

Let there be (sun)light

A Cathedral church in the Episcopal Church of Sudan's diocese of Kajo Keji has had 16 solar panels and batteries installed providing power for lights and electrical equipment. This has revolutionised members' ability to undertake ministry and outreach. Here Jaap Haasnoot, a mission partner with GZB, speaks about why and how this work has been done.

AW: Why did you go for solar power?

JH: Solar equipment is more expensive to buy (compared to a generator) but in the long run it is cheaper and low maintenance. Diesel for generators can be expensive and is not always available. Solar power is also environmentally friendly: there is no noise, no diesel fumes and you don't need to replace the oil. You have to watch your power usage with a solar system but there are more pros than cons. At the college and at the Bishop's house we have solar systems that have run for several years now without any problems.

AW: How much of a difference has solar power made to the diocese?

JH: A big difference. The choir can now practice in the Cathedral in the evening and others can meet there at night too. We can now use the sound system for services and meetings in the Cathedral. The youth in the Cathedral are particularly happy with the new power source; they can use the keyboard for worship and can watch Christian movies. *The Jesus Film* is regularly shown in the Cathedral.

Just after the solar equipment was installed, the diocese had a strategic planning workshop lasting several days and were able to use a projector for presentations without any problems. We also replaced the smaller solar system in the diocesan office with a larger one. Now there is plenty of power to run computers and to print documents. Also, it is difficult to prepare classes at night without power. The staff in this block of three apartments have light now and can run their laptops and a fan when necessary.

AW: You are planning to also power a diocesan radio station?

JH: Yes. We are still waiting for the equipment to be shipped from Nairobi. The radio station will be

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located in one of the rooms of the Cathedral and will use the power there. We want the radio station to reflect the holistic mission of the church: teaching (and discussion) about the Bible, health care, nutrition, HIV/Aids, hygiene, agriculture, local culture and education. But the station will also broadcast music and news.

AW: How did the diocese afford this technology?

We had a range of donors including parishes and dioceses in the Church of England, the Church of Nigeria, the Episcopal Church of Sudan itself, and the Government of Sudan.

AW: Who did the job of fitting the solar power systems?

JH: Mr Kees Barendse, Chief engineer with MAF Uganda, volunteered for the third time to install solar systems for the diocese. We are very grateful for his hard work. We also thank MAF Uganda for their support.

