



Somalia energy storage for grid stability

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SolarGen will describe its work in Somalia on the panel, "Microgrids for the Greater Good," May 9 at Microgrid 2018 in Chicago.

Beleaguered by famine, terrorism and war, Somalia has the added burden of some of the highest energy costs in the world. But now relief is coming in the form of solar microgrids for refugees and communities thanks to an East African company.

SolarGen Technologies is on a mission to help stabilize the country of 12 million people, using solar microgrids to cut diesel emissions and lower energy costs that are now as high as \$1 to \$3/kWh.

With offices in Somalia and Kenya, the renewable energy equipment distributor expects to complete the first of its solar microgrids in Somalia in about two months. The project is slated to reduce energy costs to about 50 cents/kWh from roughly \$1/kWh, said Sean Brooks, director of business development, SolarGen. The project is part of an international effort to help stabilize the area after its liberation from the Somali terrorist group, Al-Shabaab, in 2014, he said.

Funded by the Somalia Stability Fund, an international multi-donor fund, the 48-kW system will serve 175 households in Warsheikh, a coastal town north of Mogadishu, site of the battle depicted in the film Black Hawk Down. The microgrid is 100 percent solar and includes lead-acid battery storage, with diesel as backup, Brooks said.

SolarGen will build the microgrid and operate it for two years, then transfer operation and ownership to a community-owned utility.

A second solar microgrid will be built by SolarGen in a new development for returning refugees in Kismayo. The effort is managed by the American Refugee Committee, which is building houses for the refugees. Funding for the microgrid comes from the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), with some help from the Somalia Stability Fund, said Brooks.

"Working with the commission, we designed a system to support 100 households and five public facilities in the area designated for refugees returning back to Somalia from Kenya," he said. "As conditions improve in Somalia, more and more people are leaving refugee camps in Kenya and returning to Somalia."



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For these projects, SolarGen will install smart meters from SparkMeter.

SolarGen's goal is to create microgrids that are 100 percent solar, but it's possible SolarGen will partner with diesel operators to convert some diesel plants into diesel/solar hybrid systems.

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Web: <https://www.kary.com.pl/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

