

## Energy independence cambodia

\*Cambodia is continuing its promising transition towards renewable energy as the most committed country in the region in the global move towards green energy. In Cambodia, 59.2% of the current energy supply already comes from renewable sources, with the government having intense plans to reach its 70% target by 2030. International cooperation and ventures with social power provide hope for Cambodia in its green energy transition.

The country has focused on building hydropower and solar infrastructure to support its transition, aiming to move away from importing fossil fuels dependent on global markets, according to Energy Tracker Asia. The Sesan-II Dam was a key development in its transition; this is a facility in Stung Treng Province which opened in 2017 with eight turbines. The dam is the longest in Asia with the ability to produce 1,970 GWh per year to Cambodia's national grid; 20% of the country's total electricity generation in 2020.

Beyond its impressive expansions in the hydropower industry, Cambodia is also focusing on the solar energy and wind department. Although solar arrays currently only provide 5% of the country's electricity supply, there are predictions that this could reach 30% by 2040 as a less expensive source. Cambodia is already building solar mini-grids to provide accessible energy in rural areas but the potential for these schemes is immense considering the country's strong daily solar irradiance

Cambodia still has 245 villages that do not have access to electricity due to their remoteness, solar power may be the key to solving their problem. Solar mini-grids have become the most cost-effective way to bring 24/7 electricity to remote communities; a renewable and cheap solution to the holes in Cambodia's energy system.

For the wind energy industry, Cambodia is planning to connect wind power to its national grid by 2026. Energy Minister Keo Rattanak made clear that six projects have already been approved in Mondulkiri which will generate 900 MW. This investment already supersedes past predictions of up to 500 MW potential energy production by Blue Circle.

An important aspect of renewable energy in Cambodia has been its commitment to international cooperation to meet its aims. Australia has become a key partner in promoting green energy with a recent visit to EnergyLab Cambodia, a non-profit that is supporting the growth of green energy markets within the country.

The EU has also made key commitments to work with Cambodia towards its green goals; the European Commissioner for International Partnerships, Jutta Urpilainen, launched four new initiatives this year to promote renewable energy among other sustainable goals.

Although there seems to be a committed effort towards the transition to renewable energy in Cambodia, there

is still a significant need for private investment in the sector. This involves the government ensuring an economy that remains attractive to foreign investors - something that cheaper energy will hopefully lead to. Phoumin Han, an energy economist for ASEAN and East Asia, argues that promoting investment in rooftop solar paneling can be a key area for continuing development without relying on government expenditure.

EnergyLab is an organization that continues to support Cambodia's transition towards renewable energy and providing electricity to the rest of Cambodia's population. The organization guides policy decisions while also promoting private investment in the sector. Founded in 2018, it consults across the world but has particular success in hosting Clean Energy Week.

Renewable energy in Cambodia has opened doors for energy independence without fears of global market shifts in fossil fuels - while also allowing the country to provide electricity to 98% of its population in 2022. The continuing growth in solar and wind energy paves their path to meet future energy goals, although still dependent on international cooperation and private investment.

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Web: <https://sumthingtasty.co.za/contact-us/>

Email: [energystorage2000@gmail.com](mailto:energystorage2000@gmail.com)

WhatsApp: 8613816583346

