

Uganda's Soroti Solar Plant begins operations

Uganda's first grid-connected solar plant, made up of 32,680 photovoltaic panels and generating 10MW, is now online. The plant will supply clean, low-carbon, sustainable electricity to 40,000 homes, schools and businesses in Soroti. Minister of State for Energy D'Ujanga Simon, together with representatives of Access Power, EREN RE and donors recently celebrated its inauguration.



(Source: Access Power)

The project was developed under the [Global Energy Transfer Feed in Tariff \(GET FiT\)](#), a dedicated support scheme for renewable energy projects managed by Germany's KfW Development Bank in partnership with Uganda's Electricity Regulatory Agency (ERA) and funded by the governments of Norway, Germany, the United Kingdom and the European Union. The GET FiT programme helps renewable energy sources become more affordable and therefore more accessible in Eastern Africa.

Mix of debt and equity

The \$19m Soroti Solar Plant is in part funded by the European Union - Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund through the GET FiT Solar Facility equivalent to €8.7m in the form of result-based premium payments per kWh of delivered electricity.

The project is financed by a mix of debt and equity with the senior debt facility being provided by FMO, the Netherlands Development Bank, and the Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF).

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Uganda's minister of State for Energy, ambassadors from the EU, Germany and the Netherlands, as well as key stakeholders from Access Power and EREN RE; TSK, the contractor who built the plant; FMO and Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG), The Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF) as financiers, and other key officials.

Conducive regulatory framework

Ambassador Kristian Schmidt, European Union head of delegation to Uganda said in his speech: "Uganda is a good place to invest in solar energy. The regulatory framework is conducive and government rightly recognises Uganda's energy future must be renewable. It is great that this is now triggering private sector interest in solar power generation. The European Union is proud that our grant contribution ensures the realisation of the Soroti Solar Plant, and I hope this is only just the

beginning for many more to come."

ERA CEO Ziria Tibalwa noted, "The Access Solar Uganda 10MW grid connected solar PV project we are launching today is so far the largest in the East African region. We are so proud of this outcome of our stable and favourable regulatory environment that has produced such a leading project in the East African region. We congratulate Access Solar and the people of Uganda upon this milestone."

Improving livelihoods

Said Jennie Barugh, head DFID Uganda on the impact of GET FiT: "As an outward-looking nation, the UK fully supports Uganda in its effort to become a middle income country, with bilateral support of £110m this year. Power is an important enabler of development. GET FiT has helped to demonstrate the success of private sector-led renewable energy projects; reducing costs to the government and increasing supply to help the people of Uganda to improve livelihoods and economic empowerment, especially for women and girls, so they can stand on their own two feet. Uganda has led the way in this sector and we expect other African nations to learn from and build on the successes of GET FiT. The Soroti plant is also one of the eight renewable energy projects in Uganda to have benefited from the UK Aid supported Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund (EAIF) - part of the multilateral Private Infrastructure Development Group (PIDG). The UK is committed to supporting and improving the lives of Ugandans – with the vast majority (80%) living without access to clean modern energy – helping Uganda leave aid dependency behind."

Located on a 33-acre plot of land in Soroti District, the power plant has the potential to increase its net output capacity by a further 20MW of solar energy. At peak construction the plant had over 120 local workers involved, including engineers recruited and trained by Access Power and EREN RE.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>