

## Different investment models for rooftop solar projects in Viet Nam



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## Who is this for?

Factory owners in the textile and garment industry.

This note introduces various investment models that factory owners can choose from when implementing a solar system.

## More specifically, you will find information about:

- CAPEX vs OPEX investment model
- Decision-tree for selecting the suitable investment model
- In detail: investment models available in your country
- Recommended steps to identify the right solar partner

## Value proposition

Selecting the right investment model is a crucial step towards ensuring the viability of your on-site solar PV system. Knowledge of different investment models can support your decision-making when selecting the right model for your factory's budget and plan.



When you invest in a new on-site solar system, you can either self-finance your investment upfront (CAPEX) or make incremental payments to a third party over multiple years (OPEX).

### The Capex Model

Directly investing in a rooftop solar plant by commissioning a renewable energy developer or an engineering procurement construction (EPC) company. This is known either as a “CAPEX model” or “self-financed model”.

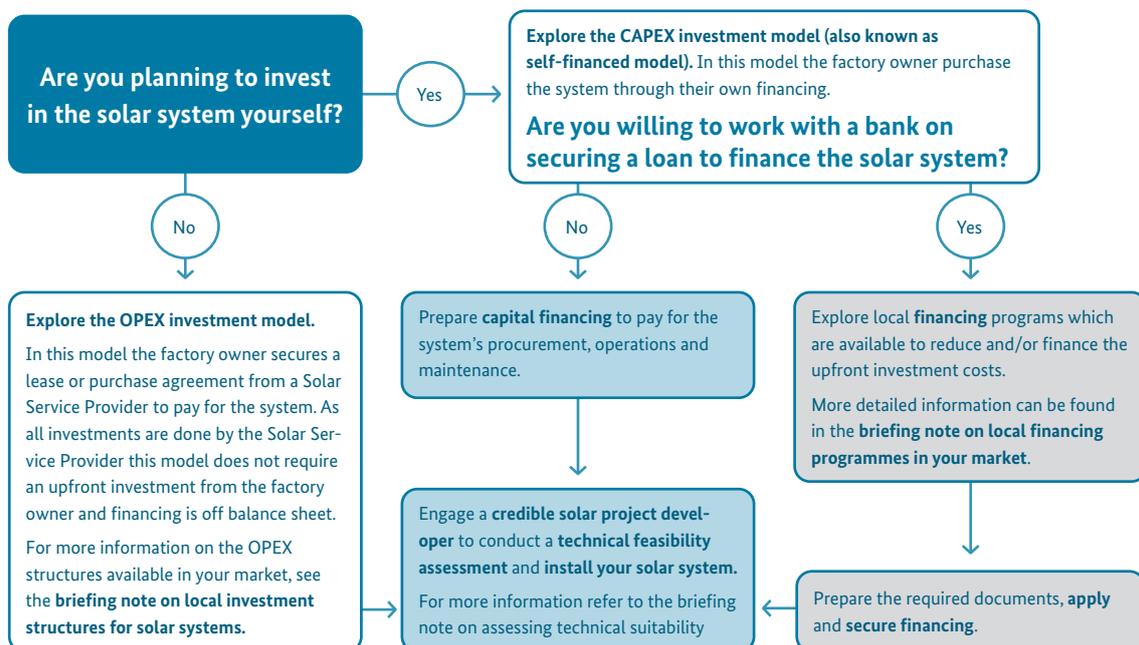
- The system is fully financed, owned and operated by the factory owner.
- The main benefit of this model is that the factory owner has full control over the installation and performance of the system.
- The factory owner is also responsible for operations and maintenance (O&M).

### The Opex Model

Buying solar power under a long-term agreement with a Renewable Energy Service Company (RESCO). This is known as an “OPEX model” or a “third-party financed model”.

- The advantage of the OPEX model is that factory owners do not have to invest in the solar PV system upfront.
- Instead, the factory owners make regular payments to the RESCO for using the solar PV system for the tenure of the contract.
- The owner also has limited to no responsibility for the O&M of the system for the duration of the contract. If it is agreed at the end of the lease contract that the system ownership be transferred to the factory, the responsibility for the O&M is also transferred.
- However, the OPEX model typically presents lower overall cost savings (since part of the revenues are shared with the RESCO) than the CAPEX model.
- Under the OPEX model, RESCOs normally conduct due-diligence on factories and would only offer services to factories with a stable business and good financial health.

The decision-tree below provides a quick assessment of the two models indicating which could be best for you.





## To help you run through the decision-tree, here are some tips on topics to explore:

### The costs of each model

Contact a trusted solar developer in your area to receive an estimate of the expected cost of a solar system at your factory, for both CAPEX and OPEX models, as a comparison exercise.

### Your internal business requirements

- What **internal requirements** does your company have in place for financing arrangements from third parties?
- What **internal approval process** is required for implementing and approving solar system financing and which stakeholders should be involved? Getting early buy-in among your decision-making colleagues is crucial.

### Your budget

Check the **budget availability/allocation** (with the relevant department) for the procurement of the equipment needed for the on-site PV system.

- Does your company's budget allow for equipment to be purchased with capital budgets (money for the acquisition and maintenance of fixed assets such as land, buildings and equipment)?
- If yes, are there any requirements around the "payback period"<sup>1</sup>?

Check whether the company allows the **use of operational budgets** to implement an on-site system via an equipment lease or power purchase agreement (PPA). A PPA is a contractual agreement between a power producer and a power consumer for the sale and purchase of electricity.

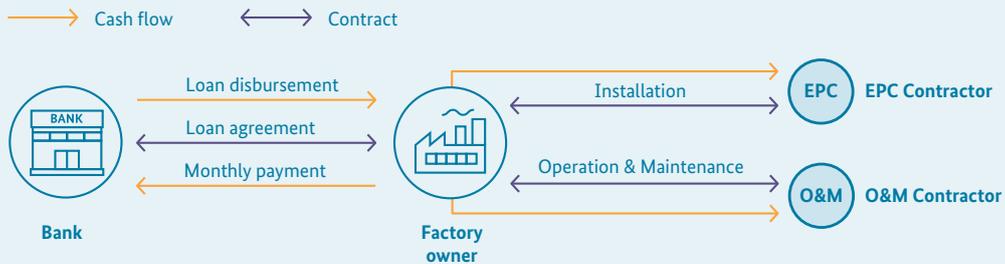
- Would it be able to sign a 10–25-year contract?
- Would a capital loan for self-financing the system be preferable to implementing third-party financing?

1. 'Payback period' refers to the time required until the savings from the solar energy system are higher than the initial system's cost and maintenance expenditure.

# CAPEX model explained

Under the CAPEX model, the entire investment for the rooftop solar system comes from the power-user/factory owner. The factory owner generally hires a solar EPC company to provide turnkey installation of the entire solar power system and hand assets over to the user.

Figure 1



<p><b>Structure</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The factory owner owns the solar PV system.</li> <li>2. The factory owner can apply for financing via a loan from a bank.</li> <li>3. The installation of the solar system is completed by a trusted EPC contractor, selected through a tender process.</li> <li>4. The factory owner is responsible for O&amp;M; however, an O&amp;M contractor should be engaged for a fee (typically annual) to ensure high quality.</li> </ol>
<p><b>How do you pay for it?</b></p>	<p>You pay for the (a) <b>capital expenditure</b> (the solar system parts) and (b) for the <b>O&amp;M support</b>.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The PV system (CAPEX costs) will be paid for on a balance-sheet basis and can be financed through a local bank. Loans to cover CAPEX costs are available with approx. 9%–11% interest rates.</li> <li>b. Factory owners can manage the O&amp;M of the solar system (if there are qualified staff available) but companies will typically hire an O&amp;M contractor to manage the O&amp;M, usually for an annual fee.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Incentives</b></p>	<p>The factory owner is responsible for taking advantage of the available incentives for solar PV in Viet Nam, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feed-in-tariff – if excess power is generated, to sell it back to the grid</li> <li>• VAT/tax incentives</li> <li>• Import duty exemptions</li> </ul>
<p><b>Operations and maintenance</b></p>	<p><b>Factory management (or the system owner) is responsible for O&amp;M.</b></p> <p>Typically, the EPC contractor offers one and sometimes two years of O&amp;M service free of charge due to the performance guarantee and warranty. After this period, O&amp;M service is charged if requested by the factories.</p> <p>The facility owner must be aware of the scope of the O&amp;M that the EPC contractor agrees to deliver and ensure that the EPC contractor fulfils this responsibility.</p> <p>If the facility owner wants to use its own staff to oversee O&amp;M activities, proper capacity-building (i.e. training) must be carried out.</p>

# OPEX model explained

Under the OPEX model, a RESCO invests in, builds and maintains an on-site solar plant. The customer pays for the power generated under a long-term agreement.

This choice is best for factory owners who do not have the capital available to install an on-site solar plant, or do not have access to long-term, low-cost capital. RESCOs in Viet Nam can offer various payment structures.

Under current regulation, three main types of OPEX agreements are permitted in Viet Nam: **(1) private power purchase agreement (on-site PPA)**; **(2) third-party ownership of the generating asset (lease model)**; and **(3) rooftop lease model**.

	1. Private power purchase agreement (on-site PPA)	2. Third-party ownership of the generating asset (lease model)	3. Rooftop lease model
Illustration			
Structure	<p>The PPA provider (a RESCO) fully owns the system as well as all the power generated, selling it to the factory via a <b>long-term PPA</b>.</p> <p>A PPA is basically a long-term electricity supply agreement between two parties.</p>	<p>The RESCO installs a solar PV system on the roof of your factory.</p> <p>The RESCO is the owner of the system and <b>leases</b> it to the factory owner on an operational basis.</p>	<p>The factory owner leases the roof to the RESCO, who is solely responsible for investing in, installing and carrying out O&amp;M on the PV system and selling all generated electricity to Vietnam Electricity (EVN).</p> <p>In other words, you do not purchase any of the electricity from the on-site solar PV system. Hence, for reporting/publication purposes, the facility owner is not considered to be consuming renewable electricity through the on-site system.</p>
Ownership of system	<p>The RESCO owns the system and is responsible for the costs of and permission for installing the solar system on the customer's property. The RESCO is also recognised as the electricity generator for regulatory purposes.</p> <p>Therefore, the RESCO could sell any excess power generated (power not consumed by the factory) to the grid via net-metering.</p> <p>Typical contract lengths range from 15 to 25 years.</p>	<p>Under the lease agreement, the RESCO company owns the system, but the factory owner is recognised as the electricity generator for regulatory purposes. At the end of the agreed lease period, the ownership of the system is passed to the factory owner, but they still need to purchase the system at a fair nominal value.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> it is important that the lease agreement be structured in such a way that it does not fall under the definition of a financial leasing arrangement under Vietnamese law. Financial leasing agreements require stricter licences and conditions, whereby the RESCO has to be a licenced credit institution.</p>	<p>The RESCO has sole ownership of the system, and the rooftop owner receives a fee for the lease of the rooftop space.</p>

	1. Private power purchase agreement (on-site PPA)	2. Third-party ownership of the generating asset (lease model)	3. Rooftop lease model
Investment	Typically, <b>zero upfront investment</b> costs are required from the factory owner.	Typically, <b>zero upfront investment</b> costs are required from the factory owner.	Typically, <b>zero upfront investment</b> costs are required from the factory owner.
Incentives	The RESCO will be responsible for taking advantage of any incentives, including the feed-in-tariff scheme.	The factory owner can apply to available incentive schemes, such as feed-in tariffs to sell the excess electricity generated.	The RESCO will be responsible for the application to and benefits received from any incentives.
How to pay for it?	<p>Payment per kilowatt hour (kWh) of solar energy used.</p> <p>The PPA price would be negotiated with the RESCO, but for example could also be related to a % discount from utility price.</p>	<p>Payment of a flat fee each month (or based on the electricity generation) which is agreed in the contract, or a <b>percentage discount from the tariff paid to EVN (between 2% and 6%)</b></p>	<p>The rooftop owner receives a fee for the lease of rooftop space to the RESCO.</p> <p>The factory owner can either operate a profit-share from the sales from the PV or receive a fixed rent per month (or per year) for the entire term of the agreement. This is specified in the contract.</p>
Operations and maintenance	The PPA provider is also responsible for the system's maintenance throughout the term of the PPA.	The RESCO typically provides maintenance services and may either include such services under the monthly rental fee or charge a fixed or variable service fee.	The RESCO is also responsible for the system's maintenance throughout the term of the lease.

For a more detailed description of each model in the Vietnamese market, please refer to “Investing in rooftop solar systems in Viet Nam – technical and administrative guidelines for commercial and industrial projects”, linked [here](#).

## Finding the right EPC or project developer is crucial

Although the pricing results of the tender are important, factory owners should also consider other qualitative aspects, such as those listed in the table below.

**Table:** Sample checklist for solar developer/EPC company due diligence

Parameter	Details	Check box
<b>Technical offer</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check that all system elements are included</li> <li>• Check that all necessary infrastructure works are included</li> <li>• Check that all relevant quality standards have been addressed</li> </ul> <p>More information on key system elements and set-ups is available in the “101 Crash Course: How a solar system works”.</p>	
<b>Financial offer</b>	<p><b>Ensure sound financial offers:</b> Offers with unusually low prices might indicate an inexperienced provider; ensure proper due diligence on this type of offer. Undertaking a tender process will ensure that different technical and financial offers are received and compared to find the best option.</p>	
<b>Track record/credibility of the EPC contractor</b>	<p><b>Review the company’s past experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research <b>previously developed projects</b> (number of years of experience and number of projects).</li> </ul> <p>The more similar the projects an EPC contractor has carried out in the past, the better the chances are that they can deliver well on this project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Check references</b> from recent clients (call respective facility owners or visit the sites).</li> <li>• <b>Check the current and historical financials</b> of the EPC contractor.</li> <li>• If applicable, check <b>accreditation</b> from the national/regional/global certification body for solar system equipment.</li> <li>• Due diligence – assess EPC contractors’ own due diligence process.</li> </ul> <p>Overall, it is important to have a long-standing and good relationship with the proposed contractors.</p>	
<b>O&amp;M services (if included in the scope)</b>	<p><b>Ensure that O&amp;M services are agreed and delivered.</b></p> <p>The scope of O&amp;M services should typically include online monitoring of the solar system, together with periodic site inspections to check for faults, clean the system and carry out repairs/replacements in case of any breakdown or malfunction of the solar system.</p> <p>To read more about best practices for O&amp;M refer to: National Renewable Energy Laboratory’s report, “Best Practices for Operation and Maintenance of Photovoltaics,” linked <a href="#">here</a>.</p>	
<b>Insurance policy and warranties</b>	<p>Check <b>insurance/warranties coverage and duration</b>.</p>	

Please note this table is not exhaustive and should be used for information purposes only.



## Did you know?

In addition to solar PV rooftop, there are two other solutions for sourcing renewable electricity in Viet Nam:

1. Purchasing **Energy Attribute Certificates (EACs)** – EACs represent 1 MWh of generated renewable electricity and can be purchased to certify that the factory’s electricity was purchased from the grid.
2. A **Direct Power Purchase Agreement (DPPA)** – with a pilot to be launched in 2021, the DPPA is a virtual PPA scheme that will allow factories to contract an off-site utility-scale solar or wind plant directly. Joining the DPPA pilot scheme requires strict criteria to be met and involves a more complex contracting process than purchasing EACs.

### List of abbreviations and acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Description	Abbreviation/Acronym	Description
CAPEX	Capital expenditure	kWh	kilowatt hour
DPPA	Direct Power Purchase Agreement	O&M	Operations and maintenance
OPEX	Operating expenditure	RESCO	Renewable Energy Service Company
EAC	Energy Attribute Certificate	PPA	Power purchase agreement
EPC	Engineering, procurement and construction	PV	Photovoltaic
EVN	Vietnam Electricity		

To explore more topics related to solar PV, please review the full set of briefing notes.

#### Topics include:

- 101 Crash Course: How a solar system works
- Assessing suitability for rooftop solar projects (technical perspective)
- Assessing the business case for on-site solar (financial perspective)
- Solar regulations and policy framework
- Different investment models for rooftop solar projects
- Local financing programmes for rooftop solar projects



Image: © GIZ / Sabrina Asche, 2017

## ABOUT FABRIC

The project FABRIC (Fostering and Advancing Sustainable Business and Responsible Industrial Practices in the Clothing Industry in Asia) is implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, which works on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). To successfully shape the desired economic growth in Asia's textile and garment production in a sustainable

way, many parties need to be involved. GIZ's FABRIC project brings together people from the Asian industry, public sectors, NGOs and from international buyers, promoting knowledge transfer and cooperation. FABRIC is working in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Viet Nam and together with China to strengthen an industry that offers quality jobs, protects the environment and contributes to economic growth.

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