



LivelyHoods

solarsister.org



The Care Economy
Knowledge Hub

the-care-economy-knowledge-hub.org

Profiling Businesses in the Care Economy

The care economy consists of paid and unpaid labor and services that support caregiving in all its forms. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, women spend between three to five times as many hours on unpaid care and domestic work as men. This represents 80 percent of a household's total hours devoted to unpaid care work.

Care economy businesses can help recognize, redistribute, reduce and reward – also known as the 4 Rs – unpaid and paid care and domestic work in the following ways:



Recognize: Initiatives that increase visibility and recognition of paid and unpaid care and domestic activity as "productive" work that creates real value and contributes to economies and societies.



Redistribute: Services and initiatives that redistribute care work from individuals to public and private sector entities, and redistribute care and domestic work within the household.



Reduce: Products and initiatives that reduce the time spent on and burden of unpaid care and domestic work.



Reward: Products, services and initiatives that ensure that care and domestic workers are paid fairly and have professional growth potential. This provides them with financial reward and security.

The Care Economy Knowledge Hub aims to address the knowledge gap around care businesses by showcasing various business models and creating a resource base for relevant stakeholders. It also aims to raise awareness and increase knowledge of the state of impact-driven care economy business models and attract a broad range of funders to invest in care economy solutions by showcasing opportunities. These business profiles are intended to showcase said potential investment opportunities. They have been created from information and data provided by the business itself.

This project is supported by Canada's International Development Research Center, in partnership with the Soros Economic Development Fund at the Open Society Foundations. Building on their track record and commitment to transforming the care economy and mobilizing finance for gender equality, they have jointly launched this action research program to help transform the care economy through impact business and investment.

Executive Summary



LivelyHoods (*recently merged with Solar Sister*)¹ is a non-profit organization operating in Kenya.² LivelyHoods partners with manufacturers of clean energy products, such as solar lamps and cookstoves, for the last-mile distribution of these products in low-income communities. LivelyHoods has created a network of women sales agents from disadvantaged communities in Kenya. The sales agents are provided training and job opportunities, mainly in educating customers about the benefits of using clean-energy products. Since its inception, LivelyHoods has improved the lives of 340,000+ people through training, job creation, and product distribution. In 2021, LivelyHoods generated a revenue of US\$ 164,823. It currently has 20 full-time employees.

Both LivelyHoods and Solar Sister Inc. increase access to clean energy products in underserved communities. The entities have aligned their missions, visions and values and will continue to bring economic opportunities and clean energy access throughout Sub-Saharan Africa. The merger has resulted in combining the Solar Sister Inc. operations in Nigeria and Tanzania, with LivelyHoods operations in Kenya. LivelyHoods will be rebranded as Solar Sister Kenya.

Enterprise Stage:
Growth

Year Established:
2011

Women Owned/Led:*

- Founded by at least one woman
- At least 30% women in senior leadership (executive level/ c-suite positions).
- At least 30% of the board of directors is composed of women



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* According to 2X "women entrepreneurship" and "women leadership" criteria: [2X Challenge Criteria](#)

¹ Solar Sister, Inc. acquired LivelyHoods in 2022 and is now in the process of rebranding Livelyhoods to Solar Sister Kenya. <https://solarsister.org/better-together-solar-sister-announces-merger-with-livelyhoods-kenya/>

² Solar Sister, Inc is a non-profit and Livelyhoods will continue to be a non-profit post merger.

1. About The Enterprise

1.1 Problem

In Kenya, access rates to electricity and clean cooking solutions are 56% and 13% respectively.³ About 75% of households in Kenya rely primarily on wood fuels or charcoal for cooking.⁴ This widespread use of wood fuels for cooking contributes to environmental degradation, increases pressure on limited natural resources and intensifies health risks. WHO data suggests that smoke and indoor pollution resulted in an estimated 23,000 deaths in Kenya in 2020.⁵ Respiratory disease (stemming from partially combusted firewood) is the third highest cause of premature death in Kenya.⁶ Further, inadequate access to efficient cooking and lighting solutions increases women's unpaid workload. On average, women in Sub-Saharan Africa spend 3 times longer than men on unpaid work, including domestic work and caregiving.⁷

Evidence suggests that there are benefits to using clean energy sources, or improved energy technologies.⁸ A study by Oxfam showed that access to time and labor-saving equipment (such as fuel-efficient stoves, water tanks, or solar lamps) made unpaid care tasks less time-consuming and intense.⁹ However, the adoption of such products is limited due to a lack of awareness of the benefits as well as, higher costs and fewer after-sales service options for the products. In Kenya, most poor households have limited resources. Thus, it is difficult to procure energy technologies and labor-saving equipment, to get a grid connection, or an LPG cylinder.¹⁰ Studies in rural Kenya also show that men are major decision-makers on all household expenditures, including the purchase of improved cookstoves. While women reported benefits in using an improved cookstove, men found it out of reach and unnecessary.¹¹

³ Christley, E., Ljungberg, H., Ackom, E., & Nerini, F. F. (2021). *Sustainable energy for slums? Using the Sustainable Development Goals to guide energy access efforts in a Kenyan informal settlement*. Energy Research & Social Science, 79, 102176.

⁴ Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Energy. (2019). *Kenya Cooking Sector Study: Assessment of the Supply and Demand of Cooking Solutions at the Household Level*. <https://eedadvisory.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/MoE-2019-Kenya-Cooking-Sector-Study-Abridged.pdf>

⁵ Chasant, M. (2020). *Air Pollution In Kenya Causes, Effects and Solutions*, ATC Mask <https://www.atcmask.com/blogs/blog/air-pollution-in-kenya#:~:text=Air%20pollution%20is%20linked%20to%20more%20than%2018%2C000%20premature%20deaths,a%20WHO%20report%20has%20revealed>

⁶ *Cooking energy access: A Kenyan case study*. Multi-disciplinary research developing a sustainable energy supply. (2019). <https://energyfutureslab.blog/2019/12/05/cooking-energy-access-a-kenyan-case-study/>

⁷ Jagoe, K., Rossanese, M., Charron, D., Rouse, J., Waweru, F., Waruguru, M., & Ipe, J. (2020). *Sharing the burden: Shifts in family time use, agency and gender dynamics after introduction of new cookstoves in rural Kenya*. Energy Research & Social Science, 64, 101413. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/341795335_Sharing_the_burden_Shifts_in_family_time_use_agency_and_gender_dynamics_after_introduction_of_new_cookstoves_in_rural_Kenya

⁸ Clancy, J., Winther, T., Matinga, M., & Oparaocha, S. (2012). *Gender equity in access to and benefits from modern energy and improved energy technologies: world development report background paper*. Gender and Energy WDR Background Paper, 44. https://ris.utwente.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/5131977/WDR_Norad_ENERGIA_Exec_Summary.pdf

⁹ Oxfam. (2019). *Gendered patterns of unpaid care and domestic work in the urban informal settlements of Nairobi, Kenya. Findings from a Household Care Survey 2019*. <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620910/rr-nairobi-kenya-household-care-survey-191119-en.pdf;jsessionid=60FF0F64D05C9263AFF2ECF9A2205B10?sequence=1>

¹⁰ Malonza, R., & Fedha, M. (2015). *An assessment of gender and energy in Kenya: the underlying issues*. International Journal of Scientific and Technology Research, 4(9), 137-153. https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Malonza_Fedha_-_An_Assessment_of_G_Energy_in_Kenya_O.pdf

¹¹ Ochieng, C. A., Murray, U., Owuor, J., & Spillane, C. (2021). *The forgotten half: Men's influence over cookstove adoption decisions in Northern Kenya*. Energy Research & Social Science, 74, 101913.

Additionally, Kenya has a growing unemployment problem. More than a quarter of Kenya's youth population is unemployed, representing approximately 3.6 million young people.¹² Women are 45% more likely to be unemployed than men.¹³

Solar energy is projected to create more than 600,000 new jobs in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050.¹⁴ Therefore, green jobs in the clean energy sector, including solar lights and cookstoves, can increase women's employment in Kenya. However, there are obstacles that women face in realizing green economic opportunities, including skill mismatch, freedom of movement, and care work burdens.¹⁵ In a study conducted to assess the labor force participation rate of people in the age group 25–54 by family situation (i.e., living alone, living with a partner, or living with a partner and kids), it was found that in Sub-Saharan Africa, women living alone have a higher labor force participation rate (92%) than women who live with a partner (77%), or with kids (80%).¹⁶

1.2 Solution

LivelyHoods focuses on increased access to clean energy products in low-income communities by creating job opportunities for women and youth through the following actions:

- **Clean energy products and distribution:** LivelyHoods acts as the last-mile distributor of clean energy products. The products, solar lights, and cookstoves are sourced from other manufacturers who sell them to LivelyHoods in bulk (at wholesale prices). LivelyHoods then adds a markup and resells to their customers. LivelyHoods tests the products' quality before procurement. LivelyHoods has adopted a hub-and-spoke distribution model, as the organization opens branches in slum communities. The branches serve as training centers and inventory stock points. At the last-mile, LivelyHoods creates awareness about the product and coordinates after-sale services. LivelyHoods educates end-users about product usage and warranty details.

¹² Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *Kenya Population and Housing Census Vol IV: Distribution of Population and Socio-Economic Characteristics*, December 2019.

¹³ UNDP. (2013). *Kenya's Youth Employment Challenge*. Discussion Paper, January 2013. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

¹⁴ UN Women and the African Development Bank. (2021). *Green jobs for women in Africa*.

https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

¹⁵ UN Women and the African Development Bank. (2021). *Green jobs for women in Africa*.

https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

¹⁶ UN Women and the African Development Bank. (2021). *Green jobs for women in Africa*.

https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2021/11/20211206_UN%20Women_Green%20Jobs_report_ENG%20webpages.pdf

- **Training and job creation for women:** LivelyHoods trains women from low-income communities to become sales agents. These women often reside in the same area as the customers. They learn about the technical details of the products and their benefits over other traditional alternatives. Sales agents' training also includes modules in areas such as sales, marketing, environment, and life skills. LivelyHoods provides field orientation to the trained agents, in order to provide first-hand experience.

The organization has developed a micro-consignment model through which trained women sales agents receive a daily consignment of products to sell. The sales agents do not have to purchase the products upfront and can return unsold products at the end of the day. The agents sell products through door-to-door marketing. A commission on each sale and performance-based bonuses and incentives are offered.

- **After-sales service:** The product manufacturers provide all warranties and servicing. LivelyHoods coordinates with the manufacturers for after-sales services.

1.3 Customer Segment

Customer Segment	Product / Service Provided	Paid / Unpaid
Low-income households in informal and urban settlements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of clean energy products and after-sales services: Customers learn about and buy products from women sales agents. Customers can send back products for replacement and servicing directly to LivelyHoods. 	Paid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customers pay for the full cost of the product. Livelyhoods also offers a layaway¹⁷ program, wherein customers may gradually save for the product (through mobile money) and collect their product once full payment is received. • Customers do not pay for any transportation/delivery costs. LivelyHoods ensures that customers can access the manufacturers directly through contact numbers and service point locations. If this is not possible, it arranges for product logistics from branch locations.

¹⁷ Layaway is a [purchasing arrangement](#) where a Livelyhoods reserves and stores an item for a customer who has a predetermined period to pay for the item in full. Livelyhoods is using the Angaza system to monitor the payment.

Customer Segment	Product / Service Provided	Paid / Unpaid
Small retailers and community groups that cater to customers in underserved areas and households	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of clean energy products: This is a business-to-business (B2B) stream through which small retailers can buy products in bulk from LivelyHoods. 	Paid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customers pay the full cost of the product.
Women sales agents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training and employment generation: The sales agents undergo 1 week of training, followed by 3 weeks of intensive field placement. Post-field placement, the trained agents decide whether or not they wish to continue to work as sales agents. <p>The sales agents can take products to sell from the nearest branch of LivelyHoods in slum communities. They do not need to take loans or any financial risk, as they can return any unsold products at the end of the day.</p>	Unpaid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The cost of training and upskilling women sales agents is managed through grant funds.

1.4 Team And Governance Structure

LivelyHoods has 20 full-time employees, 66% of whom are women. The team includes the Country Director, Account Associate, 2 Administrative and HR personnel, a Credit Manager, 3 Business Development Managers, a Training Associate, and the Program Manager. There are 10 Business Development Associates (BDA), who manage 10 branches spread across 10 counties in Kenya. On average, each BDA supports 13 sales agents within their respective branches. There are 146 sales agents in Kenya, 60% of whom are women.

Post-merger with Solar Sister, a few changes in the governance structure have been made. Two earlier Directors of LivelyHoods are now a part of the parent organization, Solar Sister. The earlier board of LivelyHoods now functions as an Advisory Board to Solar Sister. This Advisory board is comprised of 7 members, 4 of whom are women.

1.5 Enterprise Policies

Policy	Yes / No
Overall HR Policy	Yes
Equal pay for equivalent work policy	No
Non-discrimination / Equal employment opportunity / Diversity and inclusion policy (gender, LGBTQ, PWD, etc.)	No
Anti bullying and sexual harassment policy / Respectful workplaces	Yes
Whistleblower policy / Employee grievance mechanism	Yes
Maternity / Paternity leave policy	Yes
Safeguarding policies for vulnerable groups (children, elderly, PWDs)	Yes
Safeguarding policies for the environment or to reduce detrimental impact on the environment (covers reducing carbon footprint, reduced water consumption etc.)	No

2. Impact

2.1 Mission Statement

LivelyHoods' mission is to provide low-income communities access to life-improving and affordable products, through a sales network of trained youths and women.

2.2 Intended Impact

LivelyHoods intended impact is directed towards one of the four Rs:

- The clean energy products distributed by LivelyHoods help to **reduce** the time and burden of unpaid domestic work taken up by women

2.3 Monitoring And Measurement

LivelyHoods keeps track of the following indicators:

- Sales data of its cookstoves and solar products: tracked monthly through Salesforce software.
- Number of customers served by the company: tracked monthly.
- Number of communities served: tracked monthly.
- Number of people trained: tracked monthly. LivelyHoods tracks the trainee's attendance throughout the training period. The enterprise also conducts surveys 6 and 12 months after the training in order to track trainees' progress, including job status and income generation.

LivelyHoods also measures its impact on 3 fronts: Social, Economic, and Environment.

- LivelyHoods measures social impact through the number of lives impacted since its inception. This is done by taking the total number of clean energy products sold, multiplied by 5 (the average household number in Kenya). The number of trained entrepreneurs is then added to this figure.
- The economic impact is measured through jobs created and income generated by the entrepreneurs. LivelyHoods also measures household savings due to a reduction in fuel consumption.
- To measure the environmental impact, LivelyHoods estimates the reduction in CO₂ emissions based on the number of clean energy products sold and tons of charcoal saved.

2.4 Results To Date

- Number of products sold: 10,475 solar products and 56,528 cookstoves.
- Number of people trained: 5,841 individuals, 60% of whom are women.
- Number of jobs created: 2,672.
- Number of people impacted through training, job creation, and product distribution: 340,856.
- Through sales of cookstoves, the organization has enabled savings of US\$ 32,503,600 in fuel costs. Also, 1,055,378 trees have been saved (calculated based on CO₂ emission and charcoal usage reduction).¹⁸
- 50% of former sales agents have started their own business.

¹⁸ Livelyhoods tracks this each year based on equivalent indicators generated by clean energy institutions.

LivelyHoods' work is aligned with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):



3. Financials

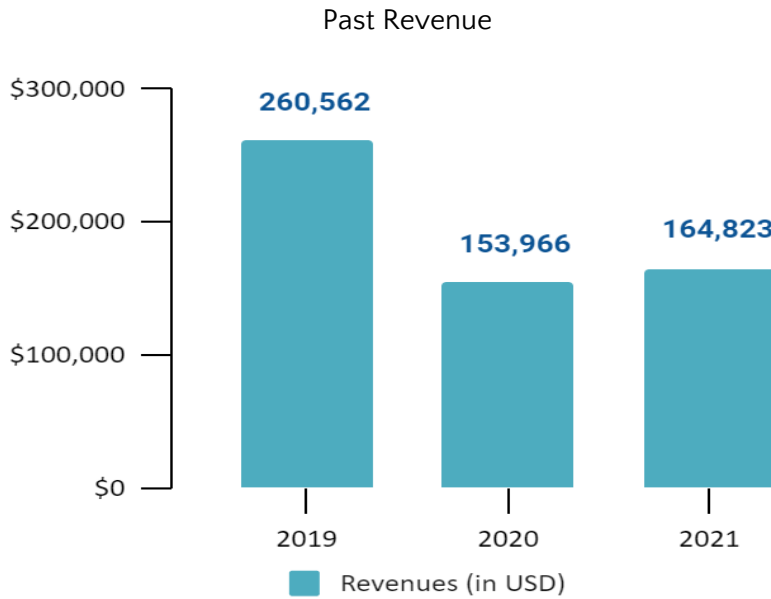
3.1 Financial Status

LivelyHoods aims to be financially sustainable in the next 3 years.

Particular (Amounts in USD)	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021
Total Revenue	260,562	153,966	164,823
Total Expenses	250,825	248,866	251,817
EBITDA OR Profit/Loss	9,738	(94,900)	(86,994)
EBITDA Margin	4%	-62%	-52%

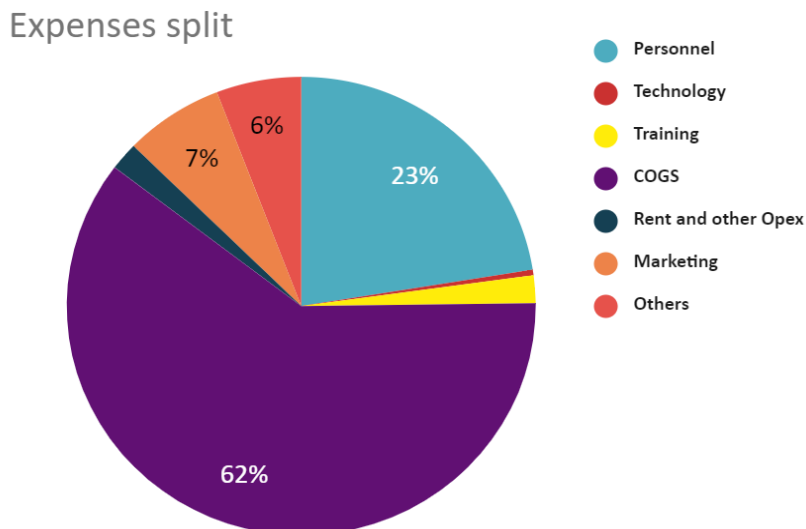
3.1.1 Revenue Streams

An estimated 52% of LivelyHoods’s revenue is from commercial business. The remaining 48% of revenue is from grants and contributions.



3.1.2 Expenses

The following chart displays the expenditure estimates of LivelyHoods in 2021:



3.2 External Funding Sources (Past and Current)

- LivelyHoods has received funding from Social Capital Funds to pilot a differentiated training and employment strategy, in order to increase the depth of impact on youths and women participants.
- Kenya off-grid Solar Access Project (KOSAP) funded LivelyHoods to establish sustainable supply chains of cookstoves, cleaner cooking fuels, and solar systems in KOSAP Service Territories (KSTs).
- The USAID-backed “Power Africa Off-Grid Project” funded LivelyHoods to distribute electricity services and clean cooking fuel delivery services.
- The Gupta Family Foundation provided grants that were used to assist beneficiaries in overcoming their limitations and achieving self-sufficiency over time.

3.3 Challenges Faced In Accessing Capital

Availability: LivelyHoods faces difficulties in raising grant funds from donors. Some of the past donors of LivelyHoods have changed their strategies, with less focus on vocational training for youths and women.

4. Path To Scalability

4.1 Potential Avenues For Growth

LivelyHoods plans for growth are as follows:

- **Geographical expansion:** LivelyHoods intends to double its sales and revenue by expanding into rural areas of Kenya. To do this, it will leverage the expertise of Solar Sister. LivelyHoods intends to set up 10 new branches in 3 years. Further, it will scale up operations in existing branches, by attaching more women sales agents.
- **Training and development of sales agents:** LivelyHoods plans to pilot their trainer model, by offering to conduct said training with partner organizations. These organizations will then implement the LivelyHoods training within their own operations. This will increase the number of women trained and ultimately support geographical expansion.

4.2 Risks And Challenges

Operational:

- Sales agent attrition is a key challenge. Sometimes the sales agents move on to other opportunities. This is challenging, given the significant amount of funds and time spent to train agents.
- Political unrest, or events such as elections, can affect sales. LivelyHoods had to stop operations in the past as it became difficult to travel safely in informal and urban settlements.

Products:

- Some suppliers and manufacturers are unable to meet orders and demands on time. LivelyHoods has diversified products and partnered with multiplier suppliers to address this.
- LivelyHoods faces competition from other distributors of the same products. Sometimes other retailers sell the same branded product but at lower rates, so it becomes difficult to operate in those regions. Livelyhoods continues to focus on relationship-building with suppliers so that these issues can be openly discussed. Livelyhoods also works with multiple suppliers to prevent over-dependence. With continued marketing support from Livelyhoods, the agents are also able to move into new areas, in case of pricing distortion by retailers.

4.3 COVID-19 Impact On The Enterprise

LivelyHoods's sales decreased by 50% during COVID-19. Due to travel restrictions, the company had to downsize its operation by half. The inability to travel also affected LivelyHoods's after-sales services.

4.4 Support Received To Date

Livelyhoods has received numerous awards that have enhanced awareness about the organization. This has enabled them to build partnerships with donors and suppliers.

- The enterprise was selected (from more than 200 projects across the region) as the project of the year, by the Energy and Environment Partnership of Southern and East Africa. The partnership represents ties with the governments of the United Kingdom, Finland, and Austria.
- LivelyHoods has received the Pan-African Awards for Entrepreneurship in Education for its entrepreneurial, sustainable, and innovative educational approach.
- The enterprise received the Global Catalyst Award as the world's most promising early-stage, market-driven, venture for tackling global poverty.

4.5 Inputs Required For Growth

Financial:

LivelyHoods requires US\$ 500,000 over the next 3 years. The funding will be used to:

- **Open 10 new branches in rural Kenya:** The new branches will consist of 10 BDA and 150 trained LivelyHoods sales agents.
- **Enhance training capacity to hire more LivelyHoods sales agents:** The funds will be used to pilot a “Train the Trainer” model. LivelyHoods will also create a new curriculum and materials.

Non-financial

LivelyHoods seeks support and funds to enhance systems and processes for program monitoring and evaluations.