



# SMART VILLAGES

New thinking for off-grid communities worldwide

## PRESS RELEASE

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### Togo Workshop Demands Bottom-Up Approach to Energy Planning

*West African front-line practitioners say communities must be full partners in plans to catalyse energy access and improve livelihoods among rural poor*

**LOMÉ:** Delegates to the Smart Villages Initiative and Practical Action workshop held in Lomé, Togo on Monday 20 February emphasised that communities must be full partners in plans to catalyse energy access and spread its resultant development dividends across the ECOWAS region. Without a true partnership between communities, governments, and the private sector, rural energy access projects will not succeed. The workshop featured a wide cross-section of stakeholders, providing an arena for frontline practitioners, researchers, village leaders, and young people to share their experiences and views on planning processes with government and donor representatives, including Togo's Ministry of Mines and Energy. The workshop also served to reinforce the key findings of Practical Action's [Poor People's Energy Outlook \(PPEO\) 2016 report](#).



*Delegates at the Smart Villages / Practical Action Togo workshop discuss the need for community led approaches to rural energy access planning.*

“Despite increasing attention to energy access in the last five years, our frontline research around the most energy-poor regions of the world has revealed that national energy planning is still too often dominated by large-scale, top-down, centralised infrastructure developments. Even where there is recognition of the

possibilities of delivering off-grid energy access at scale, uncertainty remains on how to formulate appropriate policy,” says Dr John Holmes, Co-Leader of the Smart Villages Initiative. “We have thus been delighted to host this workshop, together with Practical Action. The starting point was our shared belief that the key to both increased off-grid energy access and its sustained development benefits is to take an approach that includes communities as full partners in energy planning. Having listened to attendees—including both success stories and remaining challenges—from across the ECOWAS region at our three workshops in the region thus far, we will now incorporate their input into our final set of policy recommendations this year.”

The off-grid energy driven and community-led case studies presented by Smart Villages included SolarKiosk in Ghana, a business incubator in Mali by GERES and its local partners, fish-smoking initiatives by SNV in Ghana, Solar Sister in Nigeria, Eco-Villages in Senegal, and Bonergie’s papaya production.

“We are seeing an explosion of community-led projects in the region,” says Molly Hurley-Dépret, Policy Manager for Smart Villages. “However, many are working in relative isolation. By collating and showcasing these efforts at national and international level, the Smart Villages Initiative aims to create a strong body of evidence to support our upcoming recommendations.”



*Participants at the workshop came from across Togo and included village leaders, public sector and private sector representatives, researchers, young people, and journalists from Togolese radio, TV, print, and online media.*

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## Notes for Editors

### Smart Villages

The Smart Villages Initiative is a three-year project evaluating ways of providing off-grid energy as a catalyst for development for rural villages and encouraging the transfer of knowledge and experience between different developing regions. Through a series of international workshops and follow-up activities in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, its aim is to provide policymakers, donors, entrepreneurs, researchers, media and other stakeholders with new insights into the challenges of supplying village-level energy and how they might be overcome.

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