



How can more families get light when the cost is out of their reach?

There are several options to think about:

- 1 Some homes, depending on the country, are very close together and are very small. It is possible to start with one system of three lamps, putting the solar panel on one roof, and putting one light in each home. The need for candles and kerosene lamps is immediately gone. After the system is paid for, those families can gradually purchase another system, and then another, until they all have their own systems.
- 2 In some situations, it might make more sense to purchase a large community solar panel, and to charge several small batteries on a daily basis off a larger “main” battery that is charged from the large panel. Generators of various sorts (hydro-electric, gas) can also be used to power lamps in many homes in a village, as long as the appropriate thickness of wire is used.
- 3 Utilizing small loans, or “micro-financing”, can make the impossible possible. If an international organization uses donor money to buy lighting systems for a local NGO, that NGO can then install the lighting system in a home, and that family can gradually pay for the system over 20 or more months. If they calculate what they already spend on candles and kerosene gas for lanterns, that family can substitute one expense for the other. In that way, they immediately have clean, safe light, and no extra financial burden. Then, once their system is paid for, they never have to buy candles or kerosene gas again.

The explanation of “financing” above is how Add Your Light Charitable Foundation runs the program in the Dominican Republic. The charity uses donor funds to buy lighting systems (at cost) from the company. The charity gives that inventory to the local NGO, Fundación Agrega Tu Luz.

They give classes to women, explaining the lighting systems and financing options. The women sign a contract (guaranteed by their local Women’s Group), and a lighting system is installed. The women pay back the system over 20 months, and then Fundación Agrega Tu Luz gradually collects enough money to buy more inventory. In this way, the program becomes sustainable, and people carefully take care of their systems, because they have paid money for them.