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Newsletter 04/17 Smart Solar Off-Grid for La Gracia

It is a good while since we last reported from the solar project in La Gracia Village, Belize.

A number of obstacles have slowed down the progress of the project unexpectedly. However, we were able to resolve the issues that were mainly of legal, organizational and financial nature such as:
“How to start operating the system within the existing legal framework?” or “How exactly will we realize the connections from the power-substations to the actual houses (last mile) since the project under REPIC-umbrella ends at the substations?”

Some of the unknowns we were able to address with the assistance of the Government of Belize, others were resolved by welcoming the British Government as a new project partner.

With their assistance, every household can now be connected to the solar system and will receive proper wiring, a breaker-box, two outlets and three light fixtures including LED light bulbs. It is particularly important to the project, that the villagers from the very beginning will use energy efficient appliances.

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On April 11th, the British High Commissioner Mr. Peter Hughes OBE and his deputy Mrs. Grace Chun as well as representatives of the Energy Unit of the Belizean Government visited La Gracia to see how the project is developing.

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After a period with lots of activities done behind the scenes, physical work has resumed in the village. SESB could finally connect nine households to the first two power towers. The houses will be electrified in May.

The local crew from La Gracia is currently digging the ditches for the underground wires from the sub-stations to all the houses - they are doing a fantastic job!

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Amongst the first ones to receive electricity is also the Pentecoste Church. The pastor is looking forward to skip using the expensive energy from his small generator in the future.

In order to provide road safety during the Easter Holidays, the drains crossing the street were closed just in time for Good Friday.

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Now the cables from the houses are getting connected with the energy dispensers of each household…

…where the villagers can activate their power supply with a personalized RFID-Card. The electricity can be purchased on a prepaid bases, that allows every household to consume power according to the respective budgets.

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Mr. Thomas Flügge and Ms. Sarah Link from the German cdw-Foundation also visited the village to get an impression of what happened during the last few months. On this picture Mr. Silvan Küffer from SESB speaks with two villagers about the inside wiring of their house. Keep in mind - all of the 40 households need proper wiring before they can be connected!

On Sunday, April 24th, SESB organized another village meeting together with representatives from the Energy Unit of the Belizean Government and the villagers. The phases of electrification, facts and figures as well as power limitations were discussed.

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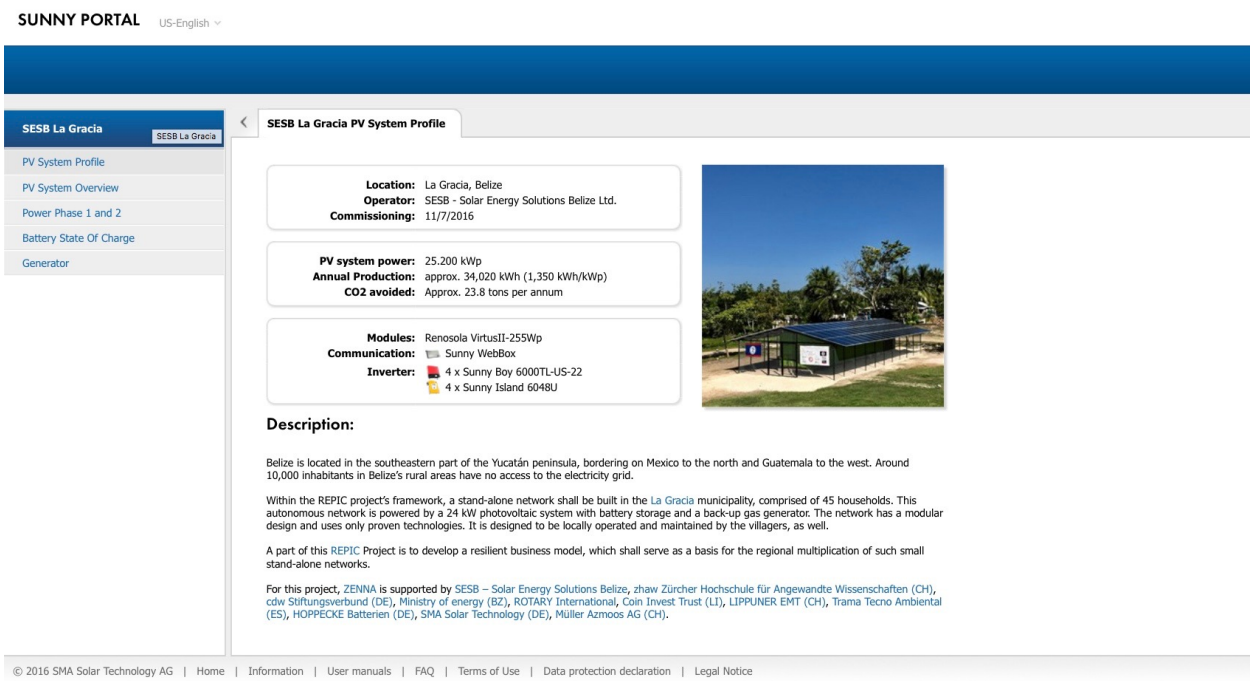
It won't be long until the first villagers can use the energy from the La Gracia Smart Solar Off-Grid system! At the beginning of May SESB is planing to start handing over the chip cards to the first households.

For people interested in the technical aspects of the system we have created a public link, that allows you to follow the systems performance:

https://www.sunnyportal.com/Templates/PublicPageOverview.aspx?plant=115eff94-d189-434f-858d-05e8719934ac&splang=



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ZENNA also developed the updated presentation video of the Smart Solar Off-Grid. The movie is available online on vimeo:

https://vimeo.com/145614639

ZENNA's Smart Solar Off-Grid for La Gracia Project is also displayed online on the REPIC-platform of the Swiss federal offices SECO, SDC and SFOE:

http://www.repic.ch/repic-en/projects/ongoing-projects/photovoltaics/zenna-belize/

Smart Solar Off-Grid for La Gracia powered by

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