

South-south sustainable energy exchange calls for strengthened networking and coordination

Written by Zarin Khan

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Twenty private sector energy businesses from around the Pacific region took part in a week long South-South capacity building and knowledge exchange program from 2 to 6 October Suva, Fiji. Participants explored opportunities to expand their business models and heard how the newly established Pacific Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (PCREEE) could provide them with on-going support in networking and coordination efforts.

Electrical contractors and renewable energy system distributors made up the majority of the participants however, the importance of energy efficiency to a broad range of business areas was evident. The revelation that energy usage can account for 60% of the operational costs for a typical hotel or motel the Pacific for example, was an eye-opener for opportunities in the tourism industry.

Participants also learned how energy efficiency can help the agricultural sector. Solar drying to

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improve the quality of cocoa, coconuts, taro, cassava and kava; the use Bio-digesters in pig and dairy farms and; the cost benefits of solar pumps for irrigation, all made a significant impression.

Mr. William Reiher of Green Energy Solutions in the Marshall Islands, provides energy audit services to hotels and commercial buildings in Majuro. He was impressed with the potential of renewable energy for his work, “I provide them with more energy efficient air conditioners, lights and maintenance services but I am struggling to meet the demands. Looking at the success of the Suva-based CBS Power Solutions and Sunergise, I can see an opportunity for the use of renewable energy.”

Fe’ao Teutau, General Manager of the Kingdom Energy in Tonga also saw the value of investing in this area, “I have concentrated on installing solar photovoltaic systems and solar water pumps in Tonga,” said Mr. Teutua, “and now I see that with a little bit of new equipment and market approach, I can venture into energy efficiency as well.”

During the week, the importance of using high quality products and services and maintaining standards was emphasised. The experience of Papua New Guinea was highlighted for its establishment of the Solar Energy Association of PNG (SEAP). Created in 2016, the SEAP provides a united voice that represents the interests of the industry and helps to ensure that high standards are followed. SEAP promotes solar energy usage, maintains industry standards and aids in off grid electrification. Just as importantly, SEAP provides guidance for policy development and support, training and education to its members.

Participants were keen on replicating the PNG experience in their respective countries and committed to exploring ideas with the Sustainable Energy Industry Association of the Pacific Islands (SEIAPI) and PCREEE to help establish and support sustainable renewable energy businesses.

PCREEE is co-hosted by the Pacific Community (SPC) and the Tonga Government at Nuku’alofa, and is a collaboration between SPC, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, SIDS Dock, the Government of Tonga and the Government of Austria.

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