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PROJECT MANAGEMENT NEWS FROM ZIMBABWE

By [Peter Banda](#)

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Total Zimbabwe rolls out US\$4million Solar Power Project

Giant French Oil Company Total has invested up to US\$4m in rolling out solar-powered service stations in Zimbabwe as the energy company turns to renewable energy to ease the ongoing power cuts in Zimbabwe. The company has become the first energy firm to carry out such a project in Zimbabwe.

The Zimbabwe Solar project by Total Zimbabwe is part of the company's parent company's program to install solar-powered service stations in 57 African countries in its bid to reduce carbon emissions.

Zimbabwe is facing erratic power supplies due to antiquated power generation infrastructure, climate change that has resulted in dwindling water levels at the country's hydro-powered plant and limited investment in the capital intensive sector. The power outages have forced local business including service stations to rely on diesel powered generators at a time the country is facing erratic fuel supplies.

In July 2019, the Government of Zimbabwe approved a duty waiver on solar equipment and allowed mining companies to source energy directly from the Southern African Power Pool as part of its efforts to ease the ongoing power cuts. Many other business organisations are now switching to solar energy to power their operations.

In a statement issued recently in February 2020 by Total Zimbabwe Communications Officer Ashirai Maphosa, the company has deployed solar systems onto six sites so far as they plan to minimise dependence on the national grid supplies. These include Total Westgate (Harare, Mashonaland), Total Emerald Hill (Harare, Mashonaland), Total Simon Mazorodze (Harare, Mashonaland), Total Clonsilla (Gweru, Midlands), Total Hillcrest (Bulawayo, Matebeleland), Total Rusape 1 (Rusape, Manicaland). Total has a presence of 101 service stations nationwide to date in Zimbabwe. Out of these, the plan is to solarise half within five years.

"This project will see us shift to a cleaner and more efficient solution which will see the energy dependence on the grid or alternative energy sources like generators decrease by 30% on the current system, said Mrs Maphosa in the statement. Once battery hybrid architecture is integrated into the solution, we could see this percentage increase, however this will be at a later stage as this requires more investment.

“We also aim to decrease our carbon (CO2) footprint as an organisation as we strive to keep our commitment to better energy. “The off-grid option is possible with a complete battery hybrid solution which will require more investment and will be considered at a later stage. For now, the service station will be grid tied with generator set as back-up. This therefore reduces reliance on the national grid and consumption of fuel.”

According to the France-headquartered energy giant, the company integrates climate change into its growth strategy and is currently building a portfolio of low-carbon businesses that are expected to account for 15 to 20 percent of its sales by 2040. Figures obtained from the energy group show that Total’s gross low carbon power generation capacity is currently standing at 7 gigawatts, of which 3 gigawatts are from renewable energy

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