

Solar energy for maternity units in Madagascar



In 2019-2020, EKOenergy granted 24,000 euros to equip eight maternity centres with solar energy in rural parts of Madagascar. The project was prepared and implemented by Santé Sud and their local partners.

Text: Elodie Cuesta

Picture: Santé Sud

Sexual and reproductive health is one of the biggest health issues in the country. 66% of birth deliveries are not assisted by qualified health professionals. Rural areas of Madagascar, home to 70% of the Malagasy population, are the most severely impacted.

To tackle this problem, Santé Sud, a French sustainable development NGO, joined forces with local communities and authorities. They decided to set-up several self-employed midwives in private maternity units in eight remote rural communities.

With EKOenergy's financial support, each maternity unit received photovoltaic equipment which guarantees stable access to electricity and low running costs. Two solar kits were installed per maternity unit. Each kit contains a solar panel, a battery, an energy converter as well as some cables. Furthermore, four low consumption LED light bulbs of 400 lumens are also included.

Since electricity facilitates everyday life both in the midwives' living quarters and the clinics, the project greatly improves the living conditions of

the locals. It enables them to use a refrigerator to preserve vaccines and medication, provides essential lighting for day and night patient care and also makes charging mobile phones and other electronic devices possible. These are all essential, especially for emergencies such as birth deliveries.

Approximately 56,000 inhabitants of rural areas, including more than 13,000 women of childbearing age and about 9,000 children under five years will be the final beneficiaries of this solar energy project.

François Calas from Santé Sud explains that the project has additional benefits too: "The introduction of solar energy is raising local awareness about sustainable energies, which is essential in Madagascar as the country lacks electricity infrastructure and is severely impacted by climate change."

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