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Six trailers containing modular photovoltaic generating systems are about to be shipped from a location on Long Island, N.Y., to the southern coast of earthquake-ravaged Haiti, where they will be transported by truck to a town for a week of training and then to villages. As described in a recent article by Kathy Kowlenko in The Institute, the solar arrays are the product of an IEEE humanitarian initiative, in which volunteer work by a handful of dedicated and visionary engineers has been key.

Each village unit of the SunBlazer system destined for Haiti consists of six photovoltaic panels, capable of generating 7 kilowatt-hours of electricity per day and charging a 40 12-Volt lead-acid home battery packs. Each pack will service a lighting kit in a home. The modular systems consist largely of off-the-shelf technology from a design developed by two cooperating companies, Nextek Power Systems and Russell Engineering.

Ultimately, says Ray Larsen, a co-founder and the project manager of the program, Sirona-Haiti's goal is to build up to 4,500 trailers serving a million Haitians in the first five years. IEEE team members from Africa and India are eager to replicate the business model in new areas

Larsen, deputy head of engineering at the Stanford Linear Accelerator Laboratory conceived the SunBlazer program in collaboration with Robin Podmore and Liang Downey. Podmore, a New Zealander and IEEE fellow, is president of Incremental Systems, a grid control system company that operates internationally. IEEE Senior Member Downey is a director at Nextek Power Systems, Bohemia, N.Y., which donated technical assistance, equipment, and labor to build the solar units. Russell Engineering, based in California, contributed expertise it's acquired as a specialist in home solar systems.

Larsen conceived the SunBlazer program in the context of the IEEE Humanitarian Technology Challenge, a three-year initiative that sought to drive development of new technology for reliable electricity, electronic health records, and health data transmission. Toward the end of last year the SunBlazer volunteers obtained \$50,000 from the Humanitarian Challenge, and then got \$75,000 more from the IEEE Nuclear Plasma and Sciences Society, Larsen's main affiliation. The IEEE Power and Energy Society has provided an additional \$20,000 to support related work.

Until SunBlazer becomes self-sustaining as a business, it will continue to rely mainly on contributions from societies and foundations, says Larsen, But it also is happy to receive individual donations, which can be made at [sironacares](#) .



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