

# Sh39b earmarked for off-grid electricity in Uganda

By Billy Rwothungeyo

Players in the off-grid electricity space in Uganda have reason to smile after Power Africa; a US government-led initiative announced an \$11m (about sh39b) facility to support electrification efforts in the country.

The facility, named Power Africa Uganda Electricity Supply Accelerator, will ease the addition of 1,000MW of generation capacity and 1,000,000 new electricity connections by 2020.

The announcement of the facility was made at the East Africa Energy and Infrastructure Summit (EAEIS) in Kampala on Tuesday.

The US ambassador to Uganda, Deborah Malac, said the time is ripe to invest in off-grid and mini-grid solutions

to cut into the energy deficits in the country.

"Off-grid solutions are playing an increasing role in supporting and enhancing rural development. This is an opportunity to discuss what more we can do together, to support the private sector driven off-grid subsector," she said.

"As you all know, it is very expensive to connect the sparsely populated communities on the national grid, but the solar systems provide a viable solution. It has been great to see over the last several years falling prices, pay as you go platforms and the continuous innovations that off-grid companies are undertaking to help drive progress in this regard," Malac noted.

Attilio Pacifici, the



Godfrey Turyahikayo

ambassador and head of Delegation of the European Union to Uganda, spoke of the risks of mobilising resources for private sector to improve electrification.

"Regulatory risks, for example, change in law, cancellation of licence, tariff adjustments and so on. There are also currency risks, linked to the volatility of the local currencies against the reference currencies."

With an average of 75KW per year, Uganda has one of the lowest electricity consumption per citizen in Africa. Only about 15% of Ugandans have access to power, leaving the rest languishing in darkness.

Godfrey Turyahikayo, the executive director of the Rural Electrification Agency, revealed that the Government is working on a grand master

plan for off-grid and mini-grid electrification solutions.

"We intend to put on the grid the areas that will have been mapped out and also look at the potential of off-grid electrification, especially using solar energy," he said.

The three-day summit is focussing on the topical issues concerning rolling out off-grid projects across Africa, presenting current project opportunities and building on the outcomes of the first successful off-grid Summit, held in Dar-es-Salaam in December 2016.

More than 40 local and international solar companies showcased solutions for lighting off-grid homes, businesses and public buildings, as well as irrigating farms on the sidelines of the summit.