



Solar energy for businesses cook islands

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Diesel-generated power used to be a way of life in Mitiaro and the other outer islands of the Cook Islands. That meant regular power interruptions and entire days when there was no power at all. But the development of a \$43 million solar power grid, co-financed by the Asian Development Bank and key partners, has created clean, affordable, and sustainable power and transformed life, school, and doing business for many Cook Islanders.

When I was a little girl, we didn't actually have electricity on the island. Some years later, we ended up using diesel for our generators. And that was the start of electricity into the home as we know it.

The electricity powering Cindy's business comes from these new solar midi-grids, part of the \$43 million Cook Islands Renewable Energy Project, co-financed by ADB, the European Union, the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

In the days of the diesel operation, we used to have a lot of failures. We never had 24-hour power then, it would run for three days a week, five days a week, and once we've gone to solar energy, we've had 24/7 electricity which has just been absolutely brilliant. We're able to install electric fans, we've got refrigerators, we've got electric stoves which we'd never had in the past. And you're able to have a lot more lights throughout your building for everyone's comfort.

Well, energy is always an import aspect of development. And particularly for our remote communities in our outer islands, energy has always been a challenge. So for us, the sensible solution has been to use renewable energy, in particular, solar energy, to meet those energy demands.

Te Aponga Uira acknowledges the invaluable support provided by the ADB through the Cook Islands Government. This support has enabled Te Aponga Uira to access financing to support key RE projects through the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility as well as other sources. We look forward to continued support tailored to the needs of the Cook Islands to ensure the success of achieving our renewable energy goals.

Being a baker on the island, I believe solar has so many advantages for me especially baking 24/7 as well as at midnight and in morning, because I believe that before that if we were on diesel power, I don't think I could be baking at midnight or early morning. So, now solar has allowed me to do that for a longer term as well.

By powering the outer islands and adding battery storage systems in the main island of Rarotonga to support grid stability, the project is expected to boost business growth across the Cook Islands.



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Putting in place a renewable energy program for the outer islands is something that was going to be critical if we wanted to lift the standard of living in the outer islands. And if we wanted to engage these communities which are quite a far distance from the major economic hub in our country, it was important that we did provide them with good, reliable energy at an affordable price that would enable them to be part of our economic development.

Fiji is enhancing its transport network with the Critical Bridges Resilience Project. This initiative aims to replace aging bridges, ensuring safer, climate-resilient infrastructure for better connectivity and economic growth.

ADB has approved a \$600 million loan to aid Indonesia's state-owned PLN in expanding electricity access and promoting renewable energy in eastern Indonesia. The program includes two \$3 million grants from Japan and the Asia Clean Energy Fund.

Securing adequate pre-retirement financial resources for post-retirement consumption is vital for old-age financial preparedness. In light of Asia's rapid population aging, how can Asians better prepare financially for old age?

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