

Empowering Digital Health Innovators with Solar: Little Sun partners with BRAC and John Snow R&T Institute, Inc. in Uganda and Ethiopia



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Kampala, Berlin, Addis Ababa, 3 September 2020 – BRAC Uganda and John Snow R&T Institute, Inc. win the request for proposals by Little Sun, and will receive a total of 648 Little Sun Charges, state-of-the-art solar-powered phone chargers, to strengthen health systems in remote areas without access to electricity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chargers will be delivered to local teams of Community Health Workers and Technicians in Uganda and Ethiopia.

COVID-19 has brought to light the many challenges confronting health systems around the world. In addition to national limitations in medical equipment and testing capacities, people living in remote areas lack sufficient access to medical care and in Ethiopia alone, 95% of all rural health posts are non-electrified.

Digital Health technologies employing app-based digital tools on smartphones can help overcome these challenges. For successful implementation however, reliable access to electricity is vital.

“Digital health is changing and improving the quality of health provision at the last mile but it can’t work without keeping smartphones charged. We’ve learned from Community Health workers across Africa that a powerful, portable solar phone charger is a game changer. This is why we are very excited to partner with BRAC and JSI to make sure their staff have the access to energy they need to provide their important health care work, especially now during the pandemic,” says Mason Huffine, Little Sun’s Director of Humanitarian Affairs.

BRAC and JSI convinced the team with their program proposals and will each receive 324 Little Sun Charges to equip their frontline health care workers with solar to power their efforts in Uganda and Ethiopia.

“Health extension workers are usually stationed at their health post, and reside in the Kebele [neighborhood] they serve, so that they will be close to the community at all times. But rural Ethiopia has little or no access to electricity and interruptions are frequent. This means our health extension workers sometimes have to travel up to 10 kms to the next urban area just to charge their phones. The portable solar chargers will save them valuable time and energy that can be used to deliver health services to women and children,” says Anteneh Kinfe, eCHIS Team Leader John Snow R&T Institute, Inc.

“The 324 phone chargers will be distributed to a local all-women team of Community Health Workers and Technicians in Northern and Eastern Uganda. They operate in distant and hard to reach places without power. The solar charger from Little Sun is a help-in-time. They provide solar energy and ensure that our community health workers can provide uninterrupted and much needed health services to households at the last mile,” says Dr. George Owuor Matete, Country Director, BRAC Uganda

The Little Sun Charge combines Digital Health care with reliable solar energy – a promising and sustainable combination that can make a real difference in the provision of health care in everyday life, but especially during the pandemic. The Little Sun Charge was specifically designed with a large solar panel and high capacity battery to power any kind of smartphone.

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Press photos: <https://bit.ly/2ED6RxX>.

To download this press release and Little Sun info material, visit the [Little Sun media page](#).

About Little Sun

Little Sun delivers affordable and renewable energy to those without access to power while mobilizing climate action globally. Founded in 2012 by contemporary artist Olafur Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen, Little Sun integrates the world of art and design with pragmatic clean energy solutions. The non-profit brings light to the most vulnerable communities worldwide who are off the grid, both in Sub-Saharan Africa and worldwide, focusing on school children, refugees and people affected by natural disaster.

Over the past five years, Little Sun has become the light of choice in the humanitarian sector and is actively engaged in supporting Digital Health programs with access to energy. In addition, Little Sun runs various social development projects, livelihoods and entrepreneur programs, educational programs, health system-strengthening programs and productive use of renewable energy projects (PURE).

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About the winning programs

Uganda: BRAC

BRAC operates community health worker (CHW) programs in several countries across Africa and Asia, providing its essential health care model with a focus on maternal and child health, infectious diseases, nutrition, family planning and non-communicable diseases. Since 2007, BRAC has provided healthcare services to 3.2 million people in Uganda with an emphasis on women of reproductive age and children under five. Currently, BRAC manages a robust network of more than 4,000 CHWs in 72 of 125 districts across Uganda.

In 2015, BRAC began working with Living Goods and Medic Mobile to build a custom digital health platform for its CHWs. The platform features patient profiles, task management support, point-of-care decision support, forms-based data collection, and analytics for data-driven performance management. BRAC supervising staff use the collected data to monitor and supervise CHWs more efficiently and have developed a cloud-based IT system to digitize all programmatic operations, administrative tasks, and supply chain management. The app was built using the open source Community Health Toolkit, a global public good being adopted by a growing number of governments and NGOs.

About BRAC

BRAC is a global leader in developing and implementing cost-effective, evidence-based programs to assist the most marginalized people in extremely poor, conflict-prone, and post-disaster settings. These include initiatives in education, healthcare, microfinance, women and girls' empowerment, agriculture, human and legal rights, and more. BRAC's vision is a world free from all forms of exploitation and discrimination where everyone has the opportunity to realize their potential. In 2020, BRAC was named the number one NGO in the world by NGO Advisor for the fifth consecutive year. Founded in Bangladesh in 1972, BRAC currently operates in 11 countries in Asia and Africa, touching the lives of over 100 million people. Learn more at brac.net.

Ethiopia: John Snow R&T Institute, Inc.

JSI's mobile app, developed in-collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, captures electronic data from the Health Extension Program. It intends to utilize this data to improve the program performance, community health outcomes, and also serve as an aid to Health Extension Workers (HEW). The phone chargers will go to selected Health Extension Workers based in Ethiopia.

About John Snow R&T Institute Inc.

John Snow R&T Institute Inc (JSI) is a public health research and consulting firm in the United States and around the world. Through collaborating with local partners, JSI assists countries, governments, communities, families, and individuals to develop their own skills and identify solutions that meet their public health needs. JSI works to improve access to and quality of health care through management assistance, education, information, training and use of technology (IT). JSI conducts research and provides technical assistance to enable agencies and health professionals to address the needs of families they serve, especially the poor and underserved. Learn more at <https://www.jsi.com/>.
