

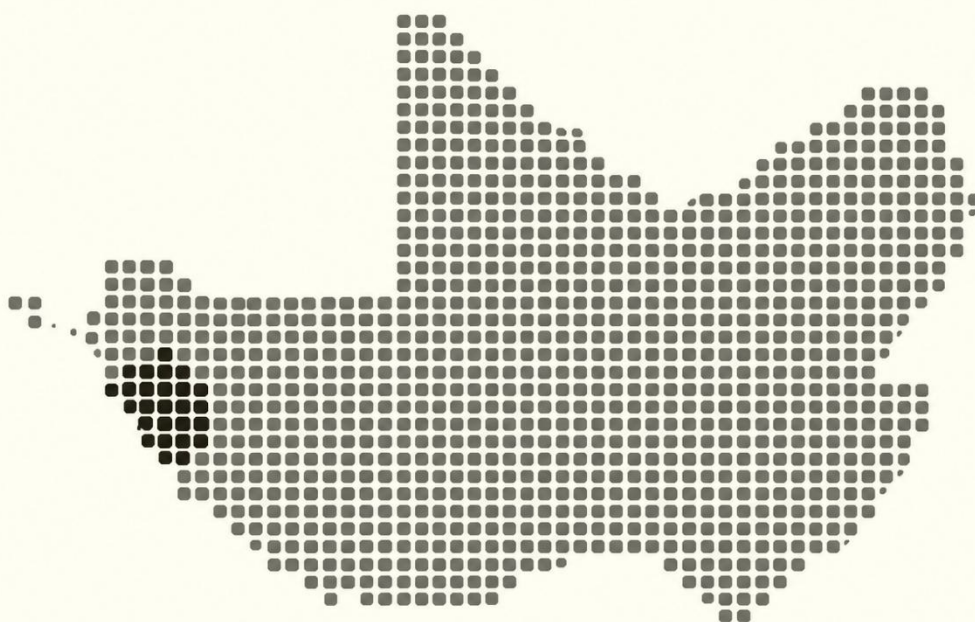


BANQUE D'INVESTISSEMENT ET DE DEVELOPPEMENT DE LA CEDEAO
ECOWAS BANK FOR INVESTMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
BANCO DE INVESTIMENTO E DE DESENVOLVIMENTO DA CEDEAO



SIERRA LEONE

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► **EBID Lights the Way in Sierra Leone**

For many communities across Sierra Leone, the setting sun once signaled the end of economic and social life. Poor access to reliable electricity left streets, markets, and public spaces in darkness, limiting mobility, constraining business activities, and raising concerns about safety and security.

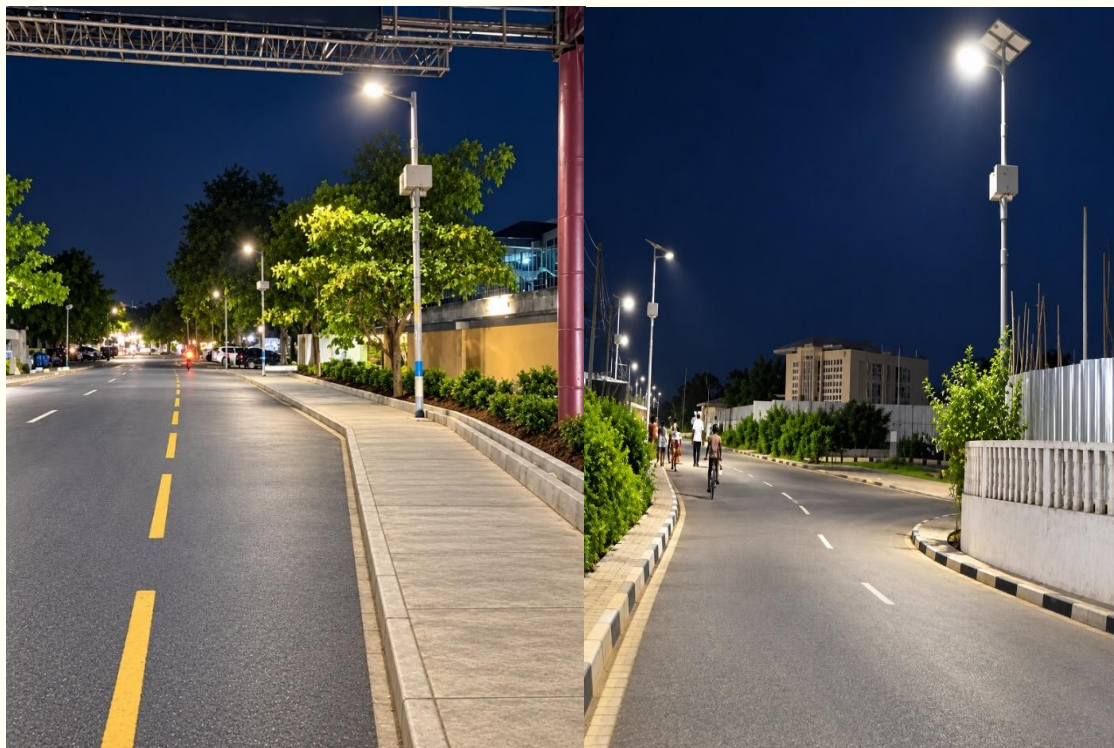
In both urban and rural areas, the absence of adequate public lighting affected daily life, particularly for women, traders, students, and other vulnerable groups who depended on safe public spaces after dark.

Determined to address these challenges, the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) partnered with the Government of Sierra Leone to implement a transformative solar-street lighting

programme designed to improve public safety, expand access to sustainable energy and support socio-economic development across the country.

On 25 January 2011, EBID signed a US\$20 million financing agreement with the Government of Sierra Leone under the country's Agenda for Prosperity. The initiative aimed to provide reliable public lighting while avoiding additional pressure on the national electricity network.

By harnessing solar photovoltaic technology and energy-efficient LED lighting, the project offered a sustainable solution capable of delivering immediate and long-term benefits to communities nationwide.



The programme financed the supply and installation of 8,880 stand-alone solar street-light systems across Freetown, Lungi and district headquarters throughout the country.

Representing approximately 1.3 MW of peak solar generation capacity, each system was equipped with photovoltaic panels, batteries, charge controllers, LED luminaires and galvanised steel poles, enabling autonomous operation independent of the national grid.

Implementation was not without challenges. The Ebola epidemic that struck Sierra Leone in 2014 temporarily halted project activities, threatening to delay the expected benefits.

However, through the commitment of the Government, EBID and project stakeholders, work resumed and was successfully completed in 2016. The project ultimately delivered solar lighting infrastructure across 20 localities, extending far beyond the capital and reaching communities in the Northern, Eastern and Southern regions of the country.

Today, the impact of the investment is visible in the daily lives of millions of Sierra Leoneans. More than one million people gained direct access to improved public lighting, while an estimated 1.8 million people now benefit from safer and more vibrant public spaces. Streets that were once difficult and, in some cases, unsafe to navigate after sunset are now illuminated, enabling residents to move with greater confidence and security.



The transformation has been particularly significant for local economic activity. Traders, shop owners, transport operators and market vendors can extend their working hours, serving more customers and increasing their incomes. In many communities, businesses that previously closed at dusk can remain open into the evening, creating new economic opportunities and contributing to local growth.

Better-lit environments have also strengthened social interactions by allowing residents to participate more actively in community, cultural and social activities after dark. Beyond improving living conditions, the project generated important employment and skills-development opportunities.

Nearly 200 direct jobs were created during implementation, while approximately 500 jobs were supported overall.

Engineers and technicians received specialised training in the installation, commissioning, and maintenance of solar lighting systems, helping to build local expertise in renewable energy and ensuring the long-term sustainability of the infrastructure.

The programme has also delivered significant environmental benefits. By relying on clean and renewable solar energy, the project contributes to Sierra Leone's efforts to promote climate-resilient and sustainable development.



Over a ten-year period, it is expected to avoid approximately 40,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, demonstrating how investments in green infrastructure can simultaneously improve livelihoods, support economic growth and protect the environment.

More than a decade after its launch, the solar street-lighting programme stands as a compelling example of the transformative impact of development finance. What began as an infrastructure investment has become a catalyst for safer communities, stronger local economies and improved quality of life.

For families walking along illuminated streets, for entrepreneurs generating additional income through longer business hours, and for communities enjoying safer and more accessible public spaces, the benefits are tangible and enduring.

Through this investment, EBID has done more than install streetlights. The Bank has helped create opportunities, strengthen resilience and improve the everyday lives of millions of Sierra Leoneans, demonstrating how strategic investments in sustainable infrastructure can empower communities and advance inclusive development across West Africa.



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