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Life in the village of Laindeha on the island of Sumba, Indonesia, used to grind to a halt at sunset. However, everything transformed three years ago with the introduction of electricity.

Previously, darkness typically marked the end of the day for residents who lacked access to noisy, polluting generators fueled by dirty energy sources. Some resorted to powering lightbulbs with car batteries or using oil lamps, which posed fire hazards.

Community improvement initiatives have now equipped residents of Laindeha and other remote villages across the country with individual off-grid solar panel systems, addressing needs often overlooked by those with reliable access to electricity. Increased lighting translates to more time for work, study, and social interaction.

Tamar Ana Jawa, a weaver and mother of two living in Laindeha, said, "It used to be dark at night, now it's bright until morning. So tonight, I work... to pay for the children."

A 17-year-old student from the east Sumba village of Ndapaymi, Antonius Pekambani, said, "I couldn't really study at night before. But now I can."

Indonesia has brought electricity to millions of people in past few years, going from 85% to nearly 97% coverage between 2005 and 2020, according to World Bank. But there are still over half a million people living in places the grid doesn’t reach.

While solar power remains uncommon in Indonesia due to restrictions preventing people from offsetting costs by selling surplus energy back to the grid, Sumba Sustainable Solutions has played a crucial role in addressing the challenge.

The donations it receives are used to subsidize home solar systems, enabling customers to make monthly payments equivalent to USD3.50 over a period of three years. Additionally, the company has distributed solar-powered wireless lamps and mills to thousands of homes on the island, offering villagers convenience and efficiency previously unavailable to them.

There have been a few obstacles hindering the transition. The off-grid systems can only power smaller devices such as phones and lightbulbs, and repairing them can be challenging, especially since some parts are difficult to attain.

Projections from the International Energy Agency estimated that as the end of 2023, approximately 760 million people worldwide were lived without electricity, with large proportion of them residing in

Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

That emphasize the significance of companies like Sumba Sustainable Solutions in Indonesia and Global OTEC, which is bringing renewable energy to the African country of São Tomé and Príncipe.

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