



Facing the Sun in Fiji: PRB Dwellers' Struggle for Dignity and Light

In Raiwai neighbourhood, Fiji, Suva, families like the Toganivalus live in homes subsidized by the Public Rental Board (PRB), a project managed by Fiji's Minister for Public Works, Meteorological Services and Transport. These families struggle with electricity shortages, as not everyone has access to reliable power. This creates challenges, especially when it gets dark, making some places unsafe, particularly for little girls, or keeping dwellers from simple tasks such as cooking their meals or using the fan on summer days when thermometers rise considerably.

The people living in Raiwai hope for a brighter future when they hear from the possibility of installing solar energy mechanisms. **If they could use energy from the sun, electricity would become more affordable.**

Mr. Shaw, a manager at PRB, expressed hope, saying, "Solar energy would be a game-changer for us. It would mean families like the Toganivalus could have more electricity without worrying about the bills."

Tiko Toganivalu from Block 3 shared his thoughts, saying, "If we had solar energy, it would mean fewer fights in our home. It would bring more calm and happiness. We would not have to go on social media to check whether there will be electricity shortages for the whole weekend".

"Solar energy empowers women, reduces oppression, and benefits communities." (Hon. Lynda Tabuya, Fiji' Minister for Women, Children and Social Protection)



Tiko stressed the importance of electricity for children to be able to study during the evenings, but also for spaces to be safe. Without proper lighting, the risk of sexual violence for little girls increased, as PRB dwellers know. "I have heard stories like that" admits Ledua, Tiko's mother. Sat in her living room, glancing out the window to gauge the breeze, her eyes occasionally flicker with memories of the past. "Especially in Fiji rural areas where electricity is even pricier".



According to the United Nations Development Fund (UNFP), **energy poverty disproportionately affects women** and children, hindering access to essential services and economic opportunities. Lack of access to modern energy exposes them to health risks and limits their potential for economic empowerment. However, clean energy presents a transformative opportunity, empowering women and benefiting entire communities. UNDP aims to close gender gaps in energy access, targeting 500 million people by 2025, with at least half being women.

Furthermore, having electricity through solar energy would restore dignity. In a culture where representing your family is vital, access to electricity brought a sense of pride and safety. The Toganivalus believe that solar energy would preserve their sense of honour within the community. "Solar energy would dignify us," said Tiko. "It would make us feel proud and secure."

In conclusion, Raiwai inhabitants eagerly await the potential impact of solar energy mechanisms, firmly believing in its ability **to bring safety, relief, and dignity to their lives.** Thus, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) is actively aiding the PRB project's by assessing the feasibility of installing solar energy solutions. With ISA's assistance, the government may gain understanding about the different solar energy mechanisms available and how to generate job opportunities in the journey of sustainable development. As of now, families like the Toganivalus in Fiji are hopeful for a brighter future to arrive.