

PROMOTING GAINS IN RENEWABLE ENERGY IN WEST AFRICA



Strengthening capacities for action research, outreach and dialogue in small-scale renewable energy.

Delivering accessible and affordable electricity is a challenge faced by many West African countries especially in the rural areas where people are reliant on wood and charcoal for cooking and lighting. This challenge is exacerbated by rapid population growth and the accompanying rise in energy demand.

Recent innovations in green energy, falling equipment prices, environmental benefits, and widespread availability demonstrate the tremendous value that access to renewable energy can bring to local communities, for green job creation and for improving economic growth and performance in the region. Despite this enormous potential, however, expansion of renewable energy in West Africa remains complex and challenging.

To understand what these challenges are and why they exist, START, with support from the Fond de recherche du Quebec, is implementing a multi-year project, Promoting Gains in Renewable Energy (ProGREEN) in West Africa focusing on Francophone countries. The project seeks to address the question: *How can small-scale renewable energy systems contribute to broader energy transition in West Africa?*

For the first phase of the project, an assessment effort is being conducted in Burkina Faso and Senegal with

multi-disciplinary experts from universities, the public and private sectors, and civil society.

The two country teams are exploring:

- the key enabling and constraining factors that influence the development of small-scale renewable energy systems, including solar, and bioenergy, in the region, and
- how access to renewable energy impacts the wellbeing and security of communities in terms of water and food security and other important development priorities related to health, education, gender and youth.

Results of this assessment are expected at the end of 2019 and will include key messages for informing relevant actors and institutions working in renewable energy and recommendations for applying lessons learned in West Africa. It will also identify critical knowledge gaps that will then be addressed in the second phase of the project that will emphasize action-research.

Through this project, START works to strengthen capacities and support networking efforts of early-career professionals from West Africa through engaging them in experiential learning and providing opportunities to connect with scientists and other experts from across Africa around critical research needs identified with the assessment in phase one.





“ProGREEN stands out for its holistic and inclusive approach to analyzing the renewable energy sector. With its retrospective and introspective look at the sector of renewable energies, it will inform both decision-makers and practitioners.”

- Yvonne Faye, Managing Director, énergie R, Senegal



“ProGREEN’s evaluation efforts will shed light on renewable energy projects, and on what all actors are doing in this sector. This information will help us better plan for future projects to ensure their technical, financial and institutional sustainability.”

- Salif Sow, Researcher, Ecole Supérieure Polytechnique de Dakar/ SEA4Cities project, Senegal

2019 HIGHLIGHTS



Following months of data collection on projects and programs relating to renewable energy in Burkina Faso, the ProGREEN team prioritized the villages of Ziga, Ziga Hameau, Filli and Lèba in the province of Yatenga, Northern Region for interviewing beneficiaries of solar energy projects, and the villages of Dedougou and Tcheriba in the Boucle du Mouhoun Region and Dano and Ouessa in the province of Loba, South West Region for interviewing beneficiaries of bioenergy programs.



Prior to the field work, in July 2019 the Burkina Faso ProGREEN team trained nine Masters students from the Applied Sciences Training and Research Unit of the University Joseph KI-ZERBO, Ouagadougou Burkina Faso, in conducting data collection. The training session took place in July and was facilitated by Dr. Adama Ouedraogo, a lecturer, CUP-Kaya, and Mr. Da Lin, a specialist in monitoring and evaluation at the National Program of Biodigester, both members of the Burkina Faso ProGREEN team.



The Senegal ProGREEN team conducted field data collection in August 2019. The first phase of the field visits was to meet project managers of renewable energy programs. Subsequently, ProGREEN team members visited communities in Thies, Louga, Saint Louis, Fatick, Kaolack, Kaffrine, Ziguinchor, Sédhiou and Kolda to meet stakeholders utilizing improved cook stoves, biodigesters, biofuels and otherwise involved with solar energy projects.