



Barefoot Solar Project

Empowering Rural Communities through Sustainable Energy & Education

How it all began.....

The SWEPA Barefoot Solar Project began in 2013 when Past President Datuk Adeline Leong met with Barefoot College Founder Mr. Bunker Roy. A project team in SWEPA was set up, a remote and rural village was selected and everyone on the team was focused on helping Kg. Sonsogon Magandai to have two semi-literate grandmothers go to India to attend a 6 month training program, to return as "Barefoot Solar Engineers" who would then install the solar panels and solar lanterns for 100 homes in their village.

One grandmother, Tarihing Masanim successfully completed her 6 months' training in India and returned to Sabah in March 2015. She returned to begin her work to light up 100 homes.

The solar equipment shipped from India arrived in Sabah Port and arrangements were made with BOMBA to air-lift the 241 boxes to Kg. Sonsogon Magandai from Kota Marudu. Together with the help of the villagers, the BOMBA personnel, all the equipment were hand carried to the Rural Electronic Workshop, a mere kilometre away but down a steep slope from the helipad, across a river and up another slope to the workshop. The REW was built in September 2014 with significant financial assistance from Sabah Credit Corporation together with volunteers from Raleigh International.

Since then, Tarihing has been residing in the REW from Monday to Friday each week, to complete the installations for the homes of her family and neighbours. She has a team she manages and generally, all work has been smooth. Some challenges faced such as the weather, some minor faulty equipment and some unpaid monthly commitments are being handled with guidance from the SWEPA team and PACOS Trust.

This first SWEPA Barefoot Solar Project was initially funded by the GEF Small Grants Program (US\$50,000.00) but due to the remoteness of the village, logistics and communication have been extremely challenging and costs of ensuring the progress of the project, the welfare and trust of the villagers escalated beyond the grant amount. More financial assistance was sought to ensure the successful completion of this project and the achievement of the objectives of lighting 100 homes in rural Sabah and empowering the community for sustainable development.

At the recent Annual General Meeting in June 2015, SWEPA members and the newly elected President Datin Hj Alhina Ogor Abdullah, committed to see this project to completion and further committed to help a second village, Kg. Sungai Magandai, to light up 50 homes there.

With the experience gained from the first project in Kg. Sonsogon Magandai, the SWEPA Project Team, with Datuk Adeline Leong as the Organizing Chairperson at the helm, is confident that 50 more homes will be able to be lighted and a second community empowered in a shorter time at a lower cost.

To begin a second SWEPA Barefoot Solar Project in Kg. Sungai Magandai, SWEPA hopes to raise RM100,000 to fund the purchase of the equipment, the preparation of two grandmothers to travel to India for the 6 months' training and the building of another Rural Electronic Workshop in the village.

The SWEPA Barefoot Solar Project is beautifully recorded on a blog maintained by Mr. Casey Leong at <https://swepabarefootsolarproject.wordpress.com> and there are many photographs capturing the progress and special moments of the project.

The Project Team members are:

1. Organizing Chairperson, Datuk Adeline Leong
2. Deputy Chairperson, Hanaa Wong Abdullah
3. Advisor & Project Treasurer, Datin Jeanette Tambakau
4. Advisor, Datin Hjh Albina Ogor Abdullah
5. Project Manager, Yap Li Ling
6. Project Secretary, Cleopatra Susan Lajawai
7. Asst. Treasurer, Geraldine Asuncion
8. Committee Member, Karen Wong
9. Committee Member, Maria Joy Rowan
10. Committee Member, Kate Chin
11. Committee Member, Pang Suk Ching
12. Committee Member, Wynn timer Jong

The SWEPA Barefoot Solar Project is SWEPA's first hands-on community project and it has been a very meaningful and fulfilling service to one under-served community in rural Sabah.

The project team in SWEPA, together with the ongoing support of all SWEPA members and the local community, hopes to continue to serve and fulfil our tagline of "Women Helping Women". When we can help more women in the community, we can help the community at large.

THE LAUNCH OF LIGHT AT KG. SONSOGON MAGANDAI ON THE 19 NOV 2015

A culmination of 3 years of hard work by our partners and SWEPA Committees

With Appreciation and Thank YOU for your partnership:-

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| 1. Asian Forestry Company | 8. Government of India (sponsoring the ITEC Visa) |
| 2. Barefoot College, India | 9. Grandis Hotel |
| 3. BOMBA, Sabah | 10. PACOS Trust |
| 4. Daily Express, official media partner | 11. Raleigh International |
| 5. GEF Small Grants Program | 12. Sabah Credit Corporation |
| 6. Government of Sabah (District Office of Kota Marudu) | 13. Individuals who have donated their expertise, time, money in and outside of SWEPA. |
| 7. Government of Malaysia (Ministry of Energy, Green Technology & Water) | |

Two teams comprising of 4 x 4 volunteers drove the SWEPA committees and partners to Kg Sonsogon Magandai on the 18 November to prepare for the official launch the next day, to be officiated by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Aman. Inclement weather, however, prevented him from taking the helicopter ride to this remote village. Project Organising Chairperson, Datuk Adeline Leong and Deputy OC, Hanaa Wong Abdullah and Political Secretary Datuk Daniel Klinsik representing Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Ongkili, Federal Minister of Energy, Green Technology and Water could not make it to the village either too due to bad weather.

The 290 km overland journey from Kota Marudu to the village was indeed most treacherous and unexpected of its turn and sharp muddy curves.

The launch took place on the 19 November in the chapel on top of a small hill at 10.30 am when we received news from the DO that CM and the others were not able to arrive due to the bad weather.

Hence, Tandek Assemblywomen and Assistant Minister in the Sabah Ministry Of Community Development and Consumer Affairs Datuk Anita Baranting did the launch on behalf of the Chief Minister at 10.30 am. The ceremony also includes the appreciation handing fo certificates to partners. Datuk Anita gave a speech to the villagers and the launch ended almost at 12 pm with lunch for everybody that had attended.

Apart from our partners that went to witness the launch, others came from Kota Marudu District. They were :-

- 1) Datuk Anita Baranting
- 2) Mariana Majinau who headed the Tandek PBS Women's Movement
- 3) District Office Encik Sualim Sanan and his Assistant DO MatLunad Agok
- 4) Officers from the Jabatan Penerangan
- 5) Officers from the Police Force Kota Marudu
- 6) Officers from Land And Survey
- 7) Officers from Forestry
- 8) Officers from District Council
- 9) Officers from the Health Ministry
- 10) Community Development Manager, Kota Marudu
- 11) RTM

Some 60 villagers, young and old gathered at the chapel to witness the launch which ended with Tarihing doing a demo.

The entourage left the village back to Kota Maruda/Kota Kinabalu immediately after the launch in fear of the rain as the clouds were heavy that morning.

With this launch, marks the completion of the Barefoot Solar Project BSF 1.0 by Grandmother Tarahing to a close, paving way for the Barefoot Solar Project 2.0.

The upcoming 2nd project will be covering Kg Sg Magandai and Kg Sonsogon Suyat ; 100 units of solar panel equipment will be needed . As such, we are targeting to raise USD \$ 50, 000 for the solar panel equipment and LED lantern. In addition, we need to raise another RM100, 000 for the REW building.

2 Grandmothers have already been identified and they are in the process of validating their medical and travel documents.

We look forward to another successful completion in the 2nd Barefoot Solar Project in the coming months/years.

Once again, we express our heartfelt gratitude to our partners; without your support and help, we will not see this project to fruition.

Contact Details :-

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Datin Hjh Albina Ogor – Swepa President 2015-2017 Hp: 019-3243452



Summary Report compiled by Wynnie Jong (Asst. Secretary) and Hanaa Wong Abdullah (IP Deputy OC)

6 Dec 2015