

Concept Note



**ECOWAS INITIATIVE ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT IN ENERGY**

**NETWORK FOR YOUNG ENERGY
RESEARCHERS/MENTORSHIP PROGRAM/RESEARCH
GRANT PROGRAM**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:



WITH FUNDING FROM
AUSTRIAN
DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION



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1. Background

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region has a population of about 300 million people, 33% of which are youth. According to the ECOWAS Youth Policy, youth are defined as young males and females aged from 15 to 35 years; a significant number of who lack access to proper education and are largely unemployed¹.

The definition of youth and the statistical classification may vary from region to region and its meaning change depending on the political, economic and socio-cultural factors existing². However, it is generally agreed that 'youth' is that stage of transition from childhood to adulthood where young women and men of a society require the most social, economic and political support to access opportunities to actualize their goals and realise their full potential, as well as contribute to the development of their communities in the long-term.

It is well recognized in the ECOWAS Youth Policy that the young people are the future of ECOWAS. Therefore the level of investment that goes into empowering them now determines how prepared they will be to lead different facets of their respective societies tomorrow. That is to say that for the West African region the likelihood of achieving its long-term sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Sustainable Energy for All (SE4ALL) objectives is significantly tied to how countries of the region are able to engage its young population today, exploiting their potential and honing their leadership skills.

Unfortunately, in West Africa, a number of socio-economic and political factors have resulted in young men and women not being able to harness, let alone, develop, their potentials³⁴.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) report on Youth Employment Interventions in Africa classifies these socio-economic and political factors into:

- "Growing divergence between economic growth and employment generation;

¹ ECOWAS Youth Policy

² The UN defines youth as young people aged 15 to 24. However, due to the socio-economic conditions and realities in West African states, countries in the region consider persons as old as 35 years as youth.

³ UNECA (2010) Strategies to Promote Youth Self-employment in West Africa, Available [here](#)

⁴ International Labour Organization (2012): Youth Employment Interventions in Africa: A Mapping Report of the Employment and Labour Sub-Cluster of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM) for Africa. Available [here](#)

- Poor quality of education, training, and skills development;
- Lack of comprehensive population policies targeted at the root causes of uncontrolled rapid population increase and unemployment;
- Low levels of savings and investments that are not conducive to the creation of more jobs;
- Post-independence policies in favour of cheap and unprocessed raw materials exports; and hence,
- Dependence on the agricultural sector."

Thus, although the number of educated youth has risen over the years with an increased number of young people being enrolled in higher institutions of learning, the probability of finding and retaining employment continues to remain an issue. Furthermore, their participation in policy formulation, decision making, leadership, and development at local and national levels, as envisioned in the ECOWAS Youth Policy of 2008, remains limited⁵.

The United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa (UNECA) notes that at the top of the issue is the disconnection between the skills obtained at school and the technical and practical skills needed to benefit from a dynamic labour market⁶.

The lack of the appropriate knowledge, skills and expertise demanded on the labour market⁷ means that a significant population of the youth in the region cannot be engaged. If they are not tangibly engaged the likelihood of them growing and becoming more skillful, over the years, in their chosen field of interest is diminished, leading to a vicious cycle which continues to hinder these young women and men from unlocking their full potential. The region's females are even more at a disadvantage, with higher rates of illiteracy and, subsequently, unemployment⁸. For all the countries, statistics show that female labour force participation rates are lower compared to their male counterparts⁹ and being female means that you tend to have fewer occupational opportunities¹⁰.

This is a situation that the ECOWAS region cannot afford. Considering the fact that the region is one of the poorest in the world, for these countries to move out of poverty there has to be a significant increase in the value of goods and services produced (the gross domestic product - GDP) and in the financial ability of the population to purchase the goods and services

⁵ ECOWAS Youth Policy

⁶ UNECA: Strategies to Promote Youth Self-employment in West Africa, Available [here](#).

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Okojie, C., .E. E., (2003): Employment Creation for Youth in Africa: The Gender Dimension. Available [here](#).

¹⁰ ECOWAS Youth Policy

produced (purchasing power). This will, no doubt, require a largely active and skilled workforce. Equally important, West Africa has one of the highest levels of energy poverty in Africa. This dire state of energy poverty is undermining current and future prospects for economic development, social stability and advancement and cultural preservation within countries and across countries. The same goes for the energy sector. On the one hand, with a larger share of the population being under-served (due to issues of inaccessibility, unavailability and unaffordability of energy) closing the demand and supply gap will require an educated and capable population working as entrepreneurs and investors; managers and developers of energy infrastructure projects; policy makers and regulators. On the other hand, innovative and skilled employees are the key for a sustainable and effective energy sector. The region's high levels of energy poverty have also curtailed potential efforts for innovation in transformative sectors.

It is against this background that the ECOWAS Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (ECREEE) is initiating the establishment of a regional initiative on Youth Leadership Development in Energy, with the goal of preparing the region's young women and men to become globally competitive energy leaders that in future, shape and influence energy development in the region and outside. The initiative will target current and future youth with the aim of strengthening their intellectual, professional and other capacities to contribute positively to the energy sector and its potential to enhance greater socio-economic change in the ECOWAS region.

The establishment of the regional initiative on Youth Leadership Development in Energy is timely, with the recent launch of the West African Energy Leaders Group¹¹, a regional branch of the African Energy Leaders Group (AELG), established to respond to the region's energy challenges and steer the transition to sustainable energy development.

The Youth Leadership Development in Energy initiative aims to be a knowledge generating body that contributes to the AELG's core objectives by producing well-researched, academic papers that support economic and political decision-makers:

- To place energy issues high on the agenda for Africa's economic advance;
- To develop facilities and infrastructure that guarantee universal access to reliable, affordable energy services and efficient appliances by 2030;

¹¹ See "Côte d'Ivoire's President launches West African Energy Leaders Group" [here](#)

- To scale up investments in energy projects and programmes under the regional power pools and the AfDB's Programmes for Infrastructure Development in the continent;
- To accelerate research, development and deployment of technological innovations to transform energy access over the long term;
- To foster energy sector reforms to encourage private-sector participation and entrepreneurship, and enhance economic gains through the value chain".

2. Youth Leadership Development in Energy: A forward-looking regional response to a regional challenge

The ECOWAS Youth Policy identifies "Participation in policy formulation, decision making, leadership, and development at local and national levels"¹² as a right of young women and men who are citizens of the ECOWAS region. However, existing challenges and barriers deny them the ability to exercise this right, and the region the opportunity to unlock this vast human potential.

Recognizing that youth empowerment in energy is necessary if the region is to secure a sustainable energy future, a 'catch them young' initiative, which is youth-centered and youth-driven is being developed to ensure that the young people of the region start early to contribute to informing decisions on energy development in their respective countries, and the region.

This Concept Note describes the establishment of a Network for Young Energy Researchers, a Mentorship Program and a Research Grant Program. These critical elements are part of the ECOWAS region's initiative on Youth Leadership Development in Energy¹³ and will work to build and strengthen the capacities of young West Africans to contribute and participate actively in the energy discourse at the national and regional levels and, thus, ensure that the youth has a say in the way energy development is shaped in West Africa.

¹² ECOWAS Youth Policy

¹³ The Youth Leadership Development in Energy is one of the five high-impact initiatives of the [ECOWAS Programme on Gender Mainstreaming in Energy Access](#) (ECOW-GEN)

2.1 Network of Young Energy Researchers

The Network of Young Energy Researchers aims to create a platform for young and ambitious energy researchers to harness, develop and utilize their potential, giving them a voice to contribute to the transformation of the region's energy sector.

The Network of Young Energy Researchers will be open to university level students as well as graduates¹⁴ in the region, and students and graduates of West African descent who are in the Diaspora, with a keen interest in addressing the energy challenges in the region through evident-based solutions, involving research and production of policy papers (through analysing and proposing solutions to topical issues in the energy sector) and research and development (R &D) of technologies.

Hosted on the ECOW-GENetwork (www.ecowgen.ecreee.org) the Network of Young Energy Researchers will create an online platform for sharing knowledge, experience and expertise - a forum to create and develop ideas for innovative solutions.

Further to this, a Youth Leadership in Energy Forum will be organized for network members on an annual basis. Young women and men that have distinguished themselves in energy research (or relevant fields) or have shown a keen interest in the subject matter will be selected from the region to participate in a regional capacity building and networking workshop. Through applications, the organizers will identify the high-flyers¹⁵ in the network. These young women and men energy leaders will be trained¹⁶ and equipped with the essential knowledge and skills to propel them to the next stage of their career advancement.

Also, members of the Network will be supported in developing and organizing their own local initiatives. Such initiatives may include awareness raising and sensitization activities and capacity building, and others that may contribute to community development.

Efforts will be made to ensure equal representation and participation of young women and men.

¹⁴ A junior division will be opened to secondary school level students.

¹⁵ "High-flyers" will be identified through their contribution to the achievement of the network's objectives.

¹⁶ Areas of training activities may include: leadership, entrepreneurship and business development, sustainable energy technology fabrication and application, etc.

2.2 Young Energy Researchers' Mentorship Programme

With the objective of contributing to the growth of the young researchers, through effective coaching, a Young Energy Researchers' Mentorship Programme will be established with mentors working on improving the research skills of the young energy researchers and supporting them to excel in their chosen career fields. The mentorship will occur over designated timeframes and will be closely monitored by ECREEE.

Through the program the region's young and aspiring energy professionals will gain access to a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise from regional and international energy experts. These mentors will guide and make valuable inputs in the research work of the mentees, as well as providing relevant information that could contribute towards the learning and development process of the young energy researchers.

Participation, as a mentee, in the Young Energy Researchers' Mentorship Programme will be based on application. Eligibility criteria have been established for both the mentees and the mentors. To be eligible, applicants must be registered on the Network of Young Energy Researchers, should have a clear and specific reason for requiring a mentor (e.g. planning to start a research work). The matching of mentees and mentors will be facilitated by the Management Committee¹⁷, with the active involvement of the prospective mentee. Mentors and mentees will be matched based on the research interest (or area of specialization), language, and the time availability of the mentor. Other criteria may include gender and geographical location of both mentor and mentee. Additionally, non-personal mentors will be available to support and contribute to the project.

The mentorship will last over the duration of the project (on average, not less than 1 year). Mentors and mentees are expected to interact for least an hour over a 4 weeks period, during the project's duration.

Mentors and mentees may continue to work together even after the project if they choose to. The primary communication will be conducted electronically, although mentees may be opportune to meet their mentors face-to-face at regional forums such as the Annual Youth Leadership Development in Energy Forum.

The pool of experts (mentors) will be established through invitation and applications from interested participants. A database of mentors (with the information to assist mentees in their selection) will be available publicly. The

¹⁷ ECREEE and other partners

criteria and terms of reference for being a mentor is attached in this document as Annex A.

The Mentorship program will be assessed annually by ECREEE to evaluate its effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the program. Mentors who have demonstrated a substantial contribution to the development of their mentee(s) will be identified and awarded periodically, for their contribution to the success of the program.

2.3 Research Grant Program

Through calls for proposals, which will be published annually, research teams comprised of young women and men will be supported to conduct research in areas with high potential of contributing meaningfully to the development of the energy sector, particularly as it concerns the ECOWAS region. Research topics must be ambitious and pioneering, and aimed at generating new knowledge¹⁸.

Grants will be available for producing research (policy) papers or R&D of appropriate technologies. With a grant size of not less than 1000 EUR per team, a maximum of 10 research projects will be supported annually¹⁹.

For written works, selection of proposals will be based on the capacity of the research teams to elucidate upon the selected issue, identify possible ways (policy alternatives) by which the issue could be addressed, evaluate the likely outcomes from each of the alternatives identified, and to recommend, and provide justifications for, a solution. Successful team applicants are those that are able to demonstrate a track-record of excellence in research and a capacity to produce high quality, policy relevant papers.

Research proposals will be evaluated and selected by the Editorial Team (See Annex B) for grant support.

The papers will be published electronically and made available on the ECREEE e-library. Furthermore, researchers will be given the opportunity to share their findings and recommendations at conferences and workshops organized by ECREEE.

The calls will be opened to individuals not more than 35 years of age.

¹⁸ Research areas may cover, broadly, energy technology, energy finance, energy economics, energy policy, energy and the environment (climate change) etc.

¹⁹ The maximum grant size for R & D projects will be treated on a case-by-case basis.

For R & D, the grant will provide support to young innovators to contribute to upscaling the deployments of appropriate technologies for community development. The R & D program will explore synergies with the Cleantech Open program of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

Beneficiaries of the research grant program will be registered members of the Network and will have access to the Mentorship Program.

For both components, synergies with grant programs from universities, private sector companies, and/or corporate foundations will be explored.

For budget and time- plan, please refer to the ECOW-GEN [Programme Document](#).

Annex A: Terms of Reference for Mentors and Mentees

o Mentors

Criteria:

1. At least 5 years in a middle or senior management position in the energy field.
The mentor must:
 - Currently be working in a middle or senior position, or
 - Have retired from such a position within 2 years from year of mentoring, or
 - Have retired within 5 years from year of mentoring, and continued to work in a consultative capacity.
2. Demonstrable experience in policies formulation, business development or investment, capacity building, and other relevant aspects of energy development.
3. Demonstrable understanding of using coaching approaches for developing capacity:
 - This will be demonstrable through applicants own description in mentoring application.
4. Must be willing and able to commit to communicating regularly with the Mentees.
 - The schedule and format of meetings will be determined between the mentor and mentee. The Management Committee recommends mentors and mentees meet for a minimum of an hour over the course of a month. Frequency will be determined by the needs of the Mentee.
5. Must be willing to participate in self and program evaluation processes to support program quality assurance.
 - Mentorships will be renewed on an annual basis – for existing mentors, this will mean a formal acceptance of renewing their role.

Duties and Responsibilities

Mentor's Role:

- Share your knowledge and experience with your mentees

- Participate in capacity development activities – online or off-line
- Commit to agreed norms²⁰ of the program

Mode of operation:

Mentors will communicate with their mentees on-line and, if geographically feasible, in person. In any case, mentors and mentees may meet during Forums. After the program, both mentors and participants will have access to each other via the on-line platform, or alternatively, they may choose to continue the relationship as they see fit. Mentor-mentee relationships, once established, will be allowed to develop unhindered.

- o **Mentees**

Criteria:

1. Should not be more than 35 years of age.

The mentees must be:

- Students registered in a higher institution of learning, or graduates from one.
2. Demonstrable experience in research.
 3. Demonstrable understanding of complex energy issues.
 4. Must be willing and able to commit to communicating regularly with the Mentors.
 - The schedule and format of meetings will be determined between the mentor and mentee. The Management Committee recommends mentors and mentees meet for a minimum of an hour over the course of a month. Frequency will be determined by the needs of the Mentee.
 5. Must be willing to participate in self and program evaluation processes to support program quality assurance.

²⁰ Mentors will be held to the highest ethical standards regarding protection of intellectual property of the mentees

Annex B: Terms of Reference (ToRs) for members of the Editorial Team

1. MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee shall be drawn from ECREEE and partner institutions.

The primary function of the Committee is to provide oversight to the work of the Editorial Team, to ensure that the editorial policies developed are in line with the goals and objectives of the journal and are upheld by the Editorial Team.

2. EDITORIAL TEAM

The role and conduct of the Chair (Editor-in-chief)

- I. Editorial Team will have an independent Chair. The Chair is required to maintain autonomy and will liaise with the Editorial Committee and Peer Review Committee on journal matters.
- II. The Chair will be a senior academic with extensive journal experience.
- III. The Chair is responsible for ensuring the membership of the Peer Review Committee is sufficient to provide subject matter expertise across all specialities in energy.

The role and conduct of the Editorial Committee

- Provide advice to the Management Committee on all matters relating to the editorial direction Journal;
- Constitute the initial 'pool of reviewers'
- Establish a panel of peer reviewers on the basis of expertise, utilising contacts to build a list of experts who will also review the papers submitted for publication;
- Comment on and monitor the quality of submissions and propose measures for improvement;
- Identify themes for inclusion in the journal in topical issues in energy;
- Provide advice to the Management Committee as otherwise requested.
- The Editorial Team has final authority on decisions about the academic content of the journal
- Editors are able to reject without peer review any manuscripts that are not suitable for publication in the journal.

- When manuscripts are sent to peer review, the Editors are responsible for selecting peer reviewers for each manuscript, with Editors having final authority on acceptance of all manuscripts.
- The term of office of an Editorial Team is three years with the possibility of up to three additional years.
- Editorial team members work actively to:
 - solicit contributions
 - identify suitable reviewers (when appropriate)
 - participate as reviewers
 - provide input on the content and direction of issues
 - Developing editorial policies to guide the content, scope, purpose and style of the journal and publications, and for ensuring that each edition of the journal is reviewed to ensure adherence to these policies.

The role and conduct of the Peer Review Committee

- The peer review of submitted papers
- Promote the journal extensively within their own institutions and externally
- Ensure that submissions are dealt with fairly and objectively and that the guidelines for reviewers are followed.

A. Membership

The Team consists of at least eight members:

- A Chair
- Three (3) members of the Editorial Committee
- Either (6) Member of the Peer Review Committee
- Additional members may include independent members from the academic and research community, who may be called upon to serve as reviewers

The Team shall consist of a minimum of 12 ordinary members (aside from the Chair), of which minimum 40% are women, and should represent the broad spectrum of roles and specialities within the energy sector, as well as have a wide geographical spread.

B. Frequency of Meetings

The Editorial Team meets electronically and as required to fulfil its Terms of Reference.

C. Appointment of Editorial Committee

Initially the Editorial Committee will be recruited by the Management Committee. Membership will be reviewed annually and nominations of membership of the Editorial Committee will be sought from all sectors and by advertising in the media channels. Members are non-paid. All nominations are received and considered by the Management Committee which makes the appointment. Every effort should be made to fill the vacancy within three months of its becoming vacant.

The Editorial Committee will elect its own Chair from among its members. The office of Chair is held for a year which may be extended to a second term and up to three years.

D. Appointment of Peer Review Committee

- The search for and nomination of new reviewers is the joint responsibility of the Editorial Committee and the Management Team.
- The role of the Search Committee is to search for and encourage applications from prospective reviewers, to evaluate proposals and to report these evaluations to both the Management Team and the Editorial Committee.
- The Search Committee's evaluation of applications will be based on criteria supplied to them by the Management Team and Editorial Team Chair.
- The newly appointed reviewers will commence upon acceptance of Terms of Reference and signing of the Contract.

A. Quorum

- For decisions to be reached by the Editorial Team at least four (4) members of the Committee are needed.

