

# The Women Solar Engineers



## Solar Power through Female Empowerment

Most of rural Myanmar is not connected to the electricity grid. Only 14% of Kayin State's rural population has access to electricity. In the Tanintharyi Region, the number drops to 8%. A decentralised supply of electricity through solar home systems (SHSs) is the most suitable method to provide for the most basic energy needs of Myanmar's rural population.

To ensure its SHS project's sustainability, WWF Myanmar in association with the Barefoot College in India started training local women as solar engineers. WWF requested funding support from EEP Mekong to scale up this project. Funding was approved in December 2018.



# 21

women were trained as solar engineers.

**They are now employed in installing and maintaining solar power systems in their communities.**



# 1,265

rural households received solar power in

# 12 communities



# Empowering Women to Deliver Solar Power in Myanmar

[www.wwf.org.mm](http://www.wwf.org.mm)



## Protecting the Environment with Solar Power

In the Dawna Tenasserim Landscape (DTL) of Myanmar, very few people have access to electricity. Only 1% of people in the Tanintharyi Region have electricity for cooking, and 8% have electric lighting. In the rural area of Kayin State, only 14% have access to any sort of electric power. Most of the electricity in the DTL comes from diesel generators that are expensive, unreliable, and harmful to the environment.

The DTL has several endemic and endangered species, so nature conservation is very important there. But most power generation developments in the area are based either on fossil fuels or hydropower dams, causing further harm to the environment. For this reason, WWF Myanmar launched the Engaging, Enriching, and Enabling Women Solar Engineers for Community Solar Electrification in Myanmar Project to provide a sustainable supply of solar power to rural areas in the DTL.

EPP Mekong provided 59% of the funds needed to electrify 12 rural villages in Tanintharyi and Kayin. The WWF, Barefoot College, and the Myanmar Women and Children Development Foundation (MWCDF) funded the remaining 41% of the €688,000 project. The project funds went towards training local women as solar engineers and procuring high-quality solar technology that will last longer. The local women were trained at the Barefoot College in India to manage the solar electrification of their communities, install solar systems, and to maintain them. Rural electronic workshops were founded in each of the 12 villages.



21 women were trained as solar engineers



## Empowering Women and Making an Impact

The project provided SHSs to 1,235 households (about 7,400 people). Because of improved access to electricity, the villages' social and economic development will improve.

21 local women were trained as solar engineers and are now employed in running solar workshops in 12 villages. This empowerment allows them to have bigger roles in decision-making in their families and communities, and gives them more control over their socio-economic situation.

The high-quality solar household systems provided to the communities enable a decentralised supply of electricity and a transition from environment-damaging power generation methods such as fossil fuel generation and large-scale hydropower projects. Through the provision of SHSs in the DTL, about 40 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions were avoided.

## Sustainability and Scaling Up

- High-quality solar systems were provided and, thanks to the trained solar engineers in each community, the technology can be managed, maintained, and even expanded for years to come without external assistance.
- 35 million people in Myanmar (69.3% of the population) have no access to electricity, indicating a large potential for replicating the project in other villages.
- Solar committees were founded in each village and are responsible for collecting monthly fees from the SHS users. These funds are used to maintain the solar workshops and to provide financing to villagers if they need to replace parts or batteries.
- WWF Myanmar and the Barefoot College are working together to establish solar training facilities in Myanmar so that the women can receive solar- and clean energy-related training in their own country.



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