

# CATALYZING GENDER EQUALITY- FOCUSED CLEAN ENERGY DEVELOPMENT IN WEST AFRICA



ECOWAS nations realize that the inclusion of more women will open up new perspectives and avenues for problem solving. *Photo courtesy of ECOWAS*

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The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) brings together 15 countries in West Africa to support regional collaboration and policymaking. Within a broader portfolio of activities, ECOWAS members are taking significant action to catalyze gender equality-focused clean energy development.

ECOWAS nations recognize that gender and energy development are deeply interconnected and action across the two is necessary to address energy poverty and energy access challenges in the region. Integrated action across gender and energy will position the region to achieve key objectives of the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) Initiative and crucial Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), as highlighted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals linked to gender equality and clean energy development

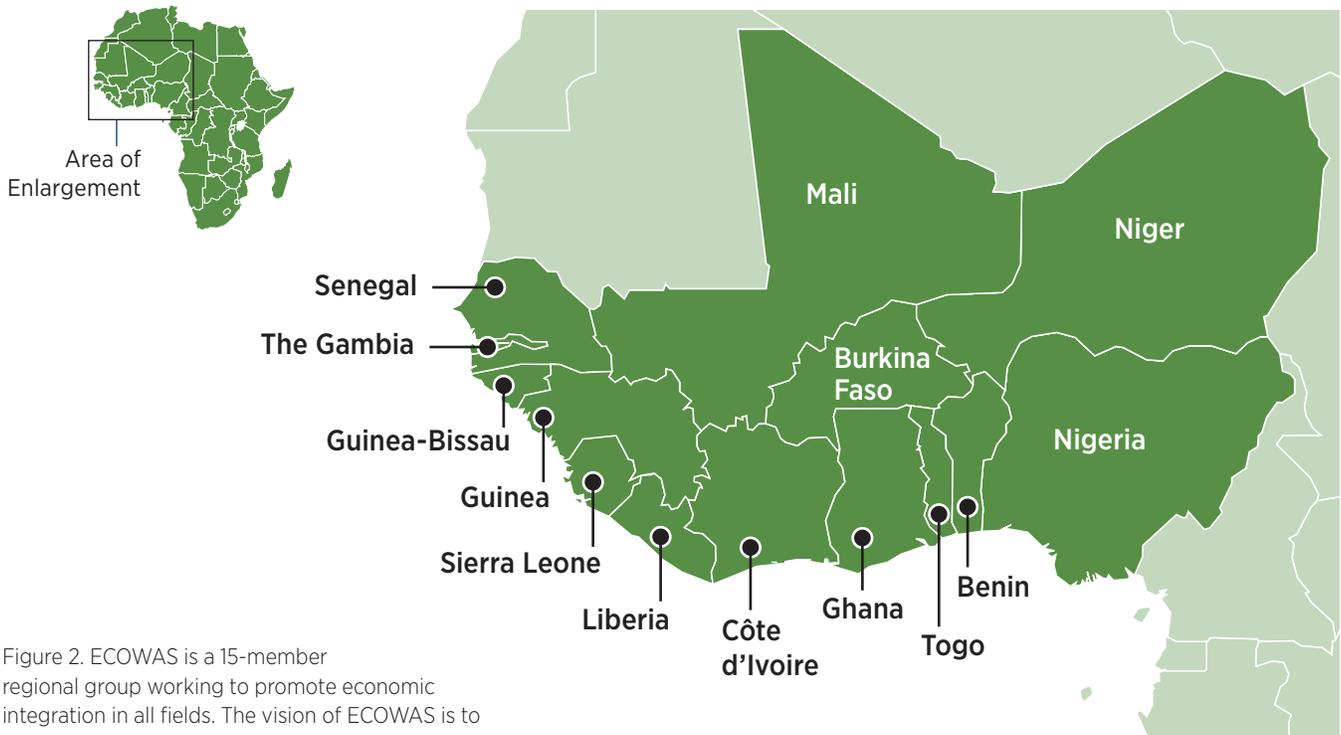


Figure 2. ECOWAS is a 15-member regional group working to promote economic integration in all fields. The vision of ECOWAS is to create a borderless region where the population has access to its abundant resources and can create sustainable opportunities.



ECOWAS member states seek to catalyze gender equality-focused clean energy development.  
 Photo courtesy of ECOWAS

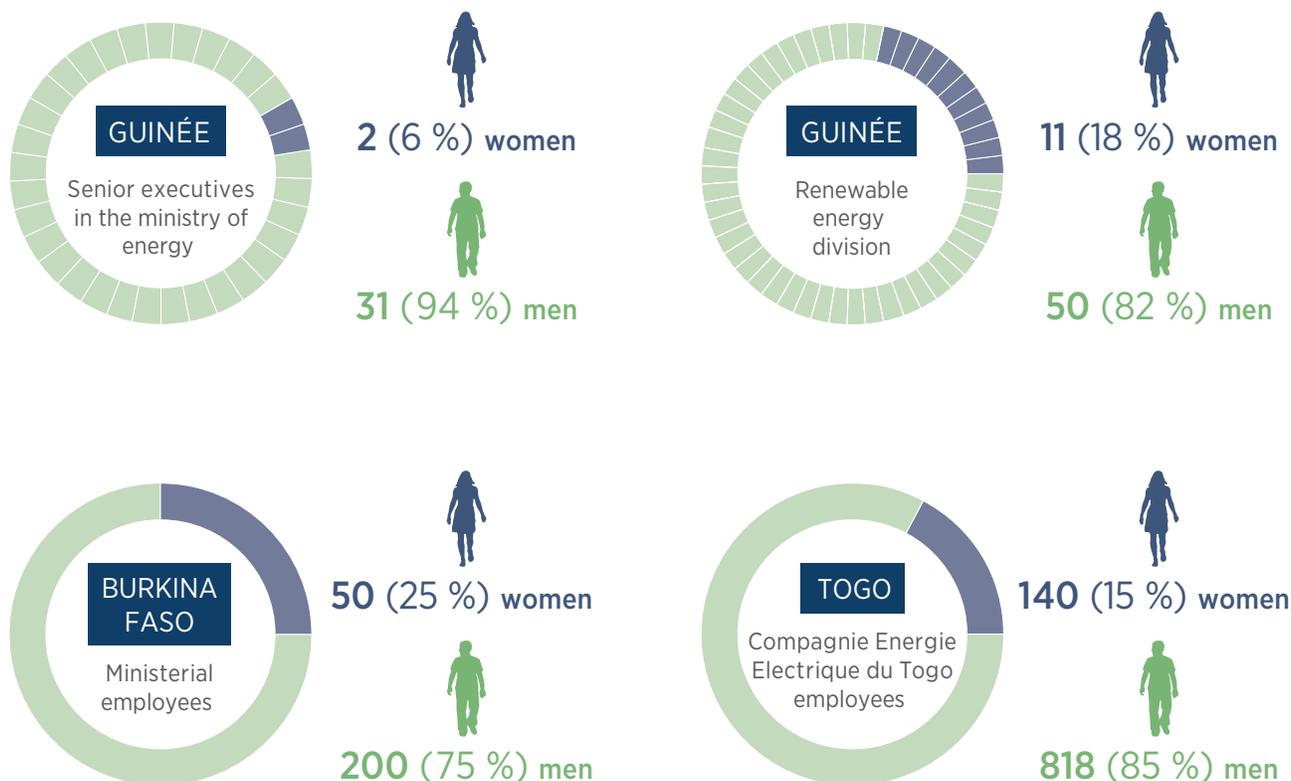


Figure 3. In energy ministries, there is large presence of women in secretarial, accounting, human resources and other administrative positions but men hold most of the technical and managerial positions. Image courtesy of ECOWAS

Within this context, the ECOWAS Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) partnered with the Clean Energy Solutions Center (Solutions Center), the African Development Bank and other institutions to develop a Situation Analysis of Energy and Gender Issues in ECOWAS Member States. Through a systematic approach to assess interlinked gender and energy issues in the region, the report puts forth a number of key findings. In particular, the analysis finds that women in the region continue to be less represented within the energy decision-making sphere (as highlighted in Figure 2) and energy access challenges often negatively impact their human rights. Further, the study reveals that although women will be disproportionately more affected by climate change, they possess relatively limited influence on key decisions related to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This finding reiterates the need for gender equality to be integrated as a critical step to combat climate change, as articulated by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The Situation Analysis highlights the need for an effective communication strategy to present the findings to high-level decision makers and other key stakeholders. To address this need, concise and compelling messaging underpinned by the robust analysis put forth in the report was developed by the project team to build support among ECOWAS member countries. Findings of the report and key messages were presented during an inception workshop in February 2015 hosted by the African Development Bank in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.



Photo courtesy of ECOWAS

The push for women's participation goes beyond fairness, but it is rather to enhance the effectiveness of interventions as their participation ensures that the decision-making processes that influence energy access is based on a balanced and informed dialogue. Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence that at the community level women's participation in the supply chain increases the adoption rate of clean energy technologies by female users, thus a balanced workforce is 'smart economics.'

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## Impact of the Partnership

By providing key insights on gender-responsive energy development actions and strategies, the Situation Analysis laid the critical groundwork for the ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access. This transformational policy was validated during a diverse and inclusive stakeholder workshop in June 2015 and is expected to be adopted by ECOWAS member countries in 2017. The policy identifies urgent challenges related to energy and gender that can be addressed with feasible solutions and integrates current policies and commitments to gender equality adopted by ECOWAS countries. Specifically, the policy puts forth the strategic objectives and key actions outlined in figure 3.



Attendees at an ECOWAS stakeholder workshop in June 2015. *Photos courtesy of ECOWAS*

Achieve widespread understanding of energy and gender considerations at all levels of society.

- Official recognition of gender and energy considerations
- Promotion of increased scientific understanding
- Widespread awareness of issues among non-state actors including the private sector, international financial institutions, civil society and the general public.

Ensure that all energy policies, programmes and initiatives are non-discriminatory, gender-inclusive, gender-balanced and directed towards addressing energy poverty differentially affecting women and men in the region.

- More precise, regular, timely and results-oriented data collection and evaluation methods that promote disaggregation by sex, age and socio-economic background
- Enhanced profiles and capabilities for gender focal units in the national energy ministries
- Agency-wide sensitization and adoption of new and gender-responsive practices
- Strengthening of the feedback mechanisms from a gender-inclusive electorate.

Increase women's public sector participation in energy-related technical fields and decision-making positions to a level of at least 25% in the medium term and 50% in the long term.

- Education and training for women in science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields
- Specific pre-career pathways created at educational institutions, energy ministries and other public sector agencies
- Creating incentives (monetary and programmatic) to increase the number of women pursuing energy-related careers.

Ensure women and men have equal access and opportunities to enter and succeed in energy-related fields in the private sector.

- Advertising and promoting business, employment, and contract opportunities for women in the energy sector
- Establishing and supporting programmes that offer relevant technical/vocational training, entrepreneurship/management training and gender-aware finance.

Establish and maintain a comprehensive monitoring and accountability framework.

- Monitoring plans and reporting procedures set forth in the accompanying implementation plan and any successor documents
- Identification of designated Parties responsible for oversight, distribution of incentives and administration of sanctions
- Establishment of clear gender goals and indicators as part of the monitoring and accountability framework.

Figure 3. Strategic objectives and key actions proposed in the draft ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Text drawn directly from draft policy at [afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/ECOWAS\\_Policy\\_for\\_Gender\\_Mainstreaming\\_in\\_Energy\\_Access.pdf](https://afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Generic-Documents/ECOWAS_Policy_for_Gender_Mainstreaming_in_Energy_Access.pdf).



Photo courtesy of ECOWAS

Actions and targets within the policy are designed to support positive outcomes for diverse stakeholders including households and communities, energy developers and suppliers and local and national governments across the region.

ECOWAS's regional collaboration and partnership with the Solutions Center to support development of the Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access represents groundbreaking action to catalyze gender equality-focused clean energy development.

## TESTIMONIAL

The ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency partnered with the Solutions Center and the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to develop the ECOWAS Policy for Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access and the Situation Analysis report that informed the policy.

Through the Solutions Center's Ask an Expert services, ECREEE gained access to internationally renowned expertise. Dr. Ellen Morris, of the University of Columbia, and her team exhibited a high level of professionalism—working closely with ECREEE and listening to the regional stakeholders. The result, of course, was a high quality report and policy document that reflected the priorities of ECREEE and the region (this is evident in the fact that the draft policy was completed and validated by the Energy Ministries' experts within, what many will agree, was a relatively short space of time).

It is important to note that the cost-sharing arrangement between ECREEE and the Solutions Center meant that ECREEE had spare funds to accomplish more in the area of public consultation.

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