



## OPEN LETTER TO FUNDERS AND IMPLEMENTING AGENCIES TO SUPPORT THE SOLARIZATION OF UN-ELECTRIFIED HEALTH FACILITIES IN ZAMBIA

In Zambia, the current COVID-19 crisis has brought into sharp focus the adverse impact that the lack of electricity has on health services, especially in rural areas. Across all the main health facilities in Zambia, only 27.5 percent<sup>1</sup> of those in rural areas have a functional connection to the grid.

Reliable access to electricity means lighting for safe emergency night-time care and childbirth, refrigeration for blood and vaccines, sterilization facilities, and electricity for simple medical devices. Furthermore, access to electricity in health facilities helps to better attract and retain staff and enable health information systems to facilitate data-based decision making.

As many health facilities are located far from the grid and even those with a grid connection often face power failures or outages,<sup>2</sup> off-grid solar solutions present an opportunity to provide clean, reliable, and cost-effective electricity to health centers. This power can dramatically transform the quality of healthcare services provided to local communities and support the government's goal of providing equitable access to quality health services for all and support Zambia to become a Middle-Income Country by 2030 as laid out in the Vision 2030.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Ministry of Energy (MoE) recognize that electrification of health facilities using off-grid solar is a priority for the government. The Zambian National Energy Policy of 2019 highlights that solar energy is critical to rural electrification and the Zambia Vision 2030 looks to increase the share of renewable energy. The Rural Electrification Authority (REA) has been tasked to oversee and coordinate grid extension to health centers (REF). To scale up electrification of health facilities and improve health outcomes, the Government is working with the Africa Clean Energy Technical Assistance Facility, in partnership with the World Resources Institute and Power for All to make the electrification of all health clinics a reality. Activities include the following.

- Mapping healthcare facilities, their electrification status, electricity requirements and optimal supply options.
- Conducting a study to quantify and validate the off-grid energy needs of unelectrified health care facilities, and the costs associated with electrifying them.

#### Sources:

1. Based on Zambia's Ministry of Health 2017 health facility census

2. WHO (2015). [Access to Modern Energy Services for Health Facilities in Resource-Constrained Settings](#)

- And, building a national multi-stakeholder coalition to ensure alignment and readiness to mobilize the needed financial and technical support from funders and implementing agencies.

Over 30 institutions representing Governmental Agencies, the Private Sector, Private Financiers and Civil Society Organizations from the health and energy sector have come together and identified the barriers to universal electrification of health facilities in Zambia and are working to develop practical solutions. The early results are promising, but without support from funder and implementing agencies, the full potential cannot be realized.

**Therefore, we call on funders and implementing agencies to coordinate efforts and pool resources to support government initiatives with the aim of scaling up the electrification of health facilities effectively and efficiently.**

Specific needs include the following:

- US\$50 million<sup>3</sup> to fund off-grid electrification of 1,000 health centres, minor works associated with solarization of the centres, context-specific services, medical devices, and operation and maintenance (O&M) costs.
- Technical Assistance and capacity building to
  - Support coordination among diverse stakeholders and the government,
  - Increase vocational skills for the implementation and maintenance of renewable energy equipment, and
  - Provide necessary knowledge to put together robust business plans to attract financing.
- Support for solutions that are viable and sustainable.
- A one stop, client-driven approach underlain by a common strategy and methodology to ensure alignment between funders and government.
- Support to implementation of the developed Action Plan

On this regard, this Call to Action is prepared and signed by the Permanent Secretaries of Ministry of Health, Ministry of Energy, and the Zambia Health Coalition Members.



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MINISTRY OF HEALTH**



**Francesca C. Zyambo (Mrs),  
Permanent Secretary,  
MINISTRY OF ENERGY**

3. This figure is validated by Ministry of Health based on the UNDP Solar for Health Programme Study and the FCDO-funded ACE TAF Energy Audits for Rural Health Facilities Electrification Study

**List of Signatories to the Open Letter to the Funders and Implementing Agencies to support the Solarization of Rural health Clinics in Zambia**

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