



Earth day: joining forces to get renewable energy to 1 million Tanzanians

Arusha, Tanzania (April 22, 2019) – Solar Sister, a non-profit that trains and supports women to deliver clean energy to rural African communities, BRAC, the world’s largest development organization, and Signify, the world leader in lighting, today proudly announce the successful launch of Women Entrepreneurship through the Solar Value chain for Economic development, or WE SOLVE. WE SOLVE is committed to improving employment and economic opportunities for women and providing access to clean energy in rural Tanzania.

In Tanzania approximately 8.5 million households are not connected to the electrical grid and so must rely on expensive and toxic fuels for their daily needs. Meanwhile, many women are seeking a livelihood so they can take care of themselves and their families.

In WE SOLVE, Solar Sister provides training and opportunities for women entrepreneurs to sell clean energy products to their own and neighbouring communities. Signify, among other providers, ensures that these entrepreneurs have high-quality, energy-efficient, reliable and safe lighting to sell.

“I’m very happy to see how joining our forces, covering every segment of the value chain, has now resulted in the start of such an impactful project, enabling so many more women in Tanzania to become solar entrepreneurs,” says Katherine Lucey, CEO of Solar Sister. “Our model helps the women to create a sustainable livelihood, while helping their families, friends and communities with clean, safe lighting.”

Prajna Khanna agrees that the collaboration between diverse but essential partners is key to sustainable development. “I have worked on so many projects throughout my career, but this truly is a one-of-a-kind public-private collaboration, in which we provide so much more than solar-powered lighting,” says Prajna. “What we provide is a whole new market ecosystem...one might say that together we’re pioneering the future of development cooperation! This is an excellent example of where the business case and development case are clearly aligned with each other and SDGs.”

Despite high quality solar technology and a well-trained women-driven distribution network, the affordability challenge remains. Many rural communities in Tanzania are underserved by banks and don’t have enough cash-in-hand to buy quality products. This is where BRAC comes in, providing microloans to enable people without access to traditional financing to purchase solar energy products such as lights and phone chargers.

WE SOLVE: a unique partnership creates jobs for women and spreads clean energy in Tanzania

Fordson Kafweku, Country Representative at BRAC Tanzania said the programme “targets the ultra poor by bringing them closer to financial inclusion that will take them out of poverty. WE SOLVE directly empowers 260,000 households with quality lighting solutions which further impact 1 million Tanzanians, many of whom are micro entrepreneurs and can now use extra hours in their business. This also helps their children to utilize solar lighting for their education when it’s needed the most.”

This unique model will create new jobs, enhance economic productivity, income and life chances of 2,000 Solar entrepreneurs and reach 260,000 households, providing over 1 million Tanzanians with clean, renewable energy, improving lives and harnessing the great powers of the sun, the latest solar technology, and the local women of Tanzania.

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