

GREEN CITIES, INFRASTRUCTURE AND ENERGY PROGRAMME (GCIEP)

## Engaging stakeholders as a key part of Ghana's renewable energy journey

Achieving Ghana's ambitious renewable energy goals requires prioritisation of utility-scale solar, wind and hydro-power projects – underpinned by a robust stakeholder consultation process. This is essential to bring all parties together to gain consensus, resolve key issues and expedite planning and commissioning. In developing a pre-feasibility study for a 200MW floating solar project, GCIEP led a multi-step, iterative stakeholder process to support the design, permitting, siting and financing. The result is a comprehensive pre-feasibility study that will pave the way for successful project development and commissioning.

### Technical, social, financial and environmental hurdles

Successful and rapid energy project development is critical to help the government of Ghana meet its renewable energy targets of 10% of installed capacity by 2030, driven by the country's Renewable Energy Master Plan (REMP)<sup>1</sup>. Yet these projects are complex and face numerous technical, social, environmental and financial hurdles on the road to commissioning. These include permitting constraints, transmission interconnection, community approval and project financing among others. To clear these hurdles, project developers must involve numerous stakeholders to socialize the development plan,

obtain permits, sign power purchase agreements and ensure community approvals. These involvements at multiple levels often lead to delays, resulting in the failure of projects to comply with the commercial operation date.

### Forging relationships and building alignment

Strategically aligned stakeholder engagement is crucial in identifying issues as early as possible to avoid or minimise delays. GCIEP followed this approach in preparing the enhanced pre-feasibility study for the 200MW Akosombo-Sedom floating solar PV project. Working with the Volta River Authority (VRA), the largest generation utility

in the country, and transmission company Ghana Grid Company, Ltd. (GRIDCo), GCIEP adopted a hands-on approach to developing the study. This involved carrying out site visits, conducting community meetings and stakeholder workshops to understand issues, address concerns, share findings, obtain support for the project and forge relationships amongst the key stakeholders.

### Site visits

The stakeholder engagement process began with a four-day field mission to Akosombo and Akuse involving GCIEP, VRA, GRIDCo and the technical consulting team comprising RSK, Multiconsult

<sup>1</sup> Ghana Renewable Energy Master Plan (REMP), 2019

and Lumen. The objective was to assess the suitability of potential locations for the proposed 200 MW Akosombo-Sedom floating solar project while gathering baseline technical, environmental and operational information to inform the enhanced pre-feasibility study. Activities included vessel-based inspections of three potential floating solar sites, review of grid interconnection infrastructure including the Akosombo switchyard, and technical discussions with VRA operational teams and GRIDCO engineers. The team also engaged institutions such as the CSIR Water Research Institute and Volta Lake transport operators to better understand hydrological conditions, navigation patterns and operational constraints on the lake. These visits helped validate early technical assumptions regarding water depth variability, site access, logistics and potential environmental and social considerations that would influence project design.

**First stakeholder meeting: District assembly**

The first formal stakeholder consultation was held at the Asuogyaman District Assembly in Akuse to introduce the project and obtain local government guidance on community engagement protocols. During the meeting, the GCIEP and consulting team explained the concept of floating solar technology and outlined the objectives of the pre-feasibility study. District officials welcomed

the potential economic and energy benefits of the project but highlighted several key concerns, particularly the potential impact on fishing livelihoods and the need to engage traditional authorities who exercise customary jurisdiction over the area. The Assembly recommended early involvement of district technical staff and emphasised the importance of transparency in environmental and social assessments. This engagement was instrumental in identifying local governance processes, livelihood sensitivities and community entry protocols that would shape the subsequent stakeholder consultations and technical analysis.

**Second stakeholder meeting: Community engagement**

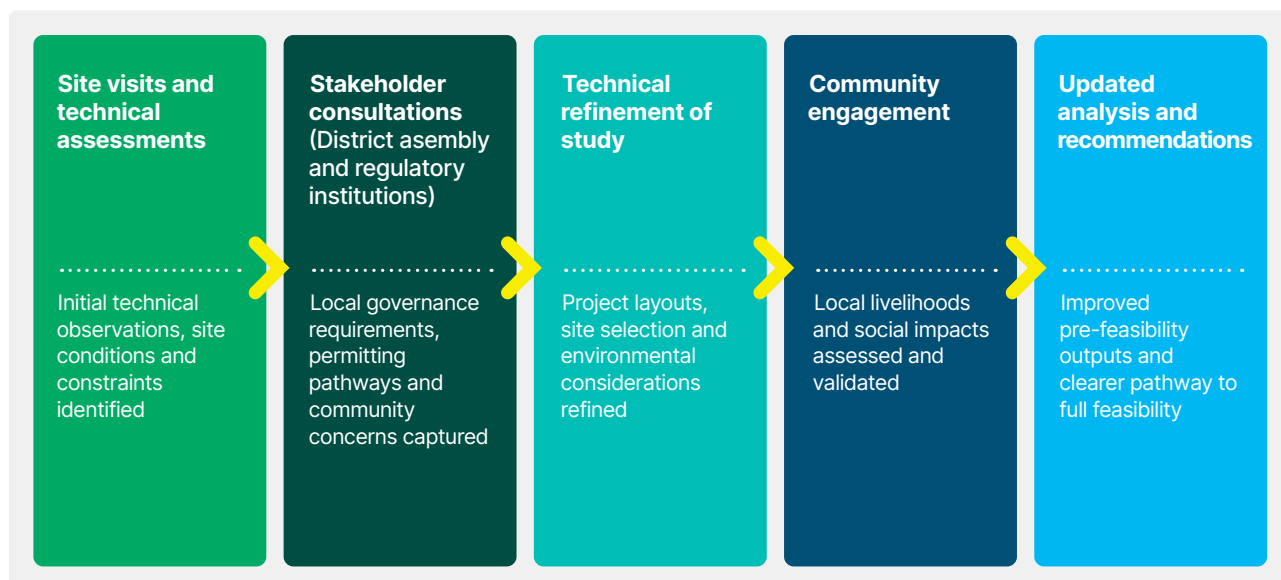
Following the District Assembly consultation, the project team conducted engagements with community representatives in Sedom village and surrounding areas to discuss the proposed floating solar development and gather feedback from local stakeholders. These discussions focused on understanding the usage of the lake by communities for fishing and transport, as well as identifying potential social impacts associated with establishing floating solar arrays and exclusion zones on the reservoir. Community members expressed interest in potential employment opportunities associated with the project but also raised concerns about maintaining

access to fishing areas and preserving local livelihoods. The consultations helped the technical team understand the potential impact of the project footprint with local economic activities and led the team to design recommendations for future environmental and social studies, including fisheries assessments and livelihood restoration planning.

**Financing consultations**

In parallel with technical and community consultations, GCIEP engaged potential financing partners to ensure that the project preparation process aligns with investor expectations. Discussions were held with organisations including FSD Africa and the World Bank to explore pathways for advancing the project toward bankable feasibility. These conversations focused on understanding financing thresholds, structuring options for the project and identifying potential sources of technical assistance or project preparation funding. FSD Africa's Project Preparation Facility indicated that the project could be a strong candidate for further development support, particularly given its scale and climate relevance. These engagements helped ensure that the pre-feasibility outputs being developed would meet the information needs of potential financiers and increase the likelihood of the project progressing into full feasibility and eventual investment.

**Stakeholder consultation process**



## Stakeholder alignment delivers intended outcomes

- **Results:** The process has achieved acceptance from all the key stakeholders. The local communities successfully reviewed the sites with their concerns properly addressed, GRIDCo offered key inputs on interconnection sites, and the technical experts and VRA teams are closely coordinating

on project analysis and recommendations from their respective teams.

- **Sustainability:** The GCIEP team provided clear recommendations and next steps for the project teams to conduct a detailed feasibility study for VRA to design and secure finance for the project. Key aspects include recommendations for completing bathymetric and solar irradiance

studies, along with strategies for phasing the development of the 200MW project to develop bankable projects.

- **Scalability:** The consultative process used for the Akosombo-Sedom project can be replicated widely for complicated energy or infrastructure projects, as well as for policy design and reform across other geographies.



Photo © GCIEP

GCIEP technical site visit to Lake Volta

### Key learning points for successful delivery of projects

- **Early engagement with key stakeholders is a must:** An adoption of this approach especially for complex energy projects will increase buy-in from all relevant stakeholders and minimise delays during project development as well as subsequent project phases.
- **It is important to identify critical issues at an early stage:** Capturing different points of view in the earliest stages of a project will help spot critical issues and allow for their mitigation prior to significant investments being made.
- **Government engagement is necessary from project preparation phase:** Engaging local government authorities early in the project preparation process helps clarify governance structures, community entry protocols and permitting pathways. This reduces the risk of delays later in the project development process and ensures that technical studies are aligned with local institutional realities.

**GCIEP** is a demand-driven initiative focused on sustainable green cities and climate-resilient infrastructure in lower-income countries. As the flagship programme of the UK's Centre of Expertise for Green Cities, Infrastructure and Energy, GCIEP supports the UK Government's mission to accelerate investment in, and delivery of, infrastructure and urban development that is responsible, reliable, inclusive, low-carbon and climate-resilient.

A significant proportion of GCIEP's work is carried out in seven priority countries: Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Philippines, Mozambique, Vietnam and Zambia, where a Deep Offer programme provides long-term, systemic interventions focused on transformative change and infrastructure financing.

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