



The African Mini-Grids Community of Practice



African Mini-Grids Community of Practice (AMG-COP) members at their second meeting, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Who are we?

The Africa LEADS Partnership (AfLP) is a membership-driven partnership comprising African governments, NGOs, project developers, and researchers. It was established to respond to the growing interest of African countries in the design and implementation of low emission development strategies (LEDS) that promote climate compatible economic growth within the region. The AfLP is one of four regional partnerships of the Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership (LEDS GP). The LEDS GP was founded in 2011 to facilitate peer learning, technical cooperation, and information exchange on the formation and implementation of climate-resilient, low-emission development strategies.

Why an African Mini-Grids Community of Practice?

Over 600 million people in Africa lack access to electricity. This energy poverty imposes a significant social and economic burden on communities, affecting their access to education and health services, as well as adversely impacting economic productivity. Mini-grids offer an opportunity to fill this supply gap, bringing electricity to areas underserved or not served at all by the centralized grid. In many places, mini-grids are the most affordable, reliable, and sustainable electrification option. Mini-grids based on renewable energy sources can help countries reach their overall development goals, energy-sector objectives, and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. However, despite their tremendous potential, uptake of mini-grids is slow, investment risks are high, and business models remain largely unproven.



In response to this challenge, the African Mini-Grids Community of Practice (AMG-COP) was convened in June 2017 at the Africa Carbon Forum in Cotonou, Benin to provide a peer-to-peer working group for African government leaders committed to scaling up mini-grid policies and systems in their countries. The AMG-COP is an initiative of the Africa LEDS Partnership (AfLP) supported by the LEDS GP Energy Working Group and Finance Working Group.

Who are the members of the African Mini-Grids Community of Practice?

The AMG-COP brings together African government representatives from departments such as the ministries of energy and environment, rural electrification agencies, and national energy commissions, with representatives from the private sector, academia, and international organizations that design, finance, and implement mini-grid systems. Country governments currently participating in the AMG-COP are: Ghana, Liberia, Namibia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Zambia. Experts, both regional and international, in specific areas – such as regulation, modeling, and finance – are called in for specific sessions requested by COP members. If you are interested in engaging with the AMG-COP or becoming a member please contact africasecretariat@ledsgp.org.

The AMG-COP is committed to partnering and collaborating with existing initiatives to maximize the impact and usefulness of all resources available to government officials and practitioners working on mini-grids in Africa, while careful not to duplicate other mini-grid initiatives or to support programs operating within the continent. The AfLP is well positioned in this regard, as fundamentally, it is a partnership of governments and practitioners working together toward common goals.

What will the African Mini-Grids Community of Practice do?

The goal of the AMG-COP is to advance the application of mini-grids as a key energy access and economic development solution that assists countries in achieving their economic, social development, and energy sector goals, as well as their NDCs. Governmental leads charged with exploring mini-grid systems typically need to answer a wide range of highly complex questions. Our work plan is based on addressing these challenges in the following areas:

- designing effective policies and enabling regulatory environments to foster strong collaboration and partnership between public and private sectors;
- evaluating and promoting proven business and ownership models and best practices to drive toward commercial viability;
- accessing finance, including engagement with the private sector, and developing bankable project proposals and regulatory frameworks that de-risk and attract private sector investment.

For African policy-makers and implementers, the AMG-COP offers a valuable opportunity to:

- engage with the private sector development and investment community to understand what is needed to unlock private investment and accelerate financial flows;
- learn from fellow African governments as well as mini-grid pioneers from around the world to design policy and regulatory frameworks and create enabling environments that leverage mini-grids to meet national developmental, electrification, and climate change mitigation objectives;
- access new tools and technical assistance to develop country-specific, tailored policy, market, and finance solutions.



A community of practice approach was favored over conventional knowledge-sharing networks that tend to engage in top-down development assistance. A community of practice comprises a network of engaged experts and practitioners from a shared sector or working area who form a group to regularly engage in peer-to-peer learning to improve their personal and collective group knowledge. They promote forms of exchange both inside and outside of formal communication channels and provide an inclusive, member-driven experience.

How will the AMG-COP operate?

The AMG-COP is a member-led initiative supported by the Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership (LEDS GP). The LEDS Energy Working Group and the LEDS Finance Working Group will lead technical assistance in the focus areas of policy and finance, respectively, using a predominantly peer-to-peer learning approach that utilizes existing capacity and expertise within the continent. Where expertise is needed beyond that contained within the AMG-COP, the technical leads will identify local, regional, and international experts who will provide training, engage in discussions, and undertake in-country capacity-building on the priority topics identified.

AMG-COP member countries are at various stages of mini-grid development and implementation. The work program of the COP is therefore designed to address these diverse needs: those countries that are leading in mini-grid implementation within the region supporting technical assistance work by sharing their experiences and knowledge with those members at earlier stages of mini-grid development. This will be done through bilateral and direct country technical assistance interventions, as well as larger in-person and remote group capacity-building training sessions. The direct assistance work will feed back to the wider COP group through workshops, webinars, and knowledge products such as case studies and guides that capture country and practitioner learning and experience.

Urgent action is needed to accomplish the ambitious electrification and climate change mitigation and resilience objectives that AMG-COP members have identified as part of their NDC commitments. The AMG-COP seeks to capture and disseminate key, real-time learning from the rapidly evolving mini-grid policy and finance arenas through direct peer-to-peer engagement and exchange.

If you are interested in joining with the AMG-COP or becoming a member, please contact africasecretariat@ledsgp.org. For further information on the AfLP including on how to become a member, please visit www.africaledspartnerhip.org.

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