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**THE ROLE OF RENEWABLE ENERGY IN THE
ACHIEVEMENT OF SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS
IN RURAL SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND THE SOUTH PACIFIC**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
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ABSTRACT

Access to an affordable and reliable supply of energy is an accepted part of our day to day lives. While the increasing price of oil and environmental issues are of concern, the great majority of people in developed countries are not yet faced with the prospect of energy becoming unaffordable or unavailable. The situation in developing countries is far less comfortable where the purchase of energy can account for 25% of total household income and price increases can mean that an energy source becomes no longer affordable. Given that energy supplies underpin economic and social development, such situations can not only hold up development and the consequential move out of poverty but actually move people further away from this goal.

This thesis examines the role of energy in people's livelihoods in two locations, one in South East Asia and the other in the South Pacific. The first of these comprises six farming villages in the Kerinci Valley in Sumatra while the second is Niue Island. Both these communities rely heavily on energy supplies but in very different ways, this being a function of the different economic situation that applies in each location. Both communities have renewable energy resources which are yet to be used or yet to be used effectively or sustainably.

The sustainable livelihoods approach is used to analyse existing livelihoods with particular reference to the role of energy. The available renewable energy resources are identified and the impact that increased use of these could have in terms of livelihood outcomes is determined. The conclusion is that renewable energy has the potential to contribute to the achievement of sustainable livelihoods. However, while the outcomes are positive, renewable energy will not by itself achieve the transformation necessary for sustainable livelihoods. There are also barriers to the implementation of renewable energy programmes, not the least being access to funding.

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