

Community microgrids bolivia

Baumbach has also participated in meetings of the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington to present information on microgrid technology and explain how microgrids might fit into the country's current energy planning. The IDB is working to determine how disruptive technologies such as microgrids might fit into Bolivia's plan for universal access; the bank is also advocating for the creation of a map that shows which unelectrified communities are good candidates for microgrid solutions.

One Morales policy that is drawing opposition from indigenous communities and environmentalists is his plan to build massive hydroelectric projects. The dams that would be required for such mega projects would deprive many indigenous communities of their land, and threaten fragile ecosystems that support rare species. Government support for solar is less controversial, and those programs are just getting underway.

In terms of energy, Bolivia is heavily dependent on biomass, with close to 70 percent of the population reliant on wood fuel for cooking and heating. Unfortunately wood is becoming scarce in arid parts of the country, and deforestation is an issue where wood is still abundant. However, the country does have abundant solar resources, particularly in the high altitude regions of the west, which happen to be the areas where most of the country's indigenous people live.

Aside from the national grid, which is managed by Bolivia's state-owned utility, there are also many isolated grids that are run by smaller companies and cooperatives. Over 90 percent of these isolated grids currently generate electricity using diesel generators or other fuels.

At the moment, Bolivia's national energy plan only calls for four percent non-hydro generated renewable energy, but if renewable energy can prove its value through investments on isolated grids, that goal could evolve.

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