



Background Information



A solar energy project to supply electricity to rural medical clinics, schools, and community centres in Cuba has, since 1994, revolutionized the lives of many Cubans. In partnership with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Solidarity Committee in Trois-Rivières has been supporting the project since 1996, and by the end of 2005 had helped finance the installation of solar energy systems on more than 150 medical clinics.

Communities receiving electricity are parachuted into the technological world of radio communication, television, refrigeration, and lighting. Some

of the direct benefits include better medical response to emergencies through the use of short-wave radios that allow communication with larger hospitals, and the ability to store medicine that requires refrigeration. The electricity also powers lights for medical procedures, and provides access to national news and programming through the installation of televisions for the communities. The indirect consequences, however, are just as numerous, and you can learn about them by reading about the Perez family!

Cuba is the largest of the Caribbean islands, and is only 90 miles from Florida. The main industry is tourism.			
	Cuba	Florida	Canada
Size (thousand square kilometres)	111	152	9 985
Population (in millions, 2003)	11.2	17	32
Population Density (people per square km)	100	113	3
Life expectancy (2003)	77	78	80
Under 5 Mortality Rate (2003)	8	9	6



The Perez family, 1998

Alexi and Maria Perez are aged 50 and 48, respectively, and live in the small village of Anacahuita, home to 175 people and located in the region of Las Tunas, Cuba. They are part of the village farming cooperative, growing cocoa and fruits in this mountainous area. They have three children, the oldest of which is a boy who left a few years ago to find work in the city. The second child, a daughter named Carmen, recently arrived home after finishing high school in the city. She is 17, and has just learned that she is pregnant. Josevani is the third child, a son who at age 15 is intrigued by the stories of his brother in the city, and who secretly hopes to also find work in the city after graduating. His parents would not be impressed, so he keeps his dreams to himself and is not sure how he would reveal his plan to his parents.

This summer government technicians are planning to come to install a solar energy system on the local medical clinic, providing power for lights, a short-wave radio, a refrigerator, a t.v. in the clinic, and a t.v. in an adjacent meeting room. This is the new hype in the community, but nobody is sure what it will mean.

The same family, 2003

Carmen recently began studying to become a nurse, and is once again home for the summer, but this time to work in the clinic. Electricity has meant more work in the local clinic, administering vaccinations and completing health examinations that were previously available only in larger villages with electricity. Carmen is also excited about the opportunity to travel, since Cuba sends many nurses and doctors on international missions.

Maria, now a grandmother, cares for the young one while Carmen is studying, and her job is much easier than it would have been without electricity. Refrigeration has brought vaccinations to the local clinic, eliminating the requirement of travelling to the city with the child.

The youngest son, Josevani, finished high school a year ago, and is excited by the learning opportunities supplied by the local television, and his youthful dream of finding work in the city seems to have faded. A one-hour weekly show about agriculture and rural Cuban life has caught his attention, and he even convinced his father to watch on a regular basis. Alexi now frequently watches old American action

movies with his neighbours. He occasionally abuses alcohol, but this is becoming less frequent as he finds other activities to occupy his evenings.



Two youth in the community work at the clinic to organise

social events, such as the movie nights as well as theatre workshops with other youth. There are plans for the theatre group to travel to a nearby village to present and share with another similar group. The elders in the village are saying that fewer youth are leaving for the city, and they are all happy about the recent change.

Student's name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Reading Comprehension Evaluation
The Impacts of Solar Electrification in Cuba

 **Instructions:** Read the information above and respond to the following questions.

1- What are three direct benefits of the electrification of medical clinics in Cuba?

2- The youngest son, Josevani, had previously thought of joining his brother in the city. What changed his mind?

3- In your opinion, why do young people want to leave small towns and villages to go the city?

4- What are two indirect benefits of the electrification of the medical clinic in Anacahuita?

5- Summarise the information in the text by filling a table like the one below. Describe the family members, their activities, and how they changed from 1998 to 2003.

	1998	2003
Alexi		
Maria		
Carmen		
Josevani		

6- True or False. People in the community will have a good understanding of how the system works and will be able to maintain and replace parts that fail. _____

7- The text describes the community “parachuting into the technological world.” What impression does this leave, and how else could this be written?

8- Match the causes to the effects in the following lists:

Effects	Causes
1. Alexi abuses alcohol less frequently	a. There is more work at the clinic with vaccinations and medical examinations
2. Josevani no longer wishes to go the city	b. Refrigeration allows local vaccinations
3. Carmen is working at the clinic	c. Educational opportunities are more numerous with the arrival of t.v.
4. Maria is not required to travel to a larger center with the grandchild	d. People in the village spend more time watching news, videos, and other t.v. programs

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PRODUCED IN COLLABORATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA
THROUGH THE



Canadian
International
Development
Agency