



SUCCESS STORY

LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE: EQUIPPING BOOKER WASHINGTON INSTITUTE (BWI) STUDENTS WITH TECHNICAL SKILLS TO GENERATE RENEWABLE ENERGY ELECTRICITY IN LIBERIA



During training, a Biomass Brother runs tests and records data on the 5kW Lister Engine running on crude palm oil (CPO)



The Biomass Brothers operate BWI's biomass gasifiers using palm kernel shells as fuel



The Biomass Brothers want to recruit new members from the BWI business program

“We figured out that the best fuel is used palm kernels. This is really great because usually people just throw those away!” Willie McGill, a “Biomass Brother,” said while training at BWI at the new Biomass Energy Center.

Willie and nine others have been dubbed the ‘Biomass Brothers’ – a group of Booker Washington institute (BWI) students who are part of the new BWI Biomass Energy Center’s education and capacity building program funded as a Public Private Partnership (PPP) by USAID’s Liberia Energy Sector Support Program (LESSP). The PPP is made up of BWI, Winrock International, implementing the LESSP on behalf of USAID and EcoPower, a Liberian renewable energy (RE) company

After the start of their training last year, all members of the Biomass Brothers are now able to manage and operate two generator gasifiers (running on palm kernel shells and rubber tree wood chips) and one Lister engine (running on crude palm oil) to generate 40 kW electricity for the BWI. The BWI campus will soon have half its electricity needs generated by the completed 70 kW gasifier systems in December 2013.

The ability to manage this technology paves the way for renewable energy electricity generation in Liberia to be a reality. The successful training of these students at BWI means that future RE generation systems in Liberia will have skilled operators and mechanics to maintain them thus promoting sustainability.

The RREA (Rural & Renewable Energy Agency) will also use the Center with BWI as an extension and demonstration unit to showcase biomass electricity generation for rural Liberian citizens and commercial enterprises. The gasifiers are also made in Berkeley, California USA by All Power Labs (APL). Both EcoPower and their sub APL are also assisting the Biomass Brothers in the development with hands on training and even all expenses paid trips to the USA to train at APL facilities in CA. “Jobs are not just a promise for us now.” Prince Kortu, another ‘Brother,’ said. “It’s a reality. And we want others to have that same promise.” (7/2013)