

ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE ENERGY SECTOR*Feruza Xadjimuratova*

The energy sector is the foundation of any country's economic development. The growth of this sector is directly linked to economic stability and the efficient management of energy resources. However, women's participation in this field remains at a low level. Global experience shows that ensuring gender equality in the energy sector increases efficiency and the level of innovation.

Today, various international organizations, including the International Energy Agency (IEA), the United Nations (UN), the World Bank, and other institutions, are promoting various initiatives to enhance gender equality in the energy sector. In Uzbekistan, certain reforms are also being implemented in this regard. In particular, efforts are being made to strengthen the role of women in the energy sector by expanding opportunities for education, professional development, and leadership. This article examines the issue of increasing women's participation in the energy sector, the existing challenges, and possible solutions.

Globally:

- According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), women make up only 22% of the workforce in the energy sector worldwide.
- The share of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields does not exceed 30%.
- Women hold only 10% of leadership positions in the energy sector.

Global Gender Distribution in the Energy Sector:

Position Type	Men (%)	Women (%)
General Workforce	78%	22%
Leadership Positions	90%	10%
STEM Workforce	70%	30%

In Uzbekistan:

- According to the data from the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Uzbekistan, women make up 10.1% of the energy's workforce.
- Among the 310 full members of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, only 6.45% are women.
- The share of women among students in higher education institutions specializing in the energy sector in Uzbekistan is around 15-20%.

Share of Women in STEM Fields in Uzbekistan:

Field	Men (%)	Women (%)
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Higher education in the energy sector	80%	20%
Academy of Sciences members	93.55%	6.45%

The Role of Women in the Energy Sector and Existing Challenges. Several factors contribute to the low participation of women in the energy sector:

1. Traditional Stereotypes – The energy sector is often perceived as a male-dominated field, which limits women's entry into this industry.
2. Lack of Education and Skills – The low number of female students in technical and engineering fields leads to a shortage of qualified women in the energy sector.
3. Work Conditions and Limited Opportunities – Insufficient gender equality measures and lack of favorable working conditions hinder women's career growth in the sector.
4. Family Responsibilities – Women often face challenges in balancing work and family life.

Initiatives to Increase Women's Participation in Uzbekistan's Energy Sector:

1. OSCE and UNDP Seminars – Training sessions are conducted under regional projects to promote gender equality in Central Asia's energy sector.
2. Specialized Engineering Courses – The National University of Uzbekistan and Tashkent State Technical University offer exclusive engineering courses for women.
3. New Investment Projects – Plans include ensuring women's active participation in developing solar and wind power stations in Uzbekistan.
4. Regulatory Framework – A presidential decree on March 7, 2022, introduced measures to support women and families systematically.
5. Forums and Seminars – The joint forum "The Role of Women in the Energy Sector: Modern Trends" was held by "Hududiy Elektr Tarmoqlari" JSC, the Women's Committee, and the Asian Development Bank.
6. International Cooperation – A memorandum of understanding was signed between the Women's Association of Kyrgyzstan's energy sector and Uzbekistan's Ministry of Energy's Gender Council.
7. Gender Strategy for 2030 – Uzbekistan's national gender strategy includes policies to promote gender equality, expand opportunities for women, and increase their participation in the energy sector.

Initiatives and Proposals to Increase Women's Participation. To enhance the share of women in the energy sector and ensure gender equality, various initiatives can be implemented. These initiatives can be categorized into four main areas: education and professional development, ensuring gender equality in recruitment, strengthening mentorship and leadership programs, and expanding women's participation in technological and innovative projects.

First and foremost, attracting girls to the energy sector through education and professional development is of great importance. Special grants and scholarships should be allocated to support their education and career growth in this field. Special courses and training programs within STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) disciplines can help increase girls' interest in these areas. Additionally, tailored educational programs for

women in engineering and technology should be developed, focusing on enhancing their practical knowledge and skills.

The second key area is ensuring gender equality in recruitment. Creating equal employment opportunities for women in the energy sector, implementing gender-equality policies within companies, and hiring women for highly skilled positions are crucial. Promoting women to leadership positions will also help strengthen their role in society and ensure gender balance at the management level.

The third aspect involves developing mentorship and leadership programs. Experienced professionals should provide guidance and mentorship to young women to support their career growth. Such programs will prepare women for leadership roles in the energy sector. Additionally, gender-focused career development programs should be designed to increase women's participation in this field.

Finally, expanding women's participation in technological and innovative projects is a pressing issue. Women should be actively involved in green energy, solar, and wind power projects, while their startups and entrepreneurial initiatives should receive support. This approach will not only increase women's involvement but also contribute to the sustainable development of the energy sector through innovative solutions.

All these directions are interconnected, and their systematic implementation will help increase the share of women in the energy sector and ensure gender equality. This, in turn, will create new opportunities for women and positively impact the overall economy and societal development.

Conclusion. Increasing women's participation in the energy sector contributes to economic progress and sustainability. Gender equality accelerates technological innovations and becomes a driving force of the economy. Uzbekistan has taken positive steps in this regard, but to achieve more effective results, it is essential to strengthen gender equality in education, employment, and leadership positions.

In the future, these initiatives will further evolve, allowing women to play an active role in the energy sector. Gender equality benefits not only women but society as a whole, fostering economic stability and accelerating innovation.

List of used literature:

1. International Energy Agency (IEA) statistical data
2. The official website of the Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Uzbekistan: <https://minenergy.uz>.
3. Data from the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, <https://www.academy.uz/en>
4. Reports from the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and OSCE, <https://www.osce.org/resources/documents>
5. Reports from the Women's Committee of Uzbekistan, <https://wcu.uz/en>
6. Research findings from Tashkent State Technical University, <https://tdtu.uz/en/research>