

Hydropower Africa: Go small or go home

Small hydropower projects have proven to be major contributors to the electrification of developing countries and Sub Saharan Africa's small hydro potential still remains largely untapped, says Nicolaas Loretz, project director of Hydropower Africa that is taking place from 19-23 September in Johannesburg. During what is Africa's largest hydropower event, delegates will have the unique opportunity to visit some of Africa's top hydropower projects, including DRC's Inga, Zambia's Kafue Gorge and South Africa's most scenic small hydropower schemes in the Eastern Cape province.

Hydro from Bethlehem to China

Nicolaas Loretz says China is an excellent example of a developing country that has used small hydro in large parts of the country and where it has proven to be a major contributor to electrification. He continues: "Small scale hydro power systems can be installed in small rivers or streams with little or no discernible environmental effects. Most small and micro scale hydro power systems make no use of a dam or major water diversions. Despite the growing demand for power in the region, Sub Saharan Africa's small hydro potential still remains largely untapped due to a number of reasons, such as the lack of funding and high grid interconnection costs."

According to the Hydropower Africa project director, the South African provinces of Kwazulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Eastern Cape are endowed with the best potential for the development of small hydropower plants. He explains: "an example of such a project is Bethlehem Hydro that provides power to the entire town of Bethlehem. It also generates income by selling electrical power and capacity under a long-term power purchase agreement (PPA) and by selling its reduction in greenhouse gas emissions as Certified Emission Reductions (CERs) – definitely the way to go!"

Getting one's feet wet at hydropower site visits

The conference offers a unique opportunity for delegates to visit some of Africa's top hydropower projects. Says Nicolaas Loretz: "we will take delegates to the heart of the African hydropower industry, including the DRC's massive Inga project - considered as one of the largest and most impressive hydropower projects in the world; Zambia's Kafue Gorge and Kariba North Bank Power Stations; as well as South Africa's most scenic small hydropower schemes in the Eastern Cape province, including First Falls, Second Falls and Mbashe (via helicopter)."

This year's Hydropower Africa conference programme has a special focus on Small, Mini and Micro Hydro and will look at sustainable ways in which hydropower can be used to alleviate Africa's electricity deficit. The theme is: "Using hydropower to unlock Africa's generation capacity"

Says Nicolaas Loretz: "Small, mini and macro hydropower will be addressed in two separate tracks and the emphasis will be on investment prospects for hydro generation projects and how to attract private investment for these projects – particularly in Africa. In-depth discussions will feature case studies on

operation and maintenance best practices and a practical workshop on how to develop small hydropower projects.”

Speaker highlights include:

- Dr Elham Ibrahim, Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission, Ethiopia (Keynote address: attracting private investment to beat Africa’s energy crisis)
- Terry Moss, Vice President, International Hydropower Association, South Africa (Keynote address: Sustainable hydropower as a feasible solution to Africa’s generation needs)
- Israel Phiri, Manager, Office for Promoting Private Power Investment, Ministry of Energy and Water Development, Zambia (Executive session and country focus – planned projects and tender prospects: Zambia)
- Siseho Simasika, CEO, Electricity Control Board, Namibia (Utility vs. IPP – the tariff issue)
- Jasper Odour, Executive Secretary, East African Power Pool, Ethiopia (Diversification of the energy mix and prospects for cross-border power trading to secure energy for Africa’s future)

Hydropower Africa event dates and location:

Conference: 19-20 September 2011, Sandton Convention Centre, Johannesburg.

Post-conference workshops: 21 September 2011, Sandton Convention Centre, Jhb

Site visits: 22-23 September 2011

- Small hydro: Eastern Cape small and mini hydropower schemes
- Large hydro: Kafue Gorge Power station, Kariba North Bank Power Station, Zambia
- Large hydro: Inga, DRC

Event website: www.hydropowerafrica.com

Co-located event: Solar Energy Africa - a niche convention forum that will address current challenges and look at opportunities and growth potential for sustainable solar energy provision in Africa.

Conference: 19-20 September 2011, Sandton Convention Centre, Jhb

Post-conference workshops: 21 September 2011, Sandton Convention Centre, Jhb

Event website: www.solarenergy-africa.com

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