

Renewable Energy Based Mini-Grids for Rural Areas in The Gambia

Background

The current shortage of reliable and affordable modern forms of energy in rural areas is one of the major barriers hampering overall socio-economic development in The Gambia. Recognising that extending the existing national grid to rural areas would not be economically viable, the Government of the Gambia has decided to achieve its rural electrification targets by the development of isolated mini-grids in rural areas.



The development of mini grids based on locally available sources of renewable energy as well as providing a valid alternative business model for the region, will have the added advantage of not locking The Gambia into a rural electrification infrastructure based on fossil fuels and therefore contributing to the avoidance of future GHG emissions.

However, the establishment of viable and functional renewable energy-powered mini grids in rural areas in The Gambia faces a number of barriers, some of which are specific to mini-grids and some which are specific to the use of renewable energy to power mini-grids. These problems are: lack of legal and regulatory framework, lack of institutional capacity to support key market players and awareness and lack of appreciation of technical feasibility and commercial viability of renewable energy mini grids.

This project is designed to offer a systematic approach to remove these and associated market barriers to enhance investments in renewable energy based mini-grids in rural areas of The Gambia.

Objective

To develop and promote a market environment that will stimulate investments in renewable energy based mini-grids for productive uses in rural areas of The Gambia.



Project Components

- Install renewable energy based mini grid capacity of at least 1.5 MW. This will be implemented on 3 different sites to demonstrate the technical and economic viability of renewable energy based mini-grids for productive uses in rural areas under various circumstances.
- Promote scaling up renewable energy based mini-grid investments through a detailed investment strategy, as well as outreach and awareness raising for key market players.
- Strengthen the legal and regulatory framework and institutional capacity to support investments in renewable energy based mini-grids.
- Draft and present a policy and regulatory framework document to the national authorities.
- Training programmes for the Gambia Renewable Energy Centre and other support institutions.

Executing Partners/Agencies at National Level

The executing partners/agencies in this project are the Gambia Renewable Energy Centre (GREC), the Ministry of Energy, the National Environment Agency (NEA), and the National Water and Electricity Company.

Project Budget

GEF – US\$ 2 million (including PPG and agency fees); Co-financing – US\$ 4 million

Progress

- 450 kW grid-connected wind generator was installed and put into operation.
- Draft of Electricity Sector Plan and Renewable Energy Law is being finalized.
- Training and awareness raising programmes for the policy-makers and private sector were organized.
- Connection of 450 kW wind turbine is in progress.

Activities	Timeframe	
CEO Endorsement	July	2011
Implementation Start	July	2011
Mid-term Evaluation	January	2013
Project Closing Date	June	2014

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