

Solar power supply in Africa

Often referred to as the "Sun continent," Africa receives more hours of bright sunlight than any other continent. But even with 60 per cent of the world's solar resources, Africa has only one per cent of solar generation capacity, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA).

Due to energy production and infrastructure challenges, many African countries regularly deal with blackouts, brownouts and poor electricity supply. Then the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global economy hard, and commodity prices surged after the invasion of Ukraine, making energy even more difficult for poorer Africans to buy.

Increasingly, start-ups rather than established corporations are offering access to advanced solar energy solutions to the majority of people across Africa. By harnessing the sun's power and transitioning to clean energy, Africans can expect major economic and social developments across the continent.

Headquartered in Nairobi, SunCulture has raised over \$40 million to equip rural farmers with solar-powered irrigation systems. Instead of counting on rainfall or revving up diesel or petrol pumps, farmers can now rely on solar-powered systems that are cheaper, use renewable energy and need minimal maintenance.

Annual capital investment in renewables in emerging markets needs to reach \$1 trillion per year if the world is to achieve the goal of net-zero emissions by 2050... "Now the missing piece is continued investment from both public and private financiers.

"Solar is particularly attractive because of its positive environmental impact, job creation potential, and economic development potential," said Mikayla Czajkowski, chief of staff at SunCulture.

"African nations have immense potential to benefit from utilizing solar energy - especially in remote and under-served regions where energy access is limited - and facilitates a reduction in the continent's carbon footprint, making a valuable contribution to global efforts to combat climate change," Ms. Czajkowski added.

In an impact survey of SunCulture's customers, measurement company 60 Decibels [a US-based organisation that offers customized assessments] found that SunCulture brought about significant improvements: 89 per cent of smallholder farmers experienced a boost in their quality of life, 90 per cent increased their production, and 87 per cent enhanced their earnings.

From GridX Africa, a firm that offers off-grid solar power to farms, safari lodges for tourists and construction projects in Kenya, Mozambique and Tanzania, to the pay-as-you-go solar company Bboxx and the Egypt-based solar power developer and electricity distributor KarmSolar, Africa has no shortage of original solar energy start-ups.



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Emily McAteer, founder and chief executive officer, of Odyssey Energy Solutions spent more than a decade working to finance and build distributed solar projects across Africa and India.

Her firm provides technology and finance solutions for distributed renewable energy businesses. At every stage of project development, she hit key bottlenecks that make it hard for solar companies like hers to scale.

By offering tools for solar developers to aggregate and pitch portfolios of projects to financiers, firms can access capital more effectively. To procure equipment more effectively, Odyssey streamlined the procurement process by negotiating directly with original equipment manufacturers for better prices and warranties and by working with developers for supply chain support.

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