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Solar distributors and service providers and microfinance businesses which are rolling out PV systems in Somalia and the self-declared Republic of Somalil and have been offered access to grants from development donors.

The U.K. government-funded Africa Enterprise Challenge Fund (AECF) has invited private-sector businesses and micro-finance institutions in Somalia which supply clean energy products and services to apply for a slice of an \$8.5 million pot of grant funding.

The AECF - set up by the former Department for International Development which is now part of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, and managed by KPMG - has launched the fund under the aegis of the SEK522 million (\$63.1 million) REACT sub-Saharan Africa household renewables initiative set up by the Swedish International Development Agency.

The AECF grant funding will also be available to applicants in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in the northwest of Somalia and the deadline for applications is on January 22, the AECF announced on Monday.

"The Somali market presents a unique opportunity for us and other development partners to change the narrative on reliance of diesel-powered mini-grids as we facilitate a switch to renewable energy sources," said AECF chief executive Victoria Sabula. "To achieve this, stimulation of market growth and engagement of [the] private sector in renewable energy value chains is pivotal."

The AECF said the grant program aims to provide access to electricity for 300,000 Somalis and cited World Bank estimates 11 million Somalis lack access to electricity services, with only 3% having access to clean cooking.

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