

One thing we have learnt this week – solar power in Nepal

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I heard a very interesting report on solar power in Nepal this week

on the radio. Solar power is not the first thing that you think of when you think of Nepal. The first thing you think of is hydropower. Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. Its electricity consumption was only 70kW per person per year. To put this in perspective there are plenty of people who manage to use this much in one day in the West. Nepal uses the following energy sources; **Biomass**. 85% of the population is rural and uses precious trees for cooking, lighting and heating. This leads to considerable respiratory disease problems. **Carbon fuels**. Nepalese also rely on imported oil and kerosene leading to the same problems as above, plus the requirement for foreign exchange. **Hydropower**. The theoretical capacity of Nepal is huge over 40,000MWp of practical resources. Its actual installed capacity is a mere 576MWp (grid connected). There are lot of micro and pico hydro plants not connected to the grid. Over a 1000 have been funded by the [world bank](#). **Wind**. The wind resource is apparently quite poor but some non grid connected wind is installed. **Solar**. The solar resource is very good. Its this that was covered in the programme slot. Previous attempts have suffered from the usual problem, developed world comes in funds high tech solution in village - goes away - system falls to bits. However what has changed is that the Nepalese government in 2002 with the support of the Danish government set up a subsidy scheme for very small systems (10-40 watts). This enough for phone charging and most importantly lighting when combined with some batteries. This has led to the creation of a local installer base which can also troubleshoot and maintain systems. Solar power in Nepal is not the first thing you would think of but such systems are vital in bringing power to over 80% of those who live without it in a sustainable way. Neil

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