



SMART VILLAGES
New thinking for off-grid communities worldwide



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Off-grid innovation already impacting rural development and climatic resilience across Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico

Pay as you go could accelerate uptake

PUNTA CANA: At an international workshop organised by the Smart Villages Initiative and the Academy of Sciences of the Dominican Republic there was unanimous agreement on the potential of renewable energy in its various forms—solar, wind, biomass and mini-hydro—to play a major role in both rural development and enhancing the climatic resilience of off-grid communities in Central America, the Caribbean, and Mexico.

According to Dr. John Holmes, Co-Leader of the Smart Village Initiative, the workshop exceeded expectations: “While our main initial focus was on how off-grid solutions could help the over 10 million people in the region without any electricity access, three other issues rapidly became apparent during the presentations and ensuing discussions. Firstly, from Nicaragua to Nevis, there are numerous examples of off-grid energy already being used beyond domestic needs to power productive uses such as improving agricultural productivity. Secondly, the whole region is highly susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and flooding, and new constantly-evolving off-grid energy generation and management technologies could greatly increase the resilience of rural communities. Thirdly, we were surprised given our experience in other areas of the world that pay as you go was not being used to help poorer communities acquire solar home systems. We are now planning follow-up activities on individual issues and will end by drawing up policy recommendations for regional and national governments on improving access and ensuring its benefits are fully exploited.”

Workshop topics included: renewable energy and energy efficiency for rural economic development and for improving social services (health and education); access to energy for risk management against natural disasters; renewable energy to increase local energy security; opportunities and challenges for the private sector in the rural electrification sector; and regulatory framework for rural electrification.

International organisations participating included the United Nations Development Programme; the World Bank; the Inter-American Development Bank; GIZ; and the University of California, Berkeley. Participants from the region included the Latin American Energy Organisation (OLADE); the Inter-American Network of Academies of Sciences (IANAS); the Energy Network Foundation; the Caribbean Association of Sustainable Energy Managers; the Caribbean Centre for Renewable Energy and Efficiency (CCREEE), Barbados; the Hinterland Electrification Company, Guyana; ACCIONA Microenergia, Mexico; the National Autonomous University of Mexico; and the Renewable Energy Producers, Guatemala.

Dominican Republic representatives include the National Energy Commission (CNE); the Ministry for Education, Focal Point Energy IANAS-ACRD; Programa de Pequeños Subsidios; Universidad APEC UNAPEC; Electric Consortium; Diagnostic Centre for Advanced Medicine and Telemedicine (CEDMAT); and Latino Academia Latino Americana Superior.

A report on the workshop will be published on the website www.e4sv.org.

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Notes to editors

Smart Villages (www.e4sv.org) is an initiative that aims to explore the opportunities and challenges for rural energy access for off-grid communities in developing countries. It is funded by the Cambridge Malaysian Education and Development Trust and the Templeton World Charity Foundation, with a team based at the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford in the United Kingdom.

The Academy of Sciences of the Dominican Republic, ACRD, was founded on December 20, 1974, and incorporated by Executive Decree No. 1097 on June 8, 1975. It is a scientific, non-partisan, non-governmental and non-profit organization dedicated to promoting scientific research and advances, technological innovation and knowledge to promote sustainable social and economic development of the Dominican Republic. Its membership consists of scientists specialized in different branches of knowledge, with high human, moral and ethical standards.