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What are the current challenges facing the power/energy and the infrastructure space that you want to talk about?

I would have to say load shedding, as it is strangling the South African economy. South Africa has a large existing coal fleet that is mostly older than 40 years and is beyond the useful life of these assets. In effect, this impacts the availability and consistency of power from these plants. This has led to the decline in the Eskom fleet Energy Availability Factor. Large portions of the existing coal fleet need to be decommissioned (18,000MW in the next 10 years) and Eskom needs sufficient capacity to take some of the plants offline to do necessary maintenance work.

Some challenges bring in opportunities. What do you see as opportunities in these sectors, particularly in the power/energy sector?

The challenges faced by Eskom have allowed for the diversification of South Africa's power sector with private parties having an opportunity to play an important role in the country's generation mix. It has also allowed South Africa to position itself as an excellent destination for the mass deployment of renewables with majors keen to participate in the sector, driving down pricing.

With renewables amounting to just over 10% of South Africa's total energy supply, excellent opportunities exist for more renewables to be added to the grid, ensuring a diversification away from coal. However, given the need to add significant additional capacity to the grid, South

Africa should also look to other energy sources such as gas, which is widely seen as a suitable transition fuel.

What do you believe a just energy transition should look like in South Africa?

In my opinion, a just energy transition needs to look at renewables and consider gas as an option too. A mixed generation supply that includes gas would still reduce carbon emissions and will ensure the security of power supply that is key to South Africa's economic growth.

Some other factors that we should consider include:

- Renewables should be maximised given that they are quick to the grid and are "green".
- South Africa should look at increasing imports, particularly hydro power, through various projects being considered by our neighbouring countries.
- Conversion of Eskom and IPP fuel powered plants into gas – it's a lower emitter and cheaper.
- Some of the 18,000MW of coal fired power plants should be decommissioned and replaced with gas power projects.
- To further increase renewables in the future, we need to have more storage options so that excess power is not wasted. Battery storage is a good option, but it can include the likes of pumped storage – which is more of a challenge given South Africa's hydrology.





Which energy mix would be most appropriate for Africa's energy transition?

There is large, untapped potential for hydro power in Africa. The problem faced is that the cost of building these plants requires larger sized projects which outstrip current demand, requiring other utilities and customers to offtake the power. We have also seen the impact of droughts, meaning some level of peaking and backup power is needed.

Renewables should continue to play a significant role on the continent. However, without storage options, countries will need to overcommit to renewables resulting in wastage of power or they will have intermittent power which places a strain on economies and their ability to grow.

I strongly believe that renewables have a significant role to play in the African energy mix, but not at the cost of energy security.

Looking at Africa as a whole, what would you say are the 5 key trends we need to look out for in the renewable energy space?

I think the five key trends when it comes to the renewable energy space include:

- Private market use of renewables – behind the metre as a means of energy security or fuel saving, as well as wheeled as a means of green electricity or as a cost saver.
- Consolidation of market players – M&A activity in the renewable sector, as well as fewer players bidding.
- Smaller projects struggle to attract appetite from traditional players and are more difficult to finance, but this may lead to the emergence of niche players who are able to generate portfolios.

- Introduction of storage technologies to better manage the generation profile of renewables.
- Hydro power to potentially play a bigger role in the region with multilateral off-takers.

What does your current role entail, and tell us about your journey to this position?

I am an Executive in the Energy and Infrastructure Team in Investment Banking at Standard Bank. My focus in South Africa is on the Independent Power Producer Programmes (currently Renewable Independent Power Producer Programme and Risk Mitigation Independent Power Producer Programme). I am also involved in project financing in the sector across the continent.

I have led the negotiations on over 1700MW of renewables and 300MW of thermal power projects.

What is the biggest / most complex transaction you have worked on so far in your career?

The biggest transaction I have worked on so far in my career actually closed this year – it was the Scatec 540MW solar and 1.1GWh battery storage project in the Northern Cape of South Africa. This is one of the largest battery storage projects globally and a first for South Africa in terms of baseload renewables.

What words of advice do you have to the next generation of bankers?

The thing I love about my role is that you can make a difference and what you finance is tangible – it is a power project, a road, a port. It contributes to the well-being and lives of people. Some media tend to portray bankers in a negative light, but you can be ethical, make money and you can contribute to society! 