Aloe Energy

RESEARCH PAPER · NOVEMBER 2026

Promised vs built: how late are power projects in Southern and Eastern Africa?

A record of 55 power lines and plants in the Southern African and Eastern Africa power pools, the date each was first promised, and when it actually arrived or is now expected.

Brandon Simons, Aloe Energy · November 2026 · Version 1.0 · License: CC BY 4.0
Data and maps: aloeenergy.org/research · Contact: brandon@aloeenergy.org

Key findings

- **In Southern Africa, about three quarters of planned capacity got built.** From 2012 to 2021, SAPP members commissioned 25,728 MW against 34,438 MW planned for those years (75%). Only one year, 2016, beat its plan.
- **In Eastern Africa, every completed project in our record arrived late.** All 15 lines and plants now in service came in after their first public completion date: a median of 5 years late, and 8 of them five years or more.
- **The pipeline is behind too.** 28 of the 39 projects not yet in service have already passed the first date promised for them. Where a current date exists, it sits a median of 5 years after the first promise.
- **Planners should expect delay, not hope against it.** For anyone planning around a future grid line, such as a mini-grid developer or a rural electrification agency, a delay of several years is the normal case. Plans that work if the grid comes late, and still work if it comes early, are the safer bet.

Why dates matter

Every map of a future grid is a map of promises. A planned transmission line decides whether a town waits for the grid or gets a mini-grid now, whether an investor builds a solar plant, and whether a utility can import power in a drought year. When those dates slip, the cost falls on the people who planned around them: households that stay in the dark, mini-grids that are stranded when the grid arrives unannounced, and plants that cannot export.

Dates slip for many reasons: financing takes longer than expected, land and resettlement take time, contractors fail, and wars and droughts intervene. This paper does not try to explain each delay. It asks a

simpler question: how far apart are the first promise and the result? Knowing the usual size of that gap makes every plan built on the grid more realistic.

Data and method

The record comes from Aloe Energy's open SAPP and EAPP grid atlases. For each transmission project and selected power plants in the pipeline, the atlases keep every completion date we could find in public sources, with who said it, when and where: power pool plans (the SAPP Pool Plan 2017 and the EAPP Master Plan 2014), utility and ministry statements, funder documents and project news.

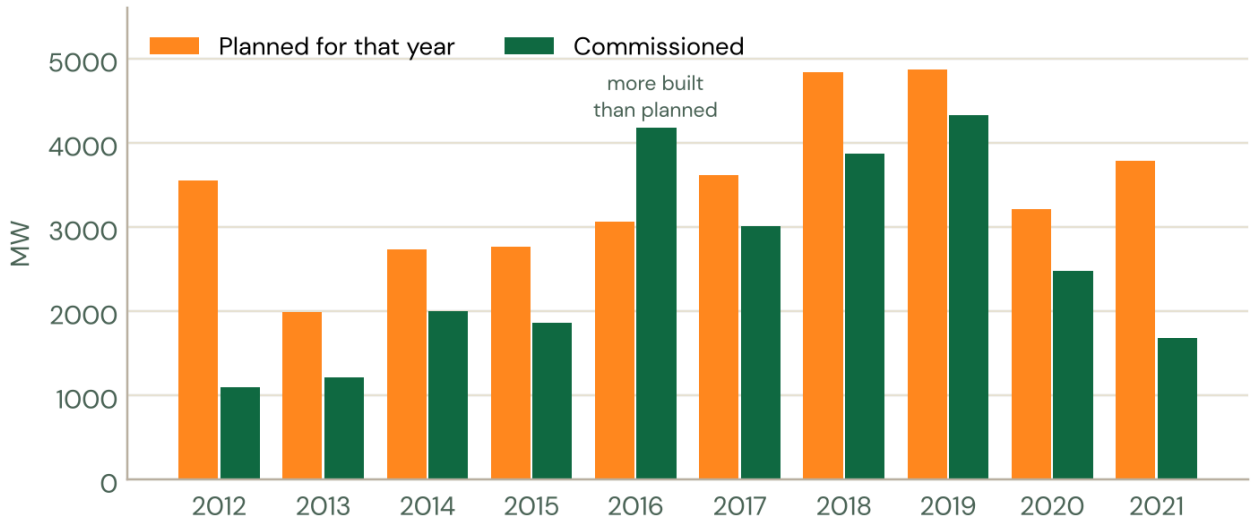
The record holds 65 projects (25 in SAPP and 40 in EAPP). 55 have at least one dated completion promise and are used here. For each, we take:

- **First promise:** the completion year in the earliest dated public statement we found.
- **Result:** the year the project entered service, or, if it has not, the latest official target. Where no official target exists, the atlases show an Aloe estimate based on the project's stage; these are marked separately.
- **Delay:** the result minus the first promise, in whole years.

For Southern Africa we add a second, capacity-based view: the generation capacity SAPP members planned to commission in each year from 2012 to 2021, and what they actually commissioned, as reported by SAPP (Annual Report 2022).

Southern Africa: three quarters of the plan

Figure 1. Generation capacity planned and commissioned by SAPP members, 2012 to 2021 (MW)



Source: SAPP Annual Report 2022. Planned is the capacity scheduled for commissioning in that year.

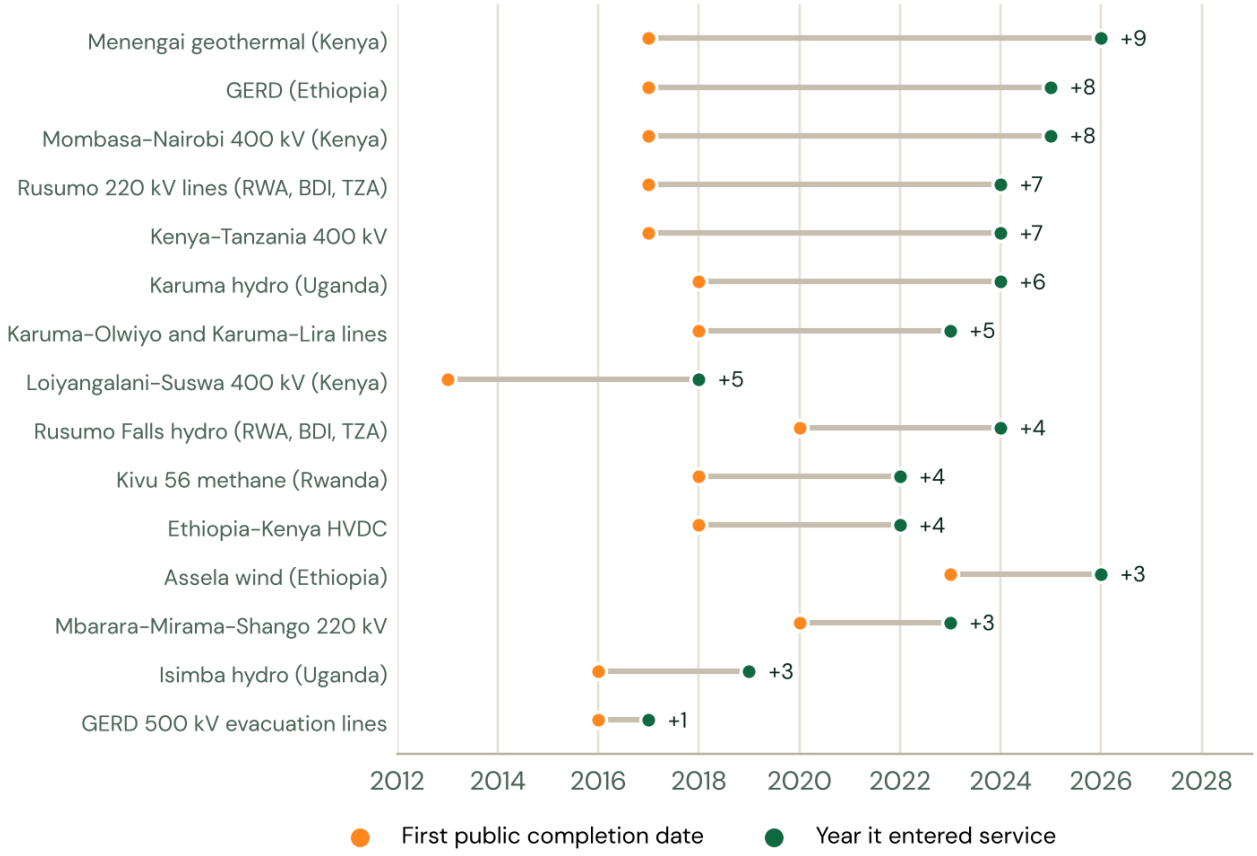
Over ten years, SAPP members commissioned 25,728 MW of the 34,438 MW they planned for those years, about 75%. The shortfall was largest at the start and end of the period: in 2012 less than a third of the planned capacity arrived, and in 2021 less than half. In 2016, a catch-up year, more was built than planned.

Individual projects tell the same story with some surprises. Mphanda Nkuwa in Mozambique, a 1,500 MW hydropower plant, was set for 2028 in the 2017 Pool Plan and is now expected in 2034. Caculo Cabaça in

Angola was first scheduled for 2024 and now expects its first unit in 2027. The other way round, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere hydropower plant was penciled in by the 2017 Pool Plan for 2036 to 2039, and entered service in 2026, more than a decade early. Pool plans are sequencing exercises, not construction schedules, so we leave Julius Nyerere out of the delay statistics below. But it shows that national decisions can move faster than regional plans expect.

Eastern Africa: every completed project arrived late

Figure 2. First public completion date and year in service, Eastern Africa Power Pool projects now operating



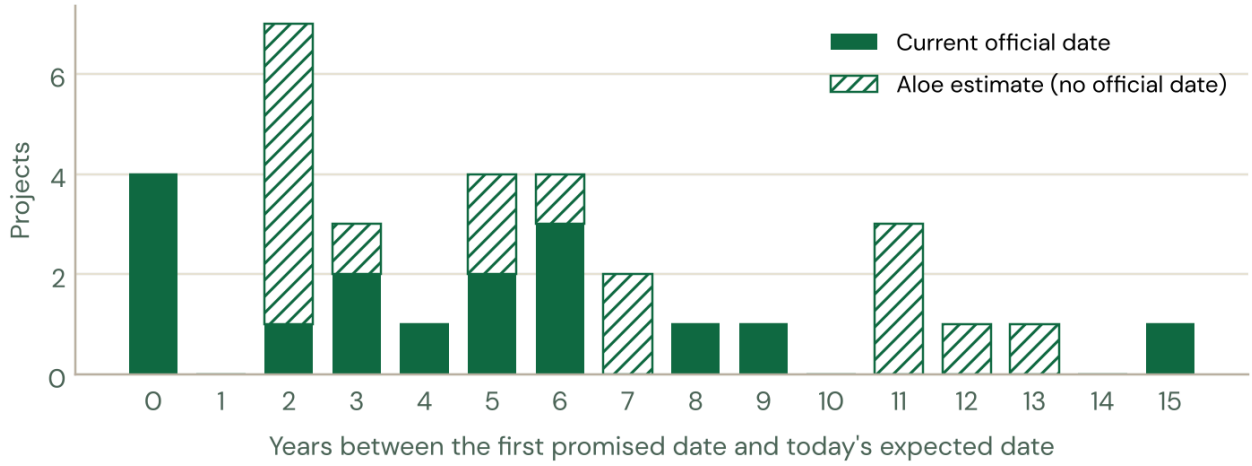
Numbers show the delay in years. Source: Aloe Energy EAPP grid atlas; each date is linked to its source in the atlas.

All 15 completed projects in the EAPP record came in after the first date promised for them. The median delay was 5 years and the average 5.1. The shortest was one year (the 500 kV lines that carry power from the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam); the longest nine (the Menengai geothermal plant in Kenya). The dam itself was first expected in 2017 and was inaugurated in September 2025. The Kenya–Tanzania 400 kV line was promised for 2017 and switched on in December 2024. Karuma's 600 MW came online in 2024, six years after the first target.

Lines and plants slip alike. Of the 15 projects, 8 were five or more years late.

The pipeline today

Figure 3. Years between the first promised date and today's expected date, projects not yet in service



33 projects in both power pools with an expected date. Hatched bars use an Aloe estimate where no official date exists. Source: Aloe Energy SAPP and EAPP grid atlases.

Of the 39 projects not yet in service, 28 have already passed the first date promised for them. Where a project has an expected date today, that date sits a median of 5 years after the first promise (4.5 years where the date is official). Two regional links that the EAPP Master Plan 2014 expected by 2020 are still not built: Uganda-South Sudan only secured its funding in 2025, and a second Ethiopia-Sudan line is back at feasibility. These are delays so far: projects that are not yet built can still slip further.

Wires are not the whole story

A finished line does not always mean power flows. The Ethiopia-Kenya HVDC link is rated at 2,000 MW, but its first contract was for 200 MW, and Kenya's own grid limits flows to under 500 MW. In Southern Africa, SAPP's own limits on 29 interconnections show how much of each line's rating can actually be used. The corridor between Mozambique and South Africa, for example, is limited to about 1,000 MW. Conflict can undo links too: Sudan's war has cut trade with Ethiopia to 10-20 MW. Promised capacity should be read together with promised dates.

What this means for planning

- **Build delay into grid-arrival assumptions.** When a plan depends on a future line, test it with the line arriving five or more years late, the median found here.
- **Plan mini-grids as future parts of the grid.** If the grid comes late, a mini-grid serves people in the meantime. If it comes early, a mini-grid designed to connect can join the grid instead of being stranded. Aloe's grid-edge atlas shows that most people without power live within 15 km of an existing or predicted line, where this choice matters most.
- **Publish the history of dates, not only the latest one.** A single current date hides how many times it has moved. Keeping every promised date, as the atlases do, shows which projects are on track and which keep slipping.
- **Treat regional plans as direction, not schedule.** Pool plans set out what a region needs, not when it will be built. Julius Nyerere shows they can be wrong in both directions.

Limitations

The "first promise" is the earliest dated statement we found, not necessarily the earliest ever made, so delays may be understated. The sample is small and favors well-documented projects, which may be larger and better funded than average. Some early dates come from news reports and secondary sources rather than official documents. Delays are counted in whole years, and a project that slipped from January to December of the same year counts as on time. The capacity view for Southern Africa depends on how SAPP's annual reports define "planned". Expected dates for projects not yet built are a mix of official targets and Aloe estimates, marked in Figure 3 and the appendix. Every date in the record links to its source in the online atlases, and corrections are welcome.

Sources

Southern African Power Pool: Annual Report 2022; SAPP Pool Plan 2017, Executive Summary; draft SAPP Generation and Transmission Master Plan 2025-2045; SAPP project portfolio presentations. Eastern Africa Power Pool: EAPP Master Plan 2014, Executive Summary. Project dates: utilities, ministries, funders (World Bank, African Development Bank, European Union) and project news, as listed project by project in the Aloe Energy atlases at aloeenergy.org/research/sapp-grid and aloeenergy.org/research/eapp-grid. Grid data in the atlases: OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL), World Bank and TANESCO grid maps.

Suggested citation: Simons, B. (2026). Promised vs built: how late are power projects in Southern and Eastern Africa? Aloe Energy. Version 1.0. DOI to be added.

Appendix: the project record

55 projects with at least one dated completion promise. "First said" is when the earliest promise we found was made; "Promised" is the completion year it gave; "Now" is the year in service, or the current expected year ("est." marks an Aloe estimate where no official date exists).

Pool	Project	First said	Promised	Promised by	Now	Status (Nov 2026)
EAPP	Assela Wind	Jan 2021	2023	Siemens Gamesa reports	2026	Operating
EAPP	Ayago	Aug 2013	2020	The EastAfrican	2035	Planned
EAPP	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)	2011	2017	business press (via Wikipedia)	2025	Operating
EAPP	Isimba	2013	2016	media (34-month build)	2019	Operating
EAPP	Karuma	Mar 2015	2018	UEGCL	2024	Operating
EAPP	Kivu 56 (Shema Power)	2016	2018	PPA reports	2022	Operating
EAPP	Kopere Solar	2018	2021	Wikipedia	2028 (est.)	Planned
EAPP	Koysha	Oct 2020	2023	Minister Seleshi Bekele	2028	Under construction
EAPP	Menengai (OrPower 22)	2015	2017	press (Menengai IPPs)	2026	Operating
EAPP	Metehara Solar	2017	2019	Enel award (via Wikipedia)	2030 (est.)	Planned
EAPP	Muzizi	2013	2018	The Independent	2029 (est.)	Planned
EAPP	Nyabarongo II	2026	2027	REG	2027	Under construction
EAPP	Rusumo	2017	2020	groundbreaking reports	2024	Operating
EAPP	Ruzizi III	Mar 2020	2021	VivAfrik	2030	Financed
EAPP	Tulu Moye I Geothermal	Apr 2022	2024	TMGO (The Reporter)	2029 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Ethiopia-Djibouti second line 230 kV (Semera-Galafi-Nagad)	2024	2024	Wikipedia infobox	2026 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Ethiopia-Kenya HVDC (Eastern Electricity Highway)	2014	2018	EAPP Master Plan 2014	2022	Operating
EAPP	Ethiopia-Sudan second interconnector 500 kV	2014	2020	EAPP Master Plan 2014	2032 (est.)	Feasibility
EAPP	GERD 500 kV evacuation (GERD-Dedesa-Holeta)	Jan 2014	2016	AidData	2017	Operating
EAPP	Kenya Loiyangalani-Suswa 400 kV (Lake Turkana Wind)	Jun 2011	2013	Isolux contract (via Wikipedia)	2018	Operating
EAPP	Kenya Mombasa-Nairobi 400 kV (Rabai-Mariakani-Isinya-Suswa)	Aug 2011	2017	KETRACO (via Wikipedia)	2025	Operating
EAPP	Kenya PPP: Kibos-Kakamega-Musaga 220 kV	2026	2026	PS Alex Wachira	2028 (est.)	Procurement
EAPP	Kenya PPP: Lessos-Loosuk 400 kV	2026	2026	PS Alex Wachira	2028 (est.)	Procurement
EAPP	Kenya-Tanzania 400 kV interconnector	Sep 2015	2017	PS Joseph Njoroge	2024	Operating
EAPP	Kenya-Uganda Lessos-Tororo 400 kV (Kenyan section)	Aug 2013	2014	Engineering News (Abengoa contract)	2027 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Rusumo 220 kV lines (Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania)	Mar 2014	2017	Engineering News	2024	Operating
EAPP	Ruzizi III 220 kV evacuation	Jun 2025	2025	Rwanda MININFRA	2030	Financed

Pool	Project	First said	Promised	Promised by	Now	Status (Nov 2026)
EAPP	Rwanda-Burundi 220 kV (Kigoma-Butare-Ngozi-Gitega)	May 2013	2016	PS James Kamanzi (EAC)	2027 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Rwanda-DR Congo 220 kV (Goma-Gisenyi, Goma-Bukavu)	2014	2025	EAPP Master Plan 2014	2027 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Uganda Bujagali-Tororo 220 kV (Ugandan section)	2020	2020	NELSAP	2027 (est.)	Under construction
EAPP	Uganda Karuma-Kawanda 400 kV (Karuma evacuation)	Jan 2014	2018	UETCL (via Wikipedia)	2024	Commissioning
EAPP	Uganda Karuma-Olwiyo 400 kV and Karuma-Lira 132 kV	Oct 2015	2018	Daily Monitor	2023	Operating
EAPP	Uganda-DR Congo 220 kV (Nkenda-Beni-Bunia)	2014	2025	EAPP Master Plan 2014	2030 (est.)	Feasibility
EAPP	Uganda-Rwanda Mbarara-Mirama-Shango 220 kV	2020	2020	NELSAP	2023	Operating
EAPP	Uganda-South Sudan 400 kV (Olwiyo-Nimule-Juba)	2014	2020	EAPP Master Plan 2014	2028	Financed
EAPP	Uganda-Tanzania 400 kV interconnector	Jul 2025	2029	AU-PIDA prospectus	2029	Procurement
SAPP	Batoka Gorge	2017	2023	SAPP Pool Plan 2017	–	Pre-procurement
SAPP	Caculo Cabaça	2017	2024	Original schedule	2027	Under construction
SAPP	Inga III	2017	2030	SAPP Pool Plan 2017 (4,800 MW first phase)	–	Re-engaged
SAPP	Julius Nyerere	2017	2039	SAPP Pool Plan 2017 (as Stiegler's Gorge, full 2,096 MW)	2026	Operating
SAPP	Malagarasi	2023	2024	AfDB progress report	2028	Under construction
SAPP	Mpatamanga	2023	2025	World Bank / ESMAP	2031 (est.)	Pre-construction
SAPP	Mphanda Nkuwa	2017	2028	SAPP Pool Plan 2017	2034	Development
SAPP	Angola-Namibia interconnector (ANNA)	2023	2026	SAPP project portfolio	2029 (est.)	Procurement
SAPP	Botswana-Namibia interconnector	2025-26	2029	SAPP master plan update (draft)	–	Pre-feasibility, data collection
SAPP	Inga-Soyo interconnector	2017	2020	SAPP Pool Plan 2017 (Inga - Angola)	–	Pre-feasibility done
SAPP	Malawi-Zambia interconnector	2025-26	2028	SAPP master plan update (draft)	2030 (est.)	Tender documents
SAPP	Mozambique north-south backbone (Mphanda Nkuwa)	2017	2028	SAPP Pool Plan 2017 (STE phased 2023-2028)	2034	Structuring
SAPP	Mozambique-Malawi interconnector (MoMa)	2023	2024	SAPP project portfolio	2026	Commissioning
SAPP	Mozambique-Tanzania interconnector	2025-26	2028	SAPP master plan update (draft)	–	Studies starting
SAPP	Nyakanazi-Kigoma 400 kV (North West Grid)	2017	2023	AfDB appraisal (target for grid connections)	2026	Line complete, substations finishing
SAPP	Tanzania-Zambia interconnector (TAZA), Tanzania section	2020	2026	EU factsheet (2020-2026)	2026	Under construction
SAPP	Zambia-Angola interconnector	2025-26	2030	SAPP master plan update (draft)	–	Routing study
SAPP	Zambia-Tanzania interconnector, Zambia section	Apr 2025	2028	World Bank signing, restart	2028	Under construction
SAPP	ZiZaBoNa interconnector	2023	2028	SAPP project portfolio	2030 (est.)	Feasibility done