

Rwanda has unveiled an innovative approach to rapidly expand electricity access to all its citizens. The Ministry of Infrastructure (MININFRA) reports that this new model aims to bring electricity closer to communities, making the power distribution process more efficient and accessible.

The new strategy was one of the key takeaways from a three-day international African energy conference held in Kigali.

The event, which also featured an energy exhibition focused on African power solutions, concluded on Wednesday, August 6, 2024. The conference brought together energy ministers, development experts, and policymakers from across the continent to discuss ways to improve electricity distribution and energy infrastructure in Africa.

Fidèle Abimana, the Permanent Secretary of MININFRA, highlighted that the conference provided valuable insights into how Rwanda could improve its electricity access. He stressed that the country's new approach to energy distribution focuses on involving local authorities in the process, given their proximity to the communities they serve.

"We have learned a lot from this conference, but the most important takeaway is the need to deliver electricity quickly and efficiently through local structures," said Abimana in a statement to the press. "We are aligning our efforts with infrastructure development, ensuring that electricity distribution is managed by local authorities in collaboration with the Rwanda Energy Group (REG), which will speed up the process."

Abimana emphasized that empowering local governments to oversee electricity distribution would help ensure that electricity reaches every household without causing displacement or disruptions. He also highlighted the potential of combining traditional grid power with renewable sources such as solar energy to address specific local needs.

"It's crucial that all Rwandans have access to electricity. In some areas, it's more efficient to provide electricity through the main grid, but in remote locations, solar energy can offer an effective solution," Abimana explained. "We have seen how other countries are successfully integrating these technologies, and we are adapting their experiences to fit Rwanda's unique context."

The conference took place at a time when Rwanda has made significant progress in expanding its electricity access. According to MININFRA, 80% of households in the country now have access to electricity. This represents a substantial increase in recent years as the government works toward its goal of providing 100% electricity coverage by 2030.

While the original target was set for 2024, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic caused delays, as the resulting economic downturn impacted the resources available for expanding the national electricity grid. Despite these challenges, the government remains committed to its goal of achieving full electricity access for all Rwandans within the next six years.

Rwanda's ambitious energy expansion plan is seen as a crucial step in driving economic development, improving living standards, and addressing the continent's energy access challenges. With continued investment in infrastructure and local partnerships, the country hopes to become a model for energy distribution in Africa.