

SOLAR SISTER



Solar Sister believes in integrating women at every level of business. The organization has a female CEO and 86% of their staff are women.

THE MODEL

Solar Sister is a network of female entrepreneurs bringing sustainable energy solutions to communities that lack access to a reliable electricity grid in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Uganda. In many of these communities, women also lack access to wage-earning work. Solar Sister's energy-entrepreneurship training provides women with a means to earn additional income to support their families. The network offers access to a supply of products and training in sales, business, and bookkeeping. Throughout their business journey, Solar Sister entrepreneurs are given mentorship and support from the organization's network. At the start of their training, participants are asked to envision their future. The Solar Sister staff then helps them create a concrete plan to reach their goals. Solar Sister entrepreneurs sell home energy solutions like home solar lighting systems and lanterns, solar powered radios and televisions, and efficient cookstoves to their communities.

THE STORY

In its quest to bring sustainable energy solutions to communities in Africa, Solar Sister's commitment to gender equality is unparalleled. The organisation has a female CEO and 86 percent of the staff and 57 percent of the board are women. Solar Sister is dedicated to providing a much-needed example of how women can be involved in every level of the energy sector.

One such example is Fatma Muzo, Solar Sister's country manager in Tanzania. She supports and directs Solar Sister's many countrywide staff in their work to bring sustainable energy to their communities. Fatma is a constant champion for her business development associates, many of whom are women, and all of whom work in regions around the country to support and mentor Solar Sister entrepreneurs.

In general, the Solar Sister staff believes that getting women involved in energy projects can help lead to wider adoption in the developing world, partially as a result of the trust that exists between women in many communities.

Solar Sister Entrepreneurs are typically women between the ages of 18 and 60.



Products sold by Solar Sister Entrepreneurs can help families save an estimated \$80 per year on kerosene costs.



In the past five years, Solar Sister has helped 1,500 women become energy entrepreneurs.

THE IMPACT

The Solar Sister model is unique because it combines two areas of development that are closely connected, but not always associated with each other: women's empowerment and clean energy.

Solar Sister works with women because they are often the ones most profoundly impacted by energy poverty and most committed to making change. Women in these communities generally are responsible for managing the energy needs of their households and are the main users of the energy products in the home. The Solar Sister staff also see that women often have the strongest community networks, which are important for facilitating widespread change.

In the past five years, Solar Sister has reached more than 280,000 people with the benefits of clean energy technology and launched the careers of 1,500 entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs are typically women between the ages of 18 and 60, and each community often has a number of entrepreneurs, with the group size depending on the local population. Instead of competing with each other, the entrepreneurs help support one another through the tough times and applaud each other's success. Finally, Solar Sister lighting products save an estimated \$80 a year per family, which is based on a conservatively estimated savings of a bit less than \$2 a week for kerosene.

ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

Though Solar Sister is currently working on the ground in Nigeria, Tanzania, and Uganda, the organisation has a global presence and partners with organisations worldwide. Solar Sister uses these partnerships to advocate for increased integration of gender issues into energy policy and solutions.

Solar Sister is currently developing a multimedia awareness campaign in Tanzania called We Shine, which will help educate consumers about the benefits of sustainable energy solutions through video, radio campaigns, newspaper ads, and case studies published online. Solar Sister will also use the SHINE awards to recognise Tanzanian leaders who are playing pivotal roles in integrating gender into the energy conversation.