

Sun shines on idea of solar-powered TVs for Cup

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THE FIRST World Cup to be held in Africa triggered a decision by listed German company Solar World to develop a solar-powered TV set to be used by communities in areas where there was no TV signal.

"It started as a social responsibility project to be used in schools and youth centres to enable them to see educational programmes," Gregor Kuepper, the company's managing director in South Africa, said yesterday.

"But then we realised it was a sustainable business with huge potential not only in southern Africa, but in the rest of the continent."

The first set has been presented

to Dibanisa Gansbaai, a school in the Western Cape with a strong focus on development through soccer, which is helping children to set goals in life.

Kuepper said solar panels were mounted on a roof or a pole to feed power through a charger into a battery that could keep a TV working for between four and five hours a day for four or five days before being recharged. But when the World Cup started it was used to watch all three matches a day, running from 1pm until 11pm and needed recharging after three days.

"It could run for seven days with a larger battery.

"I have seen rural schools in South Africa with huge classes of 80

pupils and only one teacher and they would benefit by being able to see educational programmes."

However, the company already supplies solar panels with several uses to individual customers in South Africa, including private houses and game lodges. The TV sets would also be available to them at a price of R5 000 to begin with, plus installation costs which could also be as high as R5 000.

Agreeing that this was expensive, Kuepper said that the price would fall considerably if demand for the products rose.

The cost of some solar-powered products had already come down by as much as 50 percent, he said.

Solar World is one of the largest

manufacturers of solar panels in the world and its wholly owned South African subsidiary, Solar World Africa, has been in this country since 2006, working with local partners who distribute and install its sun-powered products.

The cabinets housing the solar TV are made by Telekom Technique of Port Elizabeth.

Kuepper said that although Solar World itself had no black economic empowerment (BEE) partner its South African partners supplying and installing products powered by its panels were fully BEE compliant.

He added that it would be possible for its solar panels installed on rooftops in South Africa to feed power into the Eskom grid.