordan---limited-economic-participation-and-continued-inequality>

⁵ UN Women. (2016). Retrieved from: https://www.impact-repository.org/document/reach/9d5e7c33/reach_jor_situation_overview_un_women_livelihoods_two_pager_october_2016_0.pdf

⁶ Demographic and Health Surveys Program. (2018). Jordan Population and Family health Survey. Retrieved from: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR346/FR346.pdf>

⁷ Demographic and Health Surveys Program. (2018). Jordan Population and Family health Survey. Retrieved from: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR346/FR346.pdf>