

## PIDG Pathfinder

### Spring 2020

## Talking point

### Level the playing field: Three ways in which InfraCo Asia is empowering women and girls



**Claudine Lim, Chief Operating Officer of InfraCo Asia, is a long-term advocate of the empowerment of women and girls. Along with being a key contributor to PIDG's Gender Task Force, Claudine is also chairperson of *Aidha*, a social enterprise which provides courses to improve the financial literacy of foreign domestic workers and lower-income women in Singapore.**

Gender equity has implications for all sectors, in both formal and informal economies. And the impact of advancing women's equality extends beyond moral and social outcomes. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, advancing women's equality can add up to US\$12 trillion to global growth.

Infrastructure is one industry where gender has traditionally not been a key consideration – early-stage project development and construction jobs are historically held by men, and impact statistics often do not take into consideration how the needs of women and girls are being met, or how their lives are differentially affected.

Through the recently launched *PIDG Gender Equity Action Plan*, PIDG companies like InfraCo Asia are taking concrete steps towards improving outcomes for women and girls. This needs to be a sustained effort, and it calls for all of our team and stakeholders to commit to the plan.

The following are examples of how InfraCo Asia is building upon past efforts to help shape a future encompassing the greater participation and empowerment of women and girls. I've structured these examples according to the three pillars of the PIDG Gender Equity Action Plan and made a point to feature the women who lead and benefit from our investments and projects.

#### Pillar 1: Safeguarding women and girls from gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH)

Particularly in the countries that PIDG companies operate in, women are disproportionately affected by GBVH. The Gender Equity Action Plan sets out initiatives to address and mitigate GBVH risks on the project, company and management levels.

Along with these measures, it is important that women continue to hold positions of influence on our projects, in order to bolster efforts in addressing GBVH risks.

Take for example community relations officer Ha Thi Thu Nga from the Ninh Thuan Solar Power project. As the interface between the project's management, its staff, contractors and the surrounding community, Nga is also a strong voice for the women and girls that have been a part of the Ninh Thuan project's journey.

The rapport Nga has built with women of the project's surrounding communities is unmistakable and was instrumental in bringing the Ninh Thuan project to life, as this project film shows.

**Community Relations Officer Ha Thi Thu Nga is a strong voice for the women and girls from the Sunseap-InfraCo Asia 168MWp Ninh Thuan Solar Power project.**

#### Pillar 2: Empowering women and girls through investments

Through the Gender Equity Action Plan, PIDG will also continue to drive and demonstrate positive impact for women and girls within PIDG investments. The upcoming launch of the updated PIDG Gender Ambition Framework 2020 will spur efforts to apply the gender lens in our approach and improve outcomes for women and girls through the investments and projects of PIDG companies.

InfraCo Asia's Philippines Smart Solar Network project has surfaced several positive examples of improved outcomes for women and girls. On San Isidro, where the pilot came into operation last year, we met women and girls who shared with us the stories behind our statistics – stories which exemplify the empowerment that we would like to see throughout our InfraCo Asia's projects. Community health worker *Candelaria Agnes*, for example, shares how San Isidro leapfrogged from gas lamps to off-grid solar technology in a matter of months as a result of the Smart Solar Network project. San Isidro's first-time access to affordable and reliable clean energy has enhanced the provision of medical services that are critical to the island community, from *vaccination to maternity care*.

We've also seen how improving access to infrastructure can increase women's access to education and economic opportunity – as in the case of *Lian Ponteres*, who chairs San Isidro's youth council,

and Sonia Canton, who runs the loading station for the Smart Solar Network pilot on San Isidro. For Sonia, the Smart Solar Network project has opened doors to a range of economic opportunities. Not only is Sonia earning additional income by running the loading station for the project, she has also been able to afford a freezer which allows her to sell cold treats to her customers at a small fee. Entrepreneurial instincts like hers are given the opportunity to flourish against the backdrop of new energy infrastructure.



**San Isidro residents visit Sonia Canton's loading station when they require mobile top-ups for their household electricity plans. The Smart Solar Network project runs on a pre-paid metering system.**

#### Pillar 3: Leading by Example

Aside from delivering impact through PIDG investments and projects, the Gender Equity Action Plan recognises that diversity, inclusion, and the empowerment of women and girls needs to start 'at home' – with PIDG and PIDG companies. Women are represented in over 50% of InfraCo Asia's investment and operation roles, where recruitment is gender-blind. But gender equitable work policies cannot stop at staffing of teams.

The Plan aims to assess organisation-wide gender equitable policies and practices, addressing at least:

- organisational culture
- recruitment
- pay, promotion and evaluation procedures
- flexible ways of working
- dedicated sexual harassment and whistleblowing procedures.

At the inception of the Gender Equity Action Plan, a PIDG-wide Gender Task Force was formed and tasked with the follow-up and monitoring of progress on the plan. With more equal representation on our teams,

I believe there is far less chance for the voices of women and girls to fall through the cracks. This is but the first step. There remains much for the Gender Task Force to see through, within our companies and projects. And achieving the goals set out in the plan can only be possible with your commitment and full support.



**Women are represented in over fifty percent of InfraCo Asia's investment and operation roles.**