



20 million additional study hours for school children in Rwanda: Olafur Eliasson's Little Sun Foundation increases access to education with solar energy

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Berlin / Kamonyi district, 6 March 2019 – Light and energy are essential to human existence. In the Kamonyi district of Rwanda, 96.5% of the population lacks access to electricity, making it difficult for school children to study at night. Through the Solar Schools Program, the Little Sun Foundation has provided over 20,000 school children with solar lamps – creating over 20 million additional study hours.

Rwanda is a global leader in sustainability and gender equality. The nation is a pioneer in reducing waste and their government has exemplary rates of female representation. However, energy access, particularly in rural areas, remains a challenge. In the Kamonyi district, 96.5% of the population does not have access to electricity and more than half of the primary schools remain unconnected to the national grid. Without a reliable light source, completing daily activities after the sun sets is difficult. At home, most families depend on candles or kerosene lamps. However, fuel-based lamps emit toxic fumes, causing eye and nose irritations, respiratory distress and even pulmonary disease. For children in these remote regions, access to clean, safe and reliable energy is often a gateway to education.

The Little Sun Foundation delivers high-quality and sustainable solar lamps to students, allowing them to continue their studies after dusk. In February 2019, alongside their partners Safer Rwanda and the Rwandan Ministry of Education, the Little Sun Foundation reached a milestone: all 26 off-grid schools in Kamonyi have been equipped with solar energy.

In total, over 24,000 school children received solar lamps and more than 500 solar chargers were distributed to teachers. One Little Sun solar lamp provides over 1,000 hours of light. This means that cumulatively, over 24 million illuminated hours have been created, allowing children to read, play and study after dark. The use of renewable energy benefits families and neighborhoods from an environmental, economic and educational perspective. The distributed solar devices will eliminate 8,855,023 tons of CO₂ emissions, save a total of \$4,882,652 on energy expenses and promote more sustainable practices within the villages. These savings empower families, allowing them to redirect their focus on their children's education. Each school also took part in solar workshops. These workshops educated both students and teachers on solar technology, the importance of renewable energy and the risks of unhealthy energy sources. These were opportunities for the communities to understand how they can utilize their solar devices while simultaneously have a positive environmental impact.



In many areas of Sub-Saharan Africa, the sun remains an untapped natural resource. Until off-grid schools see an increase in solar infrastructure, portable solar lamps are a clean, practical, and affordable solution. Prior to receiving a solar lamp, 13-year-old student Cécile Imanishimwe was using a kerosene lamp to study, *“I like this Little Sun solar lamp so much because it has helped me improve my school grades. Before I got it, I had to repeat classes, but now I actually got promoted to more advanced classes.”* For the parents, the lamp is also useful, they can now do household chores or cook in the evening. Dominah Mukamana, Cécile’s mother, further explains the benefits of solar energy, *“When we used kerosene lamps, we often caught severe colds and had black coating in the nose. With the solar lamp, we don’t have any side effects at all.”*

Impact assessment in the Solar Schools shows that dropout rates have effectively decreased, enrollment has grown and exam performance has improved. Solar chargers allow teachers to spend more time preparing lessons since they can access online tools without having to walk long distances and pay to charge their devices at a power station. Every year, thousands of new students that enroll in school in the Kamonyi region lack access to electricity. The Little Sun Foundation is launching a campaign to equip every incoming student in the district with a solar lamp. Through their campaign ‘Give Light’, Little Sun plans to support an additional 8,000 school children and 500 teachers by the end of 2020. With a €30 donation, you can give one child up to 5 years of safe light. Long term, the foundation aims to implement Solar Schools across Africa, making universal access to clean energy a reality, brightening students’ futures across the continent.

Give light to school children in Rwanda

- €5 provides a student with 160 hours of additional study time
- €30 provides a student starting school with a solar lamp and over 1,000 hours of additional study hours
- €60 equips a teacher with a phone charger with an inbuilt lamp to stay connected and prepare lessons after sunset
- €250 facilitates one solar workshop in a school in the Kamonyi district
- With a monthly donation, you can make a long-term impact on the lives of families in Kamonyi

Betterplace campaign: betterplace.org/p68310

About the Little Sun Foundation

The Little Sun Foundation is a not-for-profit organization founded by artist Olafur Eliasson. The charitable entity delivers solar energy to the most vulnerable communities worldwide, focusing on refugees, orphans and school children in electricity-deprived regions of the world. The Little Sun Foundation works with qualified partners such as Oxfam, Save the Children, UNHCR and IOM to bring high-quality, durable, long-lasting solar products to empower those who need them most. Most people living off the electrical grid rely on dangerous, polluting and expensive kerosene lanterns or candles for lighting. Providing communities lacking access to electricity with solar energy improves their health, supports their well-being, ultimately allowing them to thrive and achieve new potentials. littlesunfoundation.org



Key points

- Kamonyi district, Rwanda
- Less than 4% of the district's population has access to electricity
- 26 schools equipped with 24,323 solar lamps and 526 solar chargers
- 1 solar lamp = 1,006 extra study hours
- Total study hours facilitated: 24,468,938 hours
- CO2 emissions saved: 8,855,023 tons
- Savings on fossil fuels expenses: \$4,882,652

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