



Solar project delivers sustainable opportunities

A solar energy project that's helping remote communities in northern Chile adapt to changing environmental conditions by harnessing the power of the sun is also enabling them to reap economic benefits.

The Ayllu Solar project was initiated by SERC Chile, a Solar Energy Research Centre created by Chile's National Science and Technology Commission with the support of the BHP Foundation.

Since 2015, the project has created economic opportunities for farmers in Chile's Arica and Parinacota region, helping them deliver their own sustainable solar energy solutions. That's turned the region into a solar-based sustainable development hub, in both urban and rural environments.

It's also supported laboratories designed for educating others on solar energy, a tomato dehydrating packing plant built and operating with 100 per cent solar energy, and solar-powered plants for processing camelid wool and farming trout and shrimp.

Other SERC Chile achievements include the development of a diploma in solar energy and a radiation monitoring network in the region.

Lorena Cornejo, Regional Director of the Ayllu Solar project said the Project has had a positive impact on the environment and provided sustainable

development opportunities for local and Indigenous communities.

'We've completed more than 150 workshops and training sessions with 2,000 participants; developed 120 free online information guides for public use; and established a Solar Schools Network with 40 schools and more than 1,350 students.'

The success of the Project in providing new sustainable development opportunities across the region and its positive impact on the environment, shows it has the potential to set in motion similar ventures in Chile and neighbouring countries.

After six years of support from the BHP Foundation, we proudly handover the ongoing development of this Project to the Red Asociativa Ayllu Solar (RAAS) formed by the Universidad de Tarapacá, Centro de Formación Técnica, Wakilabs Spa, the Liceo Pablo Neruda and SERC Chile.

'No single sector or organization can make the changes required at this scale without collaboration, and we are proud to have had a role over the past six years,' says James.

'While promoting environmental resilience and sustainable development, this Project has also invested in replicable and scalable projects with the potential to improve quality of life in local communities and for Indigenous peoples now and for future generations.'

James Ensor, Chief Executive, BHP Foundation

