

Impacts from Solar Home Systems – exploring user's views

Energy is an important basis for social and economic development. 80% of humanity is now living in energy-related poverty. The decentralized power generation through solar energy (Solar-Home-System) is an outstanding technical solution for most of the rural regions in developing countries. The implementation of Solar-Home-Systems means a fundamental improvement in everyday life for the people in rural areas. It offers people an opportunity for social development and economic prosperity. The following statements are made by users of Solar-Home-Systems in Ethiopia.



Economic

"With solar light I do handcrafts at night, like producing Injera, spinning traditional clothes, preparing bread. So I have increased income. On the other hand I reduce the cost of light when shifting to solar."



Business

"Previously we just opened the shop for a short period of time. It was not profitable using wood and kerosene for lighting the business at night. Now it's profitable to work over night."



Time use

"Before we had to finish all the work at daytime. But now we can take a nap during the hot noon and finish work at night. There is no hurry any more, we have enough time."



Safety

"The crime rate is reduced, not only by the street light, also because of light inside the houses, which scares thieves from breaking inside. Moreover the hyenas don't come."



Security

"Previously we were afraid that a fire will break out from the kerosene lamp, which is now not scaring us any more. We were scared for the children and old people. Some people died from these accidents."



Comfort

"Before solar, we used wood and kerosene. When I wanted to make light during the night, I couldn't find the kerosene or wood in the dark. But with the solar, that's not a problem any more. For example when my baby is crying, I just have to switch on the light and can see."



Health

"I have lung problems from the smoke of the kerosene lamps. Before the arrival of solar light, I had to finish all my work during daylight and I used to get sick a lot. But now I started feeling a lot better and I was able to make all these handcrafts you see."



Education

"Before solar we also studied at night, but less than now. Now we use the additional time for both, homework for school and also to help our parents with the housework."



Gender relations

"Before, women were busy with important work all day. But now they have additional time at night to do productive works. By that they earn money and help to increase our family economy. Life is like a stretcher. You can't carry it just on one side. You need support."



Social interaction

"Before solar, we didn't talk much in the evening. Now we use the solar light to sit together at night and talk."



Empowerment

"The aim in this world is to change life in order to escape poverty. But you can't change your life without light. Light is a basic need."



Communication

"We now keep in touch with the outside world by communicating with cell phone technology. If there is no charger, we can not use mobiles at all. Therefore SHSs are a really big improvement. Now every farmer buys a cell phone to communicate with our relatives who are far."

