

# We need a solar energy policy

In 2016, the government signed the Compact Agreement in line with power Africa and Energy Africa. Under the agreement, the Government committed to promoting and expanding investments in off grid solar opportunities for people, as opposed to reliance on hydro and fossil fuel-based grid.

It was recognised that the grid electrification could not improve access to clean energy for Ugandans, especially for vulnerable groups such as women, youth and others, where over 80% of the population remains reliant on biomass energy and other dirty sources.

They also committed to put in place a rural electrification law, a solar consumer protection law, create public awareness and many other relevant tools intended to expand clean renewable energy electrification as part of Uganda's obligations under the Sustainable Energy For All programme (SE4ALL), the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Sustainable Development Goals and other national, regional and international commitments aimed at promoting access to clean renewable electricity for all, by 2030, as opposed to the use of fossil fuel.

Uganda has sunshine through the year due to her position at the equator, thus having a lead position in solar energy generation. The country's average solar irradiance is 5.1 kWh/m<sup>2</sup> per day.

Lack of an off-grid component in the rural Electrification Strategy explains why the government's efforts to expand electricity access and affordability, especially for the poor

and vulnerable, continue to fail.

Energy access in Uganda is at 54% with 26% off-grid and 28% on grid. It is estimated that 95% of off grid connections are solar.

Further, due to lack of public awareness and affordable power, majority of the citizens remain ignorant on how to make use of the solar energy access to improve their lives and income, as well reduce on deforestation.

They remain stuck on biomass for most of their key energy needs, such as cooking and boiling water, among other things. Consequently, environmental degradation continues to worsen.

An information hub should be created to provide a forum for impact stories, knowledge exchange and capacity building through offering training opportunities for key stakeholders. There has always been an information vacuum for the needs required by the stakeholders and what actually government provides.

Concerns of increased entry of substandard solar imports into the country are on an increase because there are no solar standards that protect consumers.

Putting in place clear policies will enable the government meet her commitments under the national development plan, the SE4ALL programme, the Paris Climate Change Agreement and, also, address low energy access.

**Margret Kwijuka,  
AFIEGO**