

## Sps solar quot ghana quot

For a country that caps solar energy project sizes to just 20MW and only had its first major utility-scale project come online this year, Ghana's announcement of a 30MW module manufacturing facility outside the capital city of Accra turned more than a few heads this year.

The factory and equipment alone cost nearly US\$10 million, but with the site, buildings and support infrastructure included it required US\$30-50 million total investment while marking a major step forward for solar manufacturing in Africa.

PV Tech went to visit the factory, which was developed by Accra-based developer Strategic Power Solutions (SPS), a subsidiary of Strategic Security Systems International (3SIL), an independent Ghanaian conglomerate specialising in the procurement of solar products.

3SIL started out in the solar industry by procuring and installing solar street lights, before looking to branch into local production and various other applications of solar technology. While the firm has begun with engineering solar panels, it also aims to produce energy storage batteries and inverters in Ghana in the future.

To date, SPS and 3SIL have been completely privately financed and they have 100% equity in the company and its subsidiary with no debt, but they are looking to find cheaper ways of financing their operations.

"We are looking for operating capital to pre-finance certain aspects of our operation and also to give us an advantage in terms of dealing with our distributors, who may not be as well capitalised," adds Obeng.

The site currently has two laminators, one automatic stringing machine and one layer machine capable of 30MW per year on three shifts, but by adding two more laminators and a stringing machine, the facility could reach another 30MW with further room to optimise at around 80MW.

This is the first PV manufacturing plant in Ghana and with the exception of two plants in South Africa and another in Kenya, it stands out as a pioneering project in Sub-Saharan Africa, adds Khurram Bahar Khan, SPS general manager.

"We are getting the channel partners, JV partners, as well as getting the MoUs internationally," says Khan. "The people are rushing to West Africa globally right now. There are challenges everywhere but the level of challenge is decreasing as the number of companies increases."

The road approaching the facility just outside Tema, in a major industrial zone, is lined with solar streetlamps marking the way to the standout high-tech building in an otherwise dusty and factory-heavy horizon. Square



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solar modules line every window on the front face of the offices and the plant also is home to a 50kW PV system that supplies energy to the grid, with designs to install a 100kW system, which will eventually power the entire factory and negate the occasional need to use a backup diesel generator.

The land in Tema is cheaper than in Accra and there are some tax incentives to set up business operations, particularly manufacturing outside the Accra enclave, says Obeng. As a result the whole company has been relocated.

Obeng says the plant is offering both poly and mono modules, with sizes of 150W typically for street lights, 250W for rooftop homes, and then 300W for utilities and large-scale rooftop applications.

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