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Freedom Solar travels to Haiti to install donated solar project for orphanage

Daunting challenges didn't dissuade team from finishing project for lost, abandoned children

Freedom Solar Power recently installed an off-grid solar system for [A Child's Hope](#), an orphanage with Texas connections in La Montagne, Haiti that did not previously have electricity. The completed 20-kilowatt solar array and battery backup now provide a sustainable source of electricity that meets 100 percent of the orphanage's electricity needs.

"Thanks to the new solar power system, we're now able to light our facilities. The ultimate goal is to make the orphanage self-sustaining, and solar power was the critical first step to achieving that mission," said Raleigh Jenkins, founder of A Child's Hope, the nonprofit that built the orphanage, and owner of ABC Home & Commercial Services' Houston branch.

"The new solar array also powers the aquaponics farm we're currently building at the orphanage, allowing us to raise fresh fish and grow nutritious, organic produce. And the project will ultimately allow us to refrigerate or freeze that food so the children have a constant, reliable source of food. It's a life-changer," said Jenkins.

Freedom Solar donated the labor for the project, and SunPower donated the solar panels. Freedom Solar also paid for additional costs for the project including international customs and trans-oceanic shipping costs for equipment. The estimated total value of the project is \$100,000.

Four Freedom Solar team members made the trip to Haiti to install the system: Adrian Buck, founder and chief installation officer; Brian Gamez, lead installer; Louis Edwards, installer; and Clay McKelvy, system designer.

"Haiti has the world's largest population living in energy poverty, with more than 7 million people lacking access to electricity. We're humbled and honored to have been able to complete such a meaningful charitable project," said Buck.

While ultimately successful, the project came with plenty of obstacles along the way.

Freedom Solar spent two days assembling the majority of the equipment at their headquarters in Austin before it was packed up for shipment to the port in Haiti. The shipping process took about five to six months because of delays and difficulties with import taxes and customs.

The orphanage's solar installation took three days from start to finish. One full day was spent unpacking the shipping containers, which proved to be more difficult than anticipated.

"We had almost no tools, and dismantling the bracing was difficult. Members were spiral-nailed to the decking, impeding the removal of our heaviest equipment. The batteries had fallen onto precious, valuable items. Toys we brought for the children were smashed during transport, and our equipment was in disarray. A saw, a failing sledgehammer, two claw hammers, and some violence got the job done," said McKelvy.

By end of day two at the orphanage, the Freedom Solar team had almost all of the racking installed, and six modules trickling a charge into the batteries. On day three, the team ran into several more snags including with shoddy wiring, circuit shorts, and a malfunctioning junction box yet still ended up successfully completing the installation.

"Somehow, we overcame each obstacle by luck, fortune, or providence— depending on who you talk to," said McKelvy.

"It's a first class implementation that will provide reliable power for years to come. We're overwhelmed with gratitude for Freedom Solar Power. The new donated solar array they installed will help us build a sustainable future for lost and abandoned children in Haiti for generations to come," said Jenkins.

To view photos and video of Freedom Solar's installation and trip to the Haitian orphanage, visit <http://bit.ly/2HNkTcQ>.

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About Freedom Solar Power

Freedom Solar Power is the leader in turnkey solar installations in Texas, providing high quality, cost-effective, reliable solar solutions for residential and commercial markets. Freedom Solar has installed more than 15 megawatts of solar panels since it was founded in 2007 and grown 307 percent from 2013-15. Recognized as the number one supplier of residential solar systems in Austin by Austin Energy, the fourth-fastest growing company in Central Texas by the Austin Business Journal, and number 338 on Inc. Magazine's top 500 fastest-growing private companies in America, Freedom Solar has completed projects for corporate clients including Whole Foods, Office Depot, Lake Flato Architects, and the University of Texas, among others. <http://www.freedomsolarpower.com/>

About A Child's Hope

A Child's Hope is a nonprofit created to build a safe, loving, and supportive Christian home for more than 300 lost and abandoned children in La Montagne, Haiti. Our goal is to build a self-sustaining community for the children to be empowered and thrive in their own environment.

There are still more than 400,000 abandoned children in Haiti. They desperately need your support to make their hope a reality. <http://www.achildshope.org/>

