



THE ZULULAND COMMUNITY SOLAR PROJECT

WHAT DID WE DO?

The Zululand Community Solar Project provided solar lighting systems to three deeply rural communities south of Somkhanda Game Reserve. 130 households received solar lighting kits which included a solar panel, hanging and desk lamps, and batteries which can run for up to 16 hours daily.

Community members were selected and trained in the system installation and now serve as local agents, whereby they can earn commission from the sale and installation of add-on features, such as batteries, mosquito repellent mats, radio and even satellite television systems.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT?

The project has had truly life-changing effects for community members, who now have lighting for school assignments, household chores and leisure activities. The systems included a cell phone charging adapter, saving beneficiaries the time and expense of having to travel to town to charge their phones. Households have also experienced considerable monthly savings on candles, paraffin and batteries.



WHY WAS THE PROJECT IMPORTANT?

Solar energy is a clean energy, with far less impact on the environment than the burning of coal and other fossil fuels. Before the systems, communities met their energy needs using candles, wood (often unsustainably harvested), gas and the burning of animal dung. Inhaling the smoke and fumes produced from burning these fuels has severe consequences to health, affecting mainly women and children. These indoor pollution levels are a significant contributor to respiratory diseases, whilst the poor light levels emitted from candles often cause headaches and eye strain.

Somkhanda is a 22,000 hectare community-owned reserve, situated within a key biodiversity area. Amongst others, the reserve is home to a high density of leopard and white rhino as well as endangered black rhino, wild dog and Jozini cycad species. The communities who live adjacent to the reserve play a vital role in the safeguarding of the area and ACT has signed agreements with the communities (as well as a third, Madwaleni, community) working to build a healthy, sustainable environment.



WHO WERE THE PROJECT FUNDERS?

Funding for this project was generously provided by [EKOenergy](#) and [Siemenpuu](#).

EKOenergy is a not-for-profit eco-label for renewable energy; through their certification, EKOenergy raises money for climate projects worldwide. Because they receive far more applications than they can fund, they have partnered with Siemenpuu Foundation, who directs and provides small scale Finnish development funding to NGOs and civil movements working with environmental issues in the South.

