

LIGHT LIBRARIES

JUNE 2021



ABOUT SOLARAID



A LITTLE BIT ABOUT OUR ORGANISATION

SolarAid is an international charity set up to fight poverty and climate change. Our vision is of a world where everyone has access to clean, renewable, energy.

548 million people across Africa live without access to electricity. Without electricity, families, communities and businesses are limited. Millions rely on expensive and dangerous alternatives, such as candles and kerosene for basic lighting each night.

Solar lights and systems can transform rural communities overnight, providing much needed safe, clean and reliable light and power in homes, schools and health facilities.

Through its social enterprise, SunnyMoney, and partner organisations, SolarAid helps create access to solar power and lighting by catalysing solar markets and continually innovating to help ensure that no one is left in the dark.

2020, we set a mission to light up every home, school and clinic in Africa by the end of the decade - using safe, clean solar power.

OVERVIEW

Without access to electricity, children are forced to endanger their lives just to do their homework, with many forced to use dangerous candles and kerosene lamps each night. COVID-19 has exacerbated this issue. Small businesses are struggling and many families cannot afford any form of lighting. When the sun goes down, their day is cut short.

SolarAid's market-based model, which creates awareness and access to quality solar lights through rural schools and solar entrepreneurs, has reached over 11 million people.

But this is not enough. Even the most affordable solar light remains out of reach for the poorest families.



THE PROBLEM



Over 548 million people in sub-Saharan Africa have no access to electricity, which means whole communities descend into darkness when the sun goes down each evening.

Families across the continent are often forced to rely on dangerous alternatives, such as candles and kerosene lamps. These provide limited light and can result in eye strain and breathing issues. This is not how children in the 21st century are lighting their books each night. Teachers, meanwhile, struggle to find time to mark homework and prepare lesson plans without access to light.

Solar lights offer an elegant solution to these problems. Yet, for many families, even the most affordable solar light remains out of reach.

THE SOLUTION



Building on SolarAid's experience of working with schools and communities across the continent, SolarAid has designed, what we call, Light Libraries, which have been created specifically to reach the poorest students and their families.

Solar light libraries are like a book library, but for solar lights! For as little as 1p a day, much less than families are spending on candles, kerosene or batteries, students can borrow a solar light from their local school. With a solar light, children have the opportunity to study safely after dark.

"What I have seen after assessing them, most of them are now able to read. The young ones are breaking through in Zambian language and the older ones are breaking through in English as well."

- Ms. Michelo, Teacher,
Nyakantingi Primary School, Zambia



In addition to providing schools with portable solar lights, we also equip schools with solar systems to light up classrooms for evening study - this is particularly important during exam times. Solar systems also mean that teachers can plan lessons and mark school work after dark, as well as keep phones charged and stay connected with the education authorities.

Light libraries mean that low income households which struggle to purchase a solar light, can still benefit from access to a solar light and stop wasting money on alternatives such as candles.

Over time, these solar lights can help households save money, while at the same time generate revenue for local schools, boosting education budgets.

Light libraries also act as a 'try before you buy' model, helping to build trust in and demand for solar products. Each Light Library is linked with a locally recruited solar entrepreneur, who can offer solar lights for sale in the community.



IMPACT

Access to solar light changes everything. When a student uses a solar light, every member of the household will benefit. Through our impact research, over 30,000 interactions with rural customers, we understand the impact a solar light will have on a family:*

Education

Children can study after dark under clean, safe light - on average children with access to a solar light do an extra hour of study each night.

Money saved

Families save 10% of their income from not buying kerosene, candles or batteries - savings are spent on food, schooling and improving livelihoods.

Environment

Over 1 tonne of CO₂ is averted over the lifetime of a solar light - mitigating climate change and reducing indoor air pollution, which kills more people per year than HIV and malaria combined.

Health

Over half the household notice improved health, with less eye and respiratory illness. Particularly important now due to the nature of the COVID-19 virus.

Wellbeing

Families can enjoy each other's company after sunset - with improved security and safety.

*Calculated over the conservatively estimated three year life span of a basic solar light

OUR PLANS



In 2021, SolarAid is launching new innovations to reach every home, school and clinic in rural Africa with clean, safe and affordable solar light.

The Light Library model is at the forefront of innovation for rural energy access. Through this project, we will prove the impact Light Libraries can have on education, energy access and market catalysation.

Our goal is to replicate Light Libraries across the continent so that, by 2030, no school or student is left in the dark. Together, we can end the darkness.

For more information, visit www.solar-aid.org

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