

Success Story: What If You Could Find A Way to Extend the Day?

For most of her life, Marleny, a 28-year old mother of three from La Verde, Guatemala, has had just two options to light up her home: a homemade kerosene gas lamp or candles. Both options came at a high cost to her family's health and safety.

Kerosene lamps would fill her house with smoke that could potentially be fatal for her, her husband, and her children. Marleny saw this danger firsthand when two of her neighbors died from smoke inhalation. So, she opted for candles. The cost of buying the five candles per day needed to light up her house took up a large portion of the income she earned as a domestic worker, and she constantly worried that one of her children would accidentally knock a candle over and start a fire.



Photo credit: Kingo

But now, thanks to innovative USAID-supported Guatemalan start-up Kingo, Marleny and her family enjoy safe, affordable, and reliable electricity. Founded in 2013, Kingo makes smart energy systems that provide people in off-grid communities with complete remote power systems. The firm installs solar panels and batteries in rural homes at no cost and then customers pre-pay for electricity services. Pricing is affordable, with rates depending on the usage needs of the customer, ranging from a “basic package” that powers one lightbulb and enables mobile phone charging to a “production” package that enables everything from refrigeration to the use of electric motors.

Clean Energy Finance Facility for the Caribbean and Central America Activity Overview

Period of Performance: October 2015 – October 2018

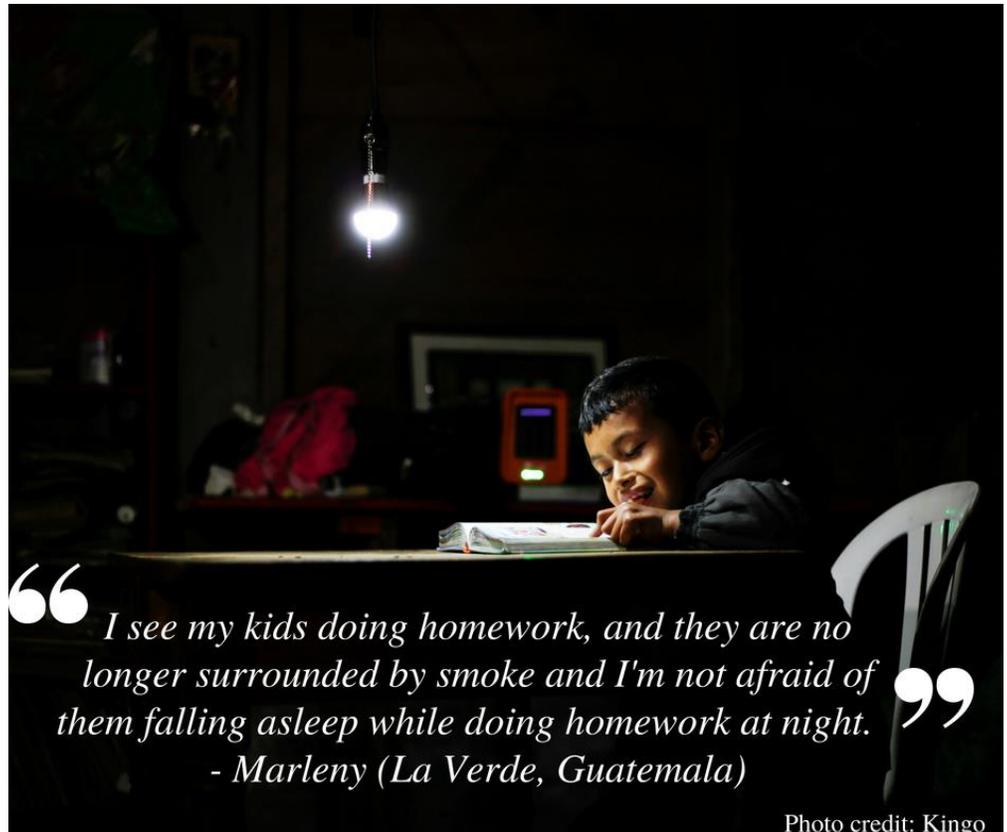
Value: \$12 million

Client: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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Kingo is one of 18 companies supported through the USAID Clean Energy Finance Facility for the Caribbean and Central America (CEFF-CCA). CEFF-CCA is a three-year (2015-2018), \$12 million program supported by USAID, the U.S. Department of State, and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and implemented by ECODIT. Through a \$10 million fund, CEFF-CCA is supporting promising yet undercapitalized renewable energy and energy efficiency projects and initiatives, enabling them to expand, increase their effectiveness, and improve access to energy. This support is critical for these grantees, as smaller early stage projects often need support with technical and financial studies to attract financing, reduce risk, secure permits, and strengthen their pathway to success.

CEFF-CCA's support for Kingo funded market and demand studies to support the expansion of its pay-as-you-go rural electrification services in Guatemala. This support enabled Kingo to increase its effectiveness and reach more people, while leveraging additional sources of funding. These new financial partners include the Inter-American Development Bank, multinational corporation Oglivy, and actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio, who has served on Kingo's Board of Advisors since April 2018.



“ I see my kids doing homework, and they are no longer surrounded by smoke and I'm not afraid of them falling asleep while doing homework at night. ”
- Marleny (La Verde, Guatemala)

Photo credit: Kingo

“CEFF-CCA support helped us to expand our services and bring electricity to more vulnerable families in off-grid villages,” said Kingo CEO Juan Fermín Rodríguez. For these families, this support has been truly life-changing. A user survey administered by the company showed that while the majority of Kingo's customers had experienced burns from the candles and gas lamps they used to power their homes before investing in the service, none of these people have been burned since adopting the Kingo system and equipment. In addition, children of Kingo customers study an average of 250 percent longer each day, with more than 85 percent of them seeing increases in their academic performance.

Marleny is one of these satisfied users. She now pays less to power her home, leaving more money to invest in her family. More importantly, she is thrilled to know that her family is safe. “I see my kids doing homework, and they are no longer surrounded by smoke and I'm not afraid of them falling asleep while doing homework at night,” she said, beaming.

While CEFF-CCA concludes its activities in October 2018, its support will enable grantees to transform millions of lives for years to come. “It has been inspiring to see grantees leverage CEFF-CCA support with their entrepreneurial spirit to improve business models, increase long-term viability, and amplify reach,” said CEFF-CCA Chief of Party Jorge Barrigh. “There is much evidence that this support will significantly contribute to the sustainability of the evolving clean energy transition in Central America and the Caribbean.”