



Shining a light on opportunity in DRC

Nuru's Goma I site powers residents and businesses in the surrounding Ndosho neighbourhood (Moses Sawasawa for GEAPP)

How GEAPP's model of collaboration can break down silos and shift perception in a tough environment where more than 80% of the population live without electricity.

DRC has the second largest unelectrified population in the world. This huge country spanning 2.35 million square kilometres has a population of over 102 million people and a transmission and distribution network of only 6,975km, concentrated mainly in the south east of the country. The scale of the landmass makes logistics and transportation fiendish. Large swathes of the country are inaccessible by road and can only be reached by small boats.

The need for energy access, matched by the opportunity for clean energy generation, makes this exactly the sort of location where GEAPP should be working.

In 2022, geospatial platform VIDA, supported by the IFC, mapped renewable energy access potential in DRC.¹ 194 populated areas were identified as viable for electrification through distributed standalone grids. In response, GEAPP and its Alliance partners formed a joint effort to work towards the electrification of 100 urban and suburban areas via 100 new mini grids by 2040, providing energy access for over 20 million people and increasing the country's access rate by 10%.

GEAPP, working with the DRC government, began trying to identify developers to build these mini grids. But found that progress was slow with previous initiatives stalled and money stuck.

So, in late-2022 we stepped back and asked our key partners: How do we all reboot our efforts knowing we need to find a new way of coordinating and accelerating? The answer touches on the heart of GEAPP's founding ethos - collaboration, urgency and the collective pooling of efforts.

2040 targets of the DRC Country Programme:²

Off grid



Micro Grids installed



People reached by new connections

Funding mobilised



Direct GEAPP investment (provisional)



Finance to be unlocked with GEAPP's catalytic funding

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These efforts have found voice in the following ways:

- **Using GEAPP's independent convening power, in partnership with Power Africa, a meeting was held in Kinshasa in February 2023.** 20 delegates representing a range of partners from within the Alliance and beyond, gathered to create a single roadmap, reflecting what each partner was seeking to achieve along with roles and responsibilities. A second meeting was held in July 2023, this time with the DRC government. GEAPP was asked to continue playing a coordination role on everyone's behalf, acting as a single point of contact. Partners working with GEAPP include: AfDB, AFD, IFC, World Bank, SeforAll and USAID.
- **Stepping up quick technical assistance to help capacity building.** For example, setting up a secretariat to align the agenda of partners and the government of DRC and incorporating an investment platform to share partner pipelines. This support extends to both central and provincial governments.
- **Acknowledging DRC's solar grids need to be developed by the private sector.** In July 2023, GEAPP concluded its first financial investment in Nuru, a private sector developer of mini grids. Following the Series B close, Nuru immediately began work on three projects in Goma, Kindu, and Bunia in eastern DRC. With a combined capacity of 13.7 MWp³ these grids will serve 20,000+ households and SMEs (equivalent to 120,000+ people). The Bunia site is slated to become the largest off-grid solar hybrid metro grid in sub-Saharan Africa. Nuru's ability to raise funds and construct plants, shows private capital what is possible in DRC and how risk can be properly managed. It also highlights GEAPP's commitment to invest directly in DRC.
- **Starting to explore the role of hydropower** to take advantage of DRC's ranking as the top country in Africa for hydro potential - 100,000MW, accounting for 13% of global capacity. For the past two decades, DRC has tended to avoid hydro because it is expensive and takes a long time to build, but new technologies allow hydro to be installed more efficiently and GEAPP actively supports the government's decision to establish smaller plants able to come online fast.

Other early-stage projects show encouraging signs of growth, including testing different financing models and building demand for the productive use of electricity. DRC also recently joined the activation plan for the Africa Carbon Markets Initiative.

GEAPP's breakthrough strategy in the DRC is its ability to play to the strengths of its Alliance partners, supercharging the private sector development of micro grids in the country. Whether that's connection subsidies from the World Bank, equity and debt from DFIs, or grant and demand support from financial services firms. There's a lot still to do, but this represents a new way of working. The proof? Similar to other countries where GEAPP operates, it will be that in the next 2-3 years, private sector developers are building business models that significantly scale up access to renewables and attract third-party capital. In this way, GEAPP's funding becomes catalytic.

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Two Nuru workers installing power lines in Goma, DRC (Moses Sawasawa for GEAPP)

¹ [vida.place/user-story/mapping-congo](https://www.vida.place/user-story/mapping-congo)

² GEAPP targets are informed by country-specific impact dashboards; these are refined and adjusted to reflect accurate monitoring and evaluation of project activities.

³ Megawatt peak (MWp) measures the maximum potential output of power.