

LIGHT UP THE WORLD



PROJECT PROFILE: Light Up Costa Rica - Phase VI

Since 2004, families in rural Costa Rica have been benefiting from solar powered LED lighting. The Light Up Costa Rica Project is taking place in the Chirripo region of Costa Rica. The region is full of lush hillsides covered by rainforest. In this area, the Cabecar and Bribri tribes of South Costa Rica have struggled for centuries to remain culturally independent. In these communities many of the indigenous families spend 1/3 of their disposable income on kerosene and candles for lighting. This typically equates to about \$20 a month, which is a substantial amount of money for people who cultivate and then walk for days with 15 kilos of beans on their back to earn \$6 to pay for salt, soap, kerosene and candles. Families experience a sharp rise in the cost of candles when a child enrolls in school due to the evening hours of study required.

The Light Up Costa Rica initiative began with the objective of eliminating regular expenses for lighting so that families could save more of their hard earned income. The project follows a microfinance approach, with families diverting what were consistent payments for kerosene and candles to repayment of the solar powered LED lighting system. Repayments are designed to be flexible according to the income level of the family with the goal being to improve their lives without burdening them beyond



Photo: These children were recipients of the LUTW home lighting system in 2008. Their neighbours will be receiving the same system this year.

Project Information

Project Status: Ongoing

Number of Homes Lit to Date: 245 as of March 2008

Objective: To install solar lighting systems in 150 homes in the Chirripo region of Costa Rica, providing families with higher quality light and ultimately saving them a significant amount of financial resources as kerosene and candles are no longer required for lighting.

Individuals Benefiting: 150 families

Location: Chirripo Region, Costa Rica

Project Proponent: David Wiwchar

Implementing Partners: David Wiwchar, CEDIN, APPTA, the YMCA and LUTW

Project Start Date: October 2008

Project Completion Date: August 2009

Funding Partners:

Private Donors
Kayak Foundation

what they were paying for lighting in the past. Thus far, the project has achieved considerable success with many families having repaid their loans in full in two years or less. As loans are paid off and families are able to save a greater proportion of their income they are then able to spend more on other necessities and chances to consume the produce they grow instead of selling it. With the LED lighting systems installed in the home, many families have commented on the positive impact on education and literacy. It has been stated in the area that a student's success is linked to the availability of light.

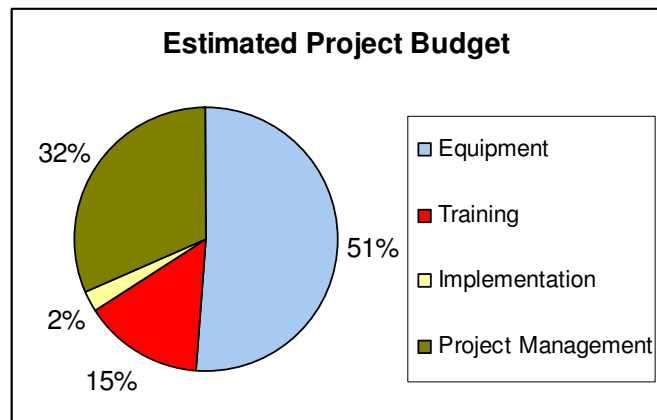
The Light Up Costa Rica Project was initiated and is coordinated by David Wiwchar a science teacher at Lasalle Secondary School in Sudbury, Ontario and his wife, Pam. They were inspired to start the project after reading Canadian Geographic (December 2003) article on Light up the World. Upon reading the article he made the connection between the work LUTW was doing and the Indigenous families he had visited in remote regions of Costa Rica. The project has been successful thus far largely due to the partnerships formed between the Wiwchar's and teachers in remote schools of the Chirripo region, the Organic Farm Co-operative APPTA, CEDIN, the YMCA and LUTW.



Photo: A young Costa Rican boy smiles below a LUTW LED lamp in his home.

Estimated Project Budget:

Equipment*:	\$21,000
Training:	\$6,000
Implementation**:	\$1,000
Project Management:	\$13,000
Total:	\$41,000



* includes shipping/handling, import duties, and tools/materials for installation.

** comprised of all costs related to system installation: in-country transportation, project coordination, and technical assistance.