

Bringing Israeli innovation to African villages

These are the highlights of Sivan Ya'ari's presentation at the SingularityU South Africa 2019 Summit.



Sivan Ya'ari speaking at the SingularityU South Africa Summit 2019. Image supplied.

It's not about one country and one village, it's about a continent. There are over 600 million people in Africa who have never seen a lightbulb - 620 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live without electricity.

Installing solar energy in schools and medical centres is not a once-off solution. What happens when the light bulbs burn out or batteries die? For Innovation Africa, solar energy was only the start of creating small businesses within villages like mobile phone charging stations and barbershops. But solar wasn't the only issue – the main problem was water. Students, for example, were too weak to walk to school.

For Innovation Africa, the solution was simple: capture energy from the sun, that exists, to capture water from the ground, which exists. Their main goal? To pump water. Currently, Innovation Africa is drilling for water, installing pumps and drip tanks as well as bringing seeds to help villages grow fruit and vegetables. With water, villagers can make (and sell) bricks and finally build homes. For medical centres, solar brings the ability to run fridges to store vaccines and other medications.

Today Innovation Africa operates in 10 African countries and have helped 1,597,461 people. But what does it actually cost to bring solar energy to an entire school? \$18,000 (approximately R250,000). To bring water to an entire village? \$50,000 dollars.

Innovation Africa works with local contractors and village chiefs, creating an ecosystem for change within a community. In South Africa, they're been working with Investec Bank since November 2018 in Bushbuckridge:

“I'm a big believer in growth. Growth can drive innovation. All of us who live in this country want to see it grow and work. If you're fortunate enough to prosper in this country, you need to give back.” – Stephen Koseff, Investec Group's former

CEO ”

Sometimes the source of the problem is also the source of the solution - the sun was the problem (drought no vegetation) but it's the sun today that brings water to the same villages who were struggling. It doesn't take much to help others. Sometimes the technology already exists – you don't need to invent when you can work with what is already around and useable. The result being that the impact is so much greater...

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