

28 April 2015

The VELUX Group and Plan International partners up to bring solar light to off-grid African regions

Today leading window manufacturer The VELUX Group and the social business Little Sun announce a partnership with the NGO Plan International to distribute a new solar lamp – the Natural Light solar lamp – in three African countries: Zimbabwe, Zambia and Senegal. The partnership with Plan International will deliver sustainable solar-powered light to people living off-grid in areas without electricity, through a program that involves and empowers local communities.

Last year the VELUX Group and Little Sun joined forces to launch the Natural Light – International Design Competition, which challenged design students around the world to produce a design for the Natural Light solar lamp, in order to bring clean, reliable, affordable light to some of the 1.2 billion people worldwide living without electricity. 14,500 Natural Light lamps will be produced based on the competition's winning design and will be distributed by Plan in Zimbabwe, Zambia and Senegal in late 2015 and early 2016.

The Natural Light – International Design Competition received 172 design proposals submitted from 65 different countries. The jury was impressed by the creative, innovative and complex ideas it saw from the participating students. Artist Olafur Eliasson, founder of Little Sun and chairperson of the Natural Light jury:

"There was a very strong sense of diversity, very different ideas. It seemed that the appeal of the competition reached a younger group, and this makes me optimistic that solar energy will resonate with the next generation."

"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. We are a company built on knowledge of light, and we use our expertise where we believe it will have the greatest impact. As part of our 75th anniversary, we therefore want to place a greater focus on bringing sustainable, reliable and affordable lighting to off-grid African regions. Our partnership with the Plan International is a perfect way of sharing daylight and fresh air with off-grid communities. Plan is an experienced and established NGO partner and we trust them to distribute the winning solar lamp design to areas that have the greatest need," says Michael K. Rasmussen, Marketing Director of the VELUX Group.

Distribution of natural light

The distribution model employed is very similar in concept to micro loans, 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 their businesses get started. To get their sales started, these entrepreneurs will initially receive a stock of Natural Light lamps for free. Once they have sold their stock, the result is a profit for themselves

and also the capital to purchase additional lamps to sell, establishing their own self-sustaining small businesses.

"We are very happy that the VELUX Group has decided to support Plan's work, which helps empower the youths of Senegal, Zimbabwe and Zambia. Engaging youth groups as retailers means income-generating opportunities and access to affordable clean light for their communities", says Gwen Wisti, Managing Director of Plan International Denmark. Wisti continues:

"With the generous contribution from the VELUX Group, Plan can reach even more youths, giving them a chance to obtain new skills and improve their livelihoods. The solar-powered lamps will benefit entire communities where electricity is a scarce resource. In countries that have an unemployment rate of more than 60 percent, this program makes a big difference in the lives of the people involved, who are given a chance to support themselves. This is in line with the overall mission of Little Sun – to make sure that clean, affordable, reliable light is available to everyone in a sustainable way."

"We are very excited to announce our distribution partnership with Plan for the Natural Light – International Design Competition's winning solar lamp. We believe that, together with local entrepreneurs, we can make a big impact delivering lamps in a sustainable way that benefits off-grid communities and generates local profits", says Frederik Ottesen, founder of Little Sun.

About the Natural Light International Design Competition

The competition encouraged young and talented design students to create a special edition solar lamp in honor of the 75th anniversary of the holding group behind VELUX, VKR Holding. The Natural Light Project was launched to mark the milestone of the VELUX Group's work for improving living conditions around the world by bringing daylight into people's homes. The VELUX Group collaborated with Little Sun, which is a social business and a global project founded by internationally renowned artist Olafur Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen, to improve living conditions for people in areas of the world without electricity.

Press material at VELUX Media Centre

See and download our news videos, photos and press material on VELUX Media Centre at press.velux.com. Here, you can [subscribe to VELUX news](#).

Follow us on twitter.com/velux and facebook.com/velux

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.

Contact

Tanja Thorsteinsson
Media Relations Manager
The VELUX Group
Telephone: + 45 26 70 27 28
@: tanja.thorsteinsson@velux.com

About VKR Holding

VKR Holding is the parent company of a group of companies that manufacture, market and sell a range of products including roof windows, vertical windows and accessories under the brands VELUX, VELFAC, RATIONEL and WindowMaster. The company has the objective of bringing daylight, fresh air and a better environment into people's everyday lives. On 1 April 2016, VKR Holding will celebrate its 75th anniversary.

About Little Sun

Little Sun is a social business and global project founded by world-renowned artist Olafur Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen to get clean, reliable, affordable light to the 1.2 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 200,000 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 from Bloomberg Philanthropies, making it possible to scale Little Sun's operations across the African continent.

For more information:

www.littlesun.com

www.littlesun.com/press

facebook.com/ilovelittlesun

twitter.com/littlesun

About Plan Denmark

Plan Denmark is a part of Plan International – one of the oldest and largest children's development organizations in the world. Plan operates in 52 developing countries across Africa, Asia and the Americas to promote children's rights and lift millions of children out of poverty. Plan's working areas has a population of 164.9 million people – including 81.5 million children. Plan is a child-centered community development organization working with children, their families, communities, organizations and local governments to bring about positive change. We encourage and help children and youth to take an active role in finding solutions to their problems and realizing their full potential.

For more information:

Signe Holme

Press Officer

Plan Denmark

Mobile: +45 60 68 30 12

E-mail: Signe.holme@plandanmark.dk

Web: www.plandanmark.dk

facebook.com/plandanmark