



# Solar Electric Light Fund

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

### **Solar Energy Brings Light and Hope to Girls in Africa**

*Rural Kenya School and Clinic Use Education to Break Cycle of Poverty and Build Peace*

**Washington, DC – February 8** – The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) today announced the successful installation of a centralized solar electric system to power the new Kisaruni Girls Secondary School and Baraka Health Center near the village of Bomete, Kenya. The school and clinic are operated by Free The Children.

Kisaruni means “land of peace.” The community members named the school in honor of the new and growing cooperation between members of the Maasai, Kisii and Kipsigis communities. The school will give young women the chance to come together and continue their education beyond middle school, bridging both ethnic gaps between them and socioeconomic gaps around them.

Scott Baker, executive director of Free The Children, said: “This is an incredible collaborative effort we’ve been able to make possible for girls living in the village of Bomete. Not only are we offering young women the opportunity to continue their education but together we’re able to provide them a space with increased technology to enhance learning. I’m personally excited to see young female leaders emerge from Kisaruni.”

Kisaruni’s faculty hopes to encourage the students to be role models and visionary leaders in their communities, empowering them to create positive change within their society.

Mr. Baker continued, “Increased education, better access to clean water and sanitation, consistent health care and sources of alternative income will help these communities grow and give Kenyan children more opportunity to thrive.”

In the Narok South District where Free The Children focuses its efforts, one in 10 Kenyan children die before the age of five. One third of children under five years of age are stunted, reflecting chronic under-nutrition. This proportion is 14 times higher than the level expected in a healthy, well-nourished population.

The Baraka Health Center is host to the community’s first ultrasound machine for prenatal care. Solar electricity powers this device as well as a vaccine refrigerator, defibrillator, microscope, centrifuge, examination lights and computers.

To power the clinic and the school, SELF’s team designed and oversaw the installation of a custom 8.4 kilowatt solar-diesel hybrid system. The array of solar panels also provides electricity for lights in Kisaruni’s eight classrooms; and for 10 laptops, a color television, printer, VCR and radio cassette player. A diesel generator serves as a backup to ensure power is available on cloudy days.

Almost 30 percent of Kenya’s current population lives in extreme poverty, having a per-capita income of less than \$1 USD per day.

Jeff Dean and his wife Heidi Hopper, along with Sanjay Ghemawat, helped to fund the project. Ms. Hopper said: “Education is a game-changer for girls, especially in rural African communities. Not only will the new school and clinic help these young women break the cycle of poverty, the programs at these facilities are empowering girls with choices about their health and their future.”

Marc Kielburger, co-founder of Free The Children, said: “We’re very excited to be introducing computers to the Kisaruni Secondary School, thanks to our new solar-powered computer lab. The girls will learn basic typing and computer use to give them employable skills and to learn more about the world outside their communities. For most—if not all—of these girls, this will be their first time using a computer.”

Mr. Kielburger would like to see more solar energy utilized at Free The Children sites.

“The transition from diesel to solar is critical,” Mr. Kielburger said. “Currently many of our sites rely on diesel generators that only provide 5 hours of power per day. With solar electricity providing power to schools, clinics and visitor centers 24 hours a day/7 days a week, Free The Children’s projects can have a much greater impact on the people and communities we serve.”

Free The Children is the world’s largest network of children helping children through education, with more than one million youth involved in education and development programs in 45 countries.

### **About SELF**

The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit working to fight poverty and climate change by bringing solar power and wireless Internet access to remote rural villages in the developing world. SELF has pioneered innovative applications of solar power for drip irrigation in Benin, telemedicine in the Amazon rainforest, vaccine refrigeration in Rwanda, online distance learning in South Africa, and microenterprise development in Nigeria. These successful pilot projects culminated in SELF’s whole-village approach, or Solar Integrated Development model. Since 1990, SELF has completed projects in 20 countries, making it a leader among non-governmental organizations in realizing practical and cost-effective alternative energy solutions for rural villagers. For more information, please visit [www.self.org](http://www.self.org).

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