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Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, March 18, 2022-- IFC has begun work with the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to bring clean, solar energy to over 1.5 million homes, businesses, schools, and clinics in the country under the World Bank Group's Scaling Mini-Grid (SMG) program.

The SMG program was designed to help the DRC and other emerging countries establish public-private partnership mini-grids to bring low cost, renewable energy to consumers. In the DRC, the program expects to secure funding of \$400 million this year from private investors to deploy 180 megawatts of installed solar PV capacity to the cities of Mbuji-Mayi and Kananga.

As part of the project, IFC and the DRC government partners have met with local authorities in Kasai-Oriental and Kasai-Central provinces, launched studies to assess local electricity demand in the region, and have begun identifying potential sites where solar photovoltaic (PV) plants will be installed.

Only about 19 percent of the DRC's population had access to electricity in 2019 according to World Bank data, underscoring the urgent need for increased power production and distribution to reach consumers and meet the government's target of connecting 30 percent by 2024.

"Renewable energy is a priority sector for the DRC government to foster growth, income generation and job creation, while supporting the ambitious goal of providing universal access to electricity," said Olivier Mwenze Mukaleng, the DRC Minister of Hydraulic Resources and Electricity. "We look forward to leveraging the WBG Scaling Mini-Grid's platform to electrify more than 100 cities ranging from 50,000 to 3 million inhabitants across DRC's 145 territories."

"IFC is proud to help the DRC increase electricity access through the Scaling Mini-Grid program," said Sylvain Kakou, IFC's Country Manager for Central Africa. "Championing the power sector in Africa is crucial to spur development and the private sector will be front and center of that drive."

Green mini grids are powered by a clean energy source--usually solar PV--combined with battery storage and a local smart distribution system, and bring power to homes, industry, and businesses alike. While the market remains in its early stages, innovations in technology and business models, coupled with declining costs, are making them an increasingly relevant solution in Africa, with the potential to connect 30 percent of the Africans gaining access to electricity by 2030.

The SMG project in the DRC also features a number of innovations, including a first-of-a-kind minimum revenue guarantee that aims to help de-risk and unlock further private investments in the space.

This report explains the main barriers to scaling up green mini-grids in Sub Saharan Africa and how developers are overcoming these barriers. It also makes recommendations on how the African Development Bank can support the mini-grid sector.

The \$1.5 million investment is provided in equal parts by E3 Capital (formerly Energy Access Ventures), Renewable Energy Performance Platform (REPP) and Proparco, the private sector financing arm of the French Development Agency (AFD). This investment is part of a series B fundraising launched by Nuru to support the development of its activities in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

In this central African country, Nuru has installed the first ever urban solar mini-grid in Goma, a city located in the North Kivu province. By opening its capital to a consortium of international investors, the company aims to develop an installed capacity of 13.7 MWp in the cities of Goma, Kindu in the province of Maniema and Bunia in the province of Ituri.

“Nuru is delighted to have partners like REPP, Proparco and E3 Capital giving us the means to provide life-changing energy access in an extremely challenging environment,” says Jonathan Shaw, Nuru’s co-founder and CEO. The Goma-based company already has an installed capacity of 1.7 MWp supplying people, industries and businesses.

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