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Solar Power Meets Rural Energy Needs in Guatemala

In 2004, 180 photovoltaic (solar) systems were installed in six rural communities of Guatemala's Northern Quiche region for household, commercial and community use. These solar energy systems will help create new economic and social opportunities.

The program was led by Fundacion Solar, in collaboration with several organizations, including Global Environment Facility (GEF); United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the European Union's Proyecto Ixil; USAID; Sandia National Laboratories of the U.S. Department of Energy; the Guatemalan Ministry of Environment and Resources; the Guatemalan Ministry of Energy and Mines; and the local organization ADIM.

Utilizing a rural energy development model that has proven to result in a high success rate of sustainable systems in rural settings, Fundacion Solar has been able to install a large number of renewable energy systems benefiting rural, developing communities in Guatemala. The key has been to take Fundacion Solar's long experience in rural energy development, and to couple that with a structured approach that is technically sound, follows good governance practices, is comprehensive and highly participant-based. The result is rapid and efficient development and installation of energy systems, with a high probability of the systems being operational and economically viable for many years. The model comes from the Organizaciones Locales para la Administracion de Proyectos de Energia Renovable (OLAPE's – Local Organizations for the

Management of Renewable Energy Projects). This model constitutes a mechanism that facilitates the communities' participation in the conceptualization, development and administration of the project. This includes participation in the costs and benefits of the projects.

However, without an integrated approach and support in the communities, it would be difficult. That is where the Asociación de Desarrollo Integral de Multiservicios (ADIM - Association for Integrated Multiservice Development; an organization which promotes economic and social development of former communities of populations in resistance in Sierra de Chamá and Chajul, Quiche). They have been performing community development in the rural communities where the energy systems have been installed since 2001. ADIM has provided the "seed bed" of strong community participation and capacity necessary for the management and maintenance of an energy system. The administration of the energy systems is initiated through a system of committees in each community. These committees are legalized, and proceed along a structured path of development under the auspices of ADIM.

"The goal is to offer energy to the communities, in order to accelerate economic development and reduce poverty,"

Roberto González Díaz-Durán, Minister of Energy and Mines, during the inauguration in the Community of Xecotz, Nebaj, Guatemala



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