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Established to incentivise developers to increase the speed and scale at which clean energy access is achieved across sub-Saharan Africa, the UEF is a multi-donor results-based finance (RBF) facility managed by Sustainable Energy for All. It seeks to accelerate progress aligned with Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG7) and the Paris Agreement. The UEF is operating across a number of sub-Saharan countries. In this instance, the project will benefit from grant funding from the UEF on a per-connection basis.

InfraCo Africa's Asset Manager Amine Amar, currently leading the Sierra Leone Mini-Grid project, said: "We are delighted to be continuing our strong relationship with PowerGen as we develop and deliver clean energy access for more communities in Sierra Leone. Having commissioned mini grids in forty communities which now serve over 13,000 customers, we can clearly see the impact that access to energy has for businesses, households and clinics in rural Sierra Leone."

InfraCo Africa and PowerGen have been working together in Sierra Leone since 2019, rolling out solar hybrid mini grids across the south and east of the country as part of the country-wide Rural Renewable Energy Project (REPP). As the RREP draws to a close, the Government of Sierra Leone remains committed to the country's growing off-grid energy sector.

Damilola Ogunbiyi, CEO and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All and Co-Chair of UN-Energy, said: "The Universal Energy Facility will help improve electricity access in communities across Sierra Leone. Mini grids supported by the facility will power households and businesses, creating jobs and economic growth within these communities."

PowerGen and InfraCo Africa will draw on their experience of delivering mini grids in rural and remote locations to high standards of health, safety, environmental and social governance, with the construction of the first UEF-supported sites expected to commence in March 2023.

The PV project in Sierra Leone received part funding of \$9 million from the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development (ADFD), which has partnered with International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) to support clean power generation in Africa.

To date, Sierra Leone has made a number of steps to commence the implementation of the project. They include ratification of the ADFD loan by the government, establishment of a working Project Implementation Unit (PIU) and the re-appointment of the UAE-based Advanced Science and Innovation Company (ASIC) LLC as project manager and EPC.

According to the announcement, the project team has prepared a step-by-step plan for the work on the ground, which includes selection and sourcing of local contractors and setting up of a project camp for the

workforce. To be able to successfully connect the plant to the main power grid, developers are planning to construct a 161KV transmission line.

Relatively small on a global scale, a 6 MW solar park in Freetown is a significant landmark in the development of the solar PV sector in West Africa. ?This important project will place Sierra Leone on the global map of sustainable Renewable Energy and provide valuable knowledge transfer and necessary supporting infrastructure,? Minister of Energy of Sierra Leone Henry Macauley said in the announcement.

Earlier this year IRENA and ADFD announced a loan package of \$43 million for clean energy projects in Antigua and Barbuda (\$15 million for 4 MW wind and solar project), Burkina Faso (\$10 million for 3.6 MW PV mini-grid), Cape Verde (\$8 million for 2 MW solar PV and wind hybrid) and Senegal (\$13 million for 2 MW PV mini-grid).

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