

Putting the sun to work

Solar power panels installed on a rooftop in Vijayawada. File | Photo Credit: [Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar](#)

A consortium of 12 Indian and British universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, has received a £7 million grant from the U.K. government to build self-sufficient solar-powered buildings in remote Indian villages.

The grant is part of a new solar project called 'SUNRISE' aimed at developing printed photovoltaic cells and new manufacturing processes which can be used to make solar energy products in India.

These will then be integrated into buildings in at least five villages of India, allowing them to harness solar power to provide their own energy and go off-grid.

The programme is part of a project led by the Swansea University, which has plenty of experience in the field.

"The energy-positive classroom we built shows that this technology works, successfully turning buildings into power stations. This funding will enable us to export this model to support India's plans to boost solar energy," said Professor Dave Worsley of Swansea University, leader of the SUNRISE team.

Going off-grid

"Designed and built by the SPECIFIC project, the classroom can run off grid. Electricity is generated by a steel roof with integrated solar cells," the university said in a statement.

Prof. Worsley said, "The Swansea team will be working closely with our partner universities in the U.K. and in India. Our hope is that if we can show this works on five villages in India, then it could be rolled out to other buildings in India and around the world."

Swansea University says the project is in line with the Indian government's plans to turn the country into a solar energy leader, leap-frogging fossil fuels. Some of the other universities that are part of the consortium are Oxford, Cambridge, Brunel and Imperial College London. The £7 million award comes from the U.K. government's Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), which supports cutting-edge research that addresses issues faced by developing countries.

"From healthcare to green energy, the successful projects receiving funding highlight the strength of the U.K.'s research base and our leadership in helping developing countries tackle some of the greatest global issues of our time," said Jo Johnson, U.K. Minister for Universities and Science.

An industrial strategy

"At a time when the pace of scientific discovery and innovation is quickening, we are placing science and research at the heart of our industrial strategy to build on our strengths and maintain our status as science powerhouse," Mr. Johnson said.

One of the key aims of the SUNRISE project for India is to provide a real-life example which proves that this technology works and that it is appropriate within communities.

The plan is that it will encourage local industries to manufacture affordable prefabricated buildings, adapted for their environment, that can generate, store and release their own power.

Jaggi Vasudev's Rally for Rivers claims they will, but this is not based on the most nuanced science

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