POLICY BRIEF 1



Green Electric Infrastructure



Introduction

Despite Africa's vast renewable energy potential - particularly in solar - more than 600 million people, or approximately 43% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa, still lack access to electricity (IEA, 2022). This enduring energy gap compels millions to rely on polluting and expensive fuels such as kerosene and biomass. These fuels not only strain household finances but also pose serious health risks and contribute significantly to environmental degradation (WHO, 2024) with women, girls a-nd most vulnerable people being disproportionally affected by energy poverty (UN Women, 2021).

At the current pace of electrification, coupled with rapid population growth, the number of people without access to electricity is projected to remain largely unchanged in the coming decades (IEA, 2022).

Africa holds vast untapped potential to drive inclusive, clean energy-based development. Realising this potential requires equitable policy frameworks, community-driven innovation, and financing models that empower local actors. The AU-EU Innovation Agenda and the EU's Global Gateway Africa-Europe Investment Package, which aim to mobilise up to €150 billion in strategic investments, place innovation and energy access at the heart of the biregional partnership.

Realising Africa's clean energy future demands more than infrastructure; it calls for inclusive innovation ecosystems, fit-for-purpose financing models, and targeted support for small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs). It is within this context that a new generation of business models is emerging – designed to overcome affordability barriers, strengthen local ownership, and scale decentralised energy access.

This policy brief shares key insights on Green Electric Infrastructure emerging from the EU funded project **Smart Energy Solutions for Africa (SESA)**. Drawing on lessons from technology demonstrations in Living Labs in Kenya, Ghana, Morocco, and South Africa, this brief identifies key policy challenges



and opportunities relevant to future EU development cooperation, particularly in support of the AU-EU Innovation Agenda and the Global Gateway strategy. It seeks to inform evidence-based policymaking by identifying replicable models, priority areas for regulatory reform, and targeted recommendations for supporting inclusive and sustainable energy transitions across Africa.

This policy brief is one out of three. The other policy briefs, in line with the SESA project scope of work, are exploring the following topics:

- Agri-food Systems: this brief provides policy outcomes on innovations within the agri-food sector, more specifically on solarpowered irrigation and clean cooking technologies – solutions which essential for addressing agricultural and household energy challenges, while building resilience, and improving livelihoods of local communities.
- 2. Acceleration of Sustainable
 Growth through Innovation,
 Education and Awareness Raising:
 drawing on lessons learned from
 the entrepreneurial approach
 adopted in SESA, this brief provides
 recommendations to foster
 innovative business models, and

How to Read This Document

This policy brief presents a synthesis of key findings, policy barriers, and regulatory insights emerging from the **Smart Energy Solutions for Africa** (**SESA**) **project**. It builds on a combination of evidence drawn from in-country technology demonstrations, stakeholder engagement, and the project's broader policy roadmaps.

While the brief highlights a range of thematic areas, it does not aim to provide a comprehensive or exhaustive overview of all technologies for all country contexts. Not all participating entities have engaged with every technology or regulatory issue in equal depth. Instead, the document focuses on consolidated insights, mature practices, and illustrative examples where relevant information was functional to the project logic.

For further insights on the recommendations outlined in this brief, you can refer to relevant SESA documents, such as country policy barrier analyses and country policy roadmaps, on our **project website**.

mobilise targeted financial support to drive a low-carbon, inclusive transformation. It also highlights the crucial role of capacity building, education and awareness in shifting behaviour, improving policies alignment, building trust, and accelerating adoption.

By centring innovation, community ownership, and financial inclusion, these efforts align closely with the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union's Agenda 2063, as well as with the ambition of the AU-EU Innovation

Agenda to co-develop solutions that address shared challenges. However, barriers such as limited consumer awareness, constrained access to finance, and underdeveloped supply chains continue to impede broader adoption and scale-up.

Finally, no policy or technology can succeed without the engagement of local communities and the leadership of local authorities. A just and inclusive energy transition depends on trust, participatory design, and local ownership. These are not secondary to infrastructure; they are fundamental to impact and scale.





Green Electric Infrastructure

This section highlights three critical energy technologies driving Africa's just energy transition: e-mobility, decentralised solar systems, and e-waste and second-life batteries (SLBs). These innovations offer practical, scalable solutions to decarbonize transport, expand rural electrification, and support circular energy systems. Policy, regulatory and infrastructural barriers persist however, particularly around EV integration, off-grid solar deployment, and e-waste management. Drawing on SESA insights and global benchmarks (World Bank Group, 2025) this analysis outlines the enablers needed to unlock sustainable energy solutions that are inclusive, affordable, and climate resilient.

E-Mobility

The transport sector is a major contributor to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in both Kenya and Morocco - accounting for over 20% of national emissions in Kenya (IEA, 2025) and 31% in Morocco (IEA, 2019).

In response, Kenya has pledged a 32% reduction in GHG emissions by 2030,

with a strong focus on decarbonising transport. The country aims for 5% of all registered vehicles to be electric by 2025. As of 2023, Kenya had 4,047 electric vehicles – just 2.44% of its more than 2 million registered vehicles – but this marks a 408% increase from the previous year, driven in part by new fiscal incentives (EMAK, 2024).

Morocco, despite its manufacturing capacity, technical expertise, and renewable energy potential, remains heavily dependent on fossil fuels in transport. The sector consumes 99% fossil-based energy and accounts for 38% of the country's final energy use (IEA, 2019). By the end of 2023, Morocco had 1,457 battery electric vehicles and 24,176 hybrid vehicles – together making up a small fraction of the country's 6.6 million registered vehicles (EMAK, 2024).

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

The lack of institutional capacity and governmental strategy act as barriers to the upscaling of e-mobility, therefore, a stronger political commitment coupled with the development of comprehensive policies on EVs and charging infrastructure are needed.

Kenya, in particular, is recommended to set clear targets and timelines, allocate resources and responsibilities, as well as introduce coordination measures to manage multiple stakeholders establish public-private partnerships, and align with industrial policy on local manufacturing and imports of EVs. Moreover, significant financing is needed, and a green fund could be established to support green financing for e-mobility.

LEGAL AND REGULATORY

Regulatory barriers hinder the growth of e-mobility due to the absence of comprehensive EV-supportive legal frameworks.

In Kenya, for instance, despite recent progress - such as the realization of a national e-mobility taskforce and the issuance of guidelines for charging infrastructure - regulatory gaps remain and the e-mobility policy is still under development. Thus, to accelerate adoption, suggestions for Kenya include the establishment and enforcement of national standards for vehicles and charging systems, the introduction of lower rates of offpeak electricity tariffs to incentivize EV charging at optimal times, as well as financing schemes to facilitate the uptake of EV assets.

Morocco, while the legislative landscape for renewable energy is comparatively advanced, the absence of a legal framework permitting the resale of electricity through private EV charging stations remains a major bottleneck and should be amended to facilitate uptake of the EV market. In this context, a regulatory authority should be introduced to oversee compliance, regulation standard setting, and market monitoring, while the establishment of clear permitting processes would facilitate the installation of charging infrastructure, particularly on public ground.





TECHNOLOGICAL

Tο support the transition e-mobility, countries must prioritise the development of reliable and efficient technological infrastructure. This includes setting clear targets for expanding electric vehicle (EV) charging networks, ensuring their deployment in public spaces, and promoting interoperability among charging systems and stations. Equally important is the need for reliable transmission lines, increased grid capacity, and a coordinated framework among electricity sector stakeholders especially as EV adoption drives up energy demand.

Kenya illustrates many of these challenges. The country faces an inefficient charging system and grid reliability issues, particularly in rural areas where electrification rates remain low, and distribution networks suffer from frequent outages. Addressing these weaknesses will require not only infrastructure investment but also a review and adjustment of electricity tariffs specific to EV charging to improve affordability and reliability.

ENVIRONMENTAL

As e-mobility expands, countries must adopt **comprehensive policies**

for battery lifecycle management – including safe disposal, recycling, repurposing, and management of toxic and pollutant waste.

In Kenya, regulatory frameworks in this area remain underdeveloped. The country should prioritise the creation of end-of-life policies for EV batteries, aligned with existing environmental regulations, also promoting local manufacturing, recycling, and second-life applications. One practical approach could involve offering consumers incentives, such as discounts, for returning used batteries to manufacturers for safe disposal. To support large-scale recycling and repurposing, Kenya should establish dedicated battery recycling facilities and provide incentives for waste management companies to handle battery materials responsibly.

Decentralised solar systems

The International Energy Agency finds that expanding national grids is the most cost-effective and scalable option for around 45% of new electricity connections by 2030. However, in remote areas of Sub-Saharan Africa - where over 80% of those without access to electricity reside - decentralized

solutions, particularly solar-powered mini-grids and standalone systems, offer the most practical and sustainable approach to meeting electricity demand (IEA, 2022), (Shonibare, 2025).

SESA explored the potential of decentralised solar systems in Morocco and Kenya – countries with a robust commitment to renewables. Morocco reached a rural electrification rate of 99.90% in 2024, according to the National Office of Electricity and Drinking Water (ONEE, 2025). Through the combination of national grid expansion and investment in renewable energy particularly solar off grid systems - the country has increased the share of solar power in its energy mix (SESA, 2024). Given its renewable energy targets of at 52% of the energy mix, of which 20% of solar power by 2030, promoting solar PV for household use would facilitate the deployment of this technology in the country.

Kenya is also on track to achieving universal energy access by 2030. However, while energy access increased significantly in urban areas, approximately 70% of the population resides in rural areas (World Bank Group, 2023) where access to electricity services is limited (IEA, 2025). Off-grid solar solutions - such as solar home systems and mini-grids - not only provide reliable





electricity but also, through Productive Use of Energy (PUE), enable incomegenerating activities by powering activities like solar irrigation pumps and cooling systems for food preservation.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

Adopting clear and enforceable solar energy policies helps to de-risk private investment, foster innovation in clean energy technologies, and support inclusive business models that are needed to scale off-grid solutions and accelerate progress.

Morocco's Rural Electrification Program (PERG) provides a strong example of a well-coordinated policy combining political support with bold national plans and resources to achieve national goals (Jacquot et al., 2020). In Kenya, constitutional provisions such as Article 42 (Right to a Clean Environment) and Article 69 (State Obligation to Prevent Environmental Harm) have provided a strong legal foundation for advancing access and environmental energy protection. The provisions are enforced through policies such as the Rural Electrification Programme, launched in 2018, which promotes the expansion of electricity to rural areas.

To fully exploit the potential of decentralised renewable grids, a national solar energy strategy including a specific focus on PUE is needed. Such a strategy should be aligned with national development and climate goals and set clear targets and timelines; it must ensure crossministerial coordination, encourage private sector participation, and be grounded in prior assessments of the technological and economic potential of off-grid systems (SESA, 2024). In fact, while the private sector has largely led the distribution and supply of solar appliances for productive use, collaboration with government remains largely reactive and project based. Establishing a formal and continuous mechanism for public-private collaboration is essential to avoid fragmented efforts (SESA 2024).

LEGAL AND REGULATORY

coherent well-defined and regulatory environment is essential to unlocking the full potential of off-grid solar energy. Current gaps, particularly regarding self-generation, create legal ambiguity and discourage investment. **Establishing** clear regulatory frameworks for self-generation is key to providing certainty for households and businesses, enabling them to generate their own electricity. This is indicative of the experience in Ghana where regulatory hurdles - such as government interruption of licensing for independent power producers (IPPs) to develop micro and mini-grids, and the lack of a clear and accessible process on how to obtain permits to operate these systems - make it difficult to expand access to electricity in rural areas. Based on SESA project experience in Ghana, such challenges led to shifting the project from micro-grid implementation to standalone solar systems, which

offered greater flexibility and faster implementation. Although this approach enabled project progress, it showed the challenges entrepreneurs and investors face in the renewable energy sector in Ghana.

Introducing, national performance standards for solar systems is needed to encourage compliance to environmentally sustainable end-of-life management and to promote sustainable business practices and effective services. In Kenya, such standards are missing. Despite this, the Energy Act (The Republic of Kenya, 2022), which is currently undergoing a parliamentary approval process, will regulate stand-alone solar systems, specifically addressing quality standards and technician certification. Once approved and implemented, these regulations will significantly enhance the quality and safety of Kenya's offgrid solar sector, thus increasing the confidence of consumers and the uptake of solar-powered systems.





TECHNOLOGICAL

Variation in installation practices and limited maintenance oversight for solar off-grids systems can result in long-term technical failures and reduced system performance. As noted in Kenya, although supply chains and skilled labour are present, after-sale services remain slow and costly in many regions due to the limited local presence of suppliers.

To address this, the adoption of national industry standards for PV components and support for domestic manufacturing and local supply chains are needed. Standardization would enhance product quality, promote environmentally responsible end-of-life management, and ensure consistency in installation and service delivery. Overall, it would avoid the circulation of substandard and counterfeit products and would drive consumer confidence and market stability. In addition, domestic production and improved infrastructure are needed, not only to reduce dependency on imported components but also to stimulate job creation and economic development.

E-waste & Second-Life Batteries

Second-Life batteries and e-waste are fundamental aspects of the project work conducted in Ghana and South Africa, where access to electricity remains a major challenge. Disparities in electricity access are particularly evident in Ghana, where, similarly to Kenya, rural areas have a significantly lower access rate (74%) compared to urban areas (95%) (Boateng, Bloomer, & Morrissey, 2025). Similarly, in South Africa, approximately 60% of rural households lack access to electricity (Zhou, 2025). As the continent seeks cost-effective and scalable energy solutions, Second-Life Batteries (SLB) have emerged as a promising alternative. Priced at 60–75% of the cost of new batteries, in Ghana SLBs present a viable option for off-grid energy storage and e-mobility applications.

In the electric vehicle (EV) sector, SLBs also offer notable cost savings – ranging from 30–70% compared to new EV batteries. However, this price advantage is projected to narrow to around 25%

by 2040 as the cost of new EV batteries continues to fall. Despite the launch of the National Electric Vehicle Policy in Ghana (Senya, 2023), there are currently no specific regulations guiding the use of SLBs.

Moreover, both countries face challenges in securing consistent supply of EV batteries, which hinders the development of a robust recycling value chain. To prevent Africa from becoming a dumping ground for e-waste, it is crucial to establish import regulations and build strong recycling and waste management infrastructures to ensure the safe and sustainable use of SLBs.

POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL

As the supply chain in South Africa and Ghana remains heavily reliant on imports, governments must establish clear regulatory framework governing the import, export, collection, processing, and safe disposal of Second-Life Batteries (SLBs). Moreover, incentives for local value addition, and guidelines to encourage the integration of second-life batteries into energy storage systems are needed (SESA, 2024).

Import policies could be revised to facilitate the import of used batteries that meet internationally recognized safety and performance standards and comply with stringent information disclosure requirements. However, to avoid exacerbating the e-waste problem, this should only be carried out in the event that adequate domestic capacity and a policy framework exist that allow for their safe repurposing (SESA, 2024). In South Africa, vertical and horizontal policy alignment and integration advisable. While the national government can set safety standards for the operation and management of SLBs, the proximity to the local community and stakeholders puts local governments in a privileged position to identify local e-waste collection points and enforce local stakeholders to comply with these standards (Moyo et al., 2022).





LEGAL AND REGULATORY

Establishing robust and enforceable legal frameworks essential is ensuring accountability, standardization, and fair distribution of responsibility across the e-waste sector. In Ghana, some progress in the legislation and guidelines on e-waste and hazardous waste has been made. With support from the Swiss SRI project, Ghana became the first African country to introduce formal technical guidelines for such waste, developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation (CNCPC n.d.) However, existing legislative instruments regulating the import of electrical appliances and renewable energy products do not include second life EV batteries use. Establishing a dedicated public institution to oversee e-waste management would strengthen regulatory oversight.

In addition, a harmonized Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework, grounded in the "polluter pays" principle, which legally obliges producers to take responsibility for the impact of their products throughout the product life cycle has the potential to drive the development of a responsible e-waste economy and promote safer regional trade. In South Africa, Extended Producer Responsibility regulations have been in place since 2008, however, these do not include electric vehicle (EV) batteries. Moreover, engaging in initiatives like the EPR Africa Forum is instrumental to advancing this agenda (SESA, 2024).

TECHNOLOGICAL

Battery dismantling processes vary significantly depending on design, as well as the diagnostic software used to assess battery health, which is often not standardized. Both Ghana and

South Africa, echoed by experts from other African countries and beyond, pointed out that Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) should be required to disclose battery usage data through mechanisms such as "battery passports", which are digital records that provide unique and traceable information that can help track defects and recalls. Looking ahead, eco-design regulations should be promoted to limit design divergence, encourage software standardization, and enable cross-compatibility. These steps are critical to facilitating a circular battery economy and reducing technological barriers to reuse. This can be further enhanced through targeted incentives to support recycling facilities in the collection, sorting, and transformation of used batteries into reusable raw materials.

SOCIAL

Addressing safety concerns in recycling facilities is crucial when working with second-life batteries. If not properly managed. lithium-ion batteries pose serious risks including fire and explosions that can endanger workers. From the beginning of the supply chain, there should be designated collection points with clear safety signs and accessible handling protocols. Facilities implement standardized should measures, such as proper storage, fire-resistant containers, regular safety inspections, and consistent health and safety (H&S) reporting. Protecting workers and the public through a strong safety culture and enforcement is essential to building trust and ensuring the long-term viability of second-life battery systems (SESA, 2024).





Policy suggestions that support the EU's Global Gateway strategy

- Promote vertical and horizontal policy alignment and integration, cross-ministerial coordination, and private sector engagement to foster a unified and harmonized strategy for the uptake of decentralised technologies.
- Strengthen legal and regulatory frameworks to accelerate the adoption of decentralised energy technologies and to address installation and maintenance services.
- Establish robust quality frameworks in line with international norms, and implement incentives to drive standardization and quality assurance.
- Harmonise the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) policy to drive the development of a responsible e-waste economy and promote safer regional trade.

- Domesticize manufacturing and local supply chains, and improve infrastructure to reduce dependency on imported components but also to stimulate local job creation and economic development.
- Establish clear regulations for import and export practices aligned with internationally recognized safety and performance standards, and enforce robust information disclosure requirements.
- Promote eco-design regulations and encourage software standardization to enhance cross-compatibility, support a circular battery economy, and reduce barriers to reuse. Complement these measures with targeted incentives for battery recycling infrastructure.



This Policy Brief is part of a collection. Be sure to check out our other Policy Briefs on **Agri-food Systems** and **Innovation, Education and Awareness Raising**.
All Policy Briefs are available on the **SESA website**.

About SESA

In response to Africa's urgent need for sustainable energy access and climate resilience, the Smart Energy Solutions for Africa (SESA) project aimed to mitigate climate change and avoid carbon lock-in, while ensuring energy remained accessible, affordable, and reliable. Through close collaboration with local partners and sister projects, SESA co-developed and piloted innovative, replicable solutions that delivered essential energy services and created business opportunities for African entrepreneurs. Guided by a five-pillar approach – Inform, Inspire, Initiate, Implement and Impact – SESA strengthened knowledge, fostered partnerships, supported implementation, and worked to embed clean energy innovations into long-term policy, financing, and decision-making processes.



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 101037141. This material reflects only the views of the Consortium, and the EC cannot be held responsible for any use that may be made of the information in it.