

South tarawa off-grid solar

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Tarawa Kiribati, September 23, 2016 - Large-scale solar panels installed at four government owned facilities were officially unveiled today as part of a new World Bank project designed to reduce Kiribati's dependence on imported fuel.

The Kiribati Grid Connected Solar PV Project, funded through the World Bank by the Australian Government and the Global Environment Facility, which will significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions from diesel fuel used for electricity, saw the unveiling today of 548kW of solar installations by representatives from the Government of Kiribati, Government of Australia, and Kiribati's Public Utilities Board (PUB).

"For too long, Kiribati - as one of the most remote countries in the world - has been dependent on imported fuel. This is not only a massive burden on our finances, but has a negative impact on the environment around us," said The Hon. Korabi Nenem, Vice President and Minister for Kiribati Ministry of Public Works and Utilities. "As a nation profoundly affected by the impacts of climate change due to the world's over-reliance on fossil fuels, it is important for us to practice what we preach."

"These solar panels take advantage of our plentiful supply of sun, and will provide a more reliable and sustainable source of energy for the future of our nation."

Kiribati's small size and remoteness makes it highly dependent on imports, and extremely vulnerable to any changes in global fuel prices. About half of all imported fuel in 2012 was used for electricity generation on the South Tarawa grid, servicing around 52,000 people. It is estimated the energy generated through these new solar panels will reduce diesel fuel use by 230,000 liters per year, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 765 tons per year, and save the Government of Kiribati US\$290,000.

The 548kWp (kilowatt peak capacity) solar panels were fitted onto four buildings in South Tarawa - the Kiribati Institute of Technology, Betio Sports Complex, Tungaru Hospital and King George V Secondary School - with the latter two sites also requiring roofs to be replaced through the project in order for the panels to be secured. Energy generated from the solar panels will be fed directly into the South Tarawa grid system.

"Shifting to solar energy in Kiribati is an important step for the government and people of Kiribati. These solar panels are contributing to electricity used by schools, hospitals and public buildings throughout South Tarawa; critical infrastructure that the Australian Government is proud to support," said His Excellency Bruce Cowled, Australian High Commissioner for Kiribati.



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"We're proud to support the Government of Kiribati with this important project; one that will reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions and reduce expenditure on fuel," said Kamleshwar Khelawan, Senior Energy Specialist at the World Bank. "It's an important milestone in our support to helping the Pacific Islands region shift to a sustainable, more cost-effective, fossil fuel-free future by building local capacity in the procurement, operations and maintenance of renewable energy systems."

Ending in 2018, the Kiribati Grid Connected Solar PV Project is coordinated by the World Bank and funded through a US\$1 million grant from the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and a US\$2.92 million grant from the Government of Australia, through the Pacific Regional Infrastructure Facility (PRIF).

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