

Mentoring Program on Empowering Central Asian Women in Renewable Energy

AN OSCE PROJECT



REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

Project Rationale

Empowering women in the energy sector can help fight energy poverty, foster energy sustainability and accelerate the energy transition. Yet, the energy sector remains one of the least gender diverse, with women making up only 22% of the global labour force in oil and gas.

The green energy transition is set to become a key catalyst for job creation, economic development and enhanced gender-equality in the sector. This transition could be particularly beneficial to the economies of the five Central Asian OSCE states due to their high potential for all renewable energy sources, ranging from wind and solar to small hydro and geothermal. As major users and managers in the daily life of Central Asia, women must play a leading role in this transition.

Responding to the need to address existing barriers preventing women from thriving in the energy industry, in 2022 the OSCE launched a regional project to empower women as change agents in the energy transition.

WOMEN CURRENTLY MAKE UP ONLY 22% OF THE ENERGY WORKFORCE...



Project Objectives:



Prepare the next generation of female leaders



Increase women's representation at decision-making levels



Develop concrete career goals and plans



Foster networking and social change



Facilitate novel ideas and encourage female entrepreneurs



Advance the energy transition and climate action

... AND 32% OF THE RENEWABLE ENERGY WORKFORCE



Project Overview

The OSCE project on promoting women's economic empowerment and leadership in the energy sector aims to achieve gender-equality in the sector as a catalyst for energy security and sustainability in Central Asia.

By tapping into the job creation potential of the energy transition, the project equips Central Asian women and girls with the skills, tools and support network needed to pursue or advance a career in the renewable energy sector.

As gender imbalances in the workplace are largely an outcome of educational pathways that remain male-dominated, this project has a strong youth focus aimed to encourage more girls to enroll in technical subjects and kick-off a career in the energy sector.

It also supports Central Asian governments and companies to integrate women's needs and gender-equality targets into their energy and hiring policies.

Main project activities:

- **Study on the gender dimension** and socio-economic benefits of **renewable energy** deployment in Central Asia.
- **Mentoring program** for Central Asian women in the energy sector.
- **Business study tours** to leading energy companies and networking opportunities.
- **Policy recommendations and capacity building** to help governments and companies advance gender equality in the energy sector.
- **Youth engagement, learning, scholarship and internship** opportunities for young Central Asian women.
- Supporting **women** energy entrepreneurs to **access finance**.

This project supports Central Asian States advancing their energy sustainability and gender equality goals.



Kazakhstan | Kyrgyzstan |
Tajikistan | Turkmenistan |
Uzbekistan

The project contributes towards six of the sustainable development goals:



Mentoring Program

The New York Times
Headline of the day:

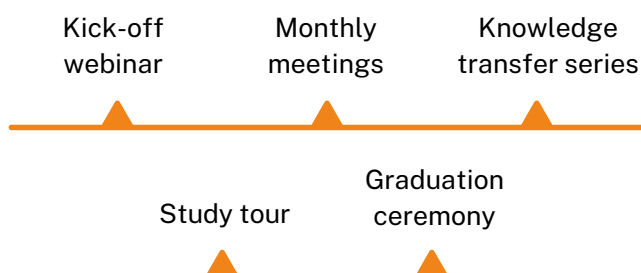
Women Energy
changes the
world

To empower women as agents of change in the energy transition, in 2022 the OSCE launched a mentoring program for women professionals working in the energy sector in Central Asia, implemented in partnership with the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET).

Building on the success and growing networks established in previous editions, the program is now entering its third cycle, with nearly 100 women mentored to date.

Central Asian women could play a leading role in this transition, but they continue to face challenges such as gender stereotyping preventing accessibility and progression in the energy sector. This mentoring program aims to provide much needed solutions to key challenges preventing women's participation and leadership in the energy sector.

Project Timeline:



Participants in this program have benefitted from:



One-to-one mentoring experience



Business trip to leading clean energy companies in Austria



Online knowledge transfer



Community Platform

"When I am alone I can't make a significant change to the system, but when you start working with a global network of women with the same goal the system can change."

Elina Ratinova

One-to-One Mentoring Experience

Conducted in partnership with GWNET, this one-to-one mentoring experience aimed to prepare the next generation of Central Asian women energy leaders. Each selected mentee was paired with a mentor who is well-established in the renewable energy sector. With frequent meetings throughout the duration of the program, the objective of the one-to-one mentoring was to help mentees develop and achieve their personal and professional goals.

Mentees submit their applications, outlining their specific objectives for the mentoring journey. Drawing on GWNET's extensive mentor pool and network, the GWNET secretariat pinpoints mentors whose proficiencies and insights harmonize with the mentees' aspirations. This tailored approach enables a synergistic match that maximizes the impact of our mentoring program.

Benefits for Mentees

- ✓ Gaining experience from seasoned professionals
- ✓ Enhancing strengths, overcoming weaknesses
- ✓ Concrete goals and career-enhancing activities
- ✓ Personal development
- ✓ Innovative ideas & strategic thinking

"I believe this is a great platform to share knowledge and experience and learn from each other about more innovative solutions on renewable energy."

Rayhon Jonbekova
(Mentee)

Benefits for Mentors

- ✓ Insights into other fields and younger generation issues
- ✓ Conscious reflection about one's own career
- ✓ Facilitating growth of young talents
- ✓ Encouraging women in the workforce
- ✓ Knowledge transfer and reputation as a mentor

"Mentoring feels like the right thing to do. While you focus on the mentee's development goals you reflect, re-evaluate your own story, values, and experience. It is an amazing opportunity to get along with other women and inspire each other to become the best version of ourselves. After each session, I felt uplifted by the interesting and deep conversation."

Mentor

The Power of Networking

In today's interconnected world the value of networking cannot be overstated. Networking can open doors and lead to personal and professional achievements. Therefore, providing a platform for women's networks to share, grow and engage is crucial.

The network created aims to empower women in Central Asia in the energy sector, to help advance their careers, engage with other female professionals and to make the sector more gender-balanced.

Online Knowledge Transfer

This course was designed to empower learners to seek leadership positions and provide them with tools and insights to help them to do so. The objective of this course was to enable learners to:

- Explain why women's empowerment in the renewable energy sector is important
- Give an overview of the current status of women's employment in the renewable energy sector
- Explain key barriers to women's entrance into and advancement in the renewable energy sector
- Give examples of best practices for overcoming these barriers
- Apply these lessons to their own careers and better envision their future career pathways
- Apply these lessons to support other women in the renewable energy sector

This course was designed to empower learners to seek leadership positions and provide them with tools and insights to help them develop a career in the renewable energy sector.

Course Overview



Module 1: Women in Sustainable Energy

The module offers an introduction and analysis to the gender landscape of sustainable energy. It familiarizes participants with concepts such as unconscious bias and gender stereotyping and demonstrates why women should be more equally represented. Most importantly, it highlights different stakeholders' successful strategies to increase women's participation and the resultant benefits.



Module 2: Asserting Yourself in a Male-Dominated Environment

Even after having successfully entered male-dominated work-environments, women continue to face obstacles and invisible/u barriers. The module addresses issues such as self-presentation (e.g. CV, in-person interviews, common challenges women face in meetings, how to use your strengths to optimize decision-making, etc.) and common hiring and promotional practices.



Module 3: Is there specifically female leadership in renewable energy?

This module shares the stories and views of successful women leaders with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. The module allows learners to witness different career paths and examples for successful strategies and approaches to leadership.



Module 4: Just and Inclusive Energy Transition

This module provides global perspectives on the energy transition, presents the work of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) on energy transitions and gender in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and offers a case study from a completely different part of the world, in the form of an interview with the National Energy Secretary of Panama.



Module 5: A Closer Look at Central Asia & A Look Ahead: Empowered Central Asian Women in Renewable Energy

In this module, we want to take a closer look at the energy transition and the position of women in energy in Central Asia. Participants are asked to reflect on the program, what they have learned, and what they are going to do next.



Study Tour Vienna

As part of the mentoring program, we organize study tours to Vienna for Central Asian female energy experts for an action-packed week of activities. Highlights from the two cohorts have included:



A visit to Seestadt Aspern, a new urban center that is one of Europe's largest urban development projects



A working breakfast hosted by former OSCE Secretary General, Helga Maria Schmid, and former Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, Igli Hasani



A visit to the United Nations offices in Vienna including a meeting at the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)



Female leadership training at the Climate Lab Vienna



A tour of the Spittelau waste incinerator, one of Vienna's most striking buildings



An exchange with the French Ambassador to the OSCE, Fatene Benhabyles-Foeth



A visit to the Austrian power grid, Austria's independent power grid operator



A visit to the Austrian Institute of Technology, Austria's largest non-university research organization



Attending the Hofburg Palace for a bi-annual gathering of energy experts at the Vienna Energy Club



Attending the Vienna Energy Security Dialogue

"During the Study Tour we learned, exchanged experiences, shared knowledge.

*Renewable energy can change the world.
Women in energy can change the world."*

Saule Zholdayakova



*"The program encouraged me to engage with other women in my organization to be deeply involved in the energy sector. **It gave me the opportunity to network and learn from the experience of other women leaders in energy sector.**"*

Dilbar Shermurodova
Tajikstan



*"It was a **true turning point**. It expanded my knowledge and strengthened my drive to create impact. Working with my mentor reminded me how much there is still to achieve. **I am committed to the sustainable development of our region and confident in my ability to make a real difference.**"*

Aruzhan Mominabyeva
Kazakhstan



*"**Now I can address gender questions, both at work and in my social life.** I've learnt a lot from my mentor. She's a role model, inspiring me to achieve new goals and achievements."*

Kanoatkhon Umurzokova
Uzbekistan



*"For the last 5 years, I have been searching my direction to grow as a professional. Thanks to the program, **I felt supported and found that there are wide opportunities for women in engineering.** For the first time, I am feeling very excited about my further journey in the field."*

Botakoz Suleimenova
Kazakhstan



*"This is my first experience in a mentoring program. I would like to thank the whole team at GWNET and OSCE for their great support. I've had a good relationship with my mentor who has understood my needs well. **I've been through a lot of changes in the past couple of years and my mentor's support has been crucial. I would say it has been invaluable for me.**"*

**Bakhriniso Narzullaeva
Tajikistan**



*"Under the support and supervision of my mentor and other networking colleagues, **I am planning to start my research focused on the practices and challenges of using renewable energy sources among small and medium enterprises and tourism.**"*

**Chynarkan Saparova
Kyrgyzstan**



*"It was an incredible experience to believe in yourself, your choice. **Women's Energy can change the world. Renewable energy is not about the future, it is already here.** I hope, Central Asian countries will realize all their own possibility. That is why we need more women in this sector. Educate Women, Educate the Generation."*

**Saule Zholdayakova
Kazakhstan**



*"The main highlight was an understanding that there are a number of **women that are also interested in the development of the energy sector and that we could be a real force for change.**"*

**Tatiana Vedeneva,
Kyrgyzstan**



*"The mentoring program not only allows you to increase your knowledge and expertise in Renewable Energy and Sustainability, but also provides you the opportunities **to broaden your professional network locally and internationally, connects you with inspiring leaders of the Energy Sector, who are sharing the same passion to bring an impact to the world as you!**"*

**Aiman Ibrayeva
Kazakhstan**



*"**The mentorship program is an excellent opportunity for the personal and professional development of women in the energy industry.** Many thanks to the whole team for taking into account our needs and supporting and guiding women in the energy industry."*

**Aizada Omokeeva,
Kyrgyzstan**



Project Case Study: Participant of Mentoring Program Receives Funding from Investor

Kyzzhibek Ryszhanova is a participating member of the Mentoring program and the founder and CEO of the engineering company “Smart ReEnergy” LLP (www.smartreenergy.kz), which provides engineering and consulting services on renewable energy projects. The main purpose of Kyzzhibek’s participation in the mentoring program was to find an investor for her project “Construction Small Hydro power plant Azamat with output 2 MW.”

Her mentor Juliane van Voorst tot Voorst assisted her in developing a business plan and financial model for the project as well as applying for PFAN (Private Financing Advisory Network), a global network of climate and clean energy financing experts, which offers free business coaching and investment facilitation for entrepreneurs developing climate and clean energy projects in emerging markets. Thanks to the mentoring and networking opportunities offered by the study tour in Austria, Kyzzhibek’s project was successfully selected by the PFAN team she met with while in Vienna and she now has a business coach who helps her to negotiate with investors.

Thanks to the mentoring program, Kyzzhibek secured an investor—an Austrian company specializing in hydropower. During the Vienna study visit, they began working together, and the company is now supporting the development of Kyzzhibek’s clean energy project.

Other Outcomes

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"I am now developing a mentoring program for women in my organization."

Khorlan Ayazbekova

"I founded a startup"

Kanoathkon Umurzokova

*"I've decided to increase my technical knowledge in Renewable Energy by gaining a **master's degree in Renewable Energy/Sustainable Energy.**"*

Aiman Ibrayeva

*"I gave a **speech at the Tajik State University** advocating for women empowerment in the energy transition."*

Dilbar Shermutotova

”

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**PhD student in Energy
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**Aigul
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Managing Director
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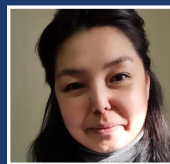
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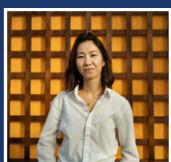
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**Thank you all for
your participation!**



“This program is designed to empower! It is led by female leaders. We were put in a nurturing environment, and we already can identify our professional progress from participating in the program.”

Kanoatkhon Umurzokova

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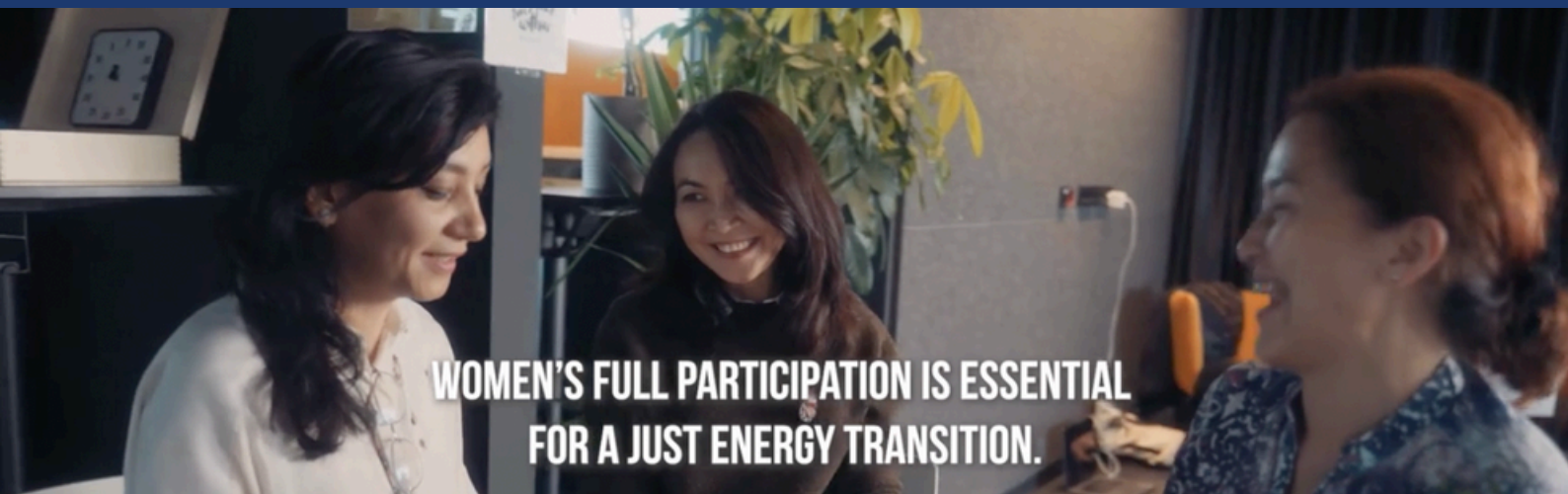
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**Thank you all for
your participation!**



**WOMEN'S FULL PARTICIPATION IS ESSENTIAL
FOR A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION.**

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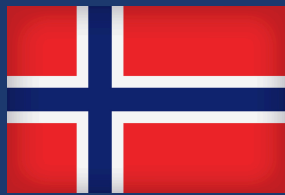
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Thank you for making this happen!

