

Case Study: Energy Access Market Activation Sierra Leone

Working in partnership with the Sierra Leone government, Power for All and a multistakeholder taskforce of partners launched the Energy Revolution, a campaign to achieve basic-level electricity access for the country by 2025. The national taskforce, coordinated by Power for All, took an ecosystem approach that identified and removed barriers to growing the decentralized renewable energy sector.

CHALLENGE

Less than 10 percent of people in Sierra Leone have access to the grid. In rural areas, the number is less than 2 percent. Those without electricity rely on expensive battery-powered torches, candles and kerosene lamps simply to light their homes—costing about 15 percent of their annual household income. Given time and financial constraints, it is not possible to reach everyone in Sierra Leone with conventional grid solutions in the next 10 or even 20 years.

SOLUTION

To address this challenge, the Sierra Leone government, DFID and a core group of partners launched the market-based **Energy Revolution** in May 2016, a bold vision to achieve basic-level universal electricity access for Sierra Leone's 7.4 million people by 2025, with interim goals of distributing 250,000 home solar products by 2017 and delivering modern power to 1 million people by 2020.

To achieve that goal, and to bridge the gap between vision and market growth, a multistakeholder **Energy Revolution Taskforce** was created, with Power for All serving as coordinator, to develop the policy and finance ecosystem needed to build the decentralized renewable energy sector. The Taskforce convened a working group of key institutions—government agencies (energy, finance, customs, standards), private sector representatives, donors, financial entities and civil society—to identify and remove barriers to market growth for solar home systems (SHS).




RESULTS

The Energy Revolution Taskforce achieved significant impact:

- In less than two years, the market grew by 900%, with imports of solar home products going from 2,000 in the first half of 2016 to more than 20,000 units by the end of 2017
- A VAT exemption for solar home products was fast-tracked, and a streamlined green lane process was implemented for rapid product clearance through customs, reducing delays from 6-8 weeks to 5 days
- The taskforce attracted international companies to come to Sierra Leone, including Total (Awango), Azuri, Greenlight Planet, d.light, BBOXX, Ignite, Barefoot Power, and facilitated the creation of the country's first private sector industry body, the Renewable Energy Association of Sierra Leone
- A national awareness campaign resulted in significant improvements in the volume and tone of media coverage of the DRE sector—the number of stories went up 11x in Sierra Leone in an 18 month period
- Significant consumer demand was generated and energy literacy improved through nationwide product roadshows, recruiting the support and involvement of the country's 149 chiefs

The Sierra Leone approach--called Target-Task-Transform (TTT)--is currently being expanded beyond solar home systems, to include market activation for the broader distributed renewable energy ecosystem, including mini-grids, productive use applications as well as capacity building to unlock in-country financing. With strategic partners, Power for All is also working to apply the TTT model to 25 low energy access countries by 2025.

A group of children in yellow school uniforms are holding up boxes of solar lamps. The boxes are yellow and white, with a circular solar panel and a light bulb. The children are smiling and looking at the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing more children and the interior of a building.

“This [taskforce] approach is unique and has been very effective in handling energy access for the country... we’ve found that the messaging and impact is better made when you have all hands on deck... Power for All [is] filling in gaps and pushing the Energy Revolution.”

- Sierra Leone’s Ministry of Energy, Henry Macauley