

Solar power enterprise gives light



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In the slums of Tondo, Manila, hope flickers in broad daylight for poor power technology.

Amid makeshift houses, piles of garbage and mud-covered walkways, a container van which has been transformed into a renting station of solar lamps at Sitio Damayan (Smokey Mountain).

The station, which houses about 400 lamps and serves more than 300 of nongovernment organization Life Project 4 Youth that started in 2007.

Team manager Cielabel Gaditano, 20, said renting a lamp would cost 10 pesos for the duration of the battery—some lamps last up to 30 hours, with others lasting up to 12 hours.

The case of the solar site in Tondo backs the principles of 2011 Ramon Magsaysay Award winner Hande, cofounder of Solar Electric Light Company (Selco). Known for her solar technology in India, Hande believes it is not impossible for the poor to have access to electricity.

In a conference on solar energy for the poor at Ramon Magsaysay Center last week, Hande toured the Tondo site, said social enterprise would not only give the poor access to electricity but also improve their quality of living.

“[We should] not look at the poor as beneficiaries but as partners,” Hande said. “It’s about being inclusive, including the poor in the process.”

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Sharing Hande's sentiments, Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) said social enterprise of solar power would also lead to a "change of n

"The poor can become asset creators," she said. "Social enterprise will encourage economic activities that will encourage them to get out of the clutches

RMAF communications director Tina Virina also highlighted the importance of establishing an "enterprise for the poor and by the poor," adding rural areas dole out.

"Let's not get into donation, let's go into development," echoed Erel Nolasco.

"It's (solar power enterprise) one of the best investments that they'll ever make," said Solar Energy Foundation.

[A mother rents a solar-powered lamp in Tondo, Manila](#)

A mother rents a solar-powered lamp in Tondo, Manila. YUJI GONZALES

Spreading the light

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Selco principal analyst Surabhi Rajgopalan also underscored the crucial role in promoting the advancement of solar power technology in the country's existing enterprises.

“[We need to] talk to government institutions if we can become part of

“These are models that can be replicated,” Hande added.

Asked why the cost of renting a solar lamp at the Tondo site was only 10 pesos, Bernadette Moralita said the organization’s mission was not to generate profit in poor communities.

“This is not only about livelihood but to help them plan their lives ahead,” said the coordinator of Life Project 4 Youth.