

**Mission:** To establish a sustainable and scalable network of local women as micro-entrepreneurs who can sell efficient, clean, and affordable energy products and to set up Community Solar Charging Stations in rural communities and employ micro-entrepreneur youths to run Rent-to-Own model in rural and slum communities throughout Chipata and Eastern Province of Zambia.

**Problem:** Energy poverty is pervasive in rural and slum communities of Chipata Districts. 89% of the population is not connected to electricity and still using traditional energy sources. Many rely on Kerosene lamps for light. Le Investment Group pilot project will target rural and slum communities in Chipata district to supply Solar Lanterns. Families in these communities almost all rely on kerosene lamps, each of which releases a ton of carbon dioxide smoke every year, contributing to global warming, and creating risk of burns, pneumonia, bronchitis, and lung cancer. The lamps are too dim for good reading, and kerosene purchases eat up family income. Solar lanterns solve these problems: They are safe, emission-free, four times brighter, and require no expensive fuel. ***The World Bank estimates that 780 million women and children breathing kerosene fumes inhale the equivalent of two cigarette pack daily.***

Women in rural and slum communities are faced with a lot of challenges, high unemployment, no proper education and their livelihood are threatened and often are subjected to "sex for money" behaviours for them to meet basic needs. Our distribution model provides an alternative sustainable livelihood for these women. Moreover, enabling households to access clean energy solar lamps through our affordable rent-to-own model ensures more beneficiaries and providing opportunities in education especially among rural children while under extra studying hours in their homes, reducing respiratory illnesses and deaths among women and children, enabling women to have enough time for productivity, improving disposable income of rural households.

The project is self-sustaining. The established solar charging station generates daily income from solar lamps renting and mobile charging. After 6 months we are able to set up an additional station while households own the clean solar lamps.

**Solution:** Le Investment Group has developed a distribution system for clean energy technology to ensure adaptation where it matters most, energy poor households. We will build a scalable network of Women Micro-entrepreneurs who will make a big difference in rural and slum communities. This will be used to reach out to women and include them as active participants in the distribution of technology to achieve the needed impact. Not only will it create income for women who have few other cash earning opportunities, it is the most effective distribution method to reach rural & slum homes. Women are the primary consumers of household energy, bearing responsibility for gathering wood or purchasing kerosene in energy poor communities, but they are rarely included in the technology conversation.

In the past few years, great advances have been made in the technology and design of micro solar products so they are both available and affordable alternatives to expensive, toxic, unsafe kerosene lanterns. But the lack of a distribution system that can reach into the rural and slum communities where the technology is most needed, and the impact of a pervasive technology gender-gap means that this potentially life-changing technology is not been adapted at the household level, leaving families in the dark. By providing women with the opportunity to be active participants in the distribution of the new solar technology, we activate a powerful network of women relationship to maximize impact.

The most important step to ending poverty is to create employment and income opportunities. Le Investment Group will provide opportunity to women to become micro-entrepreneurs. We will deliberately focus on women because not only are they overlooked in terms of economic opportunities, but they are also the primary drivers of technology adoption in household. By intentionally reaching out to women, we create economic opportunity and create employment as well as direct our marketing and outreach to the primary consumers of household energy. ***We believe that investing in women is not only the right thing to do- it is the smart thing to do.*** Micro Energy Service Company will provide the women with a "Business in a Bag" a start-up kit of inventory, training and marketing support (Like Le Investment ID, flyers, stickers, posters, t-shirts, business bag, ledger for Le Investment micro entrepreneurs to keep sales record, support for community launch events to showcase the products at high visibility

Locations). The women become their own bosses, creating sustainable businesses. The women use their natural networks of family, friends and neighbours to provide the most effective distribution channels to rural and hard to reach customers, leveraging the power of the market place. A Le Investment Group micro entrepreneur will create a chain reaction of social impact as she turns over her inventory again and again. The key to Le Investment Group model lies in the self- sustaining economics of its distribution program.

For families living on \$2 a day that can't manage to buy the solar lamp due to their income we will set up Community Solar Charging Stations that will offer a Rent-to-Own Model to be run by unemployed youths who will be trained in entrepreneurship development including book keeping and operations thus sustainability.

They will rent out solar lamps daily to household at a price lower than kerosene. After every 3 months, we are able to set up an addition charging station and enable the household to own a solar lamp.

Will start by setting up a solar charging station with 50 lamps for renting and mobile phone charging which will be run by a youths as Le Investment Group energy enterprise. They will undertake a Rent-to-Own model, where 50 households rent the lamps at \$1.68 weekly, less than what they spend on kerosene. After 3 months, the household owns the solar lamp.

Solar lamps will replace the toxic kerosene lanterns and solar cell phone chargers will provide connectivity in even the most energy poor communities. Le Investment Group will provide women and youths with business training and technical skills they will need to make their micro-businesses thrive. As they grow in their skills and confidence, they will become change agents in their communities.

**Measuring Impact:** Le Investment Group is an impact social enterprise. As a market-based program, economic benefits of the program will be directly measured through systemized data collection on the number of micro-entrepreneurs, sales generated, total beneficiaries, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions mitigated and total kerosene use displaced by the use of solar lamps and complementing services like mobile phone charging.

The hard numbers will be supplemented with qualitative interviews with women entrepreneurs and their customers to monitor the overall impact of the program as well as the success or failure of individual micro entrepreneurs to improve our processes where needed.

In our first 3 months we will employ 2 youths as sales staff to be stationed at our 2 rural solar charging stations. 1 micro entrepreneur will be recruited to service the slum and urban low income communities. With our distribution model we project sales of **500** solar lamps in 3 months. In 6 months our sale projections will be **1,300** solar lights. In 12 months our sales projection will be **5,534** of solar lamps. In one year a total of **7,334** households will have access to clean, safe, solar lamps.

**Scale Up: Le Investment Group** will be a network of micro- entrepreneurs. One of the features of building a network is the flexibility to scale operation. We will develop a recruiting/training/support program that will allow us to expand into new communities efficiently and effectively. In the first year, we will operate in Chipata district. With a population of **455,783** of which over **300,000** have no access to electricity this will help us reach greater market coverage. In the third year we will replicate the program adding two districts.

Le Investment Group will build a sustainable business that will generate sufficient income to support on-going operations at a scale that can deliver real impact in Eastern province, a region with a population of **1,592,661** of which **1,114,862** are in need of clean energy.

The financial contribution of each individual micro entrepreneur will be multiplied as we scale the program, enabling us to achieve overall financial break-even when we achieve scale. Investment in growth of operation will help Le Investment Group achieve both scale and impact.

**Conclusion:** Le Investment Group is committed to scaling access to solar lamps and empowering women in rural and slum communities from a vision to reality. With your help, we can implement this plan. We are based in Chipata, Zambia, Southern Africa. Thus, we are immersed in the target location. We know the culture and can implement the 3 month pilot immediately. What's more, we will devote one hundred percent of the money to the scale up itself. We want to make a difference in Chipata, Zambia. We also plan to evaluate our efforts with hard data. With our distribution model within two years, we project to distribute **31,057** solar lamps helping to reduce the deadly effects of kerosene use and increasing the income of household in rural and slum communities. Been a border Province with Malawi and Mozambique, we are well positioned to replicate the program in the two countries, achieving maximum impact in the region.