

40 MW Photovoltaic project site visit in Kenya

by George Aluru, Kenya (PPRE 2013/15)

In March 2015, PPRE student George Aluru from Kenya was part of the team of Lahmeyer International GmbH (an international independent engineering company based in Bad Vilbel, Germany) that undertook a site visit for a 40 MW PV plant in Eldoret, Kenya. Lahmeyer as the Lender's Engineer was to check on the suitability of the site for this PV project that when finished will be the biggest grid connected PV project in East Africa.



Left, PPRE (2013-2015) student George Aluru and his thesis supervisor Alex Loosen EUREC (2008-2010) surveying the project site at Eldoret. Right, wildlife at Nairobi National Park.

This project takes advantage of the maximum capacity eligible for feed-in-tariff for grid connected PV projects in Kenya at 40 MW. A feed in tariff of 0.12 USD/kWh has been in place in Kenya since 2012, but few grid connected PV projects have been installed. This project will likely spur the development of further PV projects in the East African country. The project is to be developed by a Spanish company with possible European funding.

With the serious business done, it was time to go and practice haggling skills at Nairobi's Maasai market. This is a market where traditional handicraft including beaded jewellery, soap stone carvings, Maasai Shukas and local paintings are on offer. Some serious bargaining had to be done to ensure the best price for the Kenyan mementoes, a feat that was ably achieved, much to the respect of the vendors.

A taste of some of the local delicacies including Ugali (carbohydrate dish made using maize flour), Tilapia from Lake Victoria, Sukuma Wiki (Swahili for a variety of Colewort) and Stoney Tangawizi (a ginger-based soda, not ginger ale) was also in the cards during this visit.

Finally a visit to the Nairobi National Park was undertaken to try and find out the real origins of Simba from the Lion King. Pumba was however unavailable for comments while Mufasa was too busy with his kingly duties. The mystery continues. As always HAKUNA MATATA!!