

Groundbreaking Handing Over of five sites to Private Operator

8th October 2020, is a groundbreaking milestone for the Rural Renewable Energy Project (RREP) as the first five of 44 sites in Work Package 2 were officially handed over to one private operator working with the Government of Sierra Leone. The Minister of Energy, Hon Alhaji Kanja Sesay officially handed over the sites to Off-Grid Power or PowerGen who are operating in Lot 1 and 2 of the RREP sites. In the project, public-private partnership agreement signed with the Ministry of Energy each operator is operating in different areas allocated by Lots. I.e. Lot 1 and 2 operated by OGP/PowerGen; Lot 3 operated by Winch energy and Lot 4 operated by Enercity/Power Leone. This is to ensure long term sustainability of the project.

During the official handing over, the Hon Alhaji Kanja Sesay, Minister of Energy applauded the project saying “the program is a priority to the Ministry and the Government because it will change the access rate of energy in the country and support the human capital development across all sectors”. So far, UNOPS has implemented the distribution networks in these locations and the private sector partner will develop the power plant generation and later handover the system to the Government after 20 years of operating and maintaining the mini-grids. It will then become an asset of the Government. These distribution networks would extend the electricity access to houses, schools and businesses in the various villages. All 44 mini-grid installation works will be completed by end of 2020. Through this project, the private sector operators (Winch Energy, PowerGen and Power Leone) at the international level is involved to operate and maintain these mini-grids while co-investing with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) formerly DFID. Speaking at the handing over, UNOPS Country Manager Mr Nick Gardner said “Co-investment is the new way of development funding and would probably be in the future and in Sierra Leone. We are setting the pace in the mini-grid sector because no one has done this before using this model anywhere in Africa”

The RREP's aims to provide up to 4 megawatts of sustainable renewable electricity to 346,000 people in rural communities of Sierra Leone whilst strengthening and supporting productive use of the electricity in the mini-grid catchment areas. This is envisaged to contribute to economic growth through stimulating entrepreneurial activities that can strengthen supply chains e.g. in the fisheries and agriculture sectors and expansion of existing commercial entities, which will, in turn, create jobs and increase incomes. Social benefits will be realised through secondary benefits of the project such as access to improved health care; education and incomes within the communities.