

Ngos ghana solar energy rural areas

Turning on the lights by flicking a switch is a routine act for most people in the world. However, for many people in the developing world, electricity is still considered a luxury with more than 1.1 billion people currently living without daily access to modern energy sources.

Building on the success of the African Rural Energy Enterprise Development (AREED) project, UNEP DTU Partnership is now part of distributing reflow funds to social enterprises working with clean and renewable energy throughout the continent.

Electric light enables children to study in the evenings and adds to the feeling of safety around the household, the substitution of conventional light sources, such as petroleum lamps, improves indoor air quality, electricity can power small devices such as radios and fans and perhaps even help the household generate income from activities such as hair dressing or the sale of refrigerated goods.

Sustainable Development Goal no. 7 calls for universal access to sustainable energy by 2030, but with current projections estimating roughly 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa to remain without access, the challenge of achieving the goal is formidable.

For over a decade, from 2000 until 2012, UNEP DTU Partnership collaborated with five African NGOs to help overcome barriers to clean and sustainable energy supply for rural households in Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia.

The project sought to alleviate the lack of affordable finance for both companies and end-users, which is considered a main barrier for the provision of clean energy services in most developing countries.

The work of UNEP DTU Partnerships and its five African NGO partners through AREED was successful in providing financial and technical support to prospective energy entrepreneurs. As a result, roughly 660,000 USD was paid back by enterprises receiving loans through AREED.

To further build on experience gained during AREED, it was decided to distribute the reflow funds equally among the five NGOs for them to develop a business proposal for a social energy enterprise.

The proposals underwent a process of evaluation by UNEP DTU Partnership as well as by an externally contracted consultant, with expertise on entrepreneurship and business development in an African context. In the end, five business plans have emerged that all address the issue of improving access to modern energy services for the rural population in Africa.

Mali-Folkecenter (MFC) was the project partner of AREED in Mali and has designed a business plan building



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on lessons learned from AREED to distribute small solar products to rural citizens of Mali.

The idea is to cooperate with a rural electrification company and a micro-finance institution to help facilitate the purchase of products by end-users. The project has already purchased and started the sales of an initial batch of roughly 3,300 solar products and expects to reach 17,000 households within three years.

Profits will be reinvested into the business to facilitate further scaling up the endeavour. The project brings various benefits such as jobs creation through the sale and distribution of products, improving conditions for women as many selling points are anchored in women cooperatives, and reduced CO2 emissions.

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