

## Gender Equality for an Inclusive Energy Transition: Women Leading the Way in Solar Energy

Even as renewable energy takes center stage in the energy transition, women are still underrepresented in the sector. Global surveys conducted by IRENA indicated that women represent only 32% of the renewable energy sector workforce and even less, 21%, of wind energy workers. Both are considerably below the level of women's participation in the overall economy's workforce (44%).

Gender inequality is most evident at decision-making levels. Across the economy, the overall number of women on company boards and in senior management positions is painfully low, as is true in policy making and governance. The absence of female role models is even more acute in energy-related fields. According to IRENA previous surveys, women barely hold 8% of senior management positions in the wind industry, while in the overall renewable energy sector, men represent at least three-quarters of directors in close to half of all the participating firms.

Therefore, substantial efforts are still needed to enable the greater participation of women at all levels, and to expand the pool of skills and talents needed to drive the transformation. Studies suggest that women bring new perspectives to the workplace and improve collaboration, while increasing the number of qualified women in an organisation's leadership also yields better performance overall.

Similar challenges and opportunities present themselves in the solar photovoltaic (PV) industry, which also needs to engage and retain more women – and promote them – to fill its growing needs for skills. Their leadership and contributions will be crucial to ensuring that the energy systems of the future address the needs of modern societies, take on the challenges of climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, and leave no one behind.

UN Women designated the theme for International Women's Day, 8 March 2021 as "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world." IRENA uses this opportunity to present the "Gender Equality for an Inclusive Energy Transition: Women Leading the Way in Solar Energy" event. It aims to provide the stage for a dynamic dialogue on the challenges and barriers, the lessons learnt but most of all, the success stories of women leaders in the solar PV sector. The event also serves as the official launch of the new IRENA Global Gender Survey of the Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Industry that will provide the basis for the forthcoming IRENA publication *Solar PV Energy: A Gender Perspective*.

The report will collect estimates and analysis of the representation and roles of women in the solar PV industry worldwide. The findings will strengthen and deepen our knowledge of issues relating to women's employment, improve our understanding of workplace opportunities, challenges and policy solutions in renewable energy, and highlight qualitative aspects of the global solar PV energy workforce.



**AGENDA:**

**Date: March 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, International Women's day (IWD 2021)**

**Time: 4:30 pm to 5:45 pm (GST)**

- Welcome (2 min)  
**Francesco La Camera**, Director-General, International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
- Opening remarks (5 min)  
**Elizabeth Press**, Director, Planning and Programme Support (IRENA)
- Scene-setting presentation (13 minutes):  
IRENA findings on the gender dimension and launch of the Solar PV survey  
**Rabia Ferroukhi**, Director KPFC, IRENA, and IRENA Gender Focal Point
- Moderated panel discussion (55 min):  
Moderator:  
**Christine Lins**, co-founder of the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition (GWNET)  
Panellists:
  - **Nawal Al-Hosany**, UAE's permanent representative to the International Renewable Energy Agency;
  - **Walburga Hemetsberger**, CEO, Solar Power Europe;
  - **Monica Oliphant**, Past President of ISES, member of the Coalition for Action Steering Group;
  - **Silvia Piana**, Head of Regulatory Affairs for Africa, Asia and Oceania, ENEL, member of the Coalition for Action Steering Group;
  - **Habiba Ali**, Founder, Managing Director and CEO, Sosai Renewable Energies;
  - **Carol Weis**, Co-Founder of Remote Energy;
  - **Virginia Snyder**, Inter American Development Bank (IADB).

**Nawal Al-Hosany, UAE's permanent representative to IRENA;**



HE Dr. Nawal Al-Hosany is the permanent representative of the UAE to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). She graduated from the Faculty of Engineering at the UAE University in 1992 and obtained her PhD from Newcastle University in the UK in 2002.

Dr. Al-Hosany's career spans business and academia, both in the UAE and internationally. She served as the deputy director-general of the Emirates Diplomatic Academy (EDA). Prior to this, she was the executive director of Sustainability at Masdar, Abu Dhabi's renewable energy company and the director of the Zayed Future Energy Prize, the UAE's annual global awards for renewable energy and sustainability.

**Walburga Hemetsberger, CEO, Solar Power Europe;**



Walburga Hemetsberger is the Chief Executive Officer of SolarPower Europe. She is responsible for the overall performance of the association. Her previous experience includes her roles as Head of the EU Representation Office at VERBUND for nine years; Advisor of Financial and Capital Markets at The Association of German Public Banks and Association of Public Banks (VÖB / EAPB); Competition lawyer at Haarmann Hemmelrath; A Parliamentary Assistant to Austrian MEP and experience in the DG Competition Merger

Control Task Force. Walburga has also been a Board Member of Hydrogen Europe.

Walburga holds a degree in Law and Business Administration from Leopold-Franzens Universität Innsbruck. She speaks German, English, Dutch and French.

**Monica Oliphant, Past President of ISES;**



Monica Oliphant is a former President of the International Solar Energy Society (ISES). She has worked in renewable energy for over 40 years in the areas of solar, wind and energy efficiency, and has served on various government committees in Australia. Monica spent 18 years as a Research Scientist at the Electricity Trust of South Australia (ETSA), where she undertook South Australia's first large-scale wind survey and worked to both improve energy efficiency and determine the impact of solar water heating and PV on energy use. Monica is also currently an Adjunct Associate Professor at the University of South Australia, from which she received an Honorary Doctorate in 2018, and runs her own consultancy.

**Silvia Piana, Head of Regulatory Affairs for Africa, Asia and Oceania, ENEL;**



Silvia Piana is Head of Regulatory Affairs for Africa, Asia and Oceania at Enel Green Power (EGP). Part of the Enel Group, EGP is a multinational company that generates energy from renewable sources across five continents. In her current position, Silvia focuses on enabling regulatory frameworks to increase utility-scale penetration of renewable energy, supporting her company in its sustainable energy transition process through greater electrification, innovation, digitalisation and flexibility. Silvia holds post-graduate degrees in International Law and Business Development.

**Habiba Ali, Founder, Managing Director and CEO, Sosai Renewable Energies;**



Habiba Ali is the managing director and CEO of Sosai Renewable Energies Company, one of the largest distributors of renewable energy in Nigeria. Sosai Renewable Energies provides renewable energy products like solar lamps, water purifiers and solar panels, as well as energy consulting services to help bring clean, renewable energy solutions to Nigeria's budding communities. Ali also co-founded the Developmental Association for Renewable Energies (DARE), and is a member of the Partnership for Clean Indoor Air and the Nigerian Energy Network. She holds an MBA and a bachelor's degree in accounting.

**Carol Weis, Co-Founder of Remote Energy;**



Carol Weis specializes in developing solar technical curricula and training solar educators. Carol is an Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) certified Master PV Trainer® and North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) certified PV Installation Professional. Carol started as a solar electrical installer and then worked as a lead member of Solar Energy International's (SEI) PV technical team for 15 years. She now primarily focuses on training technicians and educators who are starting solar training programs throughout the world. Carol has advocated for the inclusion of women in the energy sector by teaching women-only PV classes since 1999.

**Virginia Snyder, Senior Specialist Inter American Development Bank (IADB).**



Virginia Snyder is a Senior Specialist in the IDB's Energy Division in Washington, DC, and is the focal point within the IDB's Energy Division for innovation, digitization, as well as inclusion. Prior to her work at the IDB, she worked at the California Center for Sustainable Energy, where she was Associate Program Manager of the State Solar Initiative (the largest in the United States) and also worked at the U.S. Department of Energy. At that institution, she collaborated with members of the Solar Technologies Program team on the "Solar America Cities" program. Through this effort, 25 U.S. cities worked to accelerate the adoption of solar energy technologies for a cleaner and more secure energy future. Virginia earned her MBA from the University of San Diego, CA.