Saint lucia microgrid energy storage

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In the rainy season, storms pummel Saint Lucia, a small Eastern Caribbean Island nation. When they hit, the torrential rain and flooding forces local systems to shut down -- the aging infrastructure is simply not designed to handle those levels of inundation. This is especially true in the rural areas, where the water systems often shut off during heavy downpours since the water won"t be drinkable from the tap.

When Skeeta Carasco steps out of her home in Dennery, St Lucia, after a storm, she often sees intakes that are clogged or inaccessible due to roads being washed out. Even in urban areas, big storms can bring disaster to the water system. In 2010, when Hurricane Tomas hit, even the heart of Saint Lucia"s economic area was without water for weeks and two intakes were destroyed and had to be rebuilt completely. People desperate for clean water will go to medical centers, only to learn that even hospitals are suffering from a lack of potable water.

What"s needed, Carasco now knows, after years working with Saint Lucia"s water and energy sector regulator, are investments to climate-proof and harden infrastructure to make it more resilient to storms. The island needs upgrades; increased water storage capacity within water systems; more water treatment and collection systems; improved infrastructure for roads, pipes, and intakes; and a more resilient energy system.

The problem -- similar to many other small island states -- is a lack of sufficient funding for these critical projects. Because the rainy season is getting less predictable and the impacts more intense, improving the resilience of critical infrastructure is indistinguishable from battling climate change itself. "Climate finance," Carasco says, "is perhaps the biggest challenge that Caribbean countries and Small Island Developing States face when it comes to mitigation and adaptation to climate change."

Fortunately, this is exactly what Carasco is there to work on. She"s the first member of a cohort of locally hired, highly trained, dedicated climate finance advisors to be embedded in Caribbean countries with a mandate to develop pipelines of projects that will help these nations stay strong under the onslaught of climate change.

Microgrids will not only enhance the resilience of the island"s infrastructure and economy, but will also help lower energy costs. Currently Saint Lucians primarily rely on imported diesel fuel, which is expensive and volatile, heavily impacted by the geopolitical environment. The pressures of fuel prices have contributed to an increased cost of living and crimes of desperation and displacement. But money saved from implementing a distributed, renewable grid can be redirected to social programs.

Carasco"s colleague, Nadia Wells-Hyacinth, the chief economist for the Government of Saint Lucia says that Carasco "has distinguished herself by her expertise, experience, confidence and commitment. We have very high expectations of Skeeta as the first representative of the Caribbean Cohort." She describes Carasco as an

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integral member of St. Lucia"s climate finance teams and adds, "We are encouraged by her enthusiasm, commitment and zeal to advance our climate finance agenda."

While working on funding proposals might seem like just a small piece of the puzzle, Carasco describes the role of a CFAN advisor as "finally connecting the dots." She is in a position to see the big picture and draw the necessary connections for funders to both meet the needs and enhance impact across projects and sectors.

"CFAN has allowed me to connect the dots between critical infrastructure work, climate resilience, and the needs of communities," Carasco says. "I am now in the best position to make a difference, because finance is the biggest challenge that Caribbean countries face."

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