

# MAKING LIGHT WORK





## WHY WE EXIST

Nearly 600 million people in sub-Saharan Africa live without access to energy. In rural communities across the continent, the day ends when the sun sets. In the darkness, businesses close, children are unable to study, and families are left without a sense of safety. For a little bit of light, many turn

to battery powered torches, kerosene lamps or paraffin candles – alternatives that are expensive, dangerous and emit toxic fumes into people's lungs, homes and the atmosphere.



## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

SolarAid is an international charity founded in 2006 dedicated to bringing solar power to rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa. Together with our social enterprise, SunnyMoney, we are travelling to the places hardest to reach, pioneering innovative enterprise programmes that tackle poverty and climate change. To date, we have distributed over 2.3 million solar lights across rural sub-Saharan Africa.

We know that every time someone switches on a solar powered light, it's an instant win for people and the planet. That's why it's our mission to light up every home, school and clinic in Africa by 2030, making real sustainable change with clean, safe solar power.





**OUR WORK IN NUMBERS**

**2,361,939**

**SOLAR LIGHTS DISTRIBUTED**

**2422**

**SOLAR LIGHTS REPAIRED**

**133**

**LIGHT LIBRARIES**

**2883**

**MAYI WALAS, WOMEN SOLAR  
ENTREPRENEURS**





## OUR WORK IN ACTION

Our challenge is to ensure we reach the populations hardest to reach, overcoming barriers of poverty and deprivation to deliver clean, affordable, sustainable energy into rural communities.

Since we set up, we have gained extensive knowledge from working on the ground and building a sustainable market for solar lights in sub-Saharan Africa. Through our social enterprise, SunnyMoney, we have learned that building local, sustainable businesses and involving communities is the best way to ensure universal energy access and make lasting change happen faster. With our business-based approach, we help bridge the gap between emerging enterprises and people living in poverty. This means we can invest in bold ideas and create programmes that are scalable for both businesses and governments.

However, with the effects of climate change being prominent, there is an urgency to fast-track universal energy access. We need to innovate programmes with the potential to be replicated or scaled, we need to work in partnerships with rural communities and key stakeholders to develop and test innovative models designed to overcome the barriers that prevent the poorest communities from accessing sustainable solar light and electricity.





# ACHIEVING UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS

## Reaching the hardest to reach

To ensure that everyone is being reached by clean, renewable energy, it is not enough to only measure the amount of solar lights that are being distributed. We need to ensure that we are also reaching the poorest and most vulnerable parts of the population in the countries where we work. Many of these communities are located in remote, hard to reach areas and we work with networks of solar entrepreneurs to ensure we are reaching even the families furthest away. To measure this, we have developed **Leave No One Behind** metrics which we are using to assess and compare the effectiveness of any programme in effectively increasing access to electric light and power.



## Game-changing models

With the urgent need to ensure people living in extreme poverty are not left behind in the energy transition, we are working in partnership with rural communities and key stakeholders to develop and test innovative, game-changing programmes reaching the poorest, and which can be adopted and scaled across the continent.

Our **Light a Village** programme in Malawi is an example of this. This ground-breaking innovation aims to create community transformation through trialling a new way of distributing solar lighting in remote areas by engaging with the local community. Each household is provided with a solar home system, which makes electricity available in every home through an '**Energy-as-a-Service**' model, meaning families receive instant access to electricity by only paying for the electricity they use. This model responds to two key barriers that keep the poorest communities from gaining energy access - affordability and risk.

## Overcoming financial barriers

Affordability is a critical barrier to accessing solar light and power for many households. With a large part of the rural population in the countries where we work living below the poverty line, families are struggling to afford even the smallest solar lights. There are several ways in which SolarAid's programmes address finance barriers both for customers and entrepreneurs.

For example, some of our programmes offer access to solar energy through a low cost fee only for usage, such as our Energy-as-a-service programme **Light a Village**. For the customers who prefer to own their own light or system, we work with **subsidies** of our products.

To extend the lifetime of our solar lights, we are also scaling up our successful **solar light repair programmes** in Malawi and Zambia, supporting customers to enjoy their lights over a longer period of time.



For our solar entrepreneurs, who are the backbone of our operations and our success in reaching remote communities, we support with **access to finance** through partners such as Lendwithcare and or through our business cooperatives, to help them expand their solar business and reach more customers.





## THANK YOU FROM OUR CEO

Today, there are essentially no rural communities across sub-Saharan Africa where everyone has access to solar powered light and electricity. We need to change this reality.

We need to prioritise communities that are in the poorest, remotest areas. The areas where many solar enterprises struggle to go. We need to show the world that the people in these areas must not be left behind.

To do this we need to lead the way and demonstrate it can be done, and we need to provide the proof that it can.

At SolarAid, our mission is to ensure that no one is forgotten - we call it 100%. It's about recognising that it's not good enough to simply distribute more solar lights, we have to reach everyone.

We could simply give solar products out as handouts in these places. But we know that this would not be a long term solution. It would not build the sustainable market place that would be needed to ensure products remain operational in the long-term.

So we do it the hard way - devising a business-based approach so people can buy products or pay for access to energy, making them customers not beneficiaries.

This builds local jobs and resilience. It means people have a right to a warranty should a solar light need repairing or replacing. It puts them in control rather than being dependent on aid.

By demonstrating how it can be done, we can leverage thousands of emerging solar enterprises across the African continent.

Reaching some of the poorest and most climate vulnerable communities in the world is not easy. Doing this hard work needs long-term commitment and that includes people like you.

**Thank you for your amazing support.**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Keane".

**John Keane, CEO SolarAid**





**MAKE  
LIGHT  
WORK**



To find out more, go to [www.solar-aid.org](http://www.solar-aid.org)  
or contact [info@solar-aid.org](mailto:info@solar-aid.org)

Number: 1115960. Photos: SolarAid/Kondwani Jere and SolarAid