

One million solar lights are now shining in Africa

04 April 2014: SolarAid celebrates their millionth solar light as a major milestone for solar in Africa; providing evidence that charity can use business based solutions to bring about phenomenal social impact.

SolarAid's aim is daunting by anyone's measure – to eradicate the kerosene lamp from Africa by the end of the decade. Yet on **Tuesday 25th March** they reached a major milestone.

SolarAid's social enterprise, SunnyMoney, sold its millionth solar light to families living without electricity in rural Africa; bringing clean, safe affordable lighting to homes for the first time. This not only means that over 6 million people are now benefitting from free renewable power. It sets the foundations for an emerging solar market that will provide access to life-changing technology for millions more to come.

SunnyMoney has grown from selling less than 1000 solar lights per month in 2010 to an average of 50,000 each month this year. This remarkable growth reflects the huge need for affordable, accessible and trusted energy solutions for the 110 million households in Africa currently living without electricity. Portable pico-solar lights and mobile phone chargers are proving a popular investment for families who currently burn up to 25% of their income on costly, polluting kerosene, just to light their home.

CEO Steve Andrews explains how innovative community-based approaches have been key to sparking the growth that is necessary for building a sustainable market solution: *"In the last year, we have worked closely with teachers who act as solar advocates to raise awareness, instil trust and create channels for solar lights to be purchased in rural villages. Once people see a neighbour's light shining bright, demand grows. We then engage local agents to stock and sell solar products"*.

Shop-keeper Sally Kayoni in Bomet, Kenya now sells over 200 solar lights each month. Sally no longer sells kerosene, saying *"after I started selling these [solar lights]... there was no one asking for kerosene anymore"*. Whilst solar agents like Sally will profit from the growth of the solar economy, customers like John Kuriuki are also benefitting. Now that the family have reduced spending on kerosene saves 300 Kenyan Shillings every week. That's about \$180 a year and nearly 25% of their annual income. John explains that *"my kids don't cough now; they are safe and study well... I use the savings on buying food and paying my kids school fees"*.

With one million solar lights an estimated \$235,000 is being saved collectively by families every day and children are gaining 3 million extra hours of study time every night, helping Africa's youth work towards a brighter future.

As SunnyMoney continues to grow in Kenya, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania each country enterprise will become financially self-sustaining and generate surplus revenues that will be recycled back into the charity. This will support SolarAid's fundraising, enable country expansion and their research, policy and advocacy work that will help accelerate this solar revolution to its ultimate goal: the eradication of the kerosene lamp from Africa by 2020. Sales of another million lights and two new country programs are planned in the coming year.

SolarAid Chairman Jeremy Leggett explains what this business based solution means for development in Africa and the example he hopes it will set for global energy worldwide: *"SunnyMoney's soaring sales is by no means a job done. But it sets us on our path to proving an alternative to the fossil fuel dependency that damages our planet whilst locking millions into a cycle*

of poverty. When I founded Solarcentury, and we pledged 5% of our annual profits to set up and then help fund SolarAid, I did so in the hope that other companies would copy such a model. Now SolarAid and SunnyMoney have reached this milestone of one million solar lights, company founders can see how powerful this kind of business-based aid can be. I hope they will be inspired to copy us. The world would be a much better place if they did, in numbers. We hope that our business model for tackling climate change and poverty can set a precedent worldwide for a new kind of renaissance company; whose business will never compromise its social goal."

The UK government recently supported SolarAid through the UK aid match scheme and Greg Barker, Minister of State for Energy and Climate Change said: "*The UK is among the world leaders on solar and it's encouraging to see other countries just as committed to delivering clean and reliable energy supplies at the lowest possible price to consumers. SolarAid is a fantastic organisation and I congratulate them on their heroic efforts to combine solar technology with a smart-aid approach to make clean, safe lights affordable to all in Africa. The community-based approach is proving a huge success, with one million solar lights sold, but hopefully, that is just the beginning.*"

Notes to editors:

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About SolarAid&SunnyMoney

SolarAid is a London-based international charity that believes in business-based solutions to poverty and climate change. SolarAid was founded in 2006 by solar company SolarCentury to explore and create clean, safe, affordable energy for all. SolarCentury established SolarAid by making a long-term commitment of donating 5% of annual company profits. In 2008 SolarAid created a social enterprise called SunnyMoney to run it's 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.

UK Government support for SolarAid

SolarAid's latest Bring Me Sunshine appeal raised £1.2 million with a match from the governments UK Aid scheme.

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 up to 25% of their income on kerosene.
- One million solar lights means an estimated \$235,000 saved by families each day.
- 6.4 million people are benefitting from safe, clean light.
- 3 million extra hours of study time each night.