



Solomon islands solar panels

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WASHINGTON D.C., July 5, 2018 - More than 9,300 Solomon Islanders will benefit from new or improved electricity services, including renewable energy sources such as solar, through a new project approved today by the World Bank's Board of Executive Directors. The project will support the Solomon Islands government to boost renewable energy generation and increase access to grid-supplied electricity, while reducing reliance on expensive, imported fossil fuels.

The Electricity Access and Renewable Energy Expansion Project will deliver renewable energy hybrid mini-grids, electricity connections in low-income areas, and new grid-connected solar power. The focus will be on providing electricity connections to households, small businesses, and community infrastructure such as schools and health centers, throughout Honiara and surrounding towns.

"Access to energy is very important to increase the quality of life of Solomon Islanders and for the development of businesses," said Bradley Tovosia, Solomon Islands' Minister of Mines, Energy and Rural Electrification. "The government is working in partnership with the World Bank and other partners to increase access to electricity especially in remote areas."

In Solomon Islands, less than 20 percent of the population has access to any electrical power supply, and when electricity is available, it is costly and unreliable. A stable supply of grid-based electricity has the potential to promote economic growth, including tourism industry development, and improve human capital, through better conditions for children to study, and reducing the burden of household work.

"The cost of electricity in Solomon Islands is among the highest in the world - almost double the average for the Pacific Islands region as a whole - placing a massive financial burden on families and businesses across the country," said Michel Kerf, Country Director for Papua New Guinea and Pacific Islands. "We are proud to be working to support the government as it works to increase access to electricity, while reducing reliance on polluting fuels and boosting renewable energy."

The project will also seek to address the gender imbalance in the energy sector, which currently employs very few women, providing, for instance, employment opportunities for rural women to maintain solar panels and sites. Additionally, in collaboration with IFC, the International Finance Corporation, the project will support Solomon Power to build a productive and respectful workplace culture by strengthening anti-bullying and harassment policies, and supporting employees who may be affected by domestic violence.

The US\$19.95 million Electricity Access and Renewable Energy Expansion Project will be funded through a US\$5.55 million credit and a US\$4.75 million grant from the International Development Association (IDA), the World Bank's fund for the most in-need countries; a US\$7.1 million grant from the Strategic Climate Fund - Scaling-Up Renewable Energy in Low Income Countries Program; a US\$946,750 grant from the Global



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Environment Facility; and a US\$1.6 million grant from the Small Island Developing States Initiative.

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on November 22 approved financing to support the Government of Solomon Islands and Solomon Power to convert electricity networks in five provinces almost entirely to solar power.

“Reliance on diesel generation has resulted in a high cost of electricity in the Solomon Islands, which is constraining economic growth, particularly in the commercial and tourism sectors,” said Anthony Maxwell, Principal Energy Specialist at ADB’s Pacific Department. “This project will help Solomon Islands reduce the cost of generating power, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions which lead to global warming.”

The project will install about 2 megawatt of solar power generation capacity, which will consist of ground mounted rows of solar panels within or near the townships of Kirakira, Lata, Malu’s, Munda, and Tulagi. The project is part of a broader program by Solomon Power to expand electricity access to rural communities through renewable energy-based grids, according to ADB.

The modular structure of solar power plants makes them suitable for future expansion to accommodate growing demand. The project design includes oversized sites and connection equipment for future expansion, and Solomon Power staff training on solar plant operation and maintenance.

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