

Solar Sister Action Research Proposal

Name of social enterprise: Solar Sister

Mission: Solar Sister eradicates energy poverty by empowering women with economic opportunity. We combine the breakthrough potential of solar and clean cooking technology with a deliberately woman-centered direct sales network to bring light, hope and opportunity to even the most remote communities in rural Africa.

Webpage: <http://www.solarsister.org>

GSBI (2011) business plan presentation: <http://www.scu.edu/socialbenefit/entrepreneurship/gsbi/library.cfm?id=001A000000YQACJ>

Headquarters: USA and Kampala, Uganda.

Location(s) of research: Tanzania and Uganda.

Research to be based in Kampala, Uganda, and in Arusha, near Moshe, Tanzania

The challenge: to document and advance the social impact of Solar Sister's enterprise on the women and families of East Africa.

Action research products needed:

1. Documenting the social impact of these products for customers and women micro-entrepreneurs/saleswomen. These case studies, photos, and surveys need to be written to support reporting requirements from international aid agencies that provide one revenue stream for this enterprise. In 2013 a GSBF team produced these materials in Uganda, where Solar Sister began. This social impact documentation and evaluation is now needed to support activities in Tanzania. This has a strong pro-woman economic development dimension.
2. Research critically evaluating the role of the carbon credit market on the clean cookstove in several African countries. Solar Sister has historically sold solar lanterns but is testing the market for adding clean cookstoves. Well-intentioned policy efforts to support this using carbon offsets, carbon trading, has had confusing effects upon the market. Research into this could inform Solar Sister and other social enterprises.

Student skills needed: interviewing skills; ethnographic field research; cross-cultural communication experience; strong writing skills; social documentation; photography; policy and economic analysis.

Keywords: social impact evaluation; interviewing skills; solar social entrepreneurship; distributed sustainable energy provision; women's economic development; carbon markets/carbon trading; indoor air pollution; clean cooking; clean cookstoves.