Central africa first solar

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The Sakai solar photovoltaic power plant in the Central African Republic (CAR) has started its operation after three years of development. Located in Bimbo town, near the capital city of Bangui, the solar power station is a result of cooperation between the African country and China.

The solar power project was funded by the Chinese government and its construction was done by the Chinese company Tianjin Electric Power Construction (TEPC) Co. Ltd. The 15 MW power plant consists of 33,432 solar panels and is built on a 16-hectare land. It is now owned and operated by Enerca, the principal energy utility company of the Central African Republic.

The solar farm is the first successfully commissioned large-scale solar PV plant in the country. It is currently supplying day-to-day power to factories, schools, and households in Bangui. The solar farm is expected to offset around 30% of Bangui"s total electricity demand.

Arthur Bertran Piri, Minister for Energy Development and Water Resources, said the infrastructure will improve the overall electricity supply in Bangui, in particular the industrial sector. The solar plant is one of the energy projects by the government that aims to lessen the regular power outages which have become a common situation in the country that sometimes last 16 hours a day.

The energy situation in the Central African Republic has been turbulent for a long time. The slow development of infrastructure has resulted in the shortage of power supply that plagued the local population. The overall electrification rate of the country is around 15.5%, with less than 2.3% population in the rural areas having access to electricity.

According to the World Bank"s data, the Central African Republic has significant solar potential with an average solar irradiance of 5 KWh/m2 per day, but this clean energy resource remains underdeveloped. The authorities are banking on the 2015-2030 Investment Project which includes four hydroelectric schemes as well as the rehabilitation of the Boali II hydropower station, the main hydroelectric plant of the country.

In a landmark move towards sustainable development, the Central African Republic inaugurated the Danzi solar park, a 25-megawatt solar facility equipped with battery storage, situated just 18 kilometers from the capital, Bangui. President Faustin-Archange Touadera and World Bank Vice President for Western and Central Africa, Ousmane Diagana, officiated the inauguration, marking a significant stride in the country’s commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

The Danzi solar plant is poised to supply electricity to 250,000 residents in Bangui, nearly doubling the nation’s electricity generation capacity. With an electrification rate of 35% in the capital and even lower percentages in provincial areas, the project reflects the Central African Republic’s dedication to

leveraging the energy sector for inclusive growth and increased access to electricity.

President Faustin-Archange Touadera emphasized the transformative impact of the project on various aspects of people’s lives, including household electricity, lighting in educational and healthcare institutions, refrigeration, and enhanced electricity access for businesses of all scales.

Supported by the World Bank through grant funding from the International Development Association (IDA), the Danzi solar park is a collaborative effort between the government and the international organization. The project builds on the successes of the Emergency Electricity Supply and Access Project (PURACEL) and the Water and Electricity Upgrading Project (PASEEL).

Ousmane Diagana, World Bank Vice President for Western and Central Africa, highlighted the economic significance of the project, noting that increased access to electricity for health centers, schools, and businesses will enhance productivity and spur job creation.

The Danzi solar park is anticipated to replace more than 90% of energy currently produced by diesel fuel, contributing over $4 million annually to the National Electricity Company. Additionally, it is expected to result in a net reduction of emissions by 670,674 metric tons of CO2.