Google backs SolarAid to scale solar lighting in rural Africa

SolarAidwins £500,000 Global Impact Award from Google's Global Impact Challenge

Tuesday 4th June: The Global Impact Award, decided by a panel of judges including Sir Tim Berners-Lee and Sir Richard Branson, will help the UK charity get 144,000 solar lights to rural Tanzanian families and create jobs for over 400 solar entrepreneurs, taking SolarAid a giant step forward in its goal to eradicate the kerosene lamp from Africa by 2020.

Four Google Global Impact Awards, announced this afternoon, have been given to 'British non-profits using tech to tackle the world's toughest problems'. SolarAid tackles the issues of poverty, health, education, unemployment and global warming by creating sustainable markets for solar lights throughout rural Africa. 598 million African people live without access to electricity. Small solar lights provide an alternative to the expensive, toxic kerosene lamps often used for lighting.

Steve Andrews, SolarAid CEO, said, *"Giving people access to simple solar technology impacts poverty and changes lives forever. The Global Impact Award will not only help us get 144,000 solar lights into Tanzania but create a sustainable model for solar distribution, market and job creation we can replicate across the continent. The impact of the technology and the effect of the award will be astounding."*

Three of the Google Global Impact Awards were decided by the panel and one by public vote. SolarAid attracted votes from solar, renewable and development advocates around the world, including many African organisations.

Bestselling author Ian McEwan joined the call for votes, explaining, *"Without light there is no literacy. SolarAid's simple technology and brilliantly conceived networks are bringing rural African children out of the dark."*

Pippa Palmer, SolarAid MD, concluded, *"We cannot believe the overwhelming support we have received over the past few days. I would like to thank everyone who voted for SolarAid and helped spread the word. Google has given us a fantastic opportunity to highlight the life-changing impact of the simple solar light. We'll be using the incredible momentum to build even more awareness of SolarAid's work to reach millions living without electricity."*

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About SolarAid

SolarAid helps families in Africa's remotest off-grid regions afford food, education and a brighter future by distributing small solar lamps that end dependency on costly, toxic kerosene. SolarAid set up SunnyMoney, a not-for-profit trading arm that uses an innovative business model to distribute lights at scale on the ground.

Rather than giving aid, SunnyMoney sells lights in order to build viable sustainable markets in areas where little retail or transport infrastructure exists. All lights sold by SunnyMoney are Lighting Africa approved and combine photovoltaic, battery and LED technology. These solar lights have a life-span of at least 5 years and cost as little as £5. SunnyMoney is the largest seller of solar lights in Africa.

For more information please contact:

Pippa Palmer, Managing Director, SolarAid
Email: pippa.palmer@solar-aid.org
Tel: 020 7278 0400
Web: www.solar-aid.org

Further details on kerosene lamps and black carbon:

A recent 4–year research by 31 Atmospheric Scientists has highlighted the previously unrecognized impact of black carbon on global warming (Bond et al 2013).

Another study calculates that unburnt black particulate (soot) from kerosene lamps contributes exponentially to global warming. Black carbon from kerosene lamps hangs in the air where it reflects the sun and causes atmospheric temperature increases that directly contribute to global warming. Kerosene lamps account for as much as 3% of global black carbon emissions (Lam et al 2012).

The scale of the problem is much greater than previously realised. During its short atmospheric lifetime (a matter of days), "[...] one kg of black carbon produces as much 'positive forcing' (the measure for atmospheric warming) as 700 kg of carbon dioxide (CO2) does during 100 years (Lam et al, 2012:4; Bond et al 2011).

Pippa Palmer, SolarAid MD explains: *"Black Carbon creates a greater imperative for the environmental sector to get behind the eradication of the kerosene lamp than ever before. This new data puts the 0.092 tonnes per year of CO_2 emissions saved per lamp per year into a totally new perspective – we've been pre-occupied with CO_2 molehills, when in fact it is the mountainous impact of black carbon that makes the eradication of the kerosene lamp so very urgent for our planet and its people."*

Professor Kirk Smith, Nobel Prize Winner and professor of Global Environmental Health, Berkeley stated: *"There are no magic bullets that will solve all of our greenhouse gas problems, but replacing kerosene lamps is low-hanging fruit, and we don't have many examples of that in the climate world."*