

The new age of digitalisation and the impact on the African energy sector

The role of digitalisation within the African energy sector is growing rapidly and will result in demand for innovation, adaptation to new market technologies as well as the development of a new skill set within companies. African countries can add a value of R4 trillion (\$300billion) to the continent's economy by 2026 by adopting digitisation.

Digitisation and the implementation of Industry 4.0 will feature prominently at the upcoming **Africa Energy Indaba** in February 2018, where a leading discussion will be featured with a focus on the new age of digitalisation and its impact on the African energy sector.

As South Africa is supported by a macro-economic environment, it is relatively more digitally advanced than its African neighbours. It is noted that industry players operating in South Africa demonstrate established levels of digital readiness in an area such as digital operations, which is fuelled by an established culture of innovation. However, African countries that are moving up the digital maturity curve still have unique challenges to enable the distribution of energy.

In Nigeria for example, many businesses make use of the national grid as a secondary (back-up) source of energy. Innovative entrepreneurs are already developing solutions, such as portable solar-powered mobile charging stations to support the digital economy. The digital maturity in Africa is extremely diverse, and as a developing continent, it has great socio-economic needs of which many can be solved through digitalisation. However, emphasis should be placed on creating an African lens and implementing disruptive technologies in a different way. Electricity supply networks that use digital communications technology, such as Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) or Power-Line Communication (PLC), to analyse, detect and react to local changes, are increasingly being incorporated into the African power utilities' action plans.

The progress each country is making differs, with Kenya and Ethiopia having already developed good systems, according to industry professionals. However, South Africa remains ahead, advancing in line with other developed countries.

A panel of industry experts will discuss this issue and engage with the audience to explore the implementation of digitisation and the benefits attached to the adaption of this new-wave of industry technology in the conference.