

Northern Cape Mulilo Sonnedix Prieska PV project inaugurated

The 86MW Mulilo Sonnedix Prieska PV project was officially inaugurated in the Northern Cape at a series of formal events attended by major players in the renewables energy sector.



Attendees celebrated the successful completion of the project and its socio-economic development (SED) impact in the region, which has empowered local communities with skills, investment and employment.

The plant was officially opened by Sonnedix CEO Andreas Mustad and South African developers Mulilo in the presence of Prieska Mayor Howard Tshume, who thanked Sonnedix and Mulilo on behalf of the Siyathemba municipality for investing in education and local business: “This plant will enable small businesses to emerge – thank you for choosing this area to develop our society.”

The opening was honoured with the presence of all the project partners (Mulilo, Women in Power, Nedbank and Standard Bank – facility agent, Fieldstone, Norton Rose Fulbright and Arup – advisors) and all of the companies involved in the plant construction process, including the EPC Contractor juwi, their main sub-contractors and suppliers (PiA Solar, ABB, BYD).

Long-term project

The inauguration caps a productive period for Sonnedix, with in excess of €600m invested in new assets in the past 12 months. “This photovoltaic plant is the largest in the history of Sonnedix, and our first in Africa,” said Mustad. “The construction phase is complete, yet this is a long-term project. We will be operating this plant for a minimum of 20 years with a local team, the local community, our local partners, and bring continued economic development and opportunities for the local community and businesses in the region.”

“We completed the project on time and within budget, and we received excellent feedback from Eskom’s Grid Access Unit and NERSA’s RETEC regarding our grid code compliance planning and execution. Now we look forward to delivering the same standard of excellence during the operations and maintenance phase,” commented juwi South Africa MD Greg Austin.

Empowering local communities

Situated 50km South-West of Prieska, the 125-hectare PV farm is capable of powering 40,000 homes through the Eskom grid and employed 1720 people through the 14-month construction period, of which 911 came from local communities. “The project required over 1.6 million man-hours to build, out of which over half were locally sourced,” said Johnny Cullum, CEO of Mulilo. “It has injected much-needed revenue into local businesses and also created additional indirect employment in the region.”

This picture is being replicated across the country. Renewable energy is a crucial source of foreign direct investment into the country, with foreign investment into REIPPs equivalent to 86% of the total FDI attracted into South Africa in 2014.

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