

EEG Energy Insight Paper

International energy-related organisations' response to COVID-19

This *EEG Energy Insight* explores the targeted measures being taken by international energy-related organisations to support key players in the energy sector in the midst of the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. This paper builds on the *EEG Briefing Note* published in April 2020 which summarised findings from a rapid scan of online resources. In this *Insight*, we build on the original briefing note using multiple in-depth stakeholder interviews with international energy-related organisations and bilateral and multilateral donor organisations.

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Overview

The coronavirus has had far-reaching and devastating health, social, economic consequences globally. The power sector has experienced these consequences in at least three different ways. Firstly, the pandemic has thrown a spotlight on the critical role electricity supplies play in maintaining health services, powering everything from ventilators to cold chains for vaccines. Secondly, it has become clear that the power sector itself has come under immense strain as a result of the pandemic. Lockdowns have threatened the business models and survival of both grid and off-grid suppliers, albeit in different ways – falls in energy demand by as much as 20-30 per cent have threatened utilities' balance sheets, while off-grid solar system suppliers have seen their routes to market closed and sales collapse. Thirdly, however, there has been some sense that out of this crisis some good might come in terms of an opportunity to use economic recovery packages to stimulate a more rapid decarbonisation of power systems.

This *Energy Insight* paper uses these three impact areas to look at actions donors, development banks and energy sector players are taking in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia in both the grid and off-grid supply areas, to address these issues. It uses interviews with key institutions and further in-depth reviews of available references to build on an earlier [EEG Briefing Note](#) published in April 2020, which in turn summarised findings from a rapid scan of online resources. This paper finds that there have been varied levels and types of support and engagement provided thus far to support energy providers; and maps out where the main sources of support are currently distributed as well as what form they have taken. In so doing, it may be possible to observe which areas continue to have gaps and where future support may be directed.

Our findings thus far suggest that there is a mix of interventions in both the grid and off-grid sectors in terms of supporting the health sector with critically needed power supply. Most efforts to support the on-grid sector are occurring at the national level or through multilateral funding which has an implicit and long-term 'green stimulus' agenda. In comparison, we find greater cross-country and cross-agency coordination in supporting the off-grid sector throughout the pandemic. It remains to be seen whether and how an internationally coordinated effort will be implemented to support grid-based utilities which are coming under increasing pressure. Questions also remain in terms of the extent to which support to the off-grid sector through funding windows is inclusive of microenterprises and SMEs. Finally, given the constantly evolving situation, we include the caveat that many discussions around support (financial, technical and other forms) are still underway and will not have been captured in their entirety in this paper. We therefore intend to make this a 'live' document, updated as information about new initiatives becomes available. Contributions to this effect would be welcomed. Please see the end of this paper for further contact details.

Support to the on-grid energy sector

There are challenges inherent in the structure of grid-scale energy infrastructure investments that affect their ability to respond to COVID-19. Large-scale programmes, such as those under the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), typically take 2-3 years to design and perhaps 5 years to implement. The long-term objective is economic growth and programme scope will rarely shift. This review found little evidence to suggest that large-scale reorientation of such on-going investments was likely, in response to the pandemic. That said, some evidence was found of new investments being influenced, as can be seen from some of the examples below.

Increased focus on powering health services

The World Bank and UN's Sustainable Energy For All (SE4All) initiative published a joint call for energy access to take centre stage in the fight against COVID-

19.¹ In particular, there was call to fast-track energy access for health and sanitation services through "modular solar with battery energy storage systems [which] can be deployed quickly to under-served and rural health clinics, as well as for pumping and treating water to ensure hygiene." The call also mentioned the need for governments to "work with utilities and off-grid service providers to avoid shut-offs due to non-payment and come up with flexible payment plans. External financial support may include waivers to mitigate service disruption for households and critical institutions." Further support of utilities could come in the form of "providing emergency financial support for essential services, keeping work environments sanitized, stocking up on spare parts, and giving utility staff testing and protective equipment"; as well as assisting utilities with monitoring and supporting cash reserves, and providing external support to monitor Power Purchasing Agreements (PPA) to avoid contract terminations with Independent Power Purchasers (IPP). Limited evidence of grid-based investments

¹ <https://www.seforall.org/news/energy-access-takes-center-stage-in-covid-19-fight>

shifting to tackle this issue was seen in the review. That said, at a programme level, the World Bank's Energy Sector Management and Assistance Programme (ESMAP) is looking to prioritise power supply connections from the health sector perspective, although the response is unlikely to be immediate. ESMAP is exploring how it can re-orient its in-country projects towards fighting COVID-19, including assigning funding for the electrification and the provision of reliable energy supply to health facilities, and mitigating negative impacts. It is exploring how results-based financing mechanisms on its projects can be repurposed during the pandemic, to help companies to support existing clients, in countries including Liberia, Niger and Burundi. Elsewhere, ESMAP is producing a guidance note comprising resources available and a framework for thinking about reliable electricity provision using renewable energy resources for different health facilities and different contexts, although the focus on health institutions has so far been on the Africa region.²

No other grid-scale initiative shifting its emphasis to improve power supplies to health facilities was reported during this review.

Addressing the impacts of COVID 19 on the resilience and functioning of power systems

At present, the key challenges for utilities in the power sector arise from the impact on their balance sheets not only from a reduced demand for power as economic activity halts, but also from macroeconomic decisions being taken at the country level to support consumers' continued access to electricity while they are unable to work because of lockdowns. Support measures for consumers have come in the form of discounted and/or delayed bill payments, or complete bill payment holidays for a period of time – all of which directly impacts utilities' revenues and collections. In Côte d'Ivoire, authorities have decided to extend payment deadlines for April and May 2020 for all households, to July and August 2020, respectively. The authorities will also permit payment

invoices to be made in several instalments. This measure will impact more than one million households.³ Similar initiatives have also been seen in Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Peru, and Senegal⁴, while in Malaysia, the sole electricity utility company in peninsular Malaysia, Tenaga Nasional Berhad (TNB), is supporting customers with 15% discounts on monthly bills for 6 months – in particular hotels operators, travel agencies, local airlines offices, shopping malls, convention centres and theme parks; as well as providing a 6-month discount of 2% to the residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural sectors.⁵ Given these types of initiatives to support customers, utilities will need to be compensated for delayed collections.

The pandemic has had varied regional impacts across Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. In South Africa, the national COVID-19 lockdown has resulted in the cessation of wind farm construction, as well as a drop in income from Eskom contracts for independent power producers (IPPs). It is anticipated that wind energy and other renewables will be part of the government economic stimulus package.⁶

Looking to Asia, there have been both government- and corporate-led energy sector responses. In India, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy has announced that implementation delays to renewable energy projects due to supply chains would be treated as a *force majeure* event, enabling project developers to seek extensions by making applications to relevant implementing agencies.⁷ Meanwhile, the clean energy sectors of higher-income Asian countries such as Singapore have remained resilient in the face of the pandemic by harnessing a range of innovative digital solutions, the inclusive of use of smart technology and intelligent energy management systems.⁸

Many utilities in the Pacific reportedly lack any contingency plans and cash reserves in the face of COVID-19 related uncertainties and operational disruptions, as well as declining power demand and liquidity to sustain basic infrastructure. In such circumstances, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has

² ESMAP has also been coordinating with other organisations including SE4All, WHO, UNICEF, and Rockefeller Foundation.

³ <https://www.africaoilandpower.com/2020/04/23/cote-divoire-offers-electricity-payment-relief-amid-covid-19-crisis/>

⁴ <https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19#G>

⁵ <https://www.tnb.com.my/announcements/tnb-initiatives-to-help-combat-covid-19>

⁶ <https://mybroadband.co.za/news/energy/350042-lockdown-is-bad-news-for-renewable-energy-in-south-africa.html>

⁷ <https://www.twobirds.com/~media/pdfs/covid-19--a-panoramic-view-of-measures-to-protect-the-clean-energy-sector-around-the-world.pdf?la=en&hash=C6F0B8D96FEAFD149EF0F9DBC1E906A6F0011F6>

⁸ <https://www.twobirds.com/~media/pdfs/covid-19--a-panoramic-view-of-measures-to-protect-the-clean-energy-sector-around-the-world.pdf?la=en&hash=C6F0B8D96FEAFD149EF0F9DBC1E906A6F0011F6>

advised measures such as: joint and integrated energy planning to share resources between power utilities and hospitals; governments and utilities considering setting up a liquidity reserve fund equivalent to at least three months of sales; and contingency planning for potential future power failures.⁹

On a global scale, the World Bank is currently reviewing the state of power utilities, in conjunction with other donors, with an ongoing analysis of 79 state-owned utilities across Africa. The aim of this exercise is to develop a framework documenting the financial and technical workings of the utilities. The study is being used as a platform to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on the utilities and to increase understanding of what the Bank could do in this regard moving forward. ESMAP is conducting this work in close coordination with World Bank country teams, the African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Association of Power Utilities of Africa (APUA). Preliminary analysis will be presented to the virtual CEO forum organised by Power Africa on May 14th. Several World Bank interventions are also currently underway, for example in Uganda, with a focus on improving power systems.

Elsewhere, AfDB has mobilised in the space of 2-3 weeks an overall package of \$10 billion as a Crisis Response Facility for COVID-19. While the majority of the lending is directed at providing support to the public sector, \$2 billion of this Facility has been reserved for non-sovereign operations to ensure that the Bank's existing private sector clients are supported amidst the pandemic. Mobilising the Facility has required redirecting roughly two thirds of AfDB's envisaged lending programme for 2020 towards a COVID-19 response. Under this Facility, the Bank is looking to include a component around supporting electricity utilities, given that these will have been asked to provide electricity for free for certain households while also suffering against a backdrop of reduced demand from industrial consumers as a result of COVID-19.¹⁰ Furthermore, the Bank has indicated that approval processes for proposed support under the Facility may be significantly shortened to enable a timely response.

Meanwhile, bilateral donors such as Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD) are reorienting some remaining budgets on the loans already in place with country partners. AFD has also played a role, in conjunction with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) in

creating a series of webinars for partners to discuss crisis management, liquidity issues, supply chain management, crisis communication, digital security, human resources; and is open to providing more support should utilities and Ministries find it useful.

As noted above, aside from macro-fiscal support and technical analysis, there are challenges inherent in the structure of energy-related infrastructure in responding to COVID-19. There is, however, scope to adapt implementation in light of COVID-19, and the context is likely to heavily influence the continuing implementation of existing projects, as well as the future design of new infrastructure projects.

One example of responding to the pandemic context relates to MCC's on-grid investments in Ghana where programmes were halted due to the lockdown through Greater Accra. In the ensuing weeks, the Government of Ghana (GoG) saw a levelling-off in COVID-19 cases and decided to gradually lift various aspects of the lockdown. Given that the GoG manages contracts directly, MCC and the Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) have asked every infrastructure contractor involved in enhancing the energy grid in Ghana to develop Health & Safety guidelines tailored to the COVID-19 context before restarting implementation. These will be reviewed by MCA and MCC to ensure they protect workers and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Looking to the future and opportunities to accelerate decarbonisation of power supplies

The World Bank has pledged an overall \$160 billion in emergency support (\$55 billion to Africa) in order to respond to COVID-19, with this money being made available over the next 15 months. At a Bank-wide level, opportunities will be identified on a country-by-country basis. In the long-term, once budget support flows from the Bank to national governments, it is crucial that the fiscal support to the utilities is included therein so that utilities are compensated for the public support provision being provided throughout the crisis. The World Bank has a task force team focusing on providing solutions for developing-country utilities.¹¹

Several other donors have also highlighted the importance of looking further ahead to after the COVID-19 crisis and ensuring that stimulus packages

⁹ <https://blogs.adb.org/are-pacific-power-utilities-ready-for-the-impact-COVID-19>

¹⁰ At the time of writing, confirmations cannot yet be provided on what this would amount to for specific countries but there are advanced discussions with the AfDB's governance and regional teams around integrating support to utilities.

¹¹ In addition to the \$160 billion, the World Bank has established a multi-donor trust fund, the Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Multi-Donor Fund (HEPRF) with the aim of guiding "critical health security investments now and in years to come". The Government of Japan has expressed interest in being a founding donor.

being granted to recipient countries are aligned with the Paris Agreement and in favour on a low-carbon energy transition. Donors such as AFD will continue to work on technical cooperation projects in countries of intervention to support the energy transition and power system optimisation and planning towards a low-carbon development scenario. This will include increase financing of infrastructure, e.g. energy efficiency in buildings, solar parks, and other renewable energy projects, energy storage, transmission and distribution projects, provided these accelerate the energy transition.

Most recently, organisations such as United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) have agreed to work together to support the Asia-Pacific region's COVID-19 response through access to sustainable energy.¹² This support will come in the form of advising national governments on positioning themselves for the energy transition as part of the immediate response (i.e. the capacity to maintain rural health centres and provide large-scale immunization efforts when a vaccine becomes available), as well as medium- and long-term efforts.

Support to the off-grid energy sector

Perhaps due to the smaller levels of financing and shorter lead times for off-grid investments, the review found more examples of rapid changes in programmes and support to take account of and address the COVID 19 pandemic in the off-grid sector.

Increased focus on powering health services:

A number of implementation efforts are focused on how the energy sector might support the health sector in light of the pandemic. The IKEA Foundation has developed a COVID-19 relief approach focusing on humanitarian energy needs and COVID-19. SE4All is undertaking work through its "Powering Health Facilities" approach which it has refocused on coordinating the energy and health sectors to ensure that the power needs of health facilities and emergency health infrastructure are well understood and being met with appropriate energy solutions.¹³ SE4All and CLASP are collaborating with a working group including the World Bank, AfDB and the Clinton Health Access Initiative to mobilise off-grid companies, particularly mini-grids, to power health facilities.¹⁴ SE4All's efforts are also focused on supporting

decision-making at the regional and national level. For example, it is sharing data with the Africa Union who is reaching out to other governments, and to donors including DFID on how to adapt existing electrification programmes in Sub-Saharan Africa. SE4All has been asked to join the Advisory Committee for the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to advise on powering healthcare and already serves on the Steering Committee for the AfDB's Desert to Power electrification programme to assist with the COVID-19 adapt in order to support healthcare systems.

Addressing the impacts of COVID 19 on the resilience and functioning of power systems.

Efforts in recent months have been targeted towards supporting the off-grid energy sector during the pandemic. There have been numerous calls for action and further calls are also being formulated in order to mobilise financial and technical support for small and medium enterprises that operate as last-mile distributors (LMDs) in the energy sector. In terms of the LMDs themselves, the Global Distributor's Collective (GDC) – a platform for small and medium-sized enterprises in not just the energy sector but also healthcare and nutrition – is combining existing information resources and tailoring technical support to LMDs' needs. The GDC has already hosted virtual workshops on how LMDs can innovate on their business models to enable online sales and the set-up of e-commerce platforms.

Surveys of off-grid companies conducted by, among others, the Global Off-Grid Lighting Association (GOGLA) and the SE4All initiative highlight key constraints faced by off-grid operators. These include being unable to pay staff salaries during the pandemic due to reduced demand; depleted operational expenditure after 2-3 months following the start of the pandemic; as well as capital expenditure constraints.¹⁵ Follow-up member surveys are anticipated in coming weeks from these and other organisations.

Furthermore, there is a lot of discussion around how end-consumers are being affected: 60 Decibels is currently working with GOGLA and their members on customer-facing research in this respect. GDC is producing a piece on how last-mile distributors can help support the crisis response.

Financing has long been a key barrier for LMDs, and this has been exacerbated by the current pandemic.

¹²<https://www.irena.org/newsroom/pressreleases/2020/May/IRENA-and-ESCAP-Step-Up-Joint-Efforts-to-Support-Asia-Pacific-Crisis-Response>

¹³<https://www.seforall.org/interventions/energy-and-health/covid-19-response-powering-health-facilities>

¹⁴<https://www.powerforall.org/insights/dre-technologies/covid-19-roundup>

¹⁵<https://www.seforall.org/covid-19-response/supporting-the-off-grid-energy-sector>

Conversations to date around financing energy access providers have focused on the COVID-19 Energy Access Relief Fund, a EUR100 million pool of targeted concessionary debt due to be launched in June 2020 to enable off-grid energy companies in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia to both maintain their customers' existing energy services and retain the staff required to deliver future services to these customers. The Fund is intended to provide emergency access to funding with the aim of securing up to 370,000 jobs in emerging markets so that the sector can recover and continue to grow following the crisis. The current key partners are Persistent, Acumen, responsAbility, GOGLA, SunFunder, CDC, Shell Foundation, IFC, and Odyssey. ESMAP is providing support to the process, such as exploring how credit lines can be restructured and bridging loans can be provided during the crisis.

Much of the debate around the COVID-19 Energy Access Relief Fund has centred on issues of inclusivity of all players in the energy sector, in particular off-grid LMDs.¹⁶ The concern from numerous associations is that the Fund may be skewed towards larger internationally-backed companies, perpetuating the pre-existing imbalance in the sector¹⁷. Grant-based funding, rather than concessionary debt, is perceived as being more helpful to smaller firms in avoiding insolvency during the crisis. Support from the Relief Fund is anticipated to take the form of loans ticket sizes which may be larger than what is needed by most off-grid SMEs. Indeed, the perception is that SMEs may not require loans exceeding \$100,000 to continue operation during COVID-19, rather in the region of \$30,000 to help them pay for salaries, overdue invoices and for warehousing inventories.¹⁸

There are numerous efforts underway to provide technical assistance to off-grid operators who are in need of assistance on renegotiating existing loans, raising additional funding, adapting their business models (going online and digitizing operations),

human resource planning, crisis management, credit risk management, scenario planning, supply chain management, and how to communicate internally with staff and externally with investors and customers. The Get.Invest Finance Catalyst programme links renewable energy projects and companies with finance opportunities, targeting small- and medium-scale renewable energy (RE) opportunities in sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean.¹⁹ The programme is currently offering business and project developers with free-of-cost advisory support, including on scenario planning, financial modelling and assistance with accessing other funding modalities.²⁰ A technical assistance working group coordinated by CGAP and including organisations such as PFAN, is working to provide tailored technical assistance to such companies in the energy sector. Donor-funded programmes such as the Transforming Energy Access (TEA) programme are also responding to COVID-19 by increasing the amount of communications with and between their project partners on the ground. The next priority of such programmes will be to conduct risk evaluations of projects on the ground. TEA is looking at pivoting certain initiatives to energy for healthcare which may potentially support the COVID-19 response. Organisations such as Power for All are gathering and consolidating data to support the energy sector, both on-grid and off-grid, as well as participating in various calls for action.²¹

Private-sector solutions have also entered into the mix. For example, in Nigeria, Lumos, a SHS provider has been awarded part of a \$500,000 relief fund from Nigerian off-grid energy impact investing company All-On, established by Shell. Lumos is tasked with providing healthcare organisations on the frontline of the COVID-19 pandemic with reliable power and is coordinating its response with the African Field Epidemiology Network (AFENET), the Nigeria Centre

¹⁶ The eligibility criteria for applying to the COVID-19 Energy Access Relief Fund include: Addressing SDG7 (affordable and clean energy) is a defined goal of the company; implementing solar home systems, clean cooking (across the value chain) or mini-grid business model, with 50% of the revenue coming from such business; viable funding plan at the end of February 2020 until 1 May (i.e. no funding gap before May 1st) to ensure no major pre-existing financial issues prior to COVID-19 outbreak; demonstrated need for emergency funding in the next 6 months: i.e. cash on hand versus expected net cash flows; registered company; and transparent ownership structure.

¹⁷ <https://sun-connect-ea.org/dangerous-bluff-package-covid-19-energy-access-relief-fund/>

¹⁸ A few options are therefore being discussed and proposed: Donors to the Relief Fund may wish to consider structuring a blended financing mechanism, for example a loan with a matching grant. Alternatively, the proposed Fund might allow a window for smaller loan ticket sizes to enable

smaller firms to cover their short-term running costs. Other considerations may include a full-time employee equivalent grant for any companies that have not received a substantial aid investment. Provided the company can show evidence of tax receipts and paying taxes on employees, a company might qualify for \$3,000-5,000 per employee as a grant to help smaller off-grid operators to continue operating during COVID-19. The relief could, for example, take the form of a repayable grant and be flexible in nature, responding to energy access demand which has varied dramatically over the March-May period. A re-assessment survey every 6-8 weeks has also been suggested.

¹⁹ <https://www.get-invest.eu/finance-catalyst/>

²⁰ <https://www.get-invest.eu/finance-catalyst/covid-19-window/>

²¹ <https://www.powerforall.org/insights/dre-technologies/covid-19-roundup>

for Disease Control, and the Society for Family Health. The SHSs will be used to power lighting, fans and computers, ensuring that essential services are able to respond to the crisis, supply testing kits, and deliver urgent medical care.²² Elsewhere, other private sector solutions have been sought by companies such as REDAVIA, which has created a new concessionary solar power programme, the COVID-19 Resilience Lease. This initiative will support Ghanaian and Kenyan businesses provides free solar power plants to business customers for six months.²³

In terms of coordination, the perception is that industry bodies have been timely in their responses and calls for action. GOGLA was noticeably swift to launch its COVID-19 resource webpage and members' survey, as well as coordinating with the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), International Energy Agency (IEA), Alliance for Rural Electrification (ARE) and African Mini-Grid Developers Association (AMDA). The feeling is also that private investors have been able to mobilise resources, while donor agencies have struggled to determine how to best deploy capital. Many donors engaging in the energy space, including USAid and DFID, have been focused on pivoting their existing projects to COVID-19 which may mean that capital is ultimately redirected to a relatively small number of already-contracted organisations. There is also the perception that investors can only do so much, and that the benefits of technical assistance, training and knowledge sharing will be limited if SMEs are not provided the financial support to stay afloat in coming months.

Looking to the future and opportunities to accelerate decarbonisation of power supplies

As noted above, there have been numerous calls for action across the board focusing on short-, medium- and long-term solutions to responding the pandemic and embedding a green stimulus measures and packages as part of recovery plans. In the off-grid space such calls include those by the ARE²⁴ comprising 130 signatories; and the IRENA which has mobilised a

Coalition for Action with now over 100 signatories who are engaged in the renewable energy space.^{25 26}

IRENA and the African Union have reached an agreement to improve access to renewable energy in Africa in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The two organisations will explore solutions to foster the development of renewable energy, including decentralised systems, to improve access to electricity on the continent, to provide essential services in health centres and rural communities, such as medical equipment and water pumping for improved hygiene; as well as promoting long-term sustainable development and support the implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs).²⁷ Furthermore, IRENA's latest *Global Renewables Outlook 2020* recommends that recovery measures following the COVID-19 pandemic could include flexible power grids, efficiency solutions, electric vehicle charging, energy storage, interconnected hydropower, green hydrogen and other technology investments consistent with long-term energy and climate sustainability. Furthermore, it advises governments to work together towards a Global Green Deal.²⁸

Much of the focus in recent weeks has been on supporting the energy sector in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, quick and decisive action has also been taken to support the energy sector in Asia. The ADB announced a \$20 billion response package for its developing members in addition to implementing measures to streamline operations to enable the Bank to deliver assistance more flexibly. The ADB will also be hosting the Asia Clean Energy Forum 2020 virtually in June and this will include a thematic track on the impact of COVID-19 on energy and the environment.

The ADB's Energy Sector Group asserts that the pandemic has highlighted the vulnerability of Asian countries to renewable energy value chains such as solar PV; and the need to support the region's low-carbon energy transition. This could be achieved through increasing the manufacturing capacity in the solar PV chain to lessen reliance on imported solar modules and other equipment; and by capacity-building the manufacturing sector in various parts of

²² <https://www.esi-africa.com/industry-sectors/renewable-energy/covid-19-emergency-support-package-to-electrify-health-centres-in-africa/>

²³ <https://www.esi-africa.com/industry-sectors/generation/solar/free-solar-power-leasing-service-revives-smes-in-kenya-and-ghana/>

²⁴ <https://www.ruralelec.org/publications/call-action-roadmap-dre-sector-survive-and-flourish-wake-covid-19-crisis>

²⁵ <https://www.irena.org/newsroom/articles/2020/Apr/IRENA-As-Coalition-for-Action-calls-for-Green-Recovery-Based-on-Renewables>

²⁶ IRENA's Coalition puts forward concrete recommendations on how governments can ensure a rapid and sustained economic recovery that aligns with climate and sustainability objectives. These include, among others: revising deadlines for renewable energy projects given contractual obligations for near-term delivery; providing the renewable energy industry with "critical and essential sector" status; prioritising renewable energy in stimulus measures and a commitment to phasing out fossil fuels.

²⁷ <https://www.afrik21.africa/en/africa-irena-and-au-boost-renewable-energy-in-response-to-covid-19/>

²⁸ <https://www.irena.org/publications/2020/Apr/Global-Renewables-Outlook-2020>

the solar PV value chain, e.g. training in solar PV design, engineering, assembly, installation, and operations and maintenance.²⁹

Summary of findings

Overall, we find that there is a considerable amount of activity within the energy sector in terms of responding to the unfolding pandemic. Broadly, we find that most efforts in the on-grid sector are occurring at the national level or through multilateral funding which has an implicit 'green stimulus' agenda; while there is at present greater cross-country and

cross-agency coordination in supporting the off-grid sector. It remains to be seen whether there will be more of an internationally coordinated effort to support grid-based utilities coming under increasing pressure throughout the pandemic. Questions also remain in terms of the extent to the inclusivity of microenterprises and SMEs in international-level funding efforts for the off-grid sector. Finally, and encouragingly, it is clear that international energy-related agencies and donors see the response to and recovery from COVID-19 as an opportunity to expedite the energy transition.

List of organisations consulted to date

African Development Bank (AfDB)
 Africa Minigrid Developers' Association (AMDA)
 Agence Francaise de Developpement (AFD)
 Alliance for Rural Electrification
 Carbon Trust
 International Energy Agency (IEA)
 IFC Lighting Africa
 International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)
 Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC)
 Power for All
 Practical Action
 UN Sustainable Energy For All (SEForAll)
 UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)
 World Bank

Final note

This is intended to be a live document, updated as additional information on the energy sector's response to the COVID pandemic becomes available. We would welcome comments on or updates to the material presented here as well as information on initiatives not yet captured in this document. In this respect please feel free to contact EEG's Programme Director Simon Trace at simon.trace@opml.co.uk.

About the authors

Simon Trace is EEG's Programme Director. He has 35 years' experience working in international development, focusing on access to basic services (energy, water, and sanitation), natural resource management, and technology. Simon has held senior executive positions in international NGOs, including time as International Director of WaterAid and CEO of Practical Action. He has provided oversight and technical input for several high-profile energy sector publications, frameworks, and strategies, including the UN SEforALL Global Tracking Framework, the World Bank's Regulatory Indicators for Sustainable Energy (RISE), the World Energy Outlook, and the Poor People's Energy Outlook. A chartered engineer with an MA in the Anthropology of Development, Simon has lived and worked in Africa and Asia.

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The views expressed in this Energy Insight do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies.

²⁹ <https://blogs.adb.org/pandemic-may-break-value-chains-but-solar-energy-can-still-shine>