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EU-Funded SOGREA Drives International Benchmarking Collaboration with Spain to Advance Solar Waste Management in Sierra Leone



The SOGREA Benchmarking mission to Spain moves Sierra Leone Solar Waste Management vision from strategic planning directly into operational action, giving the Government of Sierra Leone and key stakeholder actors the technical blueprint required to launch Sierra Leone's first solar waste management pilot.



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MADRID, Spain — September 28, 2026 : A multi-sectoral delegation representing key government institutions, regulatory bodies, and academic leaders from Sierra Leone has completed a five-day benchmarking study visit to Madrid, Spain, focused on solar photovoltaic (PV) and battery waste lifecycle management.

The mission was facilitated by UNOPS under the Salone Off-Grid Renewable Energy Acceleration (SOGREA) initiative, a European Union-Funded project implemented by UNOPS in collaboration with the Government of Sierra Leone Ministry of Energy. It brought together delegates from Sierra Leone comprising of Ministry of Energy (MoE), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Electricity and Water Regulatory Commission (EWRC), Public Private Partnership Directorate (PPP), Sierra Leone Standards Bureau (SLSB), University of Sierra Leone (FBC), Office of the President - Presidential Initiative on Climate Change, Renewable Energy and Food Security (PI-CREF) and UNOPS SOGREA Technical Team conducted a benchmarking mission to Spain from 21 to 25 September 2026.

The mission provided a technical foundation for the pilot construction of Solar Waste Management by drawing on international best practices in circular economy models and e-waste regulation. As Sierra Leone expands off-grid solar energy access, establishing environmentally sound systems to manage end-of-life solar panels, batteries, and related equipment is critical to long-term sustainability. Spain was selected for the benchmarking mission due to its mature waste management regulatory framework including alignment with the European Union Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive operational, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes, public-private operational partnerships, and advanced research infrastructure.

The progressive learning exchange equipped participants with technical insights across the entire solar lifecycle, moving from policy design and regulatory compliance to operational collection systems, private-sector logistics, and technological recovery solutions. Delegates conducted technical site visits, interactive policy sessions, and facility demonstrations with leading Spanish institutions. Delegates had enriching engagement with ECOLEC on producer compliance, operational financing mechanisms, and collection as well as recovery frameworks. A further consultative meeting was held with the Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge (MITECO) on national legislative oversight, institutional coordination, and regulatory implementation. Technical review of waste logistics, treatment infrastructure, and operational models was also undertaken at FCC Medio Ambiente.

Additionally, strategic sessions were held with the Unión Española Fotovoltaica (UNEF) on solar market growth, producer compliance schemes, and voluntary industry stewardship followed by



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laboratory application tours and technology transfer discussions at the Centre for Energy, Environmental and Technological Research (CIEMAT). The insights gathered during the benchmarking mission will directly inform the implementation of SOGREA Work Package 7 pilot phase for solar waste management in Sierra Leone which will be aligned with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) strategic goal of an Integrated Waste Management Facility at Masiaka.

The key deliverables resulting from the benchmarking mission center on translating Spanish best practices into actionable frameworks for Sierra Leone includes a comprehensive Benchmarking Mission Report, a National Action Matrix, and specialized Policy and Technical Guidance. This will establish clear institutional responsibilities and operational timelines for adopting circular economy models, and provide concrete technical inputs to refine Sierra Leone's national Solar Waste Management Framework, draft business models, and technical training curricula.

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About the Project

The Salone Off-Grid Renewable Energy Acceleration (SOGREA) project is funded by the European Union and implemented by UNOPS in partnership with the Government of Sierra Leone. SOGREA aims to increase access to clean, reliable off-grid energy across Sierra Leone while establishing sustainable end-of-life management systems for renewable energy technologies.

About the Ministry of Energy, Government of Sierra Leone

The Ministry's guiding mission is to develop, regulate, and promote a sustainable, reliable, and affordable energy sector that supports national development, drives economic growth, and improves the quality of life for all Sierra Leoneans through transparent governance, effective service delivery, and strategic partnerships.

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