



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Solar Supporter Cycles from Cairo to Capetown to Light Africa with Renewable Energy
7,375 Mile Tour d’Afrique Racer Raises Money and Awareness to Fight Energy Poverty and HIV/AIDS

Washington, DC – January 21 – The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) today announced that Timothy Thomas of Kennett Square, Penn., has embarked upon the grueling 7,375 mile Tour d’Afrique in his attempt to raise \$100,000 for SELF’s work bringing solar power to impoverished villages in Africa. Mr. Thomas and approximately 50 cyclists from around the world departed from Cairo, Egypt, on January 16 and will race through 10 countries, riding an average of 85 miles a day to complete the journey to Capetown, South Africa, in just four months.

Mr. Thomas, who was born in New York but raised in South Africa, said, “I’ve been a huge fan of SELF ever since I heard about them in 2007. And I wanted to give something back to a continent I once called home, while quenching my own hunger for adventure in this hauntingly beautiful land. What better way to reacquaint myself with Africa than to bike from Cairo to the Cape and use the experience to bring attention to a very worthy cause?”

A former financial services executive, Mr. Thomas will direct the money he raises to fund SELF’s Lesotho project, a partnership with Dr. Paul Farmer and Partners In Health (PIH). Lesotho—a small, mountainous nation of 2 million people completely surrounded by South Africa—suffers from the third highest rate of HIV infection and the fourth highest rate of tuberculosis in the world. Almost one-quarter of the adult population is estimated to be HIV-positive and life expectancy has plummeted to less than 35 years. 90 percent of Lesotho’s population live in the rural lowlands, or in the remote mountain regions, and lack access to even the most basic health care services.

Because of the mountainous terrain, PIH clinics in Lesotho are far removed from the electric grid, making it difficult to deliver quality health care. Dr. Farmer, PIH’s co-founder and executive vice president, said, “You can’t do this without electricity. Because you’re not going to have an operating room. You’re not going to have a laboratory. You’re not going to see people at night...So it’s one of two things—either generate your own electricity with a diesel generator or go solar.” To date, SELF has installed solar power systems at four PIH clinics in Lesotho and will complete systems at three additional clinics this year.

In describing his motivation, Mr. Thomas said, “My goal is to raise at least \$100,000, which will provide sufficient solar electricity to power medical equipment and critical lighting, diagnose and treat HIV/AIDS patients and TB patients, and ensure communications and Internet connectivity for an entire clinic.” Each PIH clinic in Lesotho serves an average of 42,500 people. Mr. Thomas raised nearly \$10,000 toward his goal in advance of the race.

Robert Freling, SELF’s executive director, said: “We were very pleased to be chosen by Tim and we are in absolute awe of his endeavor. For someone to give up four months of their life—and dedicate so much of their mind, body and spirit—to fight energy poverty and climate change is a truly inspirational commitment. We will be cheering him on every inch of the way.”

The original Tour d’Afrique holds the Guinness World Record for the fastest human powered crossing of Africa. Since 2003, approximately 250 persons from more than 20 countries have completed the expedition, including cycle cross and mountain bike riders of all skill levels, retired couples, university students and professors, doctors and nurses, IT professionals, diabetics, a blind person, and a double amputee.

Tour d’Afrique, Ltd., a Toronto-based company, describes the Tour’s mandate as several fold: “first, to cross Africa by human power and to experience its beauty and diversity from the best seat in the house—a bicycle seat; second, to create a unique athletic endurance event for both amateurs and professionals; third, to give something back to Africa by raising funds for bicycle donations to community health & development groups and for environmental protection projects; fourth, to raise consciousness about bicycles as an alternative and appropriate means of transport.”

Henry Gold, the Tour’s founder, said, “Each year, the Tour participants never cease to amaze us. The causes they take on, and their selfless dedication, is a testimony to the true mission of our company. And we’re especially proud of Tim, who grew up in Africa, and his commitment to give back to his homeland in such an important way. Renewable energy, and solar energy in particular, is certainly one of the most important elements in helping communities in Africa—perhaps in the whole world. Education, health, provision of clean water, good sanitation and development of small business: those are the main elements for getting Africa to be a healthy continent, and all of these require energy.”

Throughout the race, Mr. Thomas will be sharing his experiences, observations and fundraising updates via his blog at www.thisisafrica2010.com.

SELF is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit working to combat climate change and reduce energy poverty by bringing solar power and wireless Internet access to remote rural villages in the developing world. SELF has pioneered innovative applications of solar power such as 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.

About Timothy Thomas

Tim Thomas was born on Long Island, New York, and spent his childhood in Zimbabwe and South Africa. A graduate of Fordham University in New York with a degree in mathematics, he began his career on the floor of the N.Y. Stock Exchange in 1998, working up to an executive position with Lockwood Financial Services (now a service of New York Mellon). Since 2006, he has worked as a managed account product consultant for Pershing/Bank of New York Securities. A keen athlete, Mr. Thomas has run eight marathons, climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro, and completed the 109-mile Etape du Tour bike race. He has done volunteer work for nonprofit conservation organizations in the United States and South Africa. For more information, please visit www.thisisafrica2010.com.

About Tour d’Afrique, Ltd.

Tour d’Afrique Ltd. is a Toronto based company named for its flagship cycling tour that annually traverses the African continent from Cairo to Cape Town. Since its birth in 2003, three more transcontinental tours have been added; the Orient Express, crossing Europe from Paris to Istanbul, the Silk Route, crossing Asia from Istanbul to Beijing and, in 2009, the Vuelta Sudamericana, traversing South America from Rio de Janeiro to Quito. For more information, please visit www.tourdafrique.com.

About Partners In Health

Partners In Health (PIH) is a Boston, Mass.-based nonprofit organization working to provide a preferential option for the poor in health care. By establishing long-term relationships with sister

organizations based in settings of poverty, PIH strives to achieve two overarching goals: to bring the benefits of modern medical science to those most in need of them and to serve as an antidote to despair. PIH draws on the resources of the world's leading medical and academic institutions and on the lived experiences of the world's poorest and sickest communities. For more information, please visit www.pih.org.

About SELF

The Solar Electric Light Fund (SELF) is a Washington, DC-based nonprofit organization working to end global poverty by bringing solar power and Internet access to the world's poorest people in remote rural areas. SELF utilizes clean, renewable electricity to reduce greenhouse emissions while improving the health, education and welfare of the two billion people living in energy poverty. Since its founding in 1990, SELF has launched sustainable projects in 20 countries, including Benin, Brazil, China, Haiti, India, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe. For more information, please visit www.self.org.

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