

Solar power pioneer wins global green energy award

A company specialising in providing affordable solar power products to remote rural communities has won a coveted Ashden Award for its work in Africa.

Barefoot Power was awarded some 20,000 in prize money at a prestigious ceremony in London this evening after joining other Award winners at a meeting with His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at Clarence House in the morning.

The Ashden judges said: "With its astonishing sales figures, Barefoot is a fantastic example of a market-led solution to bringing renewable electricity to Africa's rural poor. Through its network of micro-entrepreneurs it is overcoming the barriers of how to access remote communities and how to make solar power affordable."

Rick Hooper, CEO of Barefoot Power said: "We are honored to receive the prestigious Ashden Award. More than 1.5 billion people lack access to energy across the globe and with this Award, we will be in a position to help eliminate energy poverty.

"As a social enterprise we have reached two million people in vulnerable communities in more than 20 countries with solar lighting and phone charging solutions. The Award will help us scale our business and make affordable, safe, healthy energy solutions available to all communities at the base of the pyramid, and help us attain our goal of reaching 10 million people by 2015."

The Award was presented by Dr. Kandeh Yumkella, Director General of UNIDO and Chair of UN-Energy, who in his keynote speech urged governments around the world to use the opportunity of Rio+20 to increase their support for clean energy pioneers like Barefoot Power.

Said Dr. Yumkella: "The decisions that will be taken at Rio will carry consequences for generations to come. Governments around the world must act urgently to agree the right policies and investment incentives that nurture these and other sustainable energy champions, before it's too late."

Barefoot Power's products are brightening up the lives of those with limited or no access to grid power. Products range from single desk lamps to complete kits for use by homes, clinics and schools. With good links to microfinance organisations and exceptional customer care, Barefoot has sold more than 400,000 lanterns and lighting kits to two million rural poor in Africa, Asia Pacific, India and the Americas. -ends-

Detailed information, films, and photographs of Barefoot Power: www.ashdenawards.org/winners/Barefoot12

Download photos of winners' work: www.ashdenawards.org/media/international_photos/2012_finalists From Thursday 1 June:

Download photos of the Award ceremony: www.ashdenawards.org/media/photos/2012_ceremony Download photos of HRH Prince of Wales: www.ashdenawards.org/media/photos/2012_HRH

Broadcast quality footage of the winners' works and clips from the awards ceremony are available on request.

Call for entries for 2013 Ashden Awards We're now seeking entries for the 2013 Ashden Awards. Full details of the prize package, criteria and application forms are on the Ashden website: www.ashden.org/apply

Additional quote Ronald Kabiswa, Barefoot Power Solar Entrepreneur said: "You can make yourself a good business as a Barefoot Power entrepreneur. I've earned enough to buy a car and start building a house. I have six sales agents who work for me, as well as selling myself".

Notes to editors

1. The Ashden Awards were founded in 2001 to encourage the greater use of local sustainable energy to address climate change and alleviate poverty. Since then they have rewarded over 140 green energy champions across the UK and the developing world and improved the lives of 33 million people worldwide, saving over 4 million tonnes of CO2 every year. Ashden's Patron is HRH The Prince of Wales (www.ashden.org)

2. This year's four international winners and a Gold Award winner were awarded a total of 120,000 in prize money to help them scale up their work.

3. Barefoot Power has been recognized with the Award for Sustainable Enterprise, supported by Zennström Philanthropies.

4. The UN has designated 2012 as the International Year for Sustainable Energy for All. In response, the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has launched a new global initiative – Sustainable Energy for All – which aims to achieve three major objectives by 2030: ensuring universal access to modern energy services; doubling the rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and doubling the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. www.sustainableenergyforall.org

5. Dr. Kandeh K. Yumkella is the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) as well as Chair of UN-Energy, a UN umbrella body dealing with energy-related issues. He plays a key international role in raising awareness of the need for universal access to energy, increased energy efficiency and enhanced deployment of renewable sources of energy – the three major goals of the UN Sustainable Energy For All campaign.

6. Some 1.4 billion people around the world lack access to modern energy, while 3 billion rely on ‘traditional biomass’ and coal as their main fuel sources.

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