

PAKISTAN WOMEN EXECUTIVES EXAMINE UAE STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE DISTRIBUTION CUSTOMER SERVICE

EXECUTIVE EXCHANGE IN DUBAI & ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

MARCH 2013 – DUBAI & ABU DHABI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES – Senior female executives from eight of Pakistan’s electricity distribution utilities recently met their counterparts to review UAE best practices in customer service. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported this exchange to improve Pakistan distribution utility performance. The exchange was organized to not only improve customer service operations within Pakistan’s electricity distribution sector, but to bring together women energy sector professionals from across the country for a shared learning opportunity.

USAID’s Power Distribution Program (PDP) is a five-year project conducted jointly with government-owned electric power distribution companies in Pakistan to improve their performance in the areas of loss-reduction, revenue collection, and customer services. As part of the Power Distribution Program’s capacity-building efforts in Pakistan, a delegation of thirteen female distribution executives engaged in meetings, presentations, roundtable discussions, and technical site visits at Dubai Electricity & Water Authority (DEWA) and Abu Dhabi Distribution Company (ADDC), to identify the latest strategies in customer service and commercial operations utilized in the UAE electricity distribution sector.

EXECUTIVE EXCHANGE HIGHLIGHTS

The Pakistan executives spent five days visiting DEWA and ADDC. The primary objectives of this program were:

- Learn utility best practices in customer service, including:
 - o Customer information systems and data collection
 - o Customer service department organization
 - o Customer complaint management
 - o Staff customer service training programs
- Identify areas for improvement in utility commercial/financial management, including:
 - o Commercial department structure and functions
 - o Metering, billing, and collections, including meter testing programs
 - o Pricing and tariff setting practices
- Strengthen the international network of women in the energy sector



PDP delegates at Abu Dhabi Distribution Company’s (ADDC) Customer Call Center. ADDC took the PDP delegates through the complete process of handling complaints and inquiries from customers.

Below: Mr. Abdullah S. Obaidullah, Executive Vice President W&C for DEWA accepts a tapestry gift from the PDP delegation.

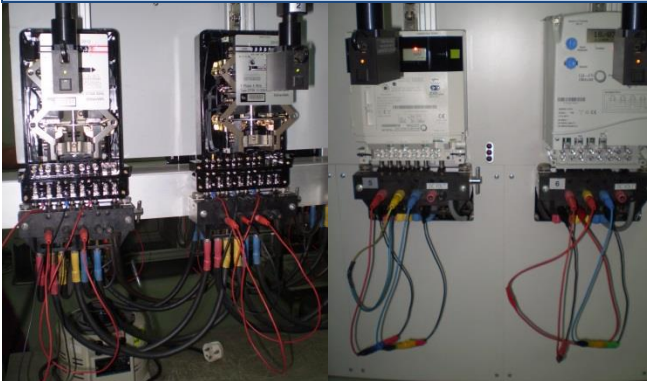
Right: DEWA & PDP delegation



DEWA Meter Testing & Repair Center & Warehouse

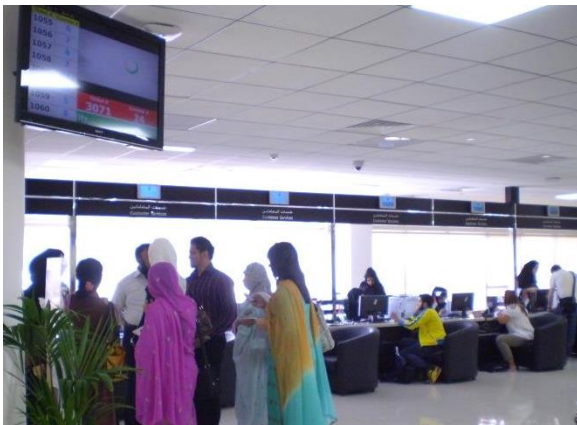


Above & right: **DEWA digital and mechanical meters being tested.** DEWA is making the transition to full AMR and plans for all mechanical meters to be replaced with static by 2020. 600,000 meters will need to be replaced.





Left: PDP delegates tour the recently completed the **DEWA Sustainable Building at Al Quoz, Dubai**. Al Quoz has achieved the highest global sustainability rating in its class, achieving the coveted LEED Platinum level of certification. On a scale of 110 LEED Points, this building achieved a total of 98 points, making it the first government owned building in the world to achieve such a LEED score. Al Quoz includes a high-efficiency cooling tower, modular solar, a wind turbine, thermal resistant windows, a Building Management System that controls the heat and AC for maximum efficiency, and many other measures to ensure greatest use of renewables and efficiency methods.



PDP delegates tour the **Customer Service Center** (above) and **Call Center** (below). The Call Center receives approximately 70,000 calls and 6,000 emails per month. The Center's staff receives quarterly merit awards and is assessed annually. DEWA provides extensive training programs, including shadowing mentoring programs.



ADDC provided the Pakistan delegates with detailed presentations on Abu Dhabi's customer service best practices; metering, billing and collections; and pricing and tariffs.



ADD Customer Contact Center

PDP delegates toured an ADDC Customer Contact Center. The Centers are mostly staffed with women during the day and men in the late afternoon shift. This allows for the women to be home when their children arrive home from school. Centers are equipped with kiosks for customers to pay their bills with direct cash navment.



ADD Customer Call Center

ADDC considers the Contact and Call Centers to be the face of the company. For that reason, staff is trained in all aspects of the utility and is given extensive training in technical as well as soft skills.

Above: ADDC provides a recreation room for staff to take breaks. Staff is encouraged to use their breaks to get a mental break from the stress of handling customer complaints.



Above: PDP delegates tour **Masdar City**, a planned city, which is being built by the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company, with the majority of seed capital provided by the government of Abu Dhabi. Designed by the British architectural firm Foster and Partners, the city will rely entirely on solar energy and other renewable energy sources, with a sustainable, zero-carbon, zero-waste ecology and will be a car free city. The city is being constructed 11 miles east-south-east of the city of Abu Dhabi, beside Abu Dhabi International Airport. Masdar City will host the headquarters of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA). The city is designed to be a hub for cleantech companies. The city as a whole was originally intended to be completed by 2016 but that date has now been pushed back to 2025.

Above right: To encourage a breeze, Masdar has built a 45-metre Teflon-coated wind tower in the center of the campus to draw draughts through the streets without using energy.



Left: Podcar at a personal rapid transit (PRT) station used to transport residents, staff and visitors through Masdar City.

BACKGROUND ON PAKISTAN'S POWER & ELECTRICITY DISTRIBUTION SECTOR

Pakistan's power sector is confronted by significant challenges. These include the limited availability of reliable and affordable electric power, aging and inadequate transmission and distribution networks, and utility policies and practices that lag behind those of advanced utilities elsewhere in the world. Additionally, the distribution utilities lack a robust technological infrastructure that can enable efficient back-office operations, such as handling customer service requests.

For major electric distribution utilities in Pakistan, these deficiencies translate into levels of financial performance that are not self-sustaining. Financial self-sufficiency is becoming critical, as Pakistan's power industry is undergoing sweeping changes. These changes include transitioning from wholly Government-owned utilities to fully autonomous companies that will engage in power generation, transmission, and distribution under the Government's aggressive reform agenda. A similar industry structure exists and functions smoothly in many other

countries today. In Pakistan, however, outdated policies, procedures, and work practices, as well as low investment in infrastructure, pose barriers to a successful transition.

RESULTS

Over the course of the five-day exchange, the Pakistani delegation observed best practices in customer service and commercial operations. The UAE utilities shared many of the challenges experienced by those in Pakistan, and with varying levels of financial, technological, and human resources to solve those challenges. In addition to the core topics of the exchange, the delegation also discussed distribution loss reduction, operations, and training. These will improve the knowledge, skills, and understanding of best practices throughout Pakistan's electricity distribution system.



PDP delegates at the ADDC Customer Call Center

As a result of this program, the delegates were exposed to:

- Methods to assess and respond to customers' needs through **Customer Satisfaction Surveys** and **Complaints Management Processes**. ADDC implements quarterly surveys to gauge customer perception of service delivery and improve satisfaction. The surveys test for quality of service, competency of staff, and preference for payment and communication methods. Supervisors share survey results with employees to emphasize their role towards satisfying customers. The utility also implements action plans to ensure application of the recommended changes and a formal Complaints Management Process.
- **Guaranteed Service Standard** implemented by ADDC. The GS sets a specified minimum service levels that must be met for various services such as connections and meter disputes. Failure to meet the standards requires a payment to the affected customer
- **Key Performance Indicators** for customer service implemented by ADDC and DEWA, such as average waiting time and average serving time. Both utilities had a number of measures to ensure customer service quality, including 24 hour service, prompt response to customer, punctuality of staff, solving all problems at one time (including billing), and the importance of respecting the customer.
- Customer Service Centers **frontline services, cash services and technical support**
- **Technical and "soft skills" training** for customer service staff
- DEWA's **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)** implementation
- DEWA and ADDC's **Quality Management System (QMS)** for a centralized method for filing and processing complaints, customer service and billing.
- Methods to obtain **feedback** from customers, including surveys and direct interaction with customers.
- Various **payment systems** to ensure maximum efficiency and convenient for the customers, including cash kiosks or direct payment in customer service centers, check payment, online payment, and payment kiosks located around the city.
- Benefits of **Automatic Meter Reading (AMR)** which include reduced meter reading expenses, increased accuracy, improved reliability, and reduced likelihood of tampering or theft. It provides customers the flexibility to pre-pay for electricity, while empowering them to monitor usage online and track expenses.

As part of its strategy to support the role of women in society on all levels, DEWA has a **Women's Committee** which is committed to continuously engage its members through work and non-work related activities. The Committee focuses on training sessions designed to enhance members' engagement and achieve the perfect balance between personal and professional development. These activities have offered participants the opportunity to meet and benefit from industry professionals. The Committee also organizes a number of workshops as an ongoing effort to strengthen social networking amongst DEWA's staff in a multi-cultural environment. DEWA and ADDC also have a number of other **measures to support families**, including paid maternity leave, child care facilities located within the utility and flexible work hours.

Abu Dhabi Distribution Company and **Dubai Electricity & Water Authority** shared the following documents and best practices with the Pakistan executives:

- Electricity and water efficiency promotional materials
- Sample electricity bills
- Payment channels flyer
- Electricity connection application for new customer
- Application for load demand notification approval (permanent connection)
- Application for supply activation & meters installation
- Application for permanent connection
- Application for approval of electrical drawings
- Application for inspection of internal installations
- Meter reading, billing, and meter testing methodologies and process
- Training programs provided to utility customer service staff
- Change management training
- Customer Information Systems
- Customer service practices, including use of interactive voice recognition (IVR)

UTILITY EXCHANGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

1. Ms. Salma Gul, Commercial Assistant, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO)
2. Ms. Ishrat Rashid, Commercial Assistant, Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO)
3. Mrs. Amber Shah, Assistant Manager Customer Service, Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO)
4. Ms. Khursheed Bano Samo, Assistant Manager Commercial, Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO)
5. Mrs. Attiya Islam, Deputy Commercial Manager, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)
6. Ms. Shabih Sughra, Assistant Manager Customer Services, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)
7. Ms. Maria Zaheer, Revenue Officer, Gujranwala Electric Supply Company (GEPCO)
8. Mrs. Iram Saba, Additional DCM, Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO)
9. Ms. Farhana Rasheed, Assistant Manager - Commercial Operations, Application Developer, Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO)
10. Mrs. Uzma Jahanzeb, Assistant Manager Customer Service/ Revenue Officer, Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO)
11. Mrs. Fouzia Shamim, Assistant Manager Customer Service, Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO)
12. Ms. Zammarud Khoso, Assistant Engineer, Quetta Electric Supply Company (QESCO)
13. Mrs. Fouzia Shahid Gill, Data Entry Supervisor (MIS), Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO)

For additional information, please contact Sarah Blanford at sblanford@usea.org or +1-202-641-6112.