



The solar panels have been of great economic, sustainability and educational value to the school. Beyond the financial savings involved in having solar panels, we have been able to demonstrate to our students the role everyone can play in supporting a sustainable future. Students have access to all the data from the panels (energy production, savings, etc) and are able to analyse and engage with it. It has been a great educational tool for us as well as helps support the long-term sustainability of Dili International School.

Tim Blackman, Principal, Dili International School

Sector: Green energy

Partner: Sundaya

Strengthening Rooftop Solar Energy in Timor-Leste

Since independence, the Government of Timor-Leste has made significant progress in expanding electricity access nationwide. However, this expansion has come at a high cost and with frequent reliability issues due to reliance on diesel generation. Electricity is consistently rated among the top three constraints for businesses, raising costs and reducing competitiveness. Recognising these challenges, the government has committed to generating 50 per cent of electricity from renewable sources.

For MDF this created a clear business opportunity. High energy costs and frequent power interruptions opened space for rooftop solar solutions—smaller-scale, privately financed systems that can directly reduce costs for households, schools and businesses. To better understand market potential, MDF commissioned a study on the business case for rooftop solar, which confirmed very low levels of adoption but strong financial viability, with attractive payback periods for businesses. This evidence provided clear entry points for MDF to help strengthen the solar market.

MDF partnered with Sundaya, a regional solar company. Through the Centro Nacional de Emprego e Formação Profissional (CNEFP), Sundaya identified Timorese technicians for training. Instruction began in Timor-Leste and was complemented by one hands-on training session in Indonesia. The training focused on practical skills such as site surveys, system design and installation, ensuring local technicians were well prepared to support businesses adopting rooftop solar.

Many businesses are unaware of the financial benefits of rooftop solar. To address this, MDF supported Sundaya's targeted outreach and marketing, including introducing rooftop solar packages to businesses in Dili. These efforts began to stimulate demand for site surveys and pilot installations.

These efforts are starting to show promise. Sundaya recently installed a 157-panel rooftop solar system at Dili International School (DIS). The project not only demonstrated technical success, but also provided a highly visible case study of rooftop solar's viability in an urban Timorese context. It showed potential clients, technicians and investors that solar can be reliable, affordable and scalable. Sundaya has set ambitious goals for expanding rooftop solar installations in the coming years. By reducing risks, strengthening local capacity and demonstrating early wins, MDF is helping lay the foundation for a solar-powered future in Timor-Leste.



Climate Change Story