

LOCATION

Sitio Lagpan, Barangay New Ibajay, El Nido, Philippines

SOCIAL IMPACT AREAS

Economy, Community, Health

DATE

July 2020

From kiosk to community



How clean water from
a solar powered well
has transformed a small
Filipino community

The tiny Filipino village of Sitio Lagpan is situated on the Palawan Peninsula, which boasts some of the world's most beautiful white-sand beaches, coral reefs and limestone cliffs. The islands of Palawan stretch between Mindoro in the northeast and Borneo in the southwest and lie between the South China Sea and the Sulu Sea. An ecologically protected area, it is also home to the largest marine sanctuary in the Philippines.

To the northwest of Palawan is Shell's Malampaya Deep Water Gas-to-Power project, which generates up to 30 percent of electricity in the Philippines. But Sitio

Lagpan is too small and too isolated to be connected to the national grid.

It is this isolation that prompted Shell to partner with the community and an experienced local charity to help bring energy – and unexpected change to Sitio Lagpan.

Small change, big impact

In early 2018, Shell began a consultation with residents and Pilipinas Shell Foundation Inc (PSFI) which has been working in Palawan since 2000.

The people of Sitio Lagpan identified safe drinking water as a health priority. The poor quality of water from the village well meant that diseases such as diarrhoea were an ongoing problem. Village children were often missing school due to sickness which was impacting their education and life choices.

It also became clear there was a need to diversify the local economy with 80 percent

of people's income coming from artisanal fishing. Affordable access to energy could help improve the health and wealth of the community.

"Sitio Lagpan's 30 families had relied on kerosene and candles for their lighting and charcoal for cooking. Shared diesel-powered generators provided their only source of energy, which was expensive, polluting and often unpredictable. Blackouts were part of everyday life," said Tisha Sugui.

The people of Sitio Lagpan were watching the country benefit from development gains, and they felt left behind.

Tisha Sugui, Social Performance Advisor, Shell



Across the Philippines nine million people do not have access to clean water.

Unicef

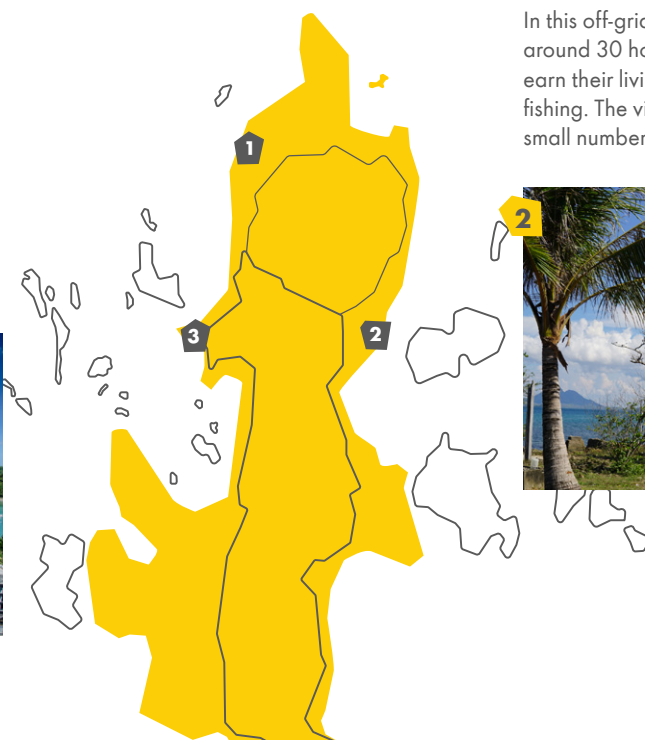


Limestone Cliffs

El Nido is an environmentally protected area and boasts the largest marine sanctuary in the Philippines. It is known for its white-sand beaches, coral reefs and limestone cliffs.

El Nido town

The small, sheltered bay of El Nido Población is situated along an arched beach and flanked by limestone cliffs. It houses the offices of the head of the municipality and several local government agencies.



Sitio Lagpan

In this off-grid community of around 30 households, most people earn their living through artisanal fishing. The village attracts a small number of tourists.



A 'technology high'

The three partners came up with a solution to build a solar-powered 'energy kiosk' to sell affordable products and services related to renewable energy - as well as safe drinking water and water for domestic use. The water would be sourced from a new solar-powered well.

Providing remote, off-grid communities with access to affordable energy is challenging - and in Sitio Lagpan, the lack of paved access roads proved a major hurdle to overcome. The terrain is virtually impassable during the rainy season from June to November. Moving materials and equipment was particularly difficult and weather conditions meant that timelines had to be adjusted. It was also important to ensure that the water quality was tested and met international standards.

The 20ft deep village well was completed with the help of PSFI engineers and volunteers from the community and marked the first time villagers could enjoy clean, affordable water without having to travel.

Marvi Trudeau, Programme Manager at PSFI says the community describes using solar power to get clean water as a 'technology high'. "Access to clean water has been the main impact of the Shell project. And, as a knock-on effect, fewer children are having to stay away from school due to diarrhoea and other illness related to using dirty water for drinking and cooking. This is important in a community which prizes education."

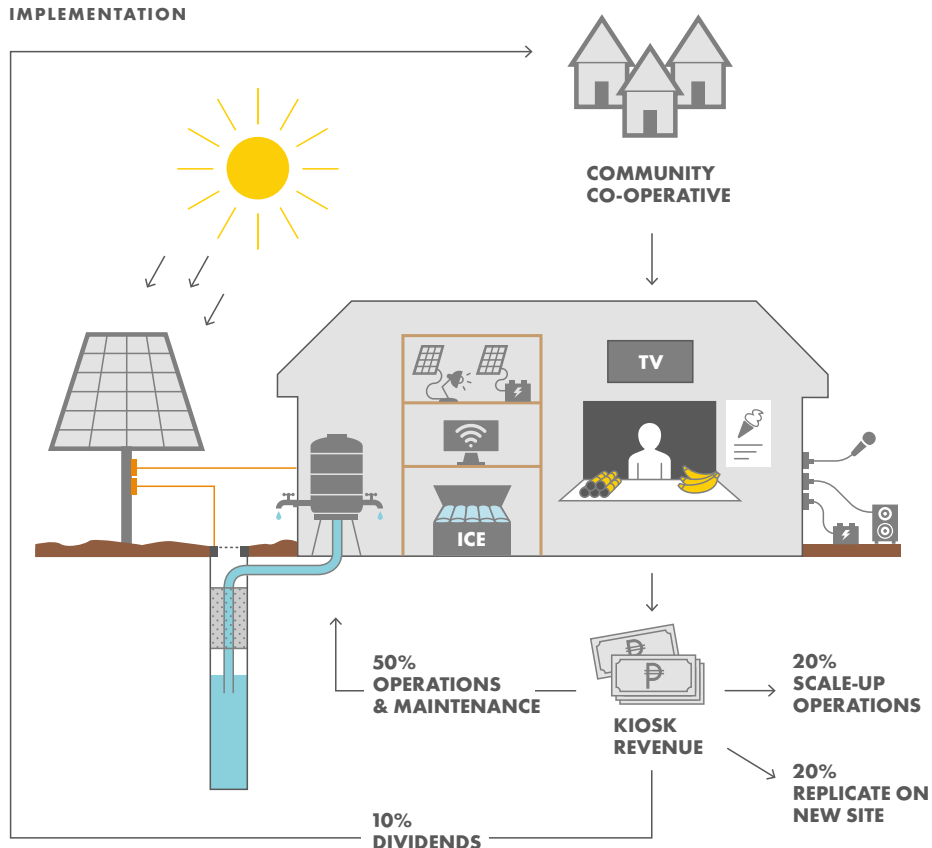


Children are at particular risk from water-related diseases, and access to improved sources of water can result in better health, and therefore better school attendance, with positive longer-term consequences for their lives.

World Health Organization



IMPLEMENTATION



The sunray kiosk

The little red and yellow kiosk in the centre of Sitio Lagpan was officially opened in November 2018, attended by around 100 community members, local officials, the media, and representatives from PSFI. The 22sqm shop - known as SINAG, which means 'sun ray' in the local language Tagalog, sells a range of products and services, including bottled water, ice, lollies, cold drinks and local home-made produce. It also offers charging stations for mobile phones, electric tools and lamps, access to the internet, and printing services.

Importantly, the kiosk offers solar home systems, which means families can access reliable lighting at home, as well as USB ports and a lithium battery for charging household electrical items. Schoolchildren also use it to access to the Internet and to print their homework.

A big economic dividend

It soon became clear that the kiosk had sparked the wider entrepreneurial spirit of the community. A skills development programme organised by PSFI has helped to equip

the community with new skills, including developing business plans, book-keeping and training in tourism-related work such as snorkeling guiding and water-safety.

The women - who no longer spend up to two hours a day fetching and carrying water - are using their time to make tourist souvenirs and make food for sale at the kiosk. More tourists have been visiting Sitio Lagpan, using the shop as a location to rest, buy cold drinks and charge their cell phones.

Quality ice has made all the difference to local fishermen who can now preserve their fish catch for longer and make ice to sell to other villages.

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Marvi Trudeau, Programme Manager at PSFI



The little SINAG kiosk provides villagers with drinking water, solar energy and a freezer to produce ice for sale to local fishermen.

The fishermen say the ice is of good quality and they are able to keep their fish for longer. This means a higher selling price for their catch, which they sell to other villages.



The kiosk is governed by a new local cooperative association, and dividends from their profits are shared by members.

The navy has trained a group of young men in water safety – allowing them to boost their income by taking intrepid tourists snorkelling. “Tourists that come here are adventurous – they arrive on bikes or by trekking. There is now potential to develop the area as a tourist attraction,” says Ms Trudeau.



Social dividends

Every evening, families join their friends in the village outside the kiosk to watch television. It has become a community hub, and on festivals, they hire a karaoke machine, also powered from the kiosk.

“The community is more organised, and the little kiosk is a gathering place. Now people are talking to each other and working with each other,” says Marvi Trudeau.

So, what has the project meant for the women of Sitio Lagan? They have more time to spend with their families and many have been able to earn their own money. They also worry less about their children’s health. And the schoolteacher says that more children are attending lessons for longer because the water they are drinking is healthy. Some of the village women have learned new business skills.

The men have been able to generate more income because they can now preserve their fishing catch. And the community is better

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Marvi Trudeau, Programme Manager at PSFI

equipped to benefit from the increasing numbers of tourists visiting Sitio Lagan and the kiosk. Water safety skills have given them the confidence to take divers into the sparkling waters around Sitio Lagan. They know that if the environment is preserved, their home could become a sustainable eco-tourism area.

KEY FACTS



Increased income from tourism, fishing and association dividends



Longer-term community cohesion



Reduction of water-borne diseases

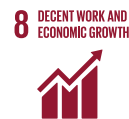


Higher school attendance

FUTURE PLANS

The success of the SINAG kiosk is to be duplicated in the neighbouring village of Ille Cave. Shell is working with the local community and government agencies to expand the solar energy project to provide clean water to more people in the region.

ASSOCIATED UN SDGS



SOURCE: UN SDG