

Jewish Heart for Africa Launches Operations in Fourth Country in Under Four Years

NEW YORK, February 18 2011 – On Wednesday February 23rd, Jewish Heart for Africa (JHA) will launch its first project in Malawi: the installation of solar energy at Kapudzama Community Based Organization (CBO).

Kapudzama CBO was founded by Jimmy Kamseza in the Lilongwe District of Malawi in 2007. With over 500 orphans and vulnerable children in his community, Kamseza felt something needed to change. He gathered the support of 15 members of his village to create a community center run for and by the people of his village.

Kapudzama's stated mission is to "uphold the values of transparency, respect for human dignity, accountability and shared responsibilities." Today, the facility provides services to over 1200 people. They have a band, a drama club and a soccer team. They offer free nursery school, and provide vocational training for tailors to teach them a trade. They also offer HIV/AIDS education, counseling and care.

The government provided funding for a building to house the CBO, but located over 10km from the electrical grid, electricity has never been an option for the people of Kapudzama. Without light, the facility cannot effectively offer its services after sunset, and so they close in the evenings.

Next Wednesday, Jewish Heart for Africa will officially launch operations in Malawi by providing Kapudzama CBO with solar energy. JHA will install light in the facility for evening activities, as well as energy for a computer lab to provide IT training to both students and adults. With light at night, Kapudzama will also become a study center for the children of the community, none of whom have light in their homes. Students will use the energy to prepare for exams and complete their homework, rather than doing so by the light of dangerous, unsanitary and expensive kerosene lamps.

Jewish Heart for Africa was introduced to Kapudzama CBO via their Malawian partner Goods4Good, a non-profit organization that provides surplus goods to a carefully selected network of CBOs and schools in Malawi. Goods4Good will be donating the laptops for the solar powered computer lab.

"Goods4Good has been instrumental in our expansion into Malawi" explains Rachel Ishofsky, JHA's Associate Executive Director. "Our solar projects are only as strong as the communities they benefit. Goods4Good's network of CBOs are ideal candidates for solar energy—they are communities committed to self improvement, with strong track records of providing meaningful programming for their members."

Ishofsky just returned from Malawi, where she and Jewish Heart for Africa volunteer Jason Manne met with key players on the ground including Malawi's Director of Energy, Gideon

Nyirongo. They also met with local and national government officials in the fields of health, education and agriculture to lay the groundwork for their expansion. They have hired a local project officer and will be working with local contractors to implement their solar and agricultural projects.

The organization chose to expand to Malawi due to its geographical proximity to their other country sites in East Africa, and because of a strong network of willing partners on the ground such as Goods4Good.

“When expanding into a new country,” Ishofsky explains, “it’s essential to have partners on the ground we can trust to introduce us to the right people and identify the right projects. In this regard, we owe a tremendous thank you to Kelly Ernst, wife of His Excellency Brian Bowler, Malawi’s Ambassador to the United Nations. Both Kelly and Ambassador Bowler have provided us with a wonderful network of resources that have made our expansion smooth, fast and efficient.”

The installation taking place next week will be attended by Kapudzama’s Local Chief, Village Chairman, Jewish Heart for Africa and Goods4Good staff as well as the hundreds of beneficiaries from Kapudzama that will come out to celebrate.

“Kapudzama is the first of many facilities we will power in Malawi,” says Sivan Borowich Ya’ari, Founder and President of Jewish Heart for Africa. “It will be our 38th solar project, and marks our expansion into our fourth country in under four years. But there is so much more to do. As we find new sources of support, we will continue to implement more projects and expand to more countries in order to facilitate African development with Israeli innovation.

About Jewish Heart for Africa

For just over three years, Jewish Heart for Africa has been bringing Israeli solar and agricultural technologies to rural villages in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda. The organization has installed solar energy at 37 facilities, providing light for evening classes in schools, powering refrigerators in rural medical clinics to store lifesaving vaccines, and pumping clean water to villages suffering from drought. 150,000 people now have access to solar energy through Jewish Heart for Africa’s projects, and over 75,000 children have received vaccines stored in their solar powered refrigerators. To learn more, visit www.jhafrica.org.

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