

(Em)powering Rural Communities

A Recap of the GBE Small Projects Fund

In Sub-Saharan Africa, 570 million people lack access to electricity. Despite long-standing global efforts to achieve SDG 7 – affordable, reliable, sustainable energy for all – that number is projected to remain unchanged by 2030. Especially in remote areas, a decentralised energy supply through stand-alone systems would often be the least-costly way to ensure electricity access.

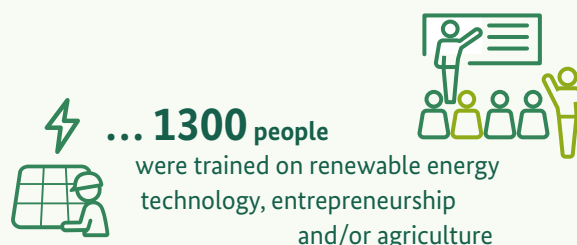
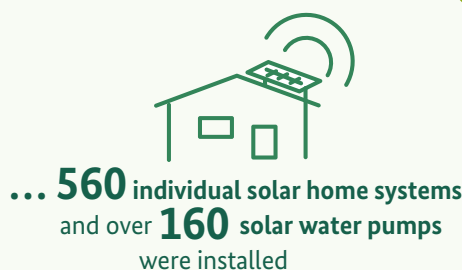
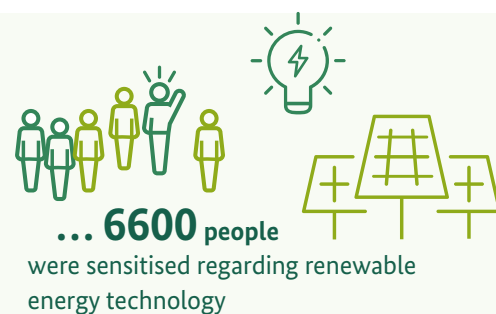
The initiative “Green People’s Energy for Africa” was announced by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) in 2017 and is one of the ten core themes of the BMZ’s Agenda 2030. The initiative includes both technical and financial cooperation measures and supports the development of decentralised renewable energy systems in rural regions of sub-Saharan Africa with the involvement of local stakeholders and private investors.

The technical measure entitled “Green People’s Energy” (GBE) was implemented by Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ) between October 2018 and September 2023 (an extension until September 2024 is planned), with activity in nine focus countries: Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Uganda and Zambia.

In addition to these country components, the GBE Small Projects Fund (SPF) supported international organisations in implementing their own innovative, small-scale energy access projects. While it prioritised activities in the GBE focus countries, the SPF also welcomed applications from other parts of sub-Saharan Africa. This fact sheet summarises the overall results and achievements of the 51 projects supported by the SPF.

While the scale and aim of the respective projects varied, the progress reports showed that, overall, the SPF projects had significant impact in areas such as raising awareness, technology installed and increased energy access.

In total, SPF partners reported that over ...



THE SMALL PROJECTS FUND

The GBE Small Projects Fund (SPF) provided financial support for public-benefit project ideas in the field of decentralised renewable energy. The applicants were asked to provide their own 20% contribution to the project. During its three-year application phase, the fund received a total of 314 project applications from around 30 African countries.

Project ideas could be submitted through two different mechanisms. Firstly, 55% of the proposals were submitted through the standard procedure. Secondly, the “Challenge Call” invited potential partners to submit projects specifically addressing one of two topics:

- Increasing the sustainability of off-grid systems or
- Reducing CO₂ emissions through energy access

Despite only being open from 19 July to 5 September 2021, the Challenge Call generated a lot of attention in the sector and led to the submission of 141 project applications, i.e., 45% of the SPF total (see Figure 1). The SPF funding share generally amounted to a maximum of EUR 200,000 (or EUR 125,000 in the Challenge Call).

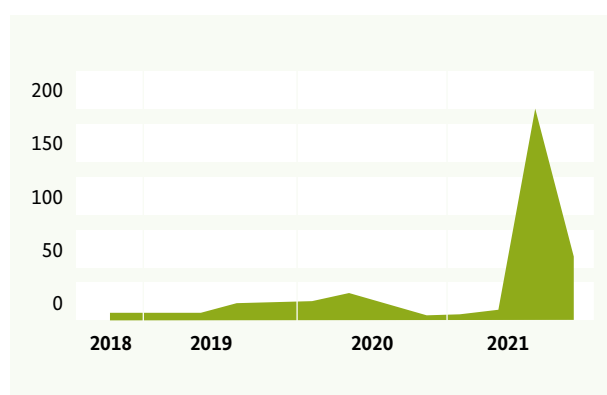


Figure 1: Applications over Time

Applications were evaluated in a standardised process which assessed whether the applicants met the administrative requirements and reviewed the potential social, ecological, and economic impacts of the project idea. Over the course of 13 selection rounds, a committee consisting of representatives of BMZ, its two Special Representatives for Energy in Africa, Bärbel Höhn und Joseph Göppel, and team members of the GBE convened on preliminary funding commitments. The selection process was followed by an intensive review period of each project until eventually a contract was signed between GIZ and the implementing partner organisation.

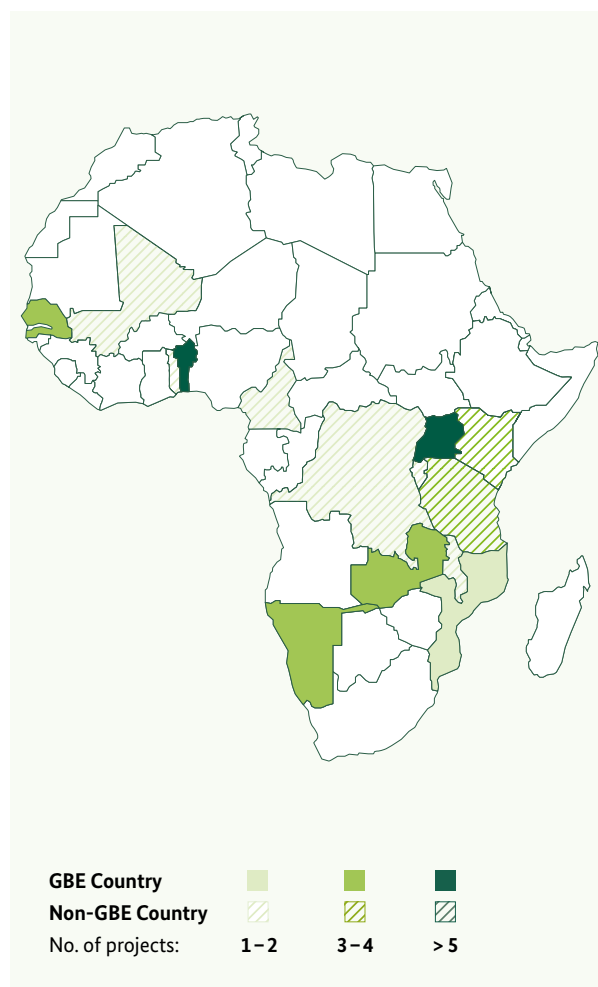


Figure 2: GBE Countries and Non-GBE Countries

The fund has been exhausted as of 1 December 2021, meaning that all funding had been contractually dedicated to projects by this point and applications were no longer possible. At the end of its tenure, the Small Projects Fund had signed 71 contracts in order to assist the implementation of 51 projects in 16 different countries, exceeding its initial target of 35 projects. Most projects were implemented in GBE focus countries, with Uganda and Benin hosting 13 and 10 projects respectively.

The SPF has been replicated and is currently being continued beyond the project duration as the Fairtrade Inclusive Energy Fund, implemented through the Fairtrade Foundation. Selected Fairtrade-certified small producer and labour organisations from Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania will have the chance to design and launch projects that accelerate and expand access to clean and green energy across their membership bases and communities.



Figure 3: (Sub-)Recipients Headquarter & Type of Organisation

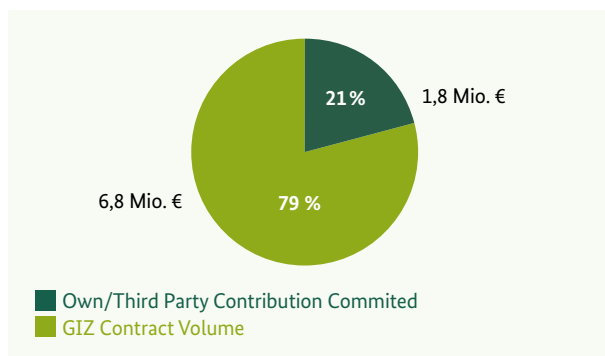


Figure 4: Overall Fund Volume Committed

Overall, the fund committed EUR 6,767,705 in support of the 51 projects. The chosen contract types ranged from procurements to consultancies, local contributions contracts and grant agreements, and varied considerably in size (see Figure 5).

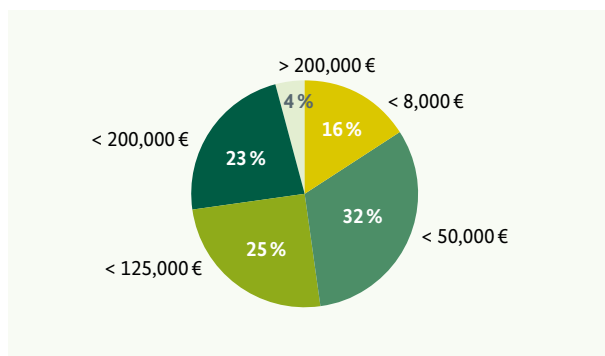


Figure 5: Distribution of Committed Contract Volumes

In addition, the partner organisations' own contractually committed contributions amounted to EUR 1,833,904, including in-kind contributions and third-party funding.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The two main areas of activity in the SPF projects were “providing energy access” and “education and training on using solar PV”, which were incorporated in 75% of all projects. The specific technological applications supported were very diverse and range from general electricity production for lighting or the cooling of vaccines, to solar-powered water pumps or the drying of coffee. A large share (30%) of the projects had a significant capacity-building element incorporated, be it by developing manuals and new curricula or training technicians on maintenance and repair. The installation of solar PV was generally accompanied by training on the functionality and maintenance of the systems. Many projects (16%) included an explicit awareness-raising and communication component to inform potential beneficiaries about the benefits, availability and quality of promoted products. Due to the Challenge Call's explicit focus on “increasing the sustainability of off-grid systems”, several projects focused on access to repair services for solar PV systems.

OVERALL, THE SPF PROJECTS WORKED ON THE FOLLOWING SIX INTERVENTION TYPES:



**SATISFACTION SURVEY:
WHAT DID THE PARTNERS THINK?**

In January 2023, a satisfaction survey was conducted among the SPF partner organisations, in which 28 organisations shared their opinion on working with the SPF.

One key finding of this survey was that more than 80% of the participating organisations would apply to such a programme again (see Figure 6).

Further, as a second major takeaway, almost all organisations responded that they intend to replicate or scale their project (see Figure 7), highlighting the success and sustainability of both the SPF mechanism and the supported projects.

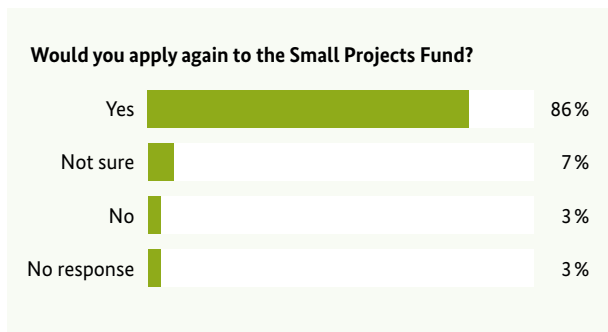


Figure 6: Survey result

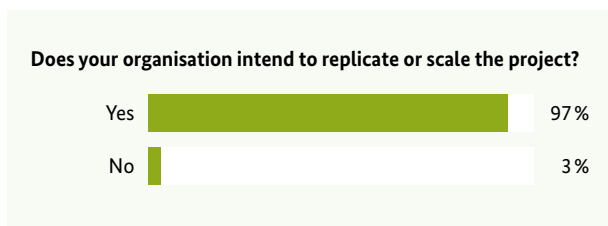


Figure 7: Survey result

Published by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Green People's Energy
Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1 – 5
65760 Eschborn

T +49 6196 79-0
www.giz.de/de/weltweit/77417.html

As at February 2024
Authors GIZ: Stefan Eibisch, Luise Dahmen, Helen Mengs
GOPA: Lukas Velt, Tobias Schmolke

Design/Layout Atelier Löwentor, Darmstadt, Germany

Photo credits © GIZ and GOPA

On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)