

# Light in the Darkness

A project by **UBS Optimus Foundation**

Many health clinics in Sub-Saharan Africa have no access to reliable electricity. As a result, too many women are dying during childbirth. Solar Suitcases allow clinics to turn sunshine into lifesaving current. You can help us deliver the next generation of these simple, but powerful, devices.

## The missing ingredient

One of the most important ingredients in modern medicine is something so basic it is easy to forget: electricity. The machines that we rely on for care cannot function without it. Nor can the facilities, be they hospitals or clinics, which use them to save our lives.

Unfortunately, as is the case in many developing regions, Sub-Saharan Africa suffers from a lack of reliable power. While this has grave consequences for anyone seeking care, for pregnant mothers it is a disaster. Some quarter of a million women in Sub-Saharan Africa die each year during childbirth – half the global total – and lack of electricity is a major factor.

Without electricity clinics simply cannot provide adequate obstetric services. At night, when for various reasons most births occur, the situation is worse. Women are often either turned away, or suffer through deliveries and caesareans performed by flashlight or even candlelight.



## Let the sun shine in

Luckily, there is one potential source of power that clinics in Sub-Saharan Africa have in abundance: sunshine. The Solar Suitcase, developed by We Care Solar, takes advantage of this simple but powerful fact.

The small, portable and robust solar power generator is very easy to use and can be taken almost anywhere. It provides both electricity and light, and has other functions – like a phone charger, portable headlamps and an optional fetal heart rate Doppler – that make it particularly useful in a small clinic.

First tried out in Africa in 2011, the suitcases have been a resounding success. They are now used in 30 countries and have been deployed during natural disasters. The World Health Organization has called them “ingenious.”

In the “Solar Suitcase: From Good to Great” project, We Care Solar is working to make its product even better. That’s important, because as good as the suitcase is, the need for it is even greater.

With Solar Suitcase version 3.0 the organization aims to create a suitcase that generates more power, lasts longer, is easier-to-use and can be produced in higher volumes and at a lower cost than its predecessor.

At the same time it is improving its deployment strategy, developing best practice guidelines to make it easier for countries and facilities to install and maintain the devices. To ensure they are as good as advertised, as part of the project the new suitcase and deployment model will both be tested in a West African country.

## Power to the people

There is no doubt that Solar Suitcases work. In numerous projects We Care Solar has seen them contribute to increases in numbers of women giving birth in clinics and to decreases in infant mortality. Health workers regularly use the suitcases for many essential procedures, such as deliveries, post-partum care, neonatal care, surgical care, suturing, and setting IV lines.

By donating, you will help We Care Solar improve on an already proven strategy to make birthing safer in poor countries. That in turn will save the lives of a large number of mothers and their babies, a very sunny prospect.



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