

Most of Haiti goes dark at Night Here's a Way to Fix that

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September 8, 2014 - Kiva.org and EarthSpark International are teaming up to scale-up the first **pre-paid solar hybrid smart micro-grid in Haiti** (Les Anglais) to serve both residential and commercial customers, including agricultural processing facilities.

Haitians spend \$10.00 per month on kerosene and candles to light their home. With electricity it only costs about \$2.00 per month and *dramatically increases* household health and safety. Haitians spend 13x more of their income on energy than the average American. Only 25% of Haitian households are currently connected to electricity grids.

For those of us who benefit from secure, public/private infrastructures that provide us with reliable access to electricity it is hard to imagine the impact that energy poverty can have. Just remember the last time the lights went out, the refrigerator stopped humming along. Did it last for a few hours, a few days? This provides us with just a small window into the life of truly living in energy poverty.

The situation in Haiti persists for several reasons. First, there is a lack of strong public infrastructure to invest in building energy grids. And second, there is a lack of affordable financing available for social enterprises with creative solutions to energy poverty.

Kiva aims to change this picture in Haiti and around the world by crowdfunding access to clean, affordable energy sources. Kiva does this by crowdfunding along every step in the supply chain from producers and distributors to resellers and end-point consumers.

Visitors to Kiva.org/Haiti can choose someone they want to support with a loan of \$25 or more. When the borrower repays, you can relend that money to another person or withdraw your money from Kiva and put it back in your pocket. Kiva borrowers have a 98% repayment rate.

Visitors to Kiva.org/Haiti crowdfund loans to **finance individual household connections to the micro-grid** AND will then crowdfund loans **for new agricultural processing companies** that will need capital to take advantage of the access to electricity. The inclusion of agribusinesses will help to bring down the costs for households.

More about EarthSpark and Kiva

EarthSpark International is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to eradicating energy poverty in Haiti with innovative technology and financing solutions. By expanding market access for lower-income Haitians, the organization is putting affordable, portable solar lighting and improved cookstoves in the hands of people who need it most. EarthSpark has also built Haiti's first smart micro-grid.

EarthSpark joined Kiva as social enterprise partner in December 2012, posting loans on Kiva to expand its business-in-a-bag model for small scale entrepreneurs who get clean energy products to rural, lower-income households in Haiti.

Since joining as a Kiva partner, EarthSpark has endorsed \$50,175 in loans to 81 entrepreneurs with a 0% delinquency rate and no defaults.

More about EarthSpark:

The organization has two aims. One is to build supply chains for small-scale clean energy technologies. Given that off-the-grid households spend an average of 25% of their incomes on dirty, low-quality sources of energy, these technologies have the opportunity to improve people's quality of life while saving them money in the long run.

EarthSpark's supply chains connect manufacturers, importers, distributors and end users. It does this by providing goods through both brick and mortar stores and a network of small-scale entrepreneurs with a "business in a bag" to help serve more isolated areas. Entrepreneurs who sell these products can generate enough additional income to run self-sustaining businesses.

EarthSpark's second aim is to expand and further develop smart micro-grids. In 2012, ES launched the first prepay microgrid in Haiti through Eko Pwòp which is short for "Clean Community Electricity" in Haitian Creole.