



CASE STUDY

Solar Kiosks for better healthcare services

The EU's Support to Civil Society and Local Authorities for Local Development program in Sierra Leone, aims to support local government authorities to deliver better public services.

Sierra Leone's Pujehun District agro-climatic conditions are favorable for agriculture. However, despite attempts by rural households to increase production levels, access to markets is a major challenge due to bad roads and poor communication facilities. The district suffers from one of the worst rates of maternal and child health challenges in Sierra Leone; with the country averaging about 76 deaths per 1,000 live births and maternal mortality at 1,360 deaths per 100,000 live births (UNICEF, 2020). The slow pace of public infrastructure projects like roads, healthcare facilities, and markets, means communities must find alternative ways of accessing services and market opportunities.



"I am a businesswoman. I sell my produce at the nearby "Luma" market. My phone helps me to determine prices of my commodities in the nearby villages. That way, I can fetch better prices for my goods. Also, I don't have to transport all my produce to different locations. I can easily ask motorcycle riders to bring my commodities when requested."

"I have seen pregnant women give birth on the way to the hospital in this community. Just last week we lost a member of our group due to pregnancy complications. This was because she was unable to reach out to healthcare workers early for help. This solar kiosk will put power in our hands and allow us to reach out for help in good time."

Community Members

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To strengthen market access and healthcare services, the European Union's Support for Civil Society and Local Authorities project is supporting the Pujehun District community to construct eight solar-powered mobile charging kiosks. Better mobile charging facilities will support the local people in the following ways:

- Access ambulances for health emergencies. In particular when women go into labor, it is difficult to reach the hospital because of far hospital distances and lack of transportation. Pujehun is one of few districts in Sierra Leone with communities surrounded by water. These solar kiosks help in ensuring that these communities can request speed-boat services from the mainland to take them to the hospital. With EU support, Pujehun District procured two boats to support communities.
- Access Community Healthcare Workers (CHW). Households can call CHWs to provide healthcare services and in complex cases, make easy and timely referrals.
- Access Medical Supplies. Often, CHWs find it difficult to replenish their drug supplies once they run out. The kiosks will support CHWs to reach their counterparts in the city to replenish stock and appropriately forecast their drug inventory.
- Access Markets. Many women rely on periodic markets to sell produce and travel to these markets with large amounts of stock to meet customer demand. If their goods fail to sell at the market rate, they are forced to discount them to eliminate extra storage or transport costs. Community members expressed that mobile phones enable women to take a limited stock to market and call for extra goods, if needed, to meet customer demand. This significantly helps increase income levels for smallholder farmers and petty traders.
- Mobile Money. Increasingly, mobile money is an important means of carrying out business transactions and receiving remittances, but the absence of charging stations limits transactions. Pujehun District is not connected to the national power grid and solar kiosks will facilitate local mobile money transactions.

Each kiosk is expected to carry 100 mobile charging spots covering 2,000 households. Community members would pay a small fee of 2,000 Le (\$0.16) to access a charging spot. Currently, households travel to different towns to charge their phones, incurring transport fees, on top of charging fees, costing an average of 20,000 Le (\$1.57). The new kiosks will make charging cheaper and save communities between 4-6 hours on transport journeys. The project will also provide start-up grants to female entrepreneurs to start or scale up businesses around these charging stations, like mobile money transaction points. Overall, these interventions will help increase income levels and overall health outcomes in the community.