

3S brings light and hope to underserved communities

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[Giving Back, Company](#)

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We absolutely love sharing stories about how solar energy can literally transform people's lives, so we're really excited about 3S. 3S, or Solar Service Station, is an innovative social business that aims to bring access to clean and affordable products and services to underserved communities around the world. SunPower partnered with [Tulay ng Kabataan Foundation](#) (TNK) and [Life Project for Youth](#) (LP4Y) to launch a pilot 3S project at Smokey Mountain, a massive dumpsite in the Philippine capital city of Manila, where about 30,000 people live in some of the most difficult circumstances imaginable.

Today, SunPower is extremely pleased to announce that we have been chosen to receive a Patents for Humanity award for our contributions to the 3S project. [Patents for Humanity](#) is an annual competition sponsored by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). The program creates business incentives for using patented technology to improve the lives of the less fortunate. In the category we entered, Household Energy, the goal was to provide power to energy-poor homes and communities for household needs like lighting, cooking and heating. It really is a tremendous honor to be selected for this award. Here is the story of the award-winning 3S pilot project.

Light is a luxury

Much of what we tend to take for granted – such as access to clean water, basic sanitation, or affordable electricity – is not available to large numbers of people in the world's poorest communities. Imagine not being able to turn on the lights when the sun goes down. Even candles are too expensive to light your home. You work or scavenge from sunup to sundown just to survive. Your children stay in a dark home all day waiting for you. You can't work or study or read after dark, so your prospects for self-improvement or your children's learning are severely limited.

Now imagine that you suddenly have access to affordable, rechargeable solar lanterns that extend your ability to be productive throughout the night if you so desire. In addition, the light discourages vermin, and it allows you to clean your home and better care for yourself and your family. Just that one little thing – a light in the darkness – really can change your entire life. That's what 3S is meant to do.

How 3S works

3S is a social business whose objective is to assist communities in overcoming economic, social and environmental challenges – not profit maximization. A 3S unit is actually a standard shipping container fully equipped with solar panels, charging units, storage furniture, and rechargeable solar lanterns or other supplies to be rented to the public, all of which is sold at cost without profit by SunPower to partner organizations.



3S is designed to be modular and scalable, enabling it to be deployed to communities without the need for extensive civil works or ground preparation. Our partner organizations are responsible for the daily operation and maintenance of 3S, thereby providing training and employment opportunities for local communities. Revenue from the rental of products and services is used to pay back the initial investment, and subsequent profit will be reinvested in 3S to develop, expand and improve the program. The goal is for 3S to become self-sustaining within each community in which it is deployed.

Empowering individuals and communities

The 3S prototype project at the Smokey Mountain dumpsite has taught us many valuable lessons and holds great promise as it grows, evolves and spreads to other communities in need. With just the prototype, 3S has already touched thousands of lives with just a few hundred rechargeable solar lanterns that cost 50 percent less than candles to use.



Local residents, mostly young mothers, manage the rental business, earning an income and learning valuable job skills in the process. People who rent the lanterns tell us stories that genuinely move us and fill us with joy – how a young mother is no longer afraid that her baby will be bitten by rodents in the dark; how the light radiates happiness and has brought laughter to a large family; how a woman is no longer anxious that kerosene lamps or candles may endanger her home and family while she scavenges at night; how children can study and learn at home so that one day they might have a better life and escape the crushing poverty of Smokey Mountain.



Learn more about how our [corporate social responsibility efforts](#) are Powering a Brighter Tomorrow™.

- See more at: <http://us.sunpower.com/blog/2015/04/27/3s-project-wins-patents-humanity-award/#sthash.RpYpf5xr.dpuf>