

The Solar Academy: A flagship achievement of the STAR C project in Senegal

The Solar Academy, established at the École Polytechnique de Thiès (EPT), stands as a major milestone of the STAR C Project in Senegal. The creation of this Academy follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the EPT (host institution), and the National Agency for Renewable Energy (ANER), the national focal point for the STAR C Project in Senegal.

Inauguration and stakeholder commitment

The Solar Academy was inaugurated on December 9, 2024, by Dr. Abdourahmane Diouf, Minister of Higher Education, Research, and Innovation, in the presence of numerous distinguished personalities. Attendees included representatives from the French Embassy in Senegal, the ISA, UNIDO, the Director General of ANER, the Director of EPT, as well as associations from the private renewable energy sector (COPERES and REPER) and a representative from a GIZ program. The authorities present expressed their enthusiasm and commitment to supporting the development of this Academy, emphasizing its pivotal role in training future professionals in the solar energy sector.

The inauguration of the Solar Academy received extensive media coverage, with notable presence from Senegalese media outlets, television channels, local radio stations, and digital platforms, reflecting the significance and excitement generated by this initiative.

Innovative training and practical immersion

The Solar Academy has already conducted two training sessions focused on solar PV. Each session welcomed 26 participants, including 46% women, demonstrating a strong commitment to inclusion and the promotion of gender equality.

The training modules offered at the Solar Academy were developed based on the findings of the ARE consultant's mission, carried out under the STAR C Project. This consultant produced detailed reports on the harmonization of curricula and qualifications in solar PV and solar thermal energy, providing a solid foundation for program design. The modules delivered at the Academy are directly derived from this work, ensuring pedagogical coherence and alignment with international standards, while addressing the specific needs of the local and regional market.

The 10-day training programs combined theoretical knowledge with practical exercises, offering participants a comprehensive and immersive experience. Beneficiaries had the opportunity to visit a solar PV installation site during each session, allowing them to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. Additionally, each session featured a conference led by a private sector representative,

providing participants with insights into the realities of the professional environment and opportunities in the solar PV sector.

Certification and acquired skills

At the end of each session, participants were evaluated and awarded a training certificate during a closing ceremony. The skills acquired include:

- ✓ The regulatory framework for renewable energy in Senegal
- ✓ The design and installation of solar PV systems in compliance with current standards.
- ✓ The maintenance of solar PV installations.
- ✓ Key concepts in energy efficiency.

Future prospects

The next two training sessions will focus on solar thermal energy, expanding the Academy's offerings. A session dedicated to the informal sector is also planned before the end of the year, aiming to reach a broader audience and strengthen the initiative's socio-economic impact.

In the short term, the Academy plans to introduce a Master's program in solar energy, in collaboration with the National Institute for Solar Energy (INES) in France. This initiative aims to enhance high-level training opportunities and position the Academy as a center of excellence in solar energy in West Africa.

A key contribution to the energy transition

The Solar Academy represents a significant step forward in building local expertise in solar energy, thereby contributing to Senegal's energy transition. By combining technical expertise, practical immersion, and strategic partnerships, it establishes itself as a hub of excellence for solar training in the region. With the ongoing support of its partners and the commitment of local authorities, the Solar Academy is poised to play a key role in fostering a green and inclusive economy in Senegal and across West Africa.