

# IEEE setting its SIGHT on underserved communities

by J. Patrick Donohoe

**T**he IEEE Special Interest Group on Humanitarian Technology (SIGHT) program is a network of volunteers from around the globe that teams with underserved communities and local organizations to leverage technology for sustainable development. SIGHT partnering is characterized by key project leaders who are citizens and/or permanent residents of the geographical area where the development takes place. Opportunities exist for Student Branches to participate in SIGHT projects.

The SIGHT program operates based on several key values, including a focus on sustainable solutions that make a long-term difference in the lives of people while operating through local volunteers and partners working with local communities. Partnerships are required for a successful SIGHT project, starting with the community and extending to government organizations, non-government organizations, schools, hospitals, companies, and others. Continuous training and education are essential for SIGHT and its volunteers to be both effective and sustainable.

SIGHT groups consist of at least six IEEE members who come together to learn about sustainable development, build relationships within their local communities, and implement SIGHT group projects that utilize technology to tackle key problems within the community. Non-IEEE members are welcome and encouraged to join their local SIGHT group. Groups can be formed at the professional or university level. The SIGHT Steering Committee invites proposals for projects aligned with its vision and with budgets between US\$1,000 and US\$19,999. Proposals must demonstrate consultation with, and a clear

understanding of, the needs of target communities and demonstrate a needs-driven approach to strengthening local capacity through technology deployment. An IEEE operating unit (normally the local IEEE Section) must act as a fiscal agent for each SIGHT group. SIGHT groups assess their operations and activities for the year through an annual report submitted each year to IEEE staff.

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SIGHT groups work in assistive technology, information and communications technology, agriculture, energy, environment, health, sanitation, water, and robotics—as long as technology development, deployment, or policy is part of the solution to the problem. To implement sustainable and impactful projects in local communities, groups need to build various capacities including, but not limited to, forming community partnerships, recruiting and engaging volunteers, and securing funding.

Some examples of funded SIGHT projects include solar power installation for light-emitting diode lighting; water purification systems and other infrastructure at a remotely located school in Honduras; improvements to small-scale aquaculture in Paraguay through the installation of solar water pumps and lighting, along with a mechanized fish harvesting system; neonatal fatality prevention in Uganda through wearable vital sign monitors designed for resource-constrained hospitals; and a solar-powered charging system for wheelchair batteries in Bangladesh.

You can learn more about SIGHT by visiting <http://sight.ieee.org/>.

## About the author

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