

# UN offers prize to illuminate 3,000 Bosnian homes

November 29 2012, by Aida Cerkez

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(AP)—Challenge prizes have inspired inventions like margarine or canned food or achievements like the Lindbergh flight over the Atlantic.

To help people living too far from Bosnia's [power grid](#), the United Nations on Thursday offered \$20,000 to whoever invents a relatively cheap [renewable energy](#) solution for over 3,000 families there.

But the marketing potential of the [invention](#) is much higher, said Yuri Afanasiev, the U.N. coordinator in Bosnia.

The winning solution should not cost more than €5,000 (\$6,500), be easy to handle and maintain and provide enough hot water and power to supply an average household.

"Ultimately, we are offering solutions for elderly people who will not have the skill to manage and maintain anything complicated," he said.

Such a kit could then be replicated in other remote areas in the world or in [national parks](#). Similar kits of [solar panels](#) already exist but the U.N. is looking for a cheaper solution—and one that matches Bosnia's harsh winter and its relatively high living standards.

Fifty families will get the winning solution in 2013.

The Isakovics, who live 12 kilometers (7 miles) from the small town of Stolac in Bosnia's southeastern hills, would like to be one of them. They

rebuilt their house after Bosnia's devastating 1992-95 war but lost every hope that a [washing machine](#) would ever make it onto their shopping list.

"So we live like our chicken," said Rizvo Isakovic, 53. "We go to bed when the sun goes down. In the winter, that's around 6 p.m. Oh, man, your body gets stiff after lying around for 12 hours."

A small generator they received as a donation is too expensive to run for the five-member family, which lives on the cheese that Rizvo's wife Izeta produces from their five cows and 70 sheep.

Asked what he thought living with electricity would be like, Rizvo paused.

"It would be like being born again," he said.

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