

## **Privately initiated development projects take lead in Barotseland—As Sesheke solar power project takes off**

by Saleya Kwalombota

Barotseland is a territory with high potential of becoming a major solar and wind energy producer in southern Africa. The Sesheke solar PV project is one example of privately initiated projects. The project is being carried out by Western Solar Power (WSP) and will benefit 350,000 households. As an independent power producer, WSP is focused on building a 60-100Mw of solar photovoltaic electricity generation.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) has already been signed with the local community, which commits part of the revenue of future electricity sales to the community in return for the land. The MoU is for a duration of 25 years. Apart from the power, the community will benefit from employment generated through plant operations, security and maintenance of the site. By 2018, construction will include land clearing, installation of the solar panels and connecting the power station to the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation national power grid. It would also undergo a process of testing and commissioning.

Agriculture sector within Barotseland is expected to benefit from the project through a reliable supply of power for irrigation. Other potential beneficiaries include: the orange industry—valencia oranges can grow very well in Barotse sands; mango processing industry; Barotse Rice—fondly called Mungu rice. There is also potential for commercial production of wheat, millet, and sorghum which grows well in all parts of Barotseland that will be boosted by the irrigation system.

The Sesheke solar project is most welcome and as are other similar private projects underway, which will have an overall positive impact on the economy of Barotseland. The solar project will be a milestone of high technology development not only for the Sesheke community but Barotseland as a whole with substantial direct and indirect benefits to the people of Barotseland.

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