

**This is GWNET, the Global Women's Network for the Energy Transition. In cooperation with the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, we are bringing to you our Energy Transition Role Models.**

**Alejandra Campos:** I am Alejandra Campos, Co-founder and Coordinator of International Relations at the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Women's Network (REDMERE) and today I have the honor to interview Itzel Martínez Velasco

Itzel is an engineer in renewable energy, she is genuinely passionate about sustainable energy, and throughout her career, she has promoted renewable energy actively within her state. She is proudly Oaxacan, and her leadership and activism were rewarded with the Oaxacan Youth Award 2019. Moreover, Itzel is an active member of REDMERE and since 2017 she has been the co-founder of ENERGETEC, an enterprise that designs, sells, installs and implements solar energy projects.

Welcome Itzel and thank you for being here today to share with us your experience as a women energy entrepreneur in Mexico.

**Itzel Velasco:** Hi Alejandra, it is a pleasure to be here today, and I am overly excited about this interview and the opportunity to share with you my experiences in the energy sector. I hope this interview will motivate more women to be involved in the sustainable energy field.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, how has your journey to sustainable energy entrepreneurship in Mexico looked like?

**Itzel Velasco:** I think it is particularly important to know what happens behind any enterprise. We mostly focus on the bright side of a business, an SME, or a company. However, most of the time, we don't know what happened behind an enterprise. I define it as a rollercoaster, it has its ups and downs, but the process of becoming an entrepreneur is a journey full of excitement.

We began ENERGETEC with little capital, although that didn't stop us and we keep growing and expanding. For us, one of the most important things was selecting the right name. Through our brand, we want to send the correct message and promote sustainable energy in Oaxaca. Although the sustainable energy market in Oaxaca is growing, it is still developing. For that reason, we need to boost solar energy, and that is the first approach and objective of ENERGETEC when encouraging people to get to know our products and services.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, you had defined your endeavor as a roller coaster; in that sense, I would like to know what does success look like to you?

**Itzel Velasco:** I will define success as finding your passion and going after. Because we spend most of our time working in front of a screen, we forget to pursue happiness and those things that make us feel fulfilled.

I consider that I have achieved success, and I defined myself as a successful woman because I work with renewable energy. I can foster its usage and encourage women's participation in the energy sector; I am incredibly proud and happy about that.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, based on your experience in ENERGETEC, what are the opportunities and challenges for women wanting to make a difference as a sustainable energy entrepreneur?

I consider one of the main opportunities and challenges is to undertake the endeavor of entrepreneurship because many times we want to do it, we think about it, and we dream about it. We even say, "I want to do this," "I would like to do it," but we do not dare to do it. I think that is the main barrier for women. We need to decide and say: "I will do it because it is my passion because I like it, and I capable of doing it."

I think the main obstacle is daring, breaking stereotypes. These women who pursue a career in hard sciences, in STEM, they are breaking gender stereotypes, since the moment they decided to study a degree in these topics. They are telling the world, they are pursuing their passion, doing what they want, and that is studying engineering, renewable energy; those degrees that are men dominated.

Finally, I would talk about technical training, which is not gender mainstreamed. For example, the design of tools and equipment are for male bodies, something as simple as dielectric boots; it is challenging to find boots for women with the right size. Generally, when selecting equipment for women, it is implied that if it is pink color, it is automatically for women.

I firmly believe that technical training - that all, men, and women, should continuously take to update our knowledge, should be designed with a gender perspective.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, you had talked to us a lot about the challenges and hurdles, but what about the opportunities?

**Itzel Velasco:** Sure, opportunities in the energy sector are vast, Mexico is a country endowed with landscapes perfect for solar and wind energy generation, we have a lot to exploit. I believe renewables are unstoppable, they are already here and are increasingly present.

Undoubtedly, we need more women in the energy sector; we need them to lead energy companies, to open energy enterprises. The energy field is full of working opportunities, and as the demand increases, we will need more enterprises to attend such demand. A single organization is incapable of covering everything. There are many needs in the country; we are talking about energy poverty and distributed generation; those are invaluable opportunities.

Indeed, women leaders bring a broader perspective of social issues and a more comprehensive business vision, both necessary for advancing Mexico towards an adequate energy transition.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, as you stated, the energy sector is vibrant and dynamic, and it is full of opportunities for women. So, Itzel, can you share with us what has been your severest hurdle and your proudest success?

**Itzel Velasco:** I would like to connect both, the hurdle, and the success. For me, ENERGETEC has been my biggest challenge and my greatest achievement. The process of creating and developing the company has challenged me to do new things and face situations I didn't know were possible. Overall, I have acknowledged what teamwork is about; being part of a team, supporting each other. Somedays, you have nothing left but the love for your project. However, if you are with the right people, and have energy and passion for your work, undoubtedly success is guaranteed.

**Alejandra Campos:** And from your perspective Itzel, what are the opportunities and challenges for women wanting to make a difference as a sustainable energy entrepreneur?

**Itzel Velasco:** I think that supporting women entrepreneurs is crucial because it is more complicated for women starting a business, as you need to deal with other areas of life. It is also more difficult financially speaking because as part of bank requirements, you need to demonstrate your income level and sources, among other qualifications, and not all women, can do it. There are plenty of women that have an informal job, or whose main activities are related to their households because these gender stereotypes are still embedded in Mexican culture. Even though, we are trying to change it.

Some people want to start a business, but access to finance is not easy. On the other hand, for people that may access this credit, the credit granted is minimal, and it does not boost their business project. In that sense, the loan becomes a debt with high-interest rates that does not accomplish its objective.

**Alejandra Campos:** Itzel, I'm reflecting on what you mentioned about financing and credit access being critical for entrepreneurs.

And finally, Itzel, what message would you give to the next generation of women aspiring to become entrepreneurs in sustainable energy?

**Itzel Velasco:** Well, I hope this interview inspires you a lot, and from the bottom of my heart, I tell you that if you want to be an entrepreneur in the energy sector, do it! If it is your passion, pursue it! And above all, the world needs you! We need you to dare to do it. It is part of the energy transition that we are experiencing as a planet - to tackle the climate crisis, we need you to dare to do it! There are many areas that you can work on, and we need you where you have found your passion.

**Alejandra Campos:** Thank you very much, Itzel, it was truly inspiring and enriching for me to learn more about your experience as an entrepreneur and more about your company.

**Itzel Velasco:** Thank you very much, Alejandra, I am incredibly happy to share my experience with you. I think that it is part of a continuous learning process to be able to share my experiences, and I will continue learning from women in the sector whom I admire. I hope this network of supporting each other keeps going.

I say goodbye with excitement, being able to do this, and being able to inspire more women. If any of you want to talk or have a specific question, we can talk about it precisely, as REDMERE's motto says so well: together to make the energy sector stronger!

**Alejandra Campos:** Thank you very much for your time, Itzel, and see you soon!