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# Solar Lights and Clean Water for East African Villages



The solar electrification of the Kakuuto Hospital, Uganda

Recognizing the important work that Solar Light for Africa (SLA) is doing in East Africa, USAID awarded, in 2004, a \$300,000 grant to the Leesburg, Virginia-based nonprofit organization. SLA collaborates with American and African church leadership, nongovernmental organizations, and governments to provide power and light to public facilities—health clinics, hospitals, schools, orphanages, churches, and community centers in rural regions of Africa.

In all its work, SLA focuses on high-impact, community-based projects that will have long-term benefits for the local people. The leadership of various faith-based groups in each country selects the recipient facilities based on the greatest need. SLA also partners with an entrepreneurial business, Solar Energy Uganda (SEU), which installs the solar systems year-round, thereby providing employment to the local population. SEU monitors and maintains all systems to ensure their sustainability.

The grant to SLA, provided by USAID's Office of Infrastructure & Engineering, was specifically for:

- The solar electrification of the Kakuuto Hospital located in the Rakai District of Uganda where the AIDS epidemic was first identified. This installation enabled the medical staff to preserve vaccines and other medicines, as well as operate small medical equipment.
- The construction of a solar powered pumping system with two large storage tanks and 3.2 kilometers of piping supplies the hospital with pure water.
- The launching of a program in Tanzania with the initial installation of 100 solar electric systems in rural health clinics, schools, and other public facilities.

A formal commissioning ceremony was held at the Kakuuto Hospital in July 2005. United States Ambassador Jimmy Kolker, spoke and stated that the U.S. Government, through the USAID, was pleased to be able to provide support for Solar Light for Africa as it seeks to bring solar electricity and pure water to rural hospitals, health clinics, schools and orphanages in rural Uganda. Ambassador Kolker quoted from a study documenting the fact that the most effective technical intervention in providing measurable improvement in quality of life for rural people is the provision of electric power. Also present at the ceremony was Ugandan First Lady Janet Museveni, a patron of Solar Light for Africa. She and President Yoweri Museveni have long been enthusiastic friends of the work of SLA in Uganda.



SLA's founder, Bishop Alden Hathaway, stressed that solar electrification in health clinics and hospitals has a key role to play in combating diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The ability to preserve vaccines and other medicines in refrigerators, as well as to operate medical equipment powered by solar, is of great benefit. The provision of good lighting at night enables the medical staff to better treat patients.

Another patron of SLA is First Lady Anna Mkapa of Tanzania who was present at the formal launch ceremony in the Bukoba District of Tanzania on August 1st. SLA plans to expand their work in Tanzania over the next several years as it has done in Uganda and other East African countries.

Juan Belt, Director of USAID's Office of Infrastructure & Engineering stated, "Access to clean, reliable and affordable energy is an essential component to social and economic development. In the health sector, electricity is essential for lighting hospital operating rooms, refrigerating vaccines, and running diagnostic equipment. In the education sector, electrification can extend the hours of study that students can devote to studying as well as the hours that a school can stay open. We are very pleased to have been able to support Solar Light for Africa as it provides clean electricity and water for hospitals,

schools, clinics and orphanages in Africa, while building capacity in Africa and affording American young people the opportunity for service overseas."

USAID's funding is being channeled through the Global Environment and Technology Foundation (GETF), a partner organization of SLA's located in Alexandria, Virginia. GETF is a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help build the infrastructure for sustainable development. Hank Habicht, CEO of GETF, expressed his pleasure at partnering with SLA, stating "development of the economies of East Africa will not happen without access to clean energy and water resources. SLA's projects are important models of institutional cooperation to deliver these critical services to Africa's most needy communities."

After completing the Kakuuto hospital project in Uganda, SLA made provisions for an American medical team to instruct the local doctors and nurses on how to operate the new medical equipment powered by solar. They also worked with local staff in the treatment of patients admitted in the hospital. In Uganda, there has been a 100% increase in patients visiting the Kakuuto hospital as a direct result of the improved medical services that are being provided because of electrification of that facility.

**USAID Contact:**

Jeff Haeni  
Office of Infrastructure & Engineering  
+1 202 712 0546  
jhaeni@usaid.gov