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VELUX Natural Light solar lamps arrive in Africa

150 local sales agents trained in Senegal, Zimbabwe and Zambia

Approximately one year after leading roof window manufacturer VELUX Group joined forces with social business Little Sun and NGO Plan International, launching a design competition to bring clean, sustainable light to Africa, the first solar lamps have now arrived on African soil.

The VELUX Natural Light International Design Competition received 172 proposals from 65 countries. A high-level jury of experts in the fields of architecture, art and design subsequently selected the winning design, by Mariana Arando and Luca Fondello of the University of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Their solar lamp design was inspired by the way light can bring people together.

The VELUX Group has so far produced and donated 14,500 of the solar-powered lamps, and 150 local sales agents are now being trained in how to sell the lamps in off-grid communities in Senegal, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The training combines workshops, roleplay, demonstrations, and group work.

"The first business training was very successful. It was well-attended and the future sales agents had a high interest in the product, convinced that the lamps would sell well. The agents were able to see that the Natural Light lamp can save their customers money. After two months of use, customers already save money compared to what they would spend on kerosene lamps. Having solar lamps means being independent from the electrical grid," says Edius N. Makono, Alight Zimbabwe Trust (Plan Zimbabwe Alumni).

Bringing sustainable light to Africa

Today, 1.2 billion people worldwide do not have access to electricity, and reliable, sustainable light is often in short supply after sunset. Therefore, The VELUX Group is collaborating with Little Sun and Plan International to bring solar light to Africa. The project uses an entrepreneurial distribution model, with the VELUX Group donating an initial batch of 14,500 solar lamps. The lamps will be sold at locally affordable prices in communities without electricity in Senegal, Zimbabwe and Zambia. The lamps will be distributed from the beginning of 2016.

"It's been very rewarding working with partners like VELUX and Plan, who share our common goal of bringing clean, renewable light to people across Africa," says Mason Huffine, sales manager for Little Sun in Africa.

The solar lamps were designed by Mariana Arando and Luca Fondello, winners of the Natural Light – International Design competition. They were inspired by how natural light can bring people together. The design concept of the solar lamps makes it possible to connect several lamps to each other, so that everyone can bring their lamp to a social gathering and create light together.

About the Natural Light donation

The VELUX Group has always been strongly committed to providing the world with new opportunities for accessing daylight and fresh air, and giving back to society. The company is built on knowledge of light, and they use their expertise where they believe it will have the greatest impact. As part of its 75th anniversary, the Group aims to place a greater focus on bringing sustainable, reliable and affordable lighting to off-grid African regions.

About Plan International's distribution of Natural Light lamps

The distribution model employed is very similar in concept to that of micro-credit, in which small local entrepreneurs who cannot obtain loans under normal circumstances - due to a lack of steady income or collateral - are offered small loans that can help get their businesses off the ground. To help kick-start sales, these entrepreneurs will initially receive a stock of Natural Light lamps for free. Once they have sold their stock, the resulting profit will give them the capital to purchase additional lamps to sell, thereby establishing their own self-sustaining small businesses.

About Little Sun

Little Sun is a social business and global project founded by artist Olafur Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen to get clean, reliable, affordable light to the 1.1 billion people in the world living in off-grid areas without electricity. The project's first product, the Little Sun solar LED lamp, is sold all over the world. Purchasing Little Suns in areas of the world with electricity makes the lamps available in off-grid areas at reduced, locally affordable prices, where they provide a clean alternative to toxic and expensive fuel-based lighting such as kerosene lanterns. Little Sun addresses the need for light in a sustainable way that benefits off-grid communities by working with local entrepreneurs, creating local jobs, and generating local profits. The Little Sun project was officially launched in July 2012 at London's Tate Modern. Since then, more than 300,000 Little Sun lamps have been distributed worldwide, with almost half going to off-grid areas. In April 2014, Little Sun received a ground-breaking \$5 million impact investment loan from Bloomberg Philanthropies, making it possible to scale Little Sun's operations across the African continent. www.littlesun.com

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About the VELUX Group

For more than 70 years, the VELUX Group has created better living environments for people around the world. Making the most of daylight and fresh air through the roof.

Our product programme includes roof windows and modular skylights as well as a range of decoration and sun screenings, roller shutters, installation solutions and intelligent home controls. These products help to ensure a healthy and sustainable indoor climate. For work and learning. For play and pleasure.

We work globally – with sales and manufacturing operations in more than 40 countries and around 10,000 employees worldwide. The VELUX Group is owned by VKR Holding A/S, a limited company wholly owned by foundations and family.

For more information, visit www.velux.com.

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