

Since I have a broad interest in sustainable energy development, this was the focus of my Crossing Borders field study. My trip was to Zululand in South Africa, to work with NuRa Energy. NuRa installs Solar Home Systems for rural households where no electricity grid is present.

NuRa's customers are generally very poor, due to sub-par education, and high unemployment rates. The Solar Home System offers them electric lights, a phone charger, and the possibility to power a small radio and television. The main goal of my research was to assess the socioeconomic impact of the Solar Home Systems.

*To what extent does the Solar Home System make a positive impact on the people's lives?*



The company NuRa was excellently accommodating for my arrival: they found me a good place to stay, provided me with a car, and did all the necessary things for me to complete my research. Of my two months I even spent about twenty days together with one of NuRa's technicians to travel Kwa-Zulu Natal and interview customers. I also helped in the office, looking for improvements in their Solar Online Management System. Working with the South Africans was very pleasant, and the Zulu people were very welcoming. I even enjoyed a Zulu Christmas pool party!

Apart from the work, I got to see the amazing natural beauty of Zuland, with its impressive mountain ranges, game parks, and hiking trails. I got the chance to see the famous big five, pet a wild elephant, scuba dive, and witness traditional Zulu dance. All in all, it was a fantastic and unique experience in which I saw both parts of South Africa: traditional, and western/touristic. I wouldn't have wanted to miss it!

