

## **Off-grid solar set to boom in Africa**

**Johannesburg, 09 January 2018 - The role of off-grid and mini-grid in rural electrification** in Africa, will be a key discussion session during the 10<sup>th</sup> Africa Energy Indaba Conference on **20-21<sup>st</sup> February 2018** at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa, supporting the immense growth potential of solar.

Solar is making a major impact in Africa; the amount of power from solar grew by more than 50%, and has officially increased energy output globally at a faster rate than any other fuel. Solar is currently leading the race in renewables and for the first time solar PV additions surpassed all other fuels including coal. The International Energy Agency (**IEA**) released their latest report relating to solar in 2017 whereby the Agency estimated a continued strong solar PV growth through to 2022, with renewable electricity capacity forecast to expand by over 920 GW, an increase of 43%.

It is estimated that for the next five years, solar PV will represent the largest annual capacity additions for renewables, surpassing wind and hydro. Recently, the IEA tracked off-grid solar PV applications in Asia and Sub Saharan Africa, and it is estimated that off-grid capacity is set to triple reaching over 3 000 MW in 2022, this resulting from industrial applications, solar home systems (SHS), and mini-grids driven by government electrification programmes, and private sector investments.

The socio-economic impact will be very significant, whereby solar home systems, this being the most dynamic sector in the off-grid segment, is estimated to bring basic electricity services to millions of households in Sub-Saharan Africa. The growth in solar PV is set to bridge the electrification gap in Africa; a case in point is Lumos, a company offering off-grid solar services in Africa called Y'ello Box and in partnership with MTN in Nigeria, is offering a device that transforms the sun's energy into affordable, clean and reliable electricity and is paid for by using the mobile phone. This type of initiative, the IEA envisages over the next five years will encourage Africa's entrepreneurs and innovative payment solutions, enabling access to electricity services by 2022 for millions of low-income additional consumers in Africa.

According to the IEA report\*, this solar renewable trend is so dynamic that the off-grid SHS capacity in Africa is set to reach around 1,000 MW by 2022. To date, East Africa has been a main initiator in off-grid solar systems, for example, in Rwanda a solar powered mobile kiosk charges phones and connects communities. Currently, the Tanzanian national grid supplies electricity to less than 20% of the population and in other areas of the country mini-grids are connected to oil-burning or hydroelectric plants. This amounts to only a quarter of Tanzanians having access to power, while only another 8% of majority rural dwellers receive continuous power from solar systems linked to lithium-ion batteries.

These above-mentioned private sector innovations supported by Power Africa and funded by OPIC (Overseas Private Investment Corporation) are enabling people to access power in increasingly shorter periods of time through off-grid energy solutions. Populations who are not yet connected to the grid no longer have to wait months, years, or decades to have access to electricity for their homes and businesses. These innovative solutions are having an immediate and practical impact whereby millions of people in Africa will benefit by switching from kerosene and diesel fuels to solar energy, reducing their expenditures on energy while concomitantly and significantly reducing CO2 emissions.

Africa is the sunniest region on earth and with its abundant natural resources the positive socio-economic spin-off potential is enormous. The lengthy, extremely expensive and arduous task of connecting to the main grid currently remains a focus of African governments and international development institutions, but clearly this needs to shift in order to accommodate the millions that could have affordable, reliable and clean electricity in their homes and businesses in the very near future. In order to hasten this vital goal, market and policy frameworks need to advance in order to facilitate the following multiple objectives, provide long-term price signals to attract investment, ensure efficient short-term electricity dispatching, price negative externalities and unlock sufficient levels of flexibility as well as cultivate a range of dispatchable renewable technologies, including Hydropower, Bioenergy, Geothermal and Concentrated Solar Power.

Various Rural Electrification Agency CEOs and decision-makers from African countries, such as Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Sudan and Mozambique, will be hosted by the South African Electrotechnical Export Council (SAEEC) in partnership with the South African Department of Trade & Industry to participate and attend the Africa Energy Indaba. Key meetings will be hosted with these Agency CEOs to expose them to new off-grid and mini-grid technologies during the exhibition component of the Africa Energy Indaba. The latest renewable energy projects that are up for tender will be an added feature and discussion throughout the event, which provides ample opportunity for business development for technology companies, EPC contractors, financiers, etc.

In addition, the exhibition and conference will feature **Hosted Buyers from property development companies, municipalities, retail centres, manufacturers**, etc. interested in solar rooftop installations and solar solutions.

The focused business opportunity programmes set up, combined with the Business Matchmaking Programme, will result in quality business being concluded at the 10<sup>th</sup> Africa Energy Indaba Conference and Exhibition. This is definitely the year to participate and to do energy business!

\*Source: <https://www.iea.org/publications/renewables2017/>

Ends.

## **ABOUT AFRICA ENERGY INDABA**

### ***An African Energy event for Africans and by Africans***

Africa is the continent of opportunity for the serious energy investor. With vast natural energy resources ranging from coal, oil, gas, hydro, solar, wind and geothermal, there is ample choice for the discerning energy entrepreneur. Lack of access to electricity means that there is an opportunity for regional governments, energy businesses, organisations and investors to unlock electricity access

to millions of people who have don't have power. **The Africa Energy Indaba** is the continent's premier energy conference and exhibition: bringing together leading African and global energy players to unlock energy and business opportunities across the African continent. The Africa Energy Indaba has strategic partnerships with the World Energy Council (WEC), the South African National Energy Association (SANEA) and the NEPAD Planning & Coordinating Agency (NPCA).

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**20-21 February 2018 at Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg**

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