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The consortium, which is led by Gridworks, the UK government-backed investor in Africa's electricity networks, also announced the brand name of the companies that will ultimately provide power to the residents and businesses of the three cities. The companies will be branded as Moyi Power. Moyi is a word for sun in Lingala, one of four national languages of DRC, and the main language of the three cities that will benefit from the project.

The consortium was selected as the winning bidder for the Essor Access to Energy (A2E) Initiative ("Essor Project") after an international tender process run by the Project Coordination and Management Unit (UCM) of the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources and Electricity with support and funding from the UK government.

The 22-year concession agreements were signed in Kinshasa by Gridworks' CEO, Simon Hodson, on behalf of the consortium, and the Congolese Minister of Hydraulic Resources and Electricity, M. Mwenze Mukaleng; in the presence of the Governors of the three provinces, the UK's Ambassador to the DRC, Emily Maltman; representatives of UCM; and other key Congolese energy stakeholders.

The governments of the UK and DRC have been key partners in the development of the Essor Project. Essor aims to encourage business growth, job creation, and improvements in health and education by building solar powered infrastructure to supply reliable and affordable electricity

Moyi has committed to offer opportunities to local suppliers and consultants, and to local employees, in the development, construction and operation of the solar-hybrid infrastructure that will power the cities. This will directly create new, green jobs, as well as employment in the wider economy as small businesses grow thanks to access to reliable power.

Distributed renewable energy (DRE) projects such as Essor use isolated local power grids which distribute power to homes and businesses from renewable sources such as solar and wind. They operate independently of the national grid. Essor has generated significant interest from the DFI community because it provides a new approach for off-grid investment: a replicable model with the scale and regulatory underpinning to attract further investment in green field utilities across Africa.

The potential development impact for the project is significant in a country where less than 10% of the population has access to reliable electricity. The project is also expected to have a significant climate change impact as it cuts carbon emission through the displacement of diesel generation.

"For all the talk of financing and technology, we shouldn't forget why we're doing this project. It has the capacity to transform hundreds of thousands of lives by bringing reliable, affordable electricity to homes and to businesses in Northern DRC. In doing so, we help the people of these cities help themselves. By building



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electricity infrastructure we support local entrepreneurs to grow their businesses and create jobs, we help families get better education and healthcare, and we empower women.

"I'm delighted to sign the concession agreements on behalf of the consortium. In serving these three cities, Moyi Power has the critical mass and regulatory support that is missing from most mini-grid models. It can set an example to the off-grid industry, pushing down costs for consumers and attracting long-term capital from investors. The consortium now looks forward to working with the Government of DRC and with the financial institutions who have supported us to take the next step and to reach financial close."

"This is a great example of the UK and DRC partnership benefiting the lives and livelihoods of the population in a green and sustainable way. Green growth is a priority for my Government and a theme for COP26 that we host later this year. This is a pilot project and I hope it will lay the foundation for many such projects to take off in other parts of DRC".

"AEE Power has a long history of commitment to the energy sector in Africa, particularly in the DRC, and we are very enthusiastic to be part of the ESSOR Project alongside our consortium partners and the Congolese authorities. We strongly believe that the participation of private capital is key for the development of the electricity distribution sector on the continent, and we are delighted to work in this pioneering project."

Nuru (Swahili for "light") is a company dedicated to enhancing connectivity in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Nuru deployed Congo's first solar-based mini-grid in 2017 and has a 1.3MW solar hybrid site in Goma, the largest off-grid mini-grid in sub-Saharan Africa. Another solar hybrid site in Beni and two in the oriental province (Tadu & Faradje).

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Web: <https://hollanddutch tours.nl/contact-us/>

Email: energystorage2000@gmail.com

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

