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Solar Photovoltaic Project Aims to Make Camphill Dairy Grid Independent

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[CAPE TOWN, South Africa, 31 October 2015]: Camphill Village, a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO) situated in the Western Cape which provides care and employment opportunities for intellectually disabled adults, is home to South Africa's very first, grid-independent dairy. The Camphill Village Dairy will now use solar power to process 28,000 litres of organic milk into cheese, yoghurt and fresh milk for the retail market, generating over R200k income for the PBO each month.

Phase II of a 60kW solar photovoltaic plant was officially inaugurated on 31 October 2015, courtesy of a committed group of corporate sponsors drawn together by the Germany-based Rays of Hope Foundation. The initial first phase of a 20kWp solar plant has been operational since March 2014 and has produced over 35.2 megawatt hours (MWh) between June 2014 and May 2015, resulting in an average saving of R9000,00 per month for Camphill Village. Now, a further installation of 40 kilowatt (kW) will meet the Camphill Village dairy's annual electricity consumption of 75,000 KWh, making it South Africa's first grid independent dairy, and a truly sustainable, ecological leader in the region.

The project was led by the Germany-based Rays of Hope Foundation, and included generous contributions and expertise from a number of industry leaders including:

Sponsor

Countrv

Contribution

1	First Solar	South Africa	732 PV Modules and financial support
2	SMA	Germany / South Africa	Inverters & control electronics, detail design
3	Schletter	Germany / South Africa	Mounting structures, structural design, expertise, staff
4	Sieckmann Engineering	South Africa	Project management, import assistance, site supervision, testing & commissioning, operation & maintenance
5	Birchmeier	Switzerland	Phase 2 barn roof extension
6	Kübler	Switzerland	Battery storage system
7	BAE	Germany	Discount on batteries for Phase 1
8	Q3	Germany	String boxes
9	Dehn	Germany	Lightning protection equipment & expertise
10	UfE	Germany	Production monitoring device
11	Leschaco	Germany / South Africa	Import & transportation of components
12	Southern Sun	South Africa	Phase I installation Solar array (20KW)
13	Hanel	South Africa	Phase I Installation battery subsystem
14	Solardura	South Africa	Evaluation of structural strength of roofs
15	Energy Intelligence	South Africa	Energy Audit

The first phase of the project has been generating electricity well above expectations, resulting in an overall estimated saving of over R162k which has been reinvested into caring for residents. With the addition of phase II, the 60KWp plant is expected to generate 144MWh annually, representing a huge saving in electricity costs for Camphill Village.

“It’s important to point out that the benefits go so much further than electricity cost savings. We have also dramatically reduced our carbon footprint, and we have bolstered our reputation as a truly sustainable, eco-conscious and organic dairy, making our products that much more appealing to consumers. It’s a significant competitive advantage for us as it means that our products are that much more marketable,” explains James Sleight, Managing Director at Camphill Village. “As a public benefit organization, we rely heavily on donor funding which is always challenging and unpredictable. Our dairy is a critically important income generation source for our village and people. It gives our people who work there a real sense of purpose and pride knowing that the products they produce are loved and enjoyed by the locals, and generates much needed income. We are truly grateful to the Rays of Hope Foundation and the companies that have contributed so significantly to this project.

Dr. Katrin Emmrich, co-founder and Chairperson of the Rays of Hope Foundation adds: “The ripple effect of this project is profound. It was initially conceived with the objective of reducing the Village’s carbon footprint, as well as its dependency on an erratic grid electricity supply that caused significant loss of production and interruption of the cold chain. The reality is that a considerable amount of money which would have been spent on electricity can now be diverted back to the village and reinvested into the people living at Camphill Village, making their lives better, stronger and more secure. We would like to express our sincere thanks to our international and local sponsors for their trust in the integrity and professionalism of Rays of Hope and for assisting in this second phase installation.”

Nasim Khan, Vice President of Business Development for First Solar in Africa concludes: “Camphill Village is an outstanding example of enabling people to gain independence by employing them in a social enterprise. Helping Camphill Village to establish its power supply in support of its principles of enhancing the lives of people in need of services and support for daily living is a wonderful outcome for us. As a company that takes sustainability and its commitment to the community seriously, First Solar is proud to be part of this effort to bring clean, reliable solar electricity to Camphill Village.”

After the official switch on of an additional 40kW PV system, the residents at Camphill Village as well as community members enjoyed a variety of great food and wine at the second annual Camphill Village music festival which took place on Saturday 31 October. The line-up included popular South African artists: Beatenberg, Just Jinjer, Ottoman Slap, Bootleggers, Swallowers of Time and Vision Records artists, with HemelBesem as MC.

About Camphill Village

Camphill Village is part of a worldwide movement that was started in Scotland in 1939 by Karl Konig, an Austrian pediatrician and educator, and several colleagues, inspired by the works of the philosopher and educator, Rudolf Steiner. The organization has had a presence in South Africa since 1952 and Camphill West Coast was founded in 1964. www.camphill.org.za

About Rays of Hope

Rays of Hope was established in 2007 by a group of German airline employees, keen to make a positive impact on communities and social groups that needed assistance in South Africa. www.rays-of-hope.de

About First Solar, Inc.

First Solar is a leading global provider of comprehensive photovoltaic (PV) solar systems which use its advanced thin-film modules. The company's integrated power plant solutions deliver an economically attractive alternative to fossil-fuel electricity generation today. From raw material sourcing through end-of-life module recycling, First Solar's renewable energy systems protect and enhance the environment. For more information about First Solar, please visit www.firstsolar.com.

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