

UPOWA CAMEROON



Location
Cameroon

PROJECT SUMMARY

Over 900,000 people in Cameroon are expected to gain access to clean electricity for the first time by 2023 through this ambitious PAYG solar home systems (SHS) initiative.

As of the end of 2018, France-based developer upOwa SAS had installed more than 4,500 systems mainly across two central regions of the country, connecting over 20,000 people to clean energy. Now, thanks to a successful €2.8m capital raise - including €1.3m equity financing from REPP - the company is embarking on a rapid expansion phase, with plans to roll out a further 200,000+ systems across the country by the end of 2023.

Through the scheme, upOwa provides systems to off-grid households using a lease-to-own model. Customers pay a deposit and then make monthly payments on a mobile phone money platform with targeted repayment periods of 18-24 months. Customers can choose between a 6Wp lights and phone charging-only system, or a 10Wp system with a radio, or a 40Wp system that provides additional power for other appliances.

Currently, upOwa is the only company implementing PAYG for SHS at scale in Cameroon – a country where just one in five rural homes is connected to the grid, and where there is a strong and urgent need for off-grid solutions. Despite low levels of energy access, more than 70% of homes in Cameroon have mobile phones, making the payment system broadly accessible.

Company leaders have set their sights on rapid growth, using the experience of its in-house technical teams and reputation for reliability and customer service to build capacity and scale up activities.

The company's growth is expected to create over 650 local jobs and will lead to nearly 9,500 tonnes of avoided GHG every year by 2023, directly supporting Cameroon's NDC target to cut emissions by 32% by 2035.

Other investors behind the project include French family business Colam, which committed €0.7m in equity financing alongside REPP's €1.3m. A further €0.8m of equity was raised mainly through convertible notes from shareholders, and also from partnering crowdfunding platforms Anaxago and LITA.

AT A GLANCE

Technology

Solar home systems

Project type

Off-grid



Offtaker

Off-grid communities

KPIs



Greenhouse gas emissions avoided: 9,473 tCO₂e per year



People with first-time access to clean energy: 930,000



Installed capacity: 1.73MW

FUNDING STRUCTURE

Signed: 10 September 2019

Type: Equity

REPP funding: EUR 1.3m

SDGs

1 NO POVERTY



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



13 CLIMATE ACTION



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



"In 2019, upOwa increased its market footprint in Cameroon at a fast pace and our series A2 is a crucial milestone that allows to pursue this accelerating trend in 2020 onwards. REPP's participation in this equity round was a key enabler in the process, hence catalysing a swift growth of solar energy deployment in the sub-region."

Kilien de Renty, CEO and co-founder, upOwa