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Tesla-backed ZOLA Electric unveils its latest solution, FLEX MAX. It's the biggest off-grid solar home solution, including the largest battery and solar panel technology on the global market. The launch enhances ZOLA's network by offering a product that caters to customers in both off-grid and on-grid areas.

Bill Lenihan, Chief Executive Officer of ZOLA Electric, said: "We are thrilled to be adding FLEX MAX to ZOLA's market-leading Enterprise technology platform, delivering distributed, clean, digital energy solutions to those that need it most. FLEX MAX offer significant hardware and software improvements and the most advanced battery technology that will be a game-changer in improving the reliability of energy systems in emerging markets.

"Through our valuable partnerships with local integrators and distributors, our solutions are installed in homes, businesses, schools and hospitals in 10 countries across four continents, serving over two million customers. ZOLA's platform of hybrid battery and storage solutions, monitored and managed by VISION, is the world's first fully integrated, modular and intelligent platform purpose-built for the Energy Access sector."

ZOLA's B2B model delivers clean, reliable and affordable energy to emerging markets globally, distributed through leading integrators in local markets including EDF, Shell, Econet/DPA and to emerging DRE (distributed renewable energy) integrators like Blue Camel in Nigeria. Its B2B model enables its integrator partners in local markets to efficiently build and manage networks that deliver community-level electrification to deliver Energy Access where it is needed most.

Zola Electric aims to solve access to reliable energy by providing distributed community grids. The task is "one of the world's greatest problems", Zola boss Bill Lenihan has said, setting out plans to tackle this, grid by community grid.

The company has been working on the problem for more than a decade. Its first port of call was Tanzania. "The problem to solve was kerosene," Lenihan said. Zola offered smart connected solar panels and a lithium ion battery.

In many ways, Zola continues to provide this. "We're still proliferating smart devices, we're still replacing inefficient energy. Today, though, we're providing a platform for smart connected devices to deliver community-level electricity."

The US-based company announced the launch of its first distributed minigrid in Rwanda, in November 2022. The project provides more than 1,000 connections, connecting up "hospitals, schools, houses. It's everybody. Our mission is to provide community level electrification for 3 billion people - and our architecture can support anyone."

Lenihan noted the different roles that went into providing the system. "There are three different industries in providing distributed energy as architecture. You need the technology, which we do, the integrators who meet customers and build the kit and then you need financing."

Zola's technology can scale, with manufacturing in a centralised facility, and more companies are able to provide the integration service. "Financing is the biggest impediment, it's really hard."

"The amount of capital required is in the trillions of dollars," Lenihan said. Zola had initially provided financing to customers, underwriting about \$150 million, but it was unable to keep this up. "We're not a bank, there's no way to do it," he said, citing the cost of capital.

"We're starting to see development institutions, governments, institutional capital enter the space." The appeal is straightforward, though. "This is energy, it's essential. If there's a lower-cost better product, customers will pay."

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