

Mulilo-Sonnedix-Prieska Solar PV plant achieves commercial operation

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CAPE TOWN, South Africa – The 125 hectare, 86MW, Mulilo-Sonnedix-Prieska PV project, in the Northern Cape officially started commercial operation on Friday 22 July, 2016. Construction was completed after only 17 months.

Further to developments in Europe, Asia and Americas, the Prieska Solar Plant is Independent Power Producer (IPP) Sonnedix's first plant in South Africa and the biggest in its fleet.

This milestone project was developed in partnership with Mulilo Renewable Energy and Ixowave Women in Power, and was built for Sonnedix by juwi Renewable Energies (Pty) Ltd, the South African subsidiary of the international juwi group.

The project will be run under the auspices of the Department of Energy and has an expected 20-year lifespan. Sonnedix will manage the ongoing operations with a local team, and will remain fully committed to support the local community and its economic development over the next 20 years.

"We are delighted to announce the completion of the Prieska Solar Plant, our first in South Africa," Andreas Mustad, Sonnedix's CEO said. "The project has driven crucial economic activity in the Northern Cape, and will bring renewable power to 40,000 homes across South Africa."

Farid Moucef, Country Manager of Sonnedix Solar South Africa Holdings (Pty) Ltd, said that the project, which was developed under the Renewable Energy Independent Power Producers Programme (REIPPPP) was completed on time and within budget: "The project was completed in due time as per the schedule and is now fully operational – it has been a tremendous team effort and we thank all of our suppliers and stakeholders who ensured that we met our deadlines."

Torsten Keller, Engineering, Procurement and Construction Manager of the Mulilo Sonnedix Prieska PV Project, says that the 125 hectare site which comprises 275,000 PV modules, connected by 990km of cable, was a complex undertaking: "The logistics were tremendous and we needed reliable partners to ensure that it was executed on time, on budget and in good quality in order to achieve the required performance for the 20-year operation."

The project has had a significant economic impact on the Northern Cape region in terms of job creation, and on a wider scale has created opportunities for South African RE suppliers.

“We used as many South African suppliers as possible for the project. Most of our large equipment, solar modules, the mounting structures, the inverter station, were procured through a local South African entity. Components were only imported if they were not manufactured in South Africa, and our plant will continue benefiting to the local community for the next 20 years of operation” said Torsten Keller.

“The lifestyle of many people has really changed. Many came with nothing and have learnt skills. This solar project has given the community of the Siyathemba area a lot of hope” said Piet Olyn, project community liaison officer.

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