

Solar Electric Light Fund powers rural clinics in Rwanda

Washington D. C. – December 2007 - The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) has taken up the challenge of solar electrification of **Partners In Health's** (PIH) Rwandan health facilities. Established by **Dr. Paul Farmer**, Partners In Health is transforming healthcare for the world's poorest people.

We are also working with Columbia University's **Mailman School of Public Health**, the **Elisabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Initiative** and the **Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund** on several other health projects in Rwanda.

A reliable energy source is essential for the operation of hospitals and clinics. But that's a major challenge in Rwanda and elsewhere in Africa. With the exception of Egypt and South Africa, 85 percent of Africa's 680 million people live in rural areas without electricity.

Diesel generators are one answer — but hardly the best. Diesel is expensive and polluting, including greenhouse gases. And generator breakdowns are common, with replacement parts typically miles and days away.

Faced with a choice between solar and diesel at five rural health clinics in eastern Rwanda, **Partners In Health** took the solar path, collaborating with SELF on systems for the communities of Mulindi, Rusumo, Rukira, Nyarabuye, and Kirehe. The systems are solardiesel hybrid systems that generate 90 percent or more of their power from the sun, with diesel generators for back-up during prolonged heavy usage, or in periods of rain.

At the clinics, solar power now supplies electricity for vaccine refrigeration and for computer recordkeeping and communication via satellite. Labs have also gained solarpowered microscopes, blood analysis machines, centrifuges, portable X-ray machines, and sterilization devices. There is, as well, new LED lighting in patient wards.

Soon after our successful collaboration with Partners In Health, SELF was approached by **Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health**, asking our help in the solar electrification of clinics run by the School's International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs. Through this collaboration, there are now **15 additional health centers** enjoying the benefits of solar power in the country's north and west.

Help us raise funds by donating online at www.self.org/donate.shtml

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