Tesla solar roof zimbabwe

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Tesla’s Powerwall 2 batteries are helping Zimbabwe change the landscape of its local telecom networks.

Zimbabwe is a country that usually faces a shortage of physical cash. With this in mind, the southern African country has widely embraced digital financial transaction systems, a notable part of which is conducted through mobile devices. Unfortunately, the country also is prone to power outages, with some lasting as long as 18 hours per day.

During outages, base stations of telecom providers stop operating, and those that do usually rely on dirty diesel generators to keep the structures active. The system works, but fuel is scarce in Zimbabwe as well. Norman Moyo, the chief executive officer of Distributed Power Africa, describes the situation in the country in a statement to Bloomberg.

"Telecommunications have become the lifeblood of the economy. If the telecom network is down in Zimbabwe, you can"t do any transactions," he said.

Econet Wireless Ltd., one of Zimbabwe’s mobile providers and the company behind EcoCash, one of the country’s most popular mobile money systems, opted to adopt a less conventional approach to respond to the country’s power problems. Instead of relying on an unstable grid and diesel generators, Econet opted to utilize Tesla’s Powerwall 2 batteries to power its base stations.

The project is notable, with the initiative involving the installation of two Powerwalls for each base station. The entire project involves the installation of 520 Powerwalls, is Tesla’s most extensive telecommunications initiative to date, according to Moyo. Considering that Econet has about 1,300 base stations across Zimbabwe, there is a good chance that Tesla’s 520 Powerwalls will only prove to be the beginning.

Moyo, whose company handles the installation of the Tesla batteries, noted that if the Zimbabwe project proves successful, similar models could be adopted in other areas too. Among these are regions such as Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo, both of which are also experiencing power shortages.

Econet notes that the Powerwall 2 batteries are designed to step in at times when the base station’s solar panels are not generating enough electricity. Each pair of Tesla Powerwalls could power a base station for as long as 10 hours on their own, according to the telecom provider.

Commenting on the project, a Tesla spokesperson has noted that the company is currently working with several telecommunications companies across the world. The Silicon Valley-based company added that it sees

a combination of solar panels and battery storage devices as a good opportunity to expand its business and reach in regions where electricity supply is limited, or at best, erratic.

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