

## Storage advances fast-track new power projects

Technological advances and a decline in prices in battery energy storage are driving progress in distributed power generation, grid stabilization and utility scale energy applications, with significant opportunities for companies across Africa.

Speaking ahead of Africa's premier power sector summit, POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa, experts say that the falling cost of enhanced energy storage will help fast-track progress in power generation, particularly in the renewables space.

Sherwin Harris, Business Development Manager SSA at General Electric, says that as countries increasingly look to integrated energy resource plans, the issue of cost effective batteries to support energy security comes to the fore. "Advanced batteries actually enhance grid stability, and can be harnessed to support a range of use cases, including thermal gas hybrids, ancillary power services, renewable integration, black start capability, minimising of spinning reserve and energy load shifting. We are seeing growing interest out of Africa in our innovations in the microgrid and energy storage spaces," says Harris.

General Electric is focusing on new storage technologies, expecting next generation batteries to pave the way for exponential growth in renewable energy. Harris will outline advances and use cases in this space during POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa 2018.

Louis Shaffer, Distributed Energy Segment Leader EMEA at Eaton, notes that companies increasingly understand that storage added to solar is a way to optimize their energy supply and reduce payback time. "Microgrids are compelling for various reasons – such as when a facility is located in an agricultural or under-served areas, or in urban areas where they are subject to excessively high peak charges," he says. Eaton will be presenting a case study from their own South Africa factory that demonstrates clearly how microgrids benefit commercial and industrial companies during POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa

Shaffer says the cost of advanced battery storage has dropped by up to 90% in the past ten years, thanks mainly to the arrival of electric cars, which has helped bring about change in the lithium ion battery space. "Anyone whose business would suffer due to power interruptions, or who uses diesel backup generators, is now able to consider solar, supported by next generation batteries," he says. Shaffer believes there is a compelling case for solar microgrids for any commercial or industrial company. He concedes that the upfront capital investment is still a hurdle for many, but notes that in many cases, a return on investment can be achieved in around five years. "Companies can also implement projects in a modular way – starting small and adding capacity over time as the costs come down," he says.

*The POWER-GEN & DistribuTECH Africa Conference & Exhibition will be staged from 17-19 July 2018 at the Sandton Convention Centre. This annual event, Africa's premier power sector summit, attracts over 3,000 VIPs and decision-makers from the pan-African and international power sector. For more information, visit [www.powergenafrika.com](http://www.powergenafrika.com) and view the conference programme here <http://events.pennwell.com/PGAfrica2018/Public/Sessions.aspx?ID=64671&View=Sessions&sortMenu=105003>*