

Djibouti city backup power

Djibouti's economy has performed well in recent years: GDP growth reached 6.5 per cent in 2015/16, and two major infrastructure projects have been completed - the new container port at Doraleh, which opened in 2009, and the railway that connects Djibouti City and its ports to Ethiopia, which opened in 2017.

This progress has coincided with the country's improved capacity to produce electricity. In 2007, the Government approached the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) for assistance with a project to replace an old diesel generator at the Boulaos power plant in Djibouti City with a newer model, having recognized that sustaining economic growth would require a larger, more reliable source of power generation.

Since the generator began operating in October 2011, and a 20 kV distribution network to reach homes and businesses across the city was installed, power has been provided across the capital city, to the benefit of thousands of people.

The Boulaos Power Plant project was part of the Government's National Strategy for Development of the Energy Sector, and was part of its national development plans. The IsDB began supporting this in 2007, in line with its strategic focus on infrastructure development.

The old diesel-fired generator, which had been in operation since 1976, had a capacity of just 4 megawatts (MW); the new machine, the Boulaos II generator, has an operational capacity of 7.2 MW. Together with the generator, the project also supported the construction of a new substation and 18 distribution lines across the city and its suburbs., which have been instrumental in connecting close to 2,000 new customers with electricity each year.

While the project experienced some initial problems, such as a cost overrun of around 75 per cent (from EUR9.40 million at appraisal in 2006 to EUR16.50 million) - largely due to the unforeseen increase in the price of the equipment during 2007/08, compared to the estimates at appraisal - this shortfall was met by the OPEC Fund for International Development, which had agreed to support the project.

Since overcoming these early challenges, the new generator has enabled the Djibouti Electricity Company (EDD), which operates the plant, to achieve rapid progress across several indicators.

While the days are now longer at Riyadh market in Djibouti City, which opened in 2013, this is a welcome change for the stallholders who trade here: the electric lights enable them to stay open much later than they could at the old city market, where they previously worked.

"We can now stay open until around 10 p.m. or 11 p.m.," says Mme Rabia, who sells shoes and clothes near the market's entrance. "In the old place, we had to rely on street lights but they weren't very bright. If we

couldn't work [because it was too dark], I would make no money."

Omar Youssouf, a retired policeman, has lived in Hayabley, a suburb of Djibouti City, since 1990. He has seen first-hand the positive changes that electricity has brought. "Before, security was low," he says. "There were stray dogs in the street, holes

Reliability is everything

The increased electricity supply and extended distribution network mean that businesses all over the city are flourishing. In Hayabley, Mustapha Mohamad's soldering and welding workshop has become far more profitable since he was connected to the main electricity supply in 2012.

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