

Google and SolarAid announce research partnership to explore the impact of solar technology on poverty alleviation in Africa

Monday 17th February 2014: Today Google has announced their continued support of international development charity [SolarAid](#) and their work distributing solar lights in rural Africa, by funding a two year evaluation on the impact of solar lights on poverty alleviation.

In June 2013 the charity won a [Google Global Impact Award](#) for using technology to make the world a better place, faster. Pico-solar lights provide clean, safe light for families living without electricity in rural communities. Light extends the productive working day for students to study at night and for businesses to stay open. It also has health and economic impacts; reducing the indoor air pollution caused by burning fuels like kerosene for light and enabling families to save a big proportion of the household income previously spent on kerosene, candles or batteries.

There is huge potential for solar lights to improve people's standard of living in Africa and Google have agreed to fund a \$650,000 two-year Randomised Control Trial study (RCT) into the impact of solar lights on poverty alleviation.

SolarAid's social enterprise SunnyMoney is the largest distributor of solar lights in Africa. As leading experts in the sector the charity's Director of Research & Impact Kat Harrison will manage the study in collaboration with an external research partner. SolarAid established their impact and research department in 2012 in order to provide evidence to fuel discussions with governments, policy-makers and practitioners. Harrison explains: *"We've now got a great deal of quality data that helps showcase the impact of our work but despite being such an important field, there is not a lot of empirical evidence out there on the links between solar lighting and poverty alleviation. This hinders our, and the sector's, ability to advise on policy, make recommendations to governments and to fully explain just what an impact a pico-solar light can have"*.

The Google funded RCT will be the first large scale research project for pico-solar lights of its kind and provide invaluable information for SolarAid and the off-grid lighting sector.

Jacqueline Fuller, Director of Google.org, explains why Google funded the study: *"Research is an incredibly powerful tool in the fight against poverty. SolarAid has committed to rigorously assessing their programs and openly sharing their findings -- and not just the rosy ones -- to make sure they're making a big impact in people's lives. We're excited to further support their mission."*

SolarAid and Google will be sharing updates on the research throughout the two years: *"We're excited to embark on this study and have a real commitment to keeping people engaged and updated along the journey as that's the best way to raise awareness of the work, encourage interaction with the process and make sure results are shared and used to inform policy and practice"* says Harrison.

You can follow these updates [here](#) and email Elly White (elly.white@solar-aid.org) if you would like to be kept informed.

SolarAid are currently being supported by the UK government who are matching donations made by UK residents, until March 1st 2014. <https://www.solar-aid.org/fund-match-campaign-starts-today/>

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Notes to editors:

For more information:

Contact Communications Coordinator Elly White: elly.white@solar-aid.org or 020 7278 0400.

Visit website: www.solar-aid.org

Read Director of Impact & Research Kat Harrison's blog: <http://sunrisekat.tumblr.com/>

About SolarAid

SolarAid is a London-based international charity that believes in business-based solutions to poverty and climate change. SolarAid was founded in 2006 by the solar sector to explore and create clean, safe, affordable energy for all.

In 2008 SolarAid created a social enterprise called SunnyMoney to run its on the ground operations in Africa. SunnyMoney uses an innovative distribution model to sell solar lights in rural off-grid communities currently dependent on costly, toxic kerosene for lighting. By building a sustainable market for solar products SolarAid and SunnyMoney aim to eradicate the kerosene lamp from Africa by 2020.

About the Google Global Impact Challenge

In June 2013 The Google Global Impact Challenge awarded £500,000 to four British non-profits using technology to tackle the world's toughest problems. One of the awards was decided by public vote and three by a panel of judges including Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Sir Richard Branson. The award helped SolarAid take a giant step forward in its goal to eradicate the kerosene lamp from Africa by 2020.

See the Google Global Impact Challenge: <https://globalimpactchallenge.withgoogle.com/uk2013>

Key stats

- There are approximately 110 million off-grid households in Africa.
- In sub-Saharan Africa only 9% of the rural population has access to electricity.
- Families can spend around 25% of their income on kerosene.
- With a solar light an average family saves around \$70 a year from reduced kerosene use.
- This money is most commonly spent on food, school costs or business/farming investment.
- On average, children do an extra hour of homework a night with a solar light.