

First solar maldives

Many tropical islands generate their electricity with large diesel generators, similar to those used in cars. A typical Maldivian island consumes 3,000 to 8,000 litres of diesel per day, which has to be imported to the island. Diesel powered electricity is not only the most expensive way of generating power, it's the dirtiest and noisiest too. This is especially true when it comes to the huge numbers of hotels that are found on tropical islands, full of power hungry air conditioning systems.

Renewable energies would obviously have a lot of immediate benefits over diesel, but switching over is often not that simple. Islands in the tropics are blessed with plenty of sunshine, but good workable land is at a premium. In order to generate enough electricity to power even a small tropical island, several football pitches of solar panels would usually be necessary.

During the night – when the sun's not shining – the resorts usually go back to using diesel generators to produce energy. Storing the solar energy for later use would require huge batteries which are prohibitively expensive.

And could the floating solar cells have a negative impact on nearby marine life? Not according to SolarSea. Installers make sure that the panels are always placed over empty patches of the seabed and not over corals. There they could even have a positive effect on nearby sea life – serving, for example, as shelters for fish and other marine creatures.

It would be great to see luxury tourist resorts taking measures to reduce their electricity consumption in the future, and also collaborating with the public sector to deliver green electricity for all. Right now, Swimsol's largest solar system is located off the island of Dharavandhoo, which is primarily inhabited by locals, and there are hopes for more local involvement in the future.

According to Miriam Eder of Swimsol, their next goal is to install more SolarSea cells at larger, more populous islands, avoiding the burning of even larger amounts of diesel. As she told RESET in interview: "Our vision is to build a large SolarSea system for the capital island of Malé – we could avoid the use of millions of litres of diesel a year."



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