

Tanzania: Voda, Mobisol Partner in Lighting Villages

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Vodacom Tanzania and Mobisol, A Germany-based provider of solar electrification through mobile technology recently welcomed the 1,000th customer of Mobisol's solar home systems (SHS) in Tanzania with a multifarious celebration.

The programme was initiated by the company in collaboration with Kakute Limited, an Arusha-based technology awareness and distribution company, aimed to provide efficient solar energy to various homes in Tanzania.

Allan De Mello, the director of Mobisol Limited in Tanzania said 1,000 solar energy systems have been installed in homes in various suburbs in Arusha as well as Monduli, Mbuyuni, Mererani townships and few in neighbouring Kilimanjaro region.

Each system costs between Sh. 500,000 and Sh. 2.4 million, he said, noting that the programme started in 2011.. Those whose homes are fitted with the gadgets have to pay a downward payment of 10 per cent the cost of the system.

Repayment of the credit is made using their mobile phones through Vodacom's M-Pesa, which is now the most preferred payment mode in the country. M-Pesa currently has over 50,000 agents country-wide.

Speaking during the event at a Catholic Church hall in Ngarenaro neighbourhood, an official of the Arusha Regional Secretariat Mr. Lemweli C. Kileo said the government needs partnership with the private sector in solar energy development.

He commended Mobisol and other stakeholders for the initiative which, according to him, has enabled people who are not connected to the national power grid to get electricity for their domestic use.

Ms. Catherine Peter, a food vendor in Arusha, who is the 1,000th customer said she paid Sh. 129,000 before the system was installed at her home. Since then she had been remitting Sh.42,400 per month (through M-Pesa) to Mobisol

"I'm extremely excited about owning my first solar home system. Thanks to the small monthly rates I can afford a bigger 120 Watt system. I use it to illuminate my home so my kids and grandchildren can study at night - and I am planning to start my own business charging my neighbours' mobile phones," she said.

Mobisol's customers pay off their ready-to-use solar home systems in monthly instalments via Vodacom's M-Pesa using their mobile phones and outright possess their very own electricity source after three years.

The SHS owners enjoy an extended warranty of three years for the battery and solar controller and 20 years for the PV panel.

Mobisol's comprehensive customer services include remote monitoring of the systems, free repair service, a free-of-charge customer service hotline and easy customer communication via SMS.

The director of Kakute Ltd Mr. Livinus S. Manyanga also elaborated that his firm supported creation of the platform for expansion throughout the country due to the business integrity it developed for itself with the Government authorities and renewable energy agencies throughout the years.