

Smart Villages Research Group Ltd

Job Description - Development Engineer/Development Associate

About us

Smart Villages Research Group Ltd is a small company that has evolved from the 7 year long Smart Villages Initiative (www.e4sv.org) exploring more innovative and sustainable ways to achieve rural development and energy access in off-grid communities around the world. We have been working for 5 years now to develop innovative technologies and business models, and implement these integrated rural development solutions, to meet the integrated needs of rural communities around the world, and to try to validate our approach through collection of impact data from the communities we work with.

SVRG is involved in a number of (industrial) R&D projects innovating in the field of energy access and rural development across a number of Global South countries. These projects support progress towards multiple Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG7: energy access for all, but always maintaining our community-led, bottom-up, holistic “Smart Villages” approach.

Projects include:

- Testing innovative minigrid designs to prove financial viability and suitability for the specific context
- Adapting tools and methods to enable more successful community engagement and participation in energy access projects
- Developing low-cost, sustainable technologies to support universal energy access and environmental stewardship aims and to integrate access to energy with innovative productive and social uses of energy to help drive social and economic development in those communities.

We also are beginning to capitalise on successful business models and technologies we have developed in implementation projects in a growing number of communities.

Countries where we have carried out projects include Tanzania, Uganda, Malaysia, Somaliland, Lesotho, Kenya. Our roles involve working with multiple in-country partners and a multi-disciplinary team, travel for in-country work, and practical application of research, engineering, community engagement, monitoring and evaluation, and project management techniques. Since most of our work is in-country, we do not have physical premises in the UK, so SVRG staff are all home based, though we keep in touch through daily virtual stand-up meetings, and will often work together in-person at project sites abroad.

We currently have 6 active members of staff, as well as a number of advisors.



About you

We are keen to recruit a recently graduated/ing engineer or other technically and practically minded individual with a keen interest in development and communities, to help us with our project work on the ground in implementation countries, as well as with more general research, administrative and analytical duties. The work is extremely varied: you might be in a field in Tanzania assisting with wiring an inverter and installing solar panels one day, and then another day designing and costing a solar energy system to power a rural petrol station, or researching characteristics of boreholes and water pumps, holding a focus group in a rural village, chasing a shipment of batteries, working out what bricks are best to use to build a coldstore, or helping write an application for funding for a new project.

To succeed, individuals will require cultural sensitivity, gravitas, curiosity, self-motivation, extraordinary self-organisation skills, practicality and common sense, a willingness to think outside the box and operate, research and innovate outside their comfort zones. A willingness to travel extensively, work remotely, and ability to influence and be diplomatic will also be essential.

Working within a small, dynamic team, the contribution by each and every person has a huge impact on a project's direction and its success. You will be expected to take responsibility for tasks and sub-projects assigned to you, and once fully inducted into the company (6-9 months in), the role is likely to progress into taking ownership for entire projects, with support from senior members of staff. But don't worry, we'll train you up to managing this!

The job

The role will be a full-time position – in the first instance for one year, but our expectation is that further projects will come on-stream before that year is out, and the possibility for the contract to be extended therefore exists.

There is a probation period of 3 months, during which there will be regular professional development check-in calls. If after 3 months it turns out we are not suitable for each other, the position will not be confirmed.

Working hours are reasonably flexible but should average out to at least 37.5 hours per week. A significant amount of time is likely to be spent on-site in the countries that we work in; for current employees in this role, about 20-50% of the year is spent abroad, for 1-5 weeks at a time on a regular basis, though the exact travel requirements vary depending on the person and project requirements. Depending on our schedule and that of our partners, we often work weekends as well when we are in the field. Conversely, when back in the UK, although working during normal daytime hours will be useful (since colleagues and our partners are likely to be working at the same time) we adopt a flexible hours policy, should you occasionally wish to walk the dog, go shopping, or see friends for the afternoon and make up the time outside normal working hours.

Annual leave is 28 days including bank holidays, and should it be necessary to work during weekends when overseas, days off in lieu may be taken.



It is a requirement of our funders that we employ people in the UK under PAYE. **You must therefore have the right to live and work in the UK.**

We operate a statutory employer pension scheme, administered through NEST. The employee contribution is 5% of your salary, the employer's contribution is 3%. You may opt out of this scheme if you wish.

You will be expected to work remotely in the UK, either from your home or – if you wish, and at your own cost – from a co-working location. Hence you will be expected to have access to essential work resources such as a good working laptop and a broadband connection. But don't bother buying a suit or a season ticket to get to the office! While travelling abroad, all work-related expenses will be covered by the company (transport, accommodation, food etc.).

Salary

To be discussed, dependant on prior experience.

Required qualities & skills

- Cultural sensitivity, personal gravitas, curiosity, self-motivation, practicality and common sense.
- High self-organisation skills, comfort with independent/remote working, confidence to contact remote colleagues with questions or uncertainties.
- General technical skills and interests, both within and beyond engineering. A basic understanding of voltage, current, power and energy, and an ability to learn from manuals and datasheets would be especially useful.
- Willingness to think outside the box and operate, research and innovate outside your comfort zones.
- A willingness and flexibility to travel extensively, work remotely and independently.
- Ability to communicate, influence and be diplomatic. People skills.
- Willingness to learn and an interest in international development.
- Interest and engagement with the communities in which we work.
- Personal experience of independent travel would be an asset.

Application procedure

We think you're probably busy enough already to have to spend any more time filling out application forms. So we would just like you to send us three things:

1. the longest CV and/or covering letter you've submitted to anyone else to apply for a job recently (and tell us who you submitted it to). If you haven't applied for a job recently, then



SMART VILLAGES
New thinking for off-grid communities worldwide

please send us an up-to-date CV and a recent piece of professional writing (for example a report you have produced - we will treat this in confidence)

2. a short video telling us why this job interests you, and what you'd bring to it (c 3-5 mins)
3. a short video telling us why you would be a good person to travel and spend a week stuck in a remote village with! (c 3-5 mins)

If you have any questions please contact bernie@e4sv.org

Many thanks for considering joining the Smart Villages team. We look forward to hearing from you!