

SOLAR COOKERS FOR AFRICA: THE SOLAR CARAVAN 2010

- Self empowerment for sustainability

Dear Readers,

This letter is to inform you of an exciting new development.

Specialising in high quality Solar Cookers for the past six years, *SunFire* is constantly looking to spread high quality lighting systems and other simple but effective technologies that improve life in Africa in a meaningful way. As a business, however, *SunFire* often finds itself unable to reach the sectors of African society we would ideally like to. To overcome this challenge, we have over the past 4 years developed a sister NGO, *Solar Cookers for Africa*.

From the beginning of August, *Solar Cookers for Africa* will embark on a new and exciting adventure - '**The Solar Caravan**' - A convoy of knowledge, experience, and partnerships in the area of sustainable household and community technologies and practices. The Caravan will start in Mozambique, to eventually cover most of Southern Africa.

We would warmly welcome your support in this venture. The Solar Caravan wants *you* to bring your skills and assets to the convoy. We are looking for knowledge, experience, partnerships and funding. If you have ideas or want to pledge to this endeavor, let us know.

In fact, you are all invited to join the Caravan and travel through Africa for a week, a year or as long as we are able to stay on the road. If you are unable to physically join us, you can follow our progress on www.solarcookersforafrica.com. We will do our best to keep updates live and frequent so that you can virtually voyeur with us, meeting beautiful people and follow their lives, times and tribulations as the Caravan makes its way through Southern Africa. More details on how to support us can be found in the end of this proposal.

WHAT IS A SOLAR CARAVAN?

The Solar Caravan is simply a convoy of dedicated individuals from various areas of expertise traveling between communities to raise awareness, facilitate change and encourage self empowerment. Together with local partners, the Caravan aims to identify and remove any barriers that are holding the community and its members back from full, healthy, sustainable lives and development.

Although solar energy is our main focus, we believe that real sustainable development requires a holistic perspective. The Caravan will therefore focus on the following key areas:

- Clean Energy
- Food Security
- Waste and Water Management
- Health
- Social Dynamics

WHY A SOLAR CARAVAN?

In large parts of Africa, deforestation, and insufficient access to water and food pose huge threats to both human populations and ecosystems. A main cause of deforestation is the cutting of wood for cooking. This leads to soil erosion and desertification, severely compromising access to clean water and conditions for food cultivation. With trees left standing, local ecosystems are more resilient, leading to a higher quality of life for local people dependent on the resources of the land for health and livelihood. With better knowledge of water conservation, waste management and ecologically sensitive crop production, this effect is multiplied many times over.

A majority of Africa's poor also lack access to electricity. Instead, they rely on fuels such as kerosene and wood for light, cooking, and heat. This is not only expensive, but also highly toxic. According to WHO, 50% of all pediatric poisoning is caused by the intake of kerosene. In addition, respiratory diseases caused by smoke from cooking fires kill a staggering 1.5 million women and children worldwide each year.

As with all fossil fuels, burning wood or kerosene also contributes to global warming. In fact, the average kerosene lamp creates a ton of carbon over seven years. When it comes to burning wood, the effect is also compounded by deforestation and the Earth's decreased capacity to absorb carbon dioxide.

In contrast, solar cooking and solar power create no waste and require only one resource, which is both abundant and free – the sun. Relying on the sun saves money and work and removes major health threats to both people and planet. We firmly believe that the way forward, not only for African communities but for all of us, is for people to realize the potential of the land and resources around them – including the power of the sun.

By actually traveling into communities, the caravan has the ability to reach places and people where small changes bring big improvements. By meeting people on their ground and working together to find both key concerns and solutions, we can find ways forward that are firmly anchored in local life - and thus also more sustainable. By being mobile, the caravan brings opportunities to where they are needed!

OUR APPROACH

SUSTAINABILITY

Our focus is on putting sustainable systems in place rather than creating new dependencies on external resources and technologies.

SELF EMPOWERMENT

Our deepest aim is to find ways for people to use the resources they have in more efficient, synergetic and sustainable ways and to empower communities to realize that they themselves have the power to change in a positive direction.

PARTICIPATORY CHANGE

The Caravan does not intend on arriving with ready solutions for community issues, but on finding them through consulting with local actors on what those issues really are. Our aim is to

facilitate rather than implement change, and to do this in harmony with existing social, cultural, economic and environmental structures.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS, GLOBAL NETWORKING

The key to the caravan's success lies partly in this close collaboration with community members. Another and equally important part is to supply all needed materials, resources and training through liaising with a network of individuals, organizations and companies interested in contributing to real time, grass-root sustainable development in African communities. The approach that distinguishes The Solar Caravan from many other initiatives is this emphasis on being on the ground, working and reporting in real time, finding flexible, cooperative, bottom up solutions by working together with both local communities and our global network of experts, suppliers, donors and organizations.

INFORMATION AND KNOWLEDGE SHARING

Far from relying in the knowledge and resources of a few, the Caravan will thus link experts, product suppliers, communities and funders. This will take place partly through our home office in South Africa, working daily to build the connections needed in the field. The other integral part is our new NGO website - Solar Cookers for Africa, where daily updates, videos and other documentation will make it possible for everybody to take part in the work, joys and trials of the Caravan and the communities we work with.

IN SHORT, WE WILL...

- Find communities willing to change in a more sustainable direction and genuinely interested in participating in that change
- Find pressure points and key actors in communities ready to resolve self-identified social, health, environmental, nutritional or energetic issues holding the community and its members back
- Make communities aware of alternatives and possibilities for clean energy, clean water, food security, health and social dynamics
- Supply communities with new technology, equipment and skills they themselves have deemed necessary for sustainable development
- Help communities find new ways forward by acting as a link between locally anchored initiatives and a wider network of people and organisations interested in improving, assisting, supporting the situation in communities on the ground, in real time
- Provide live daily updates linked to expert advisors, funders and the general public to ensure our team on the ground has an opportunity to make a difference in real time

HOW WILL WE DO IT?

A FLEXIBLE CURRICULUM OF WORKSHOPS

Starting in August 2010, a core team of 4 people from 3 countries will start traveling from Johannesburg, South Africa, towards Beira, Mozambique. In each community the Caravan visits, its members will be presented with a flexible curriculum of applied introductory workshops and demonstrations about the core topics and technologies of the Caravan. One fixed workshop module concerns clean energy; another food security, waste management and nutrition.

CLEAN ENERGY DEMONSTRATIONS

With regards to energy, community members will have a chance to join us for a day of cooking and baking on solar cookers and fuel efficient stoves while at the same time learning about the benefits of using the sun as a power source. In an evening workshop, the possibilities and benefits of harnessing power and heat from sun and wind will be discussed in general terms, together with a demonstration of solar lights and information about other, larger appliances and solutions. If solar cooking and lights are met with enthusiasm, or a need and willingness to implement any larger system using the sun, wind or biogas is identified, the aim is to supply all needed materials and expertise through the Caravan's large network of suppliers, organizations and fundraisers.

APPLIED PERMACULTURE DESIGN

Food security, nutrition, waste and water management will be addressed in a short introductory course in Permaculture Design – a holistic approach looking to create self managed systems modeled on nature. The introduction is followed up with a day of applied permaculture for those interested. If any individual or group shows a particular interest in Permaculture Design, the aim is to provide full training through the Caravan's network.

INDIVIDUALLY TAILORED PROGRAMS

The areas of health, clean water and social dynamics will instead be addressed after an assessment of the situation in the community has been made. Tailored workshops on for example conflict resolution, water filtration or malaria prevention will then be offered. If the community or any of its members are facing a serious or endemic lack or problem, resources and expertise will be sourced through the Caravan's network.

BUILDING LASTING RELATIONSHIPS

For sustainability and follow up, one or a few key individuals in each community will be enlisted as future points of contact and distributors of new skills and technology. The Caravan will thus also successively build up a network of real grass-roots activists willing to act as conduits of change in their communities.

HOW TO SUPPORT THE SOLAR CARAVAN

To be the best it can be, the Caravan needs the support of all interested individuals and organizations. Good wishes and prayers, money and advice, expertise, contacts to visit, suppliers interested in providing the best and most effective technology to meet community needs – all will be received with great gratitude.

We invite you to support us in any way you can. Join us in the Caravan, come in person or support us from afar. Bring your special skills, assets and enthusiasm and join us in supporting sustainable development through genuine meetings with other people interested in creating a better life for themselves!

Below is a list of some of the things the Caravan needs to fly.

CAN YOU HELP US WITH ANY OF THE FOLLOWING?

ITEMS NEEDED ON THE ROAD

- Power-source in the car, ideally a solar panel + batteries
- Mobile high-speed Internet Connection
- Petrol
- Signage for the car
- Solar Cookers
- Solar Lights
- Video camera
- Projector
- Screen
- Seeds or seedlings
- Gardening Tools
- Fuel Efficient Stoves
- Permaculture video in Portuguese and English
- Booklets on Permaculture Design topics – grey water systems, banana circles, water conservation, swale systems, companion planting, composting, mulching etc.
- Easily accessible information/teaching material about solar and wind power and biogas in English and Portuguese
- Easily accessible information/teaching material about core health issues such as nutrition, water sanitation, malaria prevention, infectious disease, STDs, Cholera/sanitation, natural remedies etc. in English and Portuguese
- Easily accessible information/teaching material about social dynamics, conflict resolution etc in English and Portuguese.
- Pots and cooking tools
- Ingredients for cooking
- Biodegradable soaps and washing up equipment

SUPPLIERS

- Solar cookers
- Solar panels
- Solar geysers
- Solar pumps
- Solar lights
- Wind turbines
- Biogas digesters
- Fuel Efficient Stoves
- Water filters
- Medicine
- Seeds and Seedlings

YOUR EXPERTISE

- Natural medicine
- Allopathic medicine
- Nutrition
- Solar Power
- Wind Power
- Biogas
- Environmental Engineering
- Water
- Sanitation
- Permaculture
- Social work / community development
- Regional issues in Mozambique
- Fundraising and proposal writing

SUGGESTED STOPS ON OUR ROUTE

- Communities, individuals, NGOs or other organizations you think would be interested in a visit from the Caravan. Primarily in Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana.

FUNDING OR SPONSORSHIP

- To be able to supply communities with new, clean technologies at affordable prices
- To keep the convoy on the road
- To keep communications live and in real time

IF YOU CAN PROVIDE ANY OF THESE, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH US TODAY!

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