

Ghana community microgrids

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At a ceremony at Atigagome in the Sene East District in Ghana, the Ministry of Energy has officially handed over five pilot mini-grid systems to the energy utility Volta River Authority (VRA) on 29th June, 2018 in pursuit of bringing electricity to the remaining remote communities in Ghana, particularly the isolated lakeside and island communities along the Volta Lake.

The remoteness of the communities speaks from the journey from Accra to the Krachi West East, which took 8 hours by road and 1 hour by boat crossing to Atigagome - and a walking journey of 30 minutes from Atigagome to Wayokope.

About 17% of Ghana's population, or 5 million people, do not have access to electricity, with 2.9 million of them residing in lakeside and island communities created by the Akosombo Dam in the Volta river, which was built in 1965. While the benefits of electricity to these communities are huge (for example for access to cold drinking water, listening to the radio, charging phones or watching television), targeting these communities with conventional grid extensions is practically impossible seeing the costs of such investments.

The World Bank therefore funded the construction of the five pilot mini-grids under the Ghana Energy Development and Access Project (GEDAP). These solar projects have a total of about 200kW and are expected to provide 24-hour electricity to about 3,500 residents of the 5 island communities of Kudorkope, Aglakope, Atigagome, Wayokope and Pediatorkope in the Sene East, Krachi West, Krachi East and Ada districts.

Following the formal handover ceremony, VRA is now responsible to operate, manage and maintain the mini-grid systems. The GEDAP Project Coordinator, Ing. Tonto Andrew Baffour justified the transfer by explaining that the VRA has the capacity and resilience to ensure sustainability, with experience in the management and maintenance of similar solar projects, such as the 2.5MW Novrongo Solar project in the Upper East Region.

The representative of the Chief Director of the Ministry of Energy, Mr. Seth Osei Agyen mentioned that given the positive impact of the pilot project, the government of Ghana intends to expand off-grid electricity services to 55 more communities under the Scale up of Renewable Energy Programme. He also explained that the Government has secured grant funding from the Swiss government (through SECO) to install three additional mini-grid systems in Aflive, Alokpem and Azizakpe island communities, all in the Ada East District.

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