

Island microgrids vanuatu

UNSW student groups have been visiting Tanna Island in Vanuatu for over a decade. The solar PV solutions they've brought with them have helped many communities, but since Cyclone Pam tore through the region in 2015, sustainable solar is more important more than ever.

The University of New South Wales (UNSW) Students' Vanuatu Solar Energy Project, or UNSW ?nergie Renouvelable Vanuatu (UNSWERV), is a team of UNSW students, staff and volunteers who set out to improve communications and lighting needs for health and education in remote areas using solar PV.

In January this year, the team worked on all manner of projects. The first task was to shift the Imaki village mini-grid from hydropower, which had been destroyed by Cyclone Pam in 2015, to solar power. Since Cyclone Pam tore through the region, Imaki has been using an expensive interim diesel power source. Van

The doubly troubling aspect of the effects of natural disasters like Cyclone Pam upon remote areas is that often the very tools needed in the aftermath, such as for ease of communication, running water, and artificial lighting, would've been undone by the storm itself.

Thankfully, the solar PV industry is improving its cyclone resistance standards, after all, self-sufficient stand-alone technology like solar PV is already far more secure than an electricity source dependant on transmission wires and the like. Only last month Solarwatt's Vision glass-glass PV successfully passed cyclone-testing in Darwin.

With natural disasters likely to increase in number and magnitude as a result of Climate Change, the improving durability of solar PV becomes ever more important. Self-sustaining sources of electricity, such as solar-powered microgrids, give disaster-struck communities a better chance of survival and recovery.

UNSWERV has been coming to Tanna Island since 2007/2008, meaning that the teams have built community connections but also that UNSWERV has quite a lot of repair work to do when they visit. The UNSWERV team did just that at the Malaria Laboratory at the Green Hill dispensary on the island's North side, and to the Nepraintata Area around the base of Mt Yasur volcano. It was under the volcano that the team was able to participate in a linking ceremony with members of the Nepraintata Area Council.

"I felt great when I lit the bulb by myself and I was deeply moved by the enthusiasm of the local people," said Yiyang Gao, a participating student. "I hope more students can participate in this project and make contributions to the local community."

Of course, this is not the only sustainable energy program UNSW is engaged in with our Pacific neighbours. UNSW Engineering's Sustainable Energy for Developing Countries was challenged in December

2019 to design a solar system that is technically and financially sustainable for remote villages in Fiji and came up with some innovative solutions.

UNSWERV is generously supported by UNSW School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering, SMA Australia, 5B Australia, Alpha ESS Australia and the UNSW Institute for Global Development, among many others. However, the level of sustainability UNSWERV can supply is directly proportional to funding, and more funds for batteries, mounting frames, cables, connectors, shipping and transport would promote UNSWERV and the communities they work in to new levels of sustainability.

The ceremony had performed at the Neprainetata is a joining bridge from Tanna to (UNSW) AUSTRALIA As a whole to exchange .Tanna and the people of Neprainetata want to say there are many places especially shools community water pumps and view more aidpost that need help from you.Tanna will still be your home and and friend.

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