

Solar Energy: Empowering Honduras

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Imagine if every day you had to take a cold bath, wash your clothes by hand, start a fire to cook your food, or light a candle at night in order to see. In the United States, many families are privileged to live with electricity. However, in countries like Honduras, everyday life for many families does not include that privilege. This is a major set-back. "Almost one in four people live without electricity worldwide. Without electricity, these people are at a disadvantage in nearly every aspect of their lives" (Kelly, 2011). Electricity enables us to enjoy heated water, refrigeration, and to have energy for computers, cell phones, and lights. People who live without electricity would not be able to function in a modern society. Without electricity, it will ultimately make it harder for the people in these families to find jobs other than back-breaking labor. Since Honduras is a poor country, electricity is not very affordable and is only present in the urban areas of the country. Solar panels should be installed in the areas of the country without electricity so that families living there will have the same opportunities as families who do have electricity.

Solar energy is renewable energy that comes from the sun. "Renewable energy (also known as alternative energy) is energy from resources that are easily replaceable or, for all practical purposes, cannot be depleted" ("Renewable Energy: Power for the Future," 2009). When sunlight hits a solar panel, electricity is created. Most panels are made up of silicon and phosphorus and silicon and boron. When silicon and phosphorus are put together, they produce a negative charge. From this charge is left one electron that has an electrical current. Then holes are created when silicon is put with boron. Once the photons from the sun hit the silicon combinations (the solar panel), it makes the electron from the negative charge get pulled into the boron and silicon hole. This then creates electricity. Solar panels are fairly expensive. However, if Hondurans can get them installed, they will reap the benefits of almost a lifetime of free electricity ("Renewable Energy: Power for the Future," 2009).

Solar energy can be used to provide energy during the day for the rural areas in Honduras so that schools can take advantage of more learning options: "Many schools are unable to take advantage

of educational video tapes produced by the Honduran government due to their remote rural locations and lack of electricity. Many rural students have never seen a television program” (“Opportunity Honduras,” n.d.). Students can view educational videos or DVDs, listen to instructional CDs, and learn to type and use computers. These are all learning options that will prepare students for better jobs in the future. Since solar energy is energy from the sun, the solar panels will only work during the day. At night, batteries could be used. Solar panels are certainly necessary since all children should have an equal education, or at least have an equal opportunity for it.

Solar energy can also be used in homes and businesses. Families will be able to bathe comfortably with warm water, cook or heat their meals on a stove or in a microwave, and be able to have a charged cell phone to make calls in case of an emergency. “Homeowners can use solar energy to power lights, heat and cool the house, and heat water” (“Renewable Energy 2008: Power for the Future,” 2009). Businesses will also benefit from the same things, which will most importantly lead to more business. In an interview with Juan Cortes, a Honduran native who now lives in the United States, he states, “The people who live in ‘el campo’ (the rural areas) are very different from those who live in urban areas. The people who live in urban areas often make fun of the ‘campechinos’ (country people) because of their lack of knowledge and way of living” (personal communication, February 21, 2012). This is very unfortunate and can be eliminated by taking steps to improve the living conditions of these people; one step is the installation of solar panels.

Solar energy would be more cost efficient for Honduras than current electricity. Since solar energy comes from the sun, the power it produces is free. The only cost would be for the solar panels themselves. Once the panels are installed, all that is needed is for the sun to work its magic. This is a great way to help Honduras’ economy. The environment will also benefit from solar energy: “Unlike power generated from fossil fuels, solar power produces no greenhouse gases or radioactive wastes” (“Renewable Energy 2008: Power for the Future,” 2009). Since greenhouse gases are agriculturally

harmful, solar energy will benefit the country's agriculture as well. Solar energy makes the most sense for a country like Honduras that has vast amounts of farmland and an economy that is not so good.

Juan Cortes says, "I still don't know how to type or operate a computer. I am working on it, but it is very hard for me. It wasn't until just recently that I learned how to operate a basic cell phone" (personal communication, February 21, 2012). Similarly, there are still many families in Honduras who have never flipped a light switch, turned on a computer, or even used a cell phone. In today's modern society, no one should have to live in the dark. Using solar energy to create electricity for the parts of Honduras that need it is the first step in solving this very important issue.

References

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