



SEED Awards 2008

for entrepreneurship in sustainable development

WINNER

Lighting Up Hope and Communities • Nicaragua

A cooperative business producing and marketing solar products made from recycled solar cells and solar cookers adapted for local needs

Lighting up Hope and Communities has won one of five **2008 SEED Awards** for its work to become a model for the creation of a financially self-sustaining business selling renewable energy products.

Mujeres Solares de Totogalpa is a motivated group of women who are determined to improve the quality of life for themselves and their families in rural North West Nicaragua. Working in partnership with a university research centre, an NGO and experts on solar technology, they are aiming to set up a co-operative enterprise, *Lighting Up Hope and Communities*, producing photovoltaic panels from recycled solar cells, solar cookers and dryers, and solar cooked/ dried food products and medicinal plants. These products will be made at and sold from a new Solar Center in the community.



Scaling up impacts

As part of the Award, SEED is supporting *Lighting Up Hope and Communities* in its efforts to grow. In 5 years time the project expects the production centres to become completely self-sufficient, and expand to support other community development projects. It also aims to support local, regional and national outreach and education efforts to bring this renewable energy development model to other communities.

Planned activities include:

- **Providing infrastructure and assistance for the production of new energy technologies**, through an ongoing exchange with universities, scientists, sociologists as well as national and international volunteer professionals.
- **Working with rural communities as equal partners** to develop alternative energy strategies in a manner that respects the local needs and circumstances.
- **Launching a non-profit cooperative in order to produce and sell solar products**, using local community members with expertise in construction of solar panels, cookers and dryers and in preparing solar cooked/dried food products and medicinal plants.

- **Offering educational courses** in solar technology to the community and conducting formal training to increase the number of skilled technicians available to meet increased demand.

How you could help

To ensure the long-term future of this innovative, locally-led partnership for sustainable development, [additional contacts, financing opportunities and communication and marketing networks are important](#). In particular, the following support is needed:

- **Legal and Accounting** – Access to expert Nicaraguan legal assistance
- **Capacity Development** - Equip local programme staff and the *Mujeres Solares de Totogalpa* with appropriate skills (business planning and technical) relevant to the local environment
- **Funding** – Facilitate access to financing for key projects and initiatives and support with appropriate accounting practices



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Contacts

- **SEED Initiative Secretariat** – Helen Marquard
helen.marquard@seedinit.org
- **SEED Support Programme** – Kristiane Schäfer
kristiane.schaefer@collectiveleadership.com
- **Lighting Up Communities** – Susan Kinne
thegrupofenix@gmail.com,
susankinnefenix@gmail.com

About the SEED Initiative

The SEED Initiative identifies, profiles and supports promising, locally-led start-up enterprises working in partnership to improve livelihoods, tackle poverty and marginalisation, and manage natural resources sustainably in developing countries. SEED develops learning tools for the broad community of social and environmental entrepreneurs, informs policy- and decision-makers, and aims to inspire innovative entrepreneurial approaches to sustainable development.

SEED is a global network founded in 2002 by IUCN, UNDP and UNEP to contribute towards the goals in the UN's Millennium Declaration and the commitments made at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development.

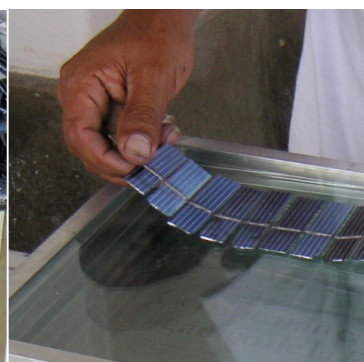
Partners in the SEED Initiative are IUCN (the International Union for Conservation of Nature); (UNDP); the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the governments of **Germany, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.**

SEED Founding Partners



Lead partners in *Lighting up Hope and Communities*

- **Center for Research, Promotion and Production of Renewable Energy, Program for Alternative Energy Sources (PFAE):** national Engineering University of Nicaragua - this programme represents the partners of the project. www.grupofenix.org
- **Mujeres Solares de Totogalpa (MST):** a women's cooperative creating a model, self-sustaining, solar community, providing clean energy alternatives to its habitants and producing and selling solar products to increase employment. www.grupofenix.org
- **Skyheat:** provides expert technical advice on photo-voltaics (PV's) and cookers/dryers, and Skyheat is the fiscal sponsor of the Renewable Energy Center in the United States. www.skyheat.org
- **SUNI Solar:** training in PV and the key source for imported solar equipment. www.sunisolar.com
- **The Engineers in Technical, Humanitarian Opportunities of Service-learning Program - ETHOS:** part of the University of Dayton. Students and professors visit Nicaragua to participate in technical exchange in renewable energies. www.udayton.edu/~ethos



The 2008 SEED Award Winners are:

From Relief to Self Reliance • Thailand
Guiding Hope • Cameroon
Lighting up Communities • Nicaragua
Oregano against MRSA • India
Pintadas Solar • Brazil

