

Solar Sister, Inc.

Category:

Best EcoHealth Solution

Organization/Company Name:

Provide the official name of your company or organization.

Solar Sister, Inc.

Overview:

Provide key information about the company, including its origins, mission, and core philosophy. Describe the solution, impact, and sector focus (e.g., water management, renewable energy, circular economy, waste management, sustainable agriculture, net-zero initiatives, etc.).

Solar Sister, founded in 2010, eradicates poverty in Africa by empowering women entrepreneurs through locally-driven, clean energy interventions. Data show that 597 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa live in poverty due to lack of economic opportunity and limited access to reliable energy sources-women and children in these communities are disproportionately affected. Our mission is to economically empower women and eradicate energy poverty through entrepreneurship. Our core philosophy is that women, as primary heads of household, are most effectively suited to advance the economic, energy, and health needs of their families. To that end, our model focuses on two areas: a) women's empowerment-we recruit, train and support women entrepreneurs to distribute clean energy products like solar lamps, home systems, and clean cooking products in underserved communities; and b) access to clean energy-utilization of these clean energy tools reduced dependence on fossil fuel which are harmful to human health and the climate while supporting livelihoods and income generation for entrepreneurs.

In short, Solar Sister is the world's first scalable, women-led renewable energy distribution model. Our model is unique because of WHO we primarily serve (women) , HOW we engage them (entrepreneurship training), and WHAT we provide (access to clean energy).

Our commitment is to support our Solar Sister Entrepreneurs (SSEs) to build sustainable businesses through 7 key activities, including Recruitment of Women Entrepreneurs, Clean Energy Distribution, Graduated Business Coaching and Training, Business Booster Program, Digitization/Digital literacy program and our \"Powered By\" programs. These

activities recognize the unique challenges and barriers that rural women entrepreneurs face and enable us to drive women's entrepreneurship and build thriving clean energy businesses.

Our impact is that 12,000 women entrepreneurs have gained economic independence across Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya. In addition, more than 5.5 million people within the region now have access to clean energy and more than 1.5 million metric tons of CO2 emissions have been mitigated.

Climate Health & Alignment with UN SDGs / National Policy Guidelines:

Please explain how your innovation mitigates or adapts to climate-related health risks and aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and national climate policies.

Solar Sister operates at the critical intersection of women's empowerment, energy poverty and climate action. Effectively contributing to four (4) of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in order of our internal priorities: a) SDG 5: Gender Equality by economically empowering women through entrepreneurship opportunities; b) SDG 7: Affordable and Clean Energy by increasing access to clean energy in underserved communities; and c) SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being by reducing indoor air pollution and promoting low-carbon energy; and d) SDG 13: Climate Action.

By providing access to clean energy, we not only improve health outcomes by reducing indoor air pollution but also promote low-carbon energy, contributing to climate action. Reliable, affordable, and efficient electricity boosts productivity, generates jobs, and enhances living conditions, particularly for women and children. Our approach economically empowers women through entrepreneurship opportunities, promoting gender equality and contributing to poverty alleviation.

Furthermore, Solar Sister's activities align with national climate policies, particularly in countries like Nigeria, where our organization operates. By supporting goals of increasing energy access, reducing emissions, and promoting sustainable development, we contribute to the achievement of national climate resilience and sustainable development strategies. Several African nations have committed to increasing renewable energy shares in their energy mix to reduce vulnerability to climate impacts, and our model of using women-led distribution networks for clean energy fits within these national strategies.

By combining women's economic empowerment with clean energy access, Solar Sister creates a pathway to address interlinked challenges of energy poverty, health risks from pollution, and gender inequality. This approach enhances community resilience to

climate-related health risks while contributing to broader sustainable development and climate goals. Our innovation mitigates climate-related health risks by: - Reducing indoor air pollution through the promotion of clean energy, - Enhancing community resilience to climate-related health risks and - Promoting sustainable development and climate action

Overall, Solar Sister's model is well-positioned to support the achievement of the SDGs and national climate policies, while making a meaningful impact in the communities we serve.

Measurable Impact:

Explain how you benchmark success and impact using scientific validation and quantifiable metrics where possible (e.g., peer-reviewed publications, Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) data, partnerships, net-zero targets, CO₂ reduction, resource efficiency, waste diversion rates, improved health outcomes, etc).

To date, Solar Sister has supported more than 12,000 women entrepreneurs across Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya. We have helped provide clean energy access to more than 5.5 million people within the region. We have eliminated the reliance on 400,000 kerosene lanterns and mitigated more than 1.5 million metric tons of CO₂ emissions. Furthermore, enabled energy saving of over \$222.9 million (USD) as a result of replacement of traditional and battery dependent alternatives and supported additional income generation of \$57.4 million (USD) as a result of off-grid system ownership. Our work is guided by 3 key goals that align with our mission, which we actively track.

Goal #1: To Achieve Gender Equity and Women's Economic Empowerment.

Number of women recruited & trained

Number of active entrepreneurs

Annual revenue from clean energy products sold

Number of women accessing Solar Sister support resources (business booster credit facility, advanced training curriculum, digital literacy, powered by program)

Goal #2: To Provide Energy Access to Last-Mile Communities.

Number of products sold by product category

Number of last-mile consumers provided with energy access

Savings from kerosene replacement

Economic benefit generated in last-mile communities

Goal #3: To Advance Climate Justice in Economically Disadvantaged Communities

CO₂e mitigated

Current kerosene lanterns displacement

Our technology-fueled data collection tools include:

1. M&E framework - track progress in alleviating poverty and empowering women.

2. \"Improving Livelihood Indices\" - tracks economic, social, environmental and health outcomes of intervention in underserved communities.
3. Mobile Business Toolkit - developed in partnership with the Grameen Foundation's TaroWorks: (frontend) - used for remote/low-connectivity areas to collect data in real-time and manage the supply-chain.
4. CRM platform to manage sales/operations Salesforce (backend): This enables us to monitor progress towards goals, evaluate impact data and identify key areas of interventions to improve.

Current Stage & Market Potential:

Describe the current stage and potential for scaling your solution to new markets, industries, or geographies. If any, include details on market demand, regulatory considerations, barriers to scale, adoption strategy and long-term sustainability.

Solar Sister currently operates in Sub-saharan Africa. A region with about 597 million people with no access to clean and reliable energy. Our solution has demonstrated potential scale to new markets driven by the growing demand for clean energy. Since Inception, we have reached a total of 5 million people with our current operations in Nigeria, Tanzania and Kenya. The market demand potential for our solution within these countries is highlighted below;

Nigeria: Number of persons with no access to electricity: 85,000,000
Solar Sister beneficiaries reached: 2,299,339
Percentage of reach within market potential: 2.7%

Tanzania: Number of persons with no access to electricity: 36,000,000
Solar Sister beneficiaries reached: 2,836,721
Percentage of reach within market potential: 7.9%

Kenya: Number of persons with no access to electricity: 12,000,000
Solar Sister beneficiaries reached: 574,986
Percentage of reach within market potential: 4.8%

There are currently few options to bring energy to off-grid, last mile communities. Other solar providers in the region do not target the most remote communities served by Solar Sister because distribution inefficiencies make sales unprofitable. Therefore Solar Sister model caters for a unique market but faces the following barriers in scaling up.

1. High upfront cost and limited funding: New communities for expansion are often more remote, and harder-to-reach, hence increasing the upfront cost of implementing the solar sister model. Furthermore, limited funding poses a challenge to Solar Sister's

scale. Solar Sister mitigates by operating a hybrid model and diversifying funding sources. Additionally, Solar Sister has also maintained an agile model which seeks to continuously optimize operations to operate efficiently at scale.

2. Cultural Challenges: Traditional gender roles and societal norms limit women's economic participation. Solar Sister addresses this by working with local women's groups, fostering leadership, building trust, and offering targeted training to empower women entrepreneurs.

3. Technological Gaps: Women in Africa face significant gaps in mobile technology use, including lower rates of mobile internet use, phone ownership, and smartphone ownership. Barriers include affordability and lack of digital literacy. SolarSister is addressing these challenges by investing in scalable digital solutions and mobile platforms tailored to women entrepreneurs' needs.

Long-term sustainability is critical to our mission. We plan to achieve this through a combination of revenue-generating activities, strategic partnerships, and ongoing evaluation and improvement of our solution. By continuously monitoring and adapting to changing market conditions, stakeholder engagement, and community needs, we'll ensure our solution remains effective and sustainable over time.

Staff and Advisors:

Describe your team's expertise (e.g., academic standing, intellectual property contributions, research collaborations, and professional communications). Highlight the team's role in innovation, policy influence, and industry leadership.

Solar Sister is a USA-based organization with a strong commitment to local operations, driven by a dynamic team of 112 full-time employees. Notably, our team is deeply rooted in the communities we serve, with 97% of African origin and 96% based within our local operations in Africa. This localized approach enables us to effectively understand and address the unique needs of our stakeholders, fostering a more impactful approach to clean energy access and women's empowerment.

Our Organizational Structure - unifies our strength as a global entity with locally-incorporated organizations. With our global headquarters incorporated in the United States, our 3 subsidiary organizations are uniquely incorporated in Kenya, Nigeria and Tanzania and run by local leadership and staff while our Africa Council brings together leadership from these 4 entities to set our strategic vision.

Our Team -

Olasimbo Sojinrin, Chief Executive Officer (USA) - provides visionary leadership and strategic direction for Solar Sister. With more than 18 years of experience in sustainable development, gender advocacy, and community engagement throughout

Africa, Olasimbo formerly served as Chief Operating Officer, leading Solar Sister's efforts to expand its impact and reach in Africa. Before joining Solar Sister, she managed projects for international organizations such as the British Council and the Bank of Industry/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Cesear Mloko, Country Director (Tanzania) - leads Solar Sister Tanzania as the Country Director. Caesar has built a reputable career in leadership across various industries, including renewable energy, financial services, telecommunications, and FMCG. This includes D.light, Serengeti Breweries, Equity, Celtel, and Zain.

Chioma Ome, Country Director (Nigeria) - joined Solar Sister Nigeria in 2017 as the Training Manager and transited to the role of the Impact and Innovation Manager. In 2022, Chioma took on the Lead role of Country Director, leading Solar Sister Nigeria Operations, expanding a network of over 3,000 women-owned green businesses across 30 states in Nigeria. Chioma is a strategic management, business, and human resource development leader with over 12 years of experience in both the private and development sectors.

Finorah Manyala, (Country Director, Kenya) - began her journey with LivelyHoods in 2011 as a dedicated volunteer. She played a crucial role in establishing the LivelyHoods brand and enhancing its reputation. Now, she serves as the country director for Solar Sister Kenya. Finorah holds a degree in sociology and has extensive experience in essential areas critical to the organization's success, such as business development, communications, and project management.

Our Board of Directors / Advisory Board - Our accomplished Board of Directors and Advisory Board compliment our staff expertise by bringing diverse experience from the nonprofit, government, and private sectors.

Memberships/Affiliations - Solar Sister is affiliated with diverse organizations, including the World Bank and International Financial Corporation's Lighting Global Associate, Sustainable Energy for All, ENERGIA International Network, Global Alliance for Clean Cooking, and Tides Foundation-supported through the Google Impact Challenge. These memberships and affiliations enable us to stay up-to-date on industry trends and best practices, and to leverage resources to drive our mission.

Financial Structure:

Describe how your innovation is funded and sustained (e.g., key investors, funding sources, financial stakeholders, royalties, grants, revenue-sharing agreements, strategic partnerships such as academic institutions, equity groups, corporate alliances, and angel investors, etc.).

Solar Sister is a social enterprise. Our sustainability model includes diversity in funding sources that ranges from traditional philanthropy to revenue-generating activities. Highlights include:

Corporate, Government and/or Private Grants: We have secured more than \$20 million USD in grants in the past 10 years from various sources, including corporate donors, foundations, government Institutions, philanthropic funders and development organizations. Our current donors include Cisco Foundation, Energia, Exxon Mobile Foundation, Puma Energy Foundation, Social Initiative and others.

Revenue-Generating: We generate revenue from the sale of solar products, with a small margin added to cover marketing and distribution costs. Solar Sister sales Revenue contributed up to 32% of the total Revenue in 2024.

Individuals: We also receive gifts and donations from individual donors.

Program-Based Incentives: This includes Government schemes such as Result-Based Financing and Carbon Credit subsidy.

Strategic Partnerships: Our strategic partnerships with organizations like GOGLA-Global Off-Grid Lighting Association, Salesforce, Renewable Energy Association, and Data.org enable us to leverage resources, expertise, and networks to drive impact. These partnerships allow us to tap into a wealth of knowledge, technology, and influence that amplifies our mission of empowering women and promoting clean energy access.

Our partnerships with donors, corporate entities, and development organizations enable us to deliver successful projects at scale. We have a proven track record of creating partnerships and leveraging funding to drive impact. Our financial sustainability is ensured through a combination of these funding sources, allowing us to focus on our mission of empowering women and promoting clean energy access.

Regulatory Compliance & Certifications (Optional Uploads):

If appropriate, provide any regulatory approvals, environmental certifications, or compliance documents demonstrating adherence to sustainability standards (e.g., ISO 14001, B Corp Certification, LEED, WELL, SBTi commitments, REACH, USDA, etc.).

[**Environmental and Social Policy .pdf**](#)

[**IH_Gender_Policy version 1_2025.pdf**](#)

Community & Social Impact:

Explain how your innovation benefits local communities, underserved populations, or public health (e.g., job creation, social equity, environmental justice, improved quality of life, tourism, etc.).

Solar Sister has supported more than 12, 100 women entrepreneurs and provided clean energy access to more than 5.5 million people in last-mile communities.

Driven by the singular mission to harness the power of women entrepreneurship to address energy poverty and advance clean energy access across underserved communities in Africa; Our innovation is more than just a solution - it is a catalyst for transformation as we are creating a ripple effect of positive change that benefits lives and communities as a whole. This includes:

1. Economic Empowerment: Our model provides women with a sustainable source of income, enabling them to support their families and contribute to their local economies. This economic empowerment has a direct impact on poverty reduction and improves the overall well-being of communities.

2. Clean Energy Access: Our innovation increases access to clean and reliable energy for thousands of people in rural and underserved areas, transforming their lives in profound ways. With access to light, households can extend their productive hours, boosting economic activity and entrepreneurship. Families also benefit from energy savings, previously spent on expensive and polluting fossil fuels and children can study and learn in well-lit homes, improving their educational outcomes and future prospects

3. Promote Sustainable Environment and Improved Health Outcomes: Adoption of clean energy solutions not only reduces reliance on polluting and expensive fossil fuels which reduces carbon emissions, but also improves indoor air quality, reducing health risks associated with smoke and pollution.

4. Advance Social and Gender Equity: Our model promotes social equity by targeting women and underserved communities. By empowering women as clean energy entrepreneurs, we are challenging traditional gender roles and promoting women's economic empowerment.

5. Community Development: The communities we serve are often marginalized and overlooked in top-down energy access initiatives, but also lacking access to essential socio-economic, innovation, and infrastructural developments. By establishing a presence and operating in these communities, we have not only brought clean energy solutions but also paved the way for other opportunities, to thrive. Our work has become a catalyst for broader community development, unlocking new possibilities and fostering growth in these previously underserved areas.

One of the bedrocks of sustaining our success is integrating community involvement from the start of our project. Solar Sister adopts a community-led approach that ensures women entrepreneurs are selected through involvement of community stakeholders (community leaders, champions, Heads of households: owing to the high Patriarchy culture in identified communities, women groups etc.) to increase buy in of communities and women where project will be implemented.

A core activity of this project also includes Community identification, entrance and collection of baseline surveys through community champions and leaders who have more information about their communities than Solar Sister as an implementing organization. Adequate community engagements will be done to all identified stakeholders. Several stakeholder meetings are held inclusive of a Community sensitization event. Our goal is to build quality relationships with community members as they provide meeting venues and local security for meetings and volunteers for the sensitization events.

Document Uploads: Supporting Data & Evidence and References:

Include letters of support, endorsements, or formal commitments from third parties, such as pilot partners, policymakers, academic institutions, news articles, or industry leaders, validating your approach and impact. Provide quantifiable metrics, case studies, third-party assessments, or regulatory approvals to support your application. Please label all files with your company name and asset name.

Prix Galien EcoHealth Award Solar Sister DRK Reference Letter 2025.pdf
SI Prix Galien EcoHealth Award Solar Sister Letter of Endorsement.pdf