

SUCCESS STORY

Building a Cadre of Women Solar Entrepreneurs, Engineers, and Technicians Among Nigeria's Youth



REEEP COP Javier Betancourt and Technical Specialist Sam Ahanor with NYSC trainees

In the energy sector, Nigerian women, particularly those in rural areas, are particularly impacted by the lack of energy services. Like other women in other developing countries, they carry the burden of gathering fuels and performing household duties involving energy use. They spend long hours collecting fuels and water, leaving them little time or opportunity for education. This also adversely affects their level of their participation in community activities as well as their health. They lack autonomy in decision-making in the energy sphere, and in most other aspects of their lives, in spite of their significant contributions. However, growing evidence in Nigeria and other countries all indicate that empowering women in the energy sphere lead to broader and more meaningful development.

Telling Our Story

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One of the main objectives of the USAID-funded Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Program (REEEP) is to provide vocational training and create awareness of the benefits of renewable energy and energy efficiency – for both men and women. To help accomplish this, REEEP is collaborating with the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) by training a selected group of corps members on renewable energy, with a special focus on solar energy and on women. The goal is to develop a cadre of women solar entrepreneurs, engineers, and installers and technicians in support of Nigeria's broader energy access and economic development objectives.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established by the Nigerian government in 1973 to encourage its youth to give back to its country by undergoing a mandatory one year period of training and service. Graduates of universities and polytechnic institutions are posted far from their cities of origin and do their 'national service year,' starting with 3 weeks of orientation in a military style boot camp. The program has served as venue for Nigerian youth to acquire new skills.

In October and November 2015, REEEP carried out 2 basic solar trainings for 7 enthusiastic female engineering and science graduates in Abuja, ranging in age from 21 to 30 years old. Each training was 4 days long. Three days were spent on theory, and the final day was spent on practical training. The training was broken down into technical, business and practical aspects of solar power technology. The technical covered the basic theory of system design, sizing, and various applications. The business aspect dealt with business startup, financing a small solar business and marketing renewable energy products and services. The practical section, included DC and AC solar power systems connections, panel current ratings and template reading.

"The knowledge I had before wasn't accurate and professional, but from the knowledge I have gotten here, I can say that I can design and install an excellent solar system," said Onotafe Mercy Ufuoma, one of the course participants. Samuel Ahanor, REEEP Technical Specialist, observed that the participants showed keen interest and handled the practical aspects of the training confidently, and with minimum supervision. "We encouraged them to do basic designs first (and since then), some have done fantastic designs. I (am) more than impressed. One actually did the design for the full installation of a solar system for a residential building in Abuja."