A pandemic in the dark - SolarAid is supporting Zambia to light up health clinics lacking electricity

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At the depths of the global pandemic of COVID-19, 10.2 million people in Zambia are facing the threat of the virus while living without electricity and rural health clinics are plunged in darkness as the virus is spreading. SolarAid, a UK based international NGO, moved quickly, expanding its operations towards supporting the Ministry of Health with their efforts.

There is a significant concern about how the outbreak will impact the countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In Zambia, where the majority of the population are living far away from access to electricity, this is not only affecting families in their homes – the majority of rural health clinics have limited or unreliable access to electricity. Many of them ask their patients to bring their own candles or torches.

As cases of the coronavirus are increasing, Zambia has taken preventive measures. However, the health care system in the country is not set up to deal with an outbreak, as rural health clinics are vastly under-resourced. Further, the lack of access to electricity and modern forms of communication makes dissemination of information to rural populations a big challenge.

SolarAid has been operating in Zambia since 2008 with the aim to bring small solar lights to rural families through its social enterprise SunnyMoney. Field operations during this time of crises have shifted towards supporting the Ministry of Health with their efforts through:

- Distribution of 3,750 free solar products to rural health clinics plunged in darkness
- Calling customers and agents (estimated 25,000) to disseminate essential health advice to rural populations in local languages

"SolarAid exists to help ensure that everyone has access to clean, renewable, energy and nowhere is light and power more important than within health facilities at a time of a global health pandemic. We are therefore pleased to partner with the Ministry of Health in Zambia to equip rural health facilities with solar lights and systems at this time", John Keane, CEO, SolarAid.

SolarAid are fundraising to cover the costs of the efforts with a public appeal, with an estimation of £162,000. Click here for the appeal page.

Notes to editors'

Press contact: Sofia Ollvid, sofia.ollvid@solar-aid.org, 078 437 427 54

Interview opportunities: John Keane, CEO SolarAid. Karla Kanyanga, Operations Director Zambia.

Photos: Click here

SolarAid: SolarAid is a UK based, international charity that combats poverty and climate change. Through its social enterprise, SunnyMoney, it is distributing solar lights to people living without electricity in Zambia in Malawi. http://solar-aid.org @SolarAid

- **Population Zambia:** 17 million (World Bank, 2018)
- **Rural population Zambia:** 56% (World Bank, 2018)
- **People living without electricity:** 60% - 10,2 million (World Bank, 2017)
- **Confirmed cases with coronavirus:** 39 (as of 7th April 2020)

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