

# Senegal: Boosting the role of women in the energy sector

Energy poverty is one of the single largest challenges preventing faster economic development throughout sub-Saharan Africa. In rural areas, it is particularly crucial that women have adequate access to energy given their crucial role in leading families and the stewardship of the household's economy.



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The Government of Senegal has made energy sector development a key component of the [Plan Sénégal Emergent](#), which aims to modernise the country's economy and achieve a wide number of ambitious socioeconomic development objectives, as well as ensuring greater gender equality. Priorities include lowering the cost of energy by reducing dependence on imported liquid fuels and increasing electricity access - particularly in rural areas. Senegal has significant potential to develop solar and wind power, together with large offshore natural gas resources that will come onstream in 2023. The Senegalese authorities aim to achieve universal access by 2025 through a combination of on-and off-grid solutions.

In Senegal, one of the single most influential voices advocating for greater inclusion of women in the energy sector value chain is the current minister of petroleum and energies Aissatou Sophie Gladima who has taken a proactive approach towards local content and providing greater opportunities for women in energy. The African Energy Chamber recently [noted](#) that: "The local content and women empowerment that has been key to the agenda of Gladima will only benefit the energy industry because opportunity and jobs are better than development aid."

## Training

The [Power Africa](#), Usaid initiative is making a particular effort to maximise the participation of women in the energy sector all over Africa, and in Senegal in particular. In March of 2020, 40 young female professionals from 17 Francophone countries across Africa participated in the YALI-Power Africa Young Women in African Power Leadership Training that was held in Dakar, Senegal. This training was carried out in partnership with the Centre Africain d'Etudes Supérieures en Gestion (African Center for Higher Studies in Management). The goal of the programme is to facilitate the participation of women in energy sector careers. Power Africa developed and facilitated nine training modules based on key energy sector concepts, such as energy as a catalyst for development and a practical approach to work in the energy space. These

focused on providing insight on modern energy trends, sharpening leadership skills, and empowering these women to take on new roles and challenges as they progress in their energy sector careers.

The energy sector in sub-Saharan Africa remains largely male-dominated, with far too few women in leadership positions. It is estimated that women currently represent less than one quarter of the energy sector workforce globally, and this trend is the same among emerging markets. There are numerous impediments towards women participating in this strategic sector for any country's economy. These include a lack of awareness of the opportunities in energy-related fields, as well as limited access to resources to pursue science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education needed to enter and thrive in the sector. The Government of Senegal and entities like Power Africa continue working to [support](#) young women professionals in the oil and gas and power sector as they champion greater gender equality in the industry.



## AOG 2021 Women in Energy panel highlights role of women in energy development

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## Renewable energy

Senegal is one of the countries at the forefront of renewable energy development in sub-Saharan Africa. In Senegal, limited energy access in rural areas has for too long impeded economic development, with only 44% of households in rural Senegal having access to reliable electricity. Rural communities are often limited to rudimentary energy sources such as wood-burning fires for cooking, lighting, warmth and other needs. In this context, for rural Senegalese businesses, renewable energy could dramatically improve food production and streamline work efficiency. Solar-powered water pumps could replace time-consuming and extenuating tasks like drawing water from a well one bucket at a time. Rural agricultural businesses are in urgent need of these technological upgrades, as well as equal energy access between rural men and women. A case in point is market gardening, a popular agricultural technique utilised by smaller-scale farmers in Senegal, which are mostly run by women. In fact, women in Senegal [comprise](#) 70% of the total rural employment workforce, making them the cornerstone of the country's agricultural and livestock farming sectors.

## Women-led initiatives

The Energy 4 Impact is a non-profit organisation partnering with local businesses to extend access to energy in Africa. It is working with other NGOs that promote and protect women's rights in Senegal through the Energy Opportunities for Women in Senegal Project. It aims not only to supply rural communities in Senegal with sustainable, efficient energy, but also to increase women's contribution across the entirety of Senegal's energy value chain. So far, the programme has empowered over 250 women-led micro and SMEs in rural areas. The goal is that by increasing the presence of sustainable energy sources, more economic opportunities will manifest themselves for women-run agricultural operations. The project has provided Senegalese women and the many SMEs they run with reusable energy technologies including solar power pumps, solar lamps and solar-powered freezers, as well as improved equipment for crop treatment. Furthermore, as well as providing the essential equipment, the project has held seminars providing women in Senegal with entrepreneurial information to empower them as businesswomen. The project emphasises that "women are at the heart of Senegal's agricultural scene, and this empowerment campaign has further secured their position as the country's main actors along the energy value chain".

Another woman-led enterprise that is having an important impact on female empowerment in West Africa is [ElleSolaire](#). The company was founded by Kelly Nwachuku-Lavelle who is also the executive director. Following a ten-year international career in investment banking and financial services, she found a deep purpose in relation to the fight against gender-based discrimination and violence. For over a decade, her organisation's work has been driven by a desire to create concrete positive change for women from the most marginalised communities in developing country contexts. She is a passionate advocate for women's entrepreneurship as a lever to bring about women's economic and social empowerment.

It is estimated that 200 million people live in energy poverty with no access to electricity in West Africa. Yet, they are surrounded by an abundant source of natural energy: sunlight. Simple, proven, affordable technologies exist which harness the power of the sun to generate energy for domestic use. What is missing is a distribution channel for these products. By investing in an empowered women-led distribution network, Elle Solaire creates a supply chain for products like solar lamps, home solar systems and clean cookstoves, that otherwise cannot reach those who most need them.

In response to growing demand for renewable power, and increasing interest by international stakeholders to invest, develop, and succeed in Africa, Energy Capital & Power will be hosting the MSGBC Oil, Gas, & Power 2021 conference and exhibition from 2-3 December 2021. Focused on enhancing regional partnerships, spurring investment and development in the oil, gas and power sectors, the conference aims to unite regional international stakeholders with African opportunities, serving as a growth-oriented platform for Africa's energy sector.

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