

Renewable energy storage banjul

The World Bank is helping Gambian utility NAWES find a consultant for the nation's first large-scale scheme, to be developed under the national Electricity Restoration and Modernization Project. The solar plant may have a capacity of up to 20 MW, and could be linked with a storage system.

The World Bank has issued a request for expressions of interest to select consultancy providers for a PV project. Gambia's National Water and Electricity Company Limited utility is planning to develop in the Greater Banjul area, in the western part of the country.

Selected consultants will have to start providing services this fall and continue for approximately 36 months, the document says. Interested companies have until October 4 to submit offers. The contract includes the management and supervision of the solar plant, a 132 kV transmission line and substations, and a SCADA/EMS system.

According to a separate World Bank document, the solar project is expected to have a capacity of 10-20 MW, and to potentially include a battery electricity storage system to adapt output to demand and minimize grid absorption concerns. The project may be configured as a single plant in the Brikama area or as 3-5 smaller plants in the Greater Banjul area, with the same total capacity.

"Available capacity in the Greater Banjul area deteriorated to 27 MW in October 2017, against a demand of 70 MW - not counting suppressed demand - leading to widespread blackouts, when some parts of the [area] reported two to three hours of power per day throughout the summer," the World Bank said in the document.

The project is part of the Gambia Electricity Restoration and Modernization Project, a \$41 million initiative to improve power supply while increasing Gambia's grid capacity, with the nation currently relying on limited installed power generation. Gambia has an installed capacity of around 99 MW, of which 88 MW is in the Greater Banjul area. Virtually all the capacity is linked to fossil fuel generation.

The west African nation's electricity network consists mainly of mini-grids which the government hopes to improve by transforming into hybrid mini-grids, integrated with renewable generation capacity.

With a population of around 2 million and an electricity access rate of only 35%, Gambia introduced legislation to promote renewables in 2013 - the Renewable Energy Act. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency, however, inadequate financial, human and institutional resources are preventing the government's plans from being implemented.

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With a population of over 400 million inhabitants and a growing economy, energy demand in West Africa is increasing at a rapid pace. The current installed capacity in the region covers less than 40 % of the demand and only 42 % of the population has access to electricity, while grid reliability issues restrain the industrial development of the region and affect productive activities. Moreover, the sense of important risks associated to the power sector makes it hard for the region to attract sufficient investments to develop the much-needed infrastructure.

On the other hand, the region has an important renewable energy potential and the costs of both wind and solar electricity generation have been decreasing rapidly over the past decade. This renewable energy potential is therefore considered a major opportunity which could supply the much-needed power demand while supporting a transition to a low carbon economy.

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