**Empowered By Light Partners with the GivePower Foundation to Install First Minigrid System at Virunga National Park**

*The solar power minigrid system will provide critical power and security for the park’s rangers and wildlife*

**Larkspur**, **Calif., August 17, 2016** –  [Empowered By Light](http://www.empoweredbylight.org/), a non-profit organization bringing renewable energy technologies to improve lives and the environment, is pleased to announce the installation of the first minigrid system in Virunga National Park in collaboration with the [GivePower Foundation](http://www.givepower.org/).

The installation, comprised of three sites totaling more than 40 kilowatts, has been completed in [Virunga National Park](https://virunga.org/), a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Virunga is Africa’s oldest national park and the continent’s most biologically diverse protected area, inhabited by roughly a quarter of the world’s endangered mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, Okapis and other rare species.

“When we visited in April, we realized just how critical reliable power is to the rangers of Virunga, we made supplying them with solar power a top priority,” said Alyssa Newman, Executive Director of Empowered By Light. “GivePower Foundation’s significant contributions made this project possible, and we’re honored to work together to serve the rangers and to help ensure Virunga National Park remains a resource for future generations.”

Solar energy will provide new power sources to three sector posts within Virunga, enabling park rangers to utilise essential tools--including security lights, radios and [more](http://empoweredbylight.org/2016/05/project-congo-update/)--enhancing their ability to protect the park’s wildlife.  These systems now bring power to remote areas of the park, contributing to existing infrastructure in order to provide reliable and sustainable sources of electricity. This newest solar project complements the ongoing work of the [Virunga Alliance](https://virunga.org/virunga-alliance/), committed to bringing peace and prosperity to communities in and around Virunga’s borders through the responsible economic development of the park’s natural resources, with a bold plan to bring clean energy to the four million people who live within a day’s walk of the park’s borders.

 “Virunga National Park is one of the last remaining lungs of the Earth,” said Moira Hanes, co-founder of Empowered by Light. “It’s crucially important we help protect the protectors of this critical habitat from which we all benefit.”

The GivePower Foundation, committed to extending the environmental and social benefits of clean renewable energy across the world, is providing the solar power installation, engineering, design and funding for the project. The minigrid project also includes [Tesla’s](https://www.tesla.com/energy) battery technology, allowing park rangers to utilize solar energy at night.

Funding for these projects would not have been possible without the support of the [Leonardo DiCaprio Foundation](http://leonardodicaprio.org/), a global organization dedicated to the long-term health and wellbeing of all Earth’s inhabitants. Other key contributors include [Canadian Solar](http://www.canadiansolar.com/), which provided the modules, and [Goal Zero](http://www.goalzero.com/), which provided portable solar power systems for the Virunga rangers to use in field operations. [Conergy](http://www.conergy.com/) supported virtual reality storytelling for the project, and the [Wallace Global Fund](http://wgf.org/) provided funding. The Virunga systems are one of three projects on which Empowered By Light, [SolarCity](http://www.solarcity.com/) and the GivePower Foundation are collaborating. Empowered By Light and GivePower are also collaborating on projects that support the Amazon Basin and the Navajo Nation.

**About Empowered By Light**

Empowered by Light’s (EBL) mission is to improve lives and the environment through renewable energy technologies. Through its projects, EBL hopes to demonstrate to developing countries that they can literally leapfrog decades of fossil fuel infrastructure development by powering their communities today with clean, renewable energy. Visit empoweredbylight.org and follow the organization on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/empoweredbylight) & [Twitter](https://twitter.com/lightempowered).

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