

# JMJ Solar

## GLI IN ACTION: CASE STUDIES FROM SOUTHEAST ASIA

This series highlights the financial and impact results of gender lens investing (GLI) through the journey of women entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia.

### OVERVIEW

High electricity costs and frequent power outages have long impacted households and businesses in the province of Agusan del Sur in southern Philippines. Husband-and-wife team Jaime and Michelle Avila saw this recurring problem as an opportunity, and in 2021 they launched JMJ Solar with the goal of delivering reliable, affordable, and sustainable energy to the province. Investing in Women partner Foundation for Sustainable Solutions, Inc. (FSSI) recognized the venture's strong people-profit-planet model and backed it with financing and technical support. With this boost, JMJ Solar has grown from a promising startup into a key local renewable-energy supplier—now expanding into a provider of power for the province's emerging e-vehicle sector.

### POWER PROBLEMS, SOLAR SOLUTION

JMJ Solar was born out of solving the electricity problems in Agusan del Sur, a largely rural and agriculture province in Mindanao. At the time, Jaime and Michelle Avila were managing a beverage distribution business and needed reliable power to keep their warehouse running. "There were frequent power interruptions and the electricity rates were really high in our area, so I thought, why not do something about it?" recalled Jaime Avila, CEO of JMJ Solar. As an engineer, his natural inclination was to turn to power supply solutions.

In 2015, well before solar power was common in the province, Jaime began experimenting with alternative power sources. He eventually learned of solar power and started building his prototype. It took Jaime more than three years to build a complete system and install it to power their warehouse. It was not long before relatives and community members learned of the Avilas' cheaper and uninterrupted power source and started asking for installations as well. "Initially, our use of solar technology was just for self-consumption, not for commercial purposes. But as more people showed interest, we thought—why not try offering it commercially? That's when we started getting clients," said Jaime.

### POTENTIAL IN SOLAR POWER

The couple recognised the opportunity and mobilised resources to meet the unexpected demand from home and business owners. "Initially, we used money from our distribution business to fund our solar power business," explained Michelle, co-founder and CFO. But when they got awarded a government contract to provide electricity for water systems for farming communities and solar-powered streetlights, they knew they needed additional capital to deliver at scale.



### FAST FACTS

Company name:

**JMJ Solar**

Co-Founders and CEO/CFO:

**Jaime and Michelle Avila**

Industry/Sector:

**Energy**

Location:

**Agusan del Sur, Philippines**

Investor:

**Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc.**

Total Investment:

**AUD ~100,000**

Investment Type:

**Loan**



**WHAT IS GLI?** Gender lens investing or GLI is a strategy or approach to investing that considers gender-based factors across the investment process to advance gender equality and better inform investment decisions. Learn more about GLI [here](#).



When we got to know FSSI, we were impressed by their mission. They don't just help businesses, they protect the environment and support women, too."

– Michelle Avila, CFO, JMJ Solar

"We know that government projects take a long time to pay and require a large investment. This was also during the pandemic, and our distribution business was affected by lockdowns, so it was hard to find where to borrow money for the solar business," recalled Michelle.

Traditional lenders proved not to be a viable option for them. "Especially with banks. They require guarantees when borrowing large amounts, like millions. You need to show titles or assets to match the loan amount," Michelle added. The Avilas did not have access to such assets.

Through network contacts, Michelle and Jaime got connected with the Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc. (FSSI), a seasoned social investment organisation based in Manila, Philippines.

### FINANCING BUSINESS GROWTH

FSSI took interest in JMJ Solar because of the business' strong alignment with FSSI's commitment to advancing the Triple Bottom Line (3BL) of people, planet and profit.

"[At the time], supporting priority value chains was a major focus, and renewable energy—particularly solar—was one of these. Although still in its growth stage, JMJ had already built strong relationships with both private and government agencies, demonstrating credibility by securing multiple projects," said FSSI.

*"Overall, we saw in JMJ a growing enterprise with a clear contribution to clean energy goals, strong market momentum, and a business model that advances environmental and social impact in line with FSSI's mission."*

FSSI also valued how JMJ actively promoted gender diversity and inclusion, especially in a male-dominated sector. Two of the key personnel in the business are women – the Chief Finance Officer and the Lead Engineer, highlighting how the company welcomes women workers in technical fields. Rose Anne Claveria was a fresh graduate when she joined JMJ during its inception and has been leading its engineering and design functions since. "Working in a male-dominated field is challenging, but it's rewarding seeing our projects help clients and bring clean energy to communities," Claveria said.

In 2023, FSSI provided a ~AUD 100,000 working capital loan to JMJ Solar; it was the first time the company had accessed formal financing. This credit line, structured with the flexibilities needed to meet their needs and affordable interest rates, allowed the company to take on larger, longer-tenor contracts.

With their liquidity constraints eased, JMJ was able to focus on refining its technology, improving operational efficiency, and expanding market reach. "We gained the capacity to transact with government and residential clients. Our coverage expanded, and we were able to mobilize across different sectors of society," said Jaime.

Beyond financing, FSSI also provided capacity assessment to evaluate JMJ's strengths and opportunities in management areas such as governance, strategic planning, and administrative, and inform the company's capacity development plan. Other support such as gender sensitivity training were also provided. "These assessments and trainings guided our company's growth," said Michelle.

## HELPING PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

Feedback from clients was positive. Not only were they able to have access to uninterrupted power, they also saw a significant decrease in their electricity costs, some reporting as high as 60-80% in savings.

“One client was a resort in Surigao. They had unstable power and frequent brownouts. Electricity was expensive due to the remote location. After we provided solar technology, their power issues were solved and their electricity bill dropped from 100,000–200,000 pesos (AUD ~2,500-5,000) to around 40,000 pesos (AUD ~1,000),” shared Jaime.

JMJ Solar was also able to reach other remote locations and provide reliable electricity to power essential services. After Typhoon Rai ravaged southern Philippines in 2021, Dinagat Islands was one of the most devastated provinces, left with no potable water. While the government had the needed equipment, they lacked the power supply. “We provided solar power, enabling their water filtration system to run. We also helped farmers with water supply through solar technology.”

JMJ Solar’s energy capacity is now at 500 kilowatts, enough to meet the daily electricity needs of over 1,000 Filipino households. Based on their current capacity, MJM estimates that the company has reduced an average of two tons of CO2 per day by replacing fossil-based electricity with solar power.

## REAPING PROFIT

JMJ Solar’s success is not just in impact, but in financial returns as well. MJM Solar achieved profitability in 2023, with revenues of AUD ~180,000 and net income of AUD ~45,000 recorded for the first half of 2025, reflecting a 17% increase in net income from the same period in 2024.

For Jaime, growth follows when people see a good product that benefits not just them but the environment as well. “It’s the technology—renewable energy. People realized it’s the most feasible and sustainable. Technology and good company management are key to growth.”

As an investor, FSSI saw the owners’ dedication, and willingness to learn, adapt and improve as factors contributing to the business’ success. They also attribute its success to the couple’s complementary strengths: Jaime’s deep technical expertise and Michelle’s solid financial management skills.

## BRIGHTER DAYS AHEAD

JMJ Solar continues to power homes, businesses, and essential community infrastructure. To date, MJM have completed more than 150 projects across the province, including systems that power farm irrigation and reliable water supply for livestock operations. The company is now taking its renewable energy offering to the next level: integrating solar power with electric vehicle charging. “It’s the fastest-growing industry and aligns with clean mobility,” said Jaime.



As of end 2025, MJM Solar has installed four solar-powered EV charging stations, with plans to expand to meet rising demand.

“As the industry grows, we need to adapt and invest more. There’s significant potential even beyond the

province, and we’ll need capitalization to support that growth.”

Confident in MJM Solar’s commercial trajectory and its commitment to people, planet, and profit, FSSI has approved an additional ~AUD 75,000 loan to support the company’s expansion—positioning MJM Solar as a scalable clean energy provider contributing to the country’s ongoing energy transition.

**ABOUT THE INVESTOR** Since its foundation in 1995, Foundation for Sustainable Society, Inc (FSSI), has placed social impact at the core of its activities. In 2020, the organisation decided to expand their impact by intentionally engaging women-owned and -led social enterprises. FSSI’s partnership with Investing in Women helped them put this commitment into action. Learn more about FSSI’s GLI journey [here](#).

