

# Africa will leapfrog other regions in electric vehicle adoption

By [Amel Chadli](#)

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Many believe that electric vehicles are only affordable to the wealthy. This misconception is understandable in many markets, electric vehicles are priced at a premium which puts them out of reach of many. And yet, electric vehicles have the potential to not just make many of Africa's cities greener and more sustainable, but also help many people earn more money.



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The solution is motorcycles. And electric motorcycles are the simplest, most effective way to promote clean transportation. First of all, motorcycles make up the majority of vehicles in Africa. They're cheap, they can manoeuvre any type of road, and they are adaptable. In some cities, motorcycles make up more than 50% of vehicles on the road. And sales aren't slowing down; sales of all motorcycle types will grow by 50% by 2050, according to the United Nations Environment Programme.

But combustion engine motorcycles aren't popular, partly due to a push to clean up the region's roads. Recently Rwanda's president spoke of his hope that all motorcycles sold in the country would only be electric. But there's another reason why electric vehicles should be prioritised.

What holds traditional vehicles back is the cost of gasoline and maintenance costs. To keep them on the road is relatively expensive, compared to electric vehicles which are up to 40% cheaper to run on a per-kilometre basis. And the cost of running electric vehicles is dropping all the time, thanks to the decreasing cost of electricity brought about by the uptake of renewables.

## Decrease in expense and dealing with challenges

What does this mean for the person on the street? When speaking to the *Wall Street Journal* earlier this year, professional driver Remy Namahro explained that his monthly income has jumped 42%, to around \$300 (R4,272), since he exchanged

his combustion two-wheeler for an electric model which he now leases.

“I can regularly put meat on the table,” he told the newspaper. “For the first time, I can save for my children’s education and healthcare.”

There are obvious challenges. Many countries in Africa frequently experience electrical blackouts. But even here, companies have found ingenious ways to adapt. Some firms are installing solar-powered microgrids that operate off-grid to charge vehicles when they’re not in use, for example during lunch breaks. Others are using pre-charged swap-out batteries which can be switched in a matter of a minute.

Africa has history when it comes to leapfrogging other regions in how technology is used. One example is with mobile phones. Another is with mobile financing. I believe that Africa will leapfrog the rest of the world and become a leading adopter of electric vehicles. And we will all be better off for it, especially Africans themselves.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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