

The Haitian Project, Inc.

Community Update: Living by the Sun

September 5, 2012



LCS solar panels (left) and batteries with inverter (right).

The inverter in our house, a device that converts AC to DC and DC back to AC as part of a daily energy storage/retrieval process, has recently decided to emulate a newborn. It waits for us to get a good sleep going and then goes off at about 3 AM. In this case, the crying is done by sleepers whose fans have stopped. It's not just the temperature increase and renewed vulnerability to mosquitoes that wakes us; there is also the change in sounds previously drowned out by our fans – roosters sounding off dogs barking and the like. Usually, just about when we have fallen back to sleep to salvage the final 30 minutes of the night, the sounds change again to include the loud humming of our generator.....another unsolicited wake-up call.

I am not pointing this out only to incur your sympathy. It is to make two points. 1) Solar power in a developing country presents extra complexities. 2) Solar power is not at a full-proof or turn-key point in its development; it takes a lot of active management. For starters, without a reliable electric grid and fully-functioning utility behind it, we cannot sell electricity back to the grid as is common in the US. Therefore, excess power

produced during the day has to be stored in batteries—very large, expensive, and yet to be completely full-proof batteries.

We have 5 inverters on the property, 98 batteries and 193 photovoltaic (PV) panels. Generally, the panels are the most reliable part. The inverters take monitoring and occasional repair. The batteries are the challenge. Solar batteries are more like black boxes than they are known commodities. Batteries add a lot of cost and a lot of complexity to operating solar power.

Our solar operation is far less problematic than relying on local power—which is intermittent at best. It is also less costly than running our generators and better for Haiti's economics and the world's environment. Still, solar is not perfect because it has yet to be perfected.

It remains better to live by the Son than the sun.

Peace, Patrick

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“What you receive as gift, you must give as gift.”
“Se gratis nou resevwa, Se gratis tou pou nou bay.”

---Matthew 10:8