

What's on the Horizon for West Africa?

*The 13th annual West African Power Industry Conference (WAPIC) will take place at the Eko Hotel, Lagos, Nigeria 16-17 November 2016. The event is West Africa's largest strategic power and energy conference and trade exhibition aimed at accelerating power supply and driving growth within the region.*

West Africa is the fastest growing region in Africa, representing the continent's largest business opportunities. There has been an on-going and continuous increase in foreign direct investment into the West African region for power sector developments and initiatives.

The West African regional power industry is facing many challenges from insufficient domestic gas supply, ageing infrastructure, low revenue collection to a skills gap in the workforce. It's been said that doubters don't overcome challenges, but innovators and entrepreneurs find lucrative opportunities and solutions. Consequently there is a high demand for companies, organisations and individuals to work on amending financial frameworks, building IPPs, finding off-grid solutions and training engineers to bridge the skills gap.

The event is a strategic hub for stakeholders looking for collaboration and joint solutions. Over 3 days over 2,000 visitors including regional stakeholders utilities, regulators and the private sector are expected to come together to debate deliberate not only on these issues but on the potential solutions and the way forward.

Nigeria is the largest power market in terms of scale and size and is transitioning to a wholly competitive market characterized by robust economic pricing of electricity that would allow for full recovery of supply electricity. The first phase of the electric power sector reform through the unbundling and the privatization of the Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) has been successfully completed. It's expected that the next phase of the market development should be characterized by competition amongst generators by energy trading between generators and distributors.

Speaking at WAPIC 2015, Robert Dickerman, MD & CEO of Enugu Electricity Distribution Company stated that Nigeria generates 156 units of electricity per person, while India generates 774 units of electricity per person, stressing that the country records the lowest electricity generation per person in the world. Although Nigeria's generation has been rising this year, holding around 4,500 MW due to higher gas supply it still requires \$40 billion to move her electricity generation from the current 4,500 MW of electricity to 20,000 by 2020.

For the second year best practice being implemented in the region were highlighted at the annual Industry Awards and some 200 elite power professionals cheered and celebrated well-known industry pioneers and companies in seven different awards categories. Dangote Group's Joseph Makoju, Akon Lighting Africa and the AfDB big winners at the 2015 annual awards function.

The event travelled through the region but settled in Nigeria in 2010 due to the ever increasing size of the trade exhibition. The exhibition with presents opportunities for local and international exhibitors to showcase solutions and network with the 1,800 unique visitors and each other. Often the most important business partnerships are those between the local SME's and larger internationals who were present on the exhibition floor. Sectors covering metering, transmission and distribution, generation, energy efficiency, finance & investment and clean power & renewables will be represented.

For example the West African Power Pool (WAPP) is driving a project to develop a 1,300 km (807 miles) interconnection line across Ivory Coast, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. A consortium of development agencies including the World Bank, African Development Bank, European Investment Bank and German Export Bank have agreed to provide 329 million euros (\$374.43 million) over 25 years for the project. This infrastructure will enhance power trading on a regional level.

Clean power generation is on stakeholders' lips. For example, in Senegal there is an industrial-scale project wind farm being planned, which will be the largest of its kind in West Africa. Yet the urgency and priority still lies with traditional fuel mix, gas is still king. Renewable energy technologies, supporting the implementation of renewable energy continue to be expensive, but application of new technologies will continue to be addressed.

WAPIC is a leading regional event within a much wider-reaching power and water portfolio presented by Spintelligent. Spintelligent is a specialist provider of face to face business platforms for Sub Saharan Africa.