

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

During a Women in Energy panel discussion at Angola Oil & Gas (AOG) 2021, solutions to enhance inclusivity and ensure women are actively involved in Africa's energy transformation were highlighted. Panel participants included Nina Birgitte Koch, MD, Equinor, Angola; Lame Verre, head of strategy, Energy Customer Solutions SSE plc, United Kingdom; Ayotola Jagun, chief compliance officer and company secretary, Oando PLC, Nigeria; and Sandra Almeida, legal manager, TotalEnergies EP Angola.



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Emphasising workplace culture, the root causes of the gender gap, and the value of inclusivity, the seminar provided insight into an integrated approach to enhancing participation.

“It is a two-pronged approach: firstly, unless you tackle the foundation, by having more women able to study engineering and being supported in the study of STEM subjects, you won’t see inclusivity. Secondly, we need favourable workplace practices. There continue to be societal norms, biases and prejudices in the oil and gas industry, and it is a shame we are still talking about inequality in 2021,” stated Jagun.

She called for women to rise and break the glass ceiling and support each other through the ranks to senior and executive management.

Meanwhile, the value of a supportive workplace culture and reinforced inclusivity was emphasised. With sectoral growth and the energy transition demanding increased innovation, a collaborative approach to decision-making, functioning, and developing is critical.



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Diversity celebrates cultural differences

Almeida discussed the difference between inclusion and integration, noting that diversity celebrates cultural differences and enables an environment of respect, whereas integration was a form of appropriation where one group identity is expected to conform in some way to another.

“What we want is the concept of inclusion. At TotalEnergies, we believe in the value of everyone and of different perspectives and solutions. Diversity and inclusion are about women and men working together, with the same resolve, to achieve the same target,” she stated.

“Companies are doing a lot with long-term commitment to inclusivity. But it is not about picking someone because of their gender, it’s about competency, choosing deliberately and ensuring diversity. We need a collaborative approach in the energy industry. The industry is extremely interesting to work with, with a lot of possibilities for women,” stated Birgitte.

“Women should be at the forefront of economic development, and bringing women issues to the top of the political agenda is part of the solution to driving economic growth. If we solve gender issues, we will solve development issues,” said Verre.

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