

## Guinea energy storage for resilience

Faced with major climate and development challenges, access to renewable energy has become vital for hundreds of millions of Sahelians. In the Sahel, a region endowed with enormous potential, UNDP has set the ambitious goal of providing more than 150 million people with access to clean and affordable energy by 2025.

In a mountainous landscape surrounded by dense vegetation and numerous watercourses, the isolated villages of western Guinea in the forest region seem to move backwards in time. However, on this land with abundant rainfall and natural resources, several communities have managed to bridge the energy gap thanks to renewable energy.

In Guinea, energy access stands at 18.1 percent, with 47.8 percent in urban areas and 2 percent in rural areas. As consumption is concentrated in urban areas, rural households have almost no access to energy.

Thanks to the construction of hydroelectric dams, hundreds of inhabitants of the villages of Firadou and Bolodou, separated by about 50 kilometres, now benefit from uninterrupted electricity supply.

"Now we have power outlets in our homes to charge our phones and use electronic devices. We have light to carry out our activities at night. We can even watch television for information or entertainment," enthuses a Firadou resident. Here, the power plant installed in 2017 and expanded in 2021 produces 43 KVA of electricity and 60 KVA in Bolodou, according to the UNDP representative in Guinea.

These renewable energy projects were initiated by young people who were tired of being disconnected and wanted to provide energy for their communities. Prototypes were first made with available resources, and subsequently, UNDP supported these local initiatives and helped them expand.

"Rather than limiting ourselves to access to electricity, we asked ourselves what we could do with this energy. With the reservoir of the hydroelectric dams, fish farming sites have been set up to enhance the food security of the population. Small businesses selling refrigerated drinks or food have also been created." - Mamadou Cir? Camara, Environment and Sustainable Development Programme Officer, UNDP Guinea

"Renewable energy creates jobs for young people. I hope that authorities and donors will continue to support us because there is still much to be done. We have the ideas but not always the means," says Fara Santos Kamano, an electrician at the Bolodou hydroelectric power plant.

In contrast, The Gambia, the smallest country in mainland Africa, has already achieved self-sufficiency in electricity and is a leader in addressing climate change. It is also an example for other Sahelian countries.

The country of about 2.6 million inhabitants is building a super photovoltaic park to produce 250 MW by the



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end of 2025, not only to meet domestic needs but also to supply energy to its West African neighbours. Solar-powered systems are also being installed in over a thousand public schools and health facilities.

Civil society is also taking part in the renewable energy transition and driving initiatives to accelerate community development. This change in mentality and usage requires awareness and training.

In the coastal village of Kartong in the southwest of the country, the "Fandema" project, which means "to help oneself" in the Mandingo dialect, enables hundreds of young women to train in renewable energy fields, such as photovoltaics.

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