



**Miller Center**  
for Social Entrepreneurship



# Scaling Through Partnerships Strategy Manual



Amanda Eason and Emma Hokokda

# MESSAGE FROM SOLAR SISTER

*Solar Sister has pioneered a unique women-centered clean energy distributed model to eradicate energy poverty. We have taken on a bold challenge because we believe everyone deserves clean energy and we know women can transform their communities. Together, we are democratizing light and energy. And we are leaving no one behind. We are proud to be a learning organization committed to 'better every day' mantra rooted in data, evidence and world class research to learn from our successes, failures and challenges.*

*In February 2019, we launched our 5 year strategy: Invest in Women, Power Communities. Over the next five years, Solar Sister will support over 10,000 women to build clean energy businesses that reach over 10 million people in sub Saharan Africa with clean energy technology by working towards 4 strategic goals: women's economic empowerment, energy access for underserved communities, advocacy for gender inclusion and scaling what works.*

*We realize that is an ambitious goal and one that calls us to increase our operational efficiencies, think out of the box and persist in the face of many sectoral and scaling challenges. This is where our research partnerships play a vital role. Santa Clara University's Miller Center for Social Entrepreneurship has been our long time research partner, providing us with research insights to improve and grow to support our vision.*

*This year, the SCU research team sought to analyze the role of partnerships in scaling our impact. With humility and a commitment to an evidence based practice, we welcome these findings. As we continue to grow our impact, we commit to incorporate the lessons shed by the report to improve our in-house efficiencies and implementation partnerships practices. We welcome this report as a powerful testament to the work we have ahead of us.*

*Katherine Lucey, Founder & CEO  
Solar Sister*

Prepared by:



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Solar Sister creates a brighter world powered by women entrepreneurs. To scale its impact, it seeks to develop better partnership practices with other organizations in Tanzania. In 2019, we traveled to 8 regions in Northeast Tanzania to research Solar Sister's operations and partners. There are both strengths and inefficiencies in Solar Sister's current approach to establishing and maintaining partnerships. This report offers recommendations for how to maximize the strengths and mitigate the inefficiencies so that scaling will be successful.

In its 2019-2023 strategic plan, Solar Sister identified the goal to "scale what works." There are many aspects of partnering that Solar Sister employees do well, such as selecting partners that align in their mission, that are ready for scaling, and that will help fulfill this initiative. However, there are other critical processes that need a fresh approach in order to scale successfully. Improved BDA engagement with partners, communication with partners, and success metrics will better position Solar Sister for scaling.

Partnerships have the potential to accelerate the process of entrepreneur recruitment and create a more sustainable model for growth. Our research indicates that Solar Sister can boost efficiency, trust, and balance the division of labor in its relationships with partners. This will foster more motivated BDAs, greater accountability on both sides, deeper community connections and increased efficiency. Working with partners can make recruiting new SSEs more efficient and less time-and-resource intensive for BDAs and management staff.

Value exchange is essential to partnerships. Developing mutual understanding and clearly articulating benefits of collaboration between Solar Sister and its partners will focus the purpose and expectations of each partnership. This will enhance the value exchange, foster accountability on both sides, and achieve common goals.

## Phases of Scaling Through Partnerships

### **Phase 1: Address in-house inefficiencies**

### **Phase 2: Reform partnership practices**

Prepared by:



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Table of Contents	3
List of Acronyms	4
Introduction	5
Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships	6
Benefits of Effective Partnerships	15
Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations	18
Strategic Value	23
Conclusion	26
Appendix A: Organization Chart and Employee Table	27
Appendix B: Partner Selection Checklist	29
Appendix C: RACI Diagram	31
Appendix D: Key Performance Indicators for Partnerships	33
Appendix E: Methods	34

Prepared by:



# List of Acronyms

<b>SSE</b>	<b>Solar Sister Entrepreneur</b>  These are the women served with entrepreneurial training and economic opportunity. They sell solar lights and clean cookstoves to people in their communities. There are over 2,000.
<b>BDA</b>	<b>Business Development Associate</b>  These are the Solar Sister staff who recruit SSEs. There are 30.
<b>BDM</b>	<b>Business Development Manager</b>  These are the Solar Sister staff who manage BDAs. There are 4.
<b>HQ</b>	<b>Headquarter Staff</b>  These are Solar Sister staff who work at the main office in Arusha. This includes the Country Director, the Admin, Human Resources, the Training Manager, the BRAC Partnership Manager, and the Accountant.

Prepared by:



# Introduction

Over 600 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa do not have access to electricity and over 700 million rely on harmful cooking fuels. Energy poverty disproportionately impacts off-grid communities and women's health, education, and income. Solar Sister is a social enterprise that addresses these disparities by investing in women's enterprise to distribute clean energy solutions to off-grid communities.

Solar Sister recruits and trains women to become micro-entrepreneurs in clean energy. There are many social enterprises in East Africa that seek to eliminate the use of kerosene and harmful fuels by distributing affordable clean energy technologies to rural communities. But unlike other clean energy distributors, Solar Sister strives to achieve this mission through an intentional gender lens, utilizing women's trust networks and leadership qualities. Not only does it provide affordable and sustainable energy to people living in energy poverty, but Solar Sister increases women's incomes, improving their lives, their families' well-being, and their communities' development.

Solar Sister is in the process of expanding into new geographies, with the intention of extending its customer base and scaling its impact. One way to accelerate customer acquisition is through partnerships with organizations that have access to new and different networks of women with the potential to become SSEs. Solar Sister currently does not have a formal protocol for identifying potential partners or establishing efficient relationships; partnerships mostly emerge unplanned and fail often. We spent 8 weeks with Solar Sister in Tanzania, interviewing 10 BDAs, 2 BDMs, 4 HQ staff, 56 SSEs, and representatives from 9 partner organizations to discover where the problems and inefficiencies lie, and how they can be improved.

Prepared by:



# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships

After observing Solar Sister for eight weeks, spending half of our time in the Arusha office and half of our time in the field, we noticed several operational strengths and weaknesses. There are many things that Solar Sister does well when it comes to working with partners. In addition to these strengths, we observed several areas for growth that Solar Sister must address before it can “scale what works.” Fixing these key areas will strengthen Solar Sister’s operational capacity and prepare Solar Sister to take advantage of strategic partnerships.

## Strengths:

- 1 Consistent messaging
- 2 Partnership selection
- 3 Processes for accountability

## Opportunities for growth:

- 1 Isolated BDAs
- 2 Misaligned BDA expectations
- 3 High BDA turnover
- 4 Incomplete BDA training
- 5 Neglected MOUs
- 6 Undefined task delegation

Internal

External

Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## Strengths

### *Consistent Messaging*

The first key strength that we noticed was the consistent training administered to each of the six Sisterhood Meetings that we attended, which were all lead by different BDAs. While the meetings varied slightly to conform to the specific needs of each group, there was consistent messaging and structure throughout all of the meetings which speaks to the quality of trainings BDA receive from Solar Sister.

### *Partnership Selection*

We were impressed with the partners that we visited; they all were a great fit to work with Solar Sister. Each organization had either a gender focus or gender lens, aligned with Solar Sister's mission, and had access to new markets and groups of women that Solar Sister could tap into. To ensure that strength remains consistent in the future, we suggest formalizing the process of partnership selection, as explained in the solutions section.

 **Reference Appendix B for the partnership selection checklist.**

### *Processes for Accountability*

BDAs are required to report regularly to their BDM. Each week there are two required check-ins, one on Monday and one on Friday. In the Monday check-in BDAs provide their weekly plan and goals for the week. In the Friday check-in BDAs report on their progress in adhering to their plan and goals. These check-ins vary by region and in form, from email to text to phone call. The Arusha BDAs talk more frequently with their BDM than in other regions because they share an office. BDA progress is also measured by the four KPIs that set monthly targets. BDMs use KPIs to track the productivity of BDAs and are expected to check in with them when BDAs are struggling to meet their targets. This process for reporting and tracking is certainly an operational strength, however it can be improved upon through formalization.

**Reference Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations for direction.**

Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## Internal Opportunities for Growth

### *Isolated BDAs*

Working in rural, difficult-to-reach communities is inherently challenging, which affects BDAs every day. BDAs have significant area to cover within the region they work and because they are so spread out, face-to-face interaction with other Solar Sister employees is rare. Solar Sister's only physical office space is at HQ in Arusha. This means that all BDAs in other regions must store light inventories in their home and work alone in their home when they are not in the field. The BDA position also requires extensive travel to Sisterhood Meetings and to new villages for recruitment. These conditions do not foster a strong sense of community for BDAs or facilitate connections to each other or to the enterprise. Occasionally, BDMs may accompany a BDA into the field or meet with her in person, but this happens infrequently. The BDA summit held once a year is the only time when all BDAs convene in the same space. Reducing isolation could improve morale and reduce the rapid turnover rate explained later.

**Reference Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Phase One for direction.**

“

Reducing isolation could improve morale and reduce the rapid turnover rate

Prepared by:



# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

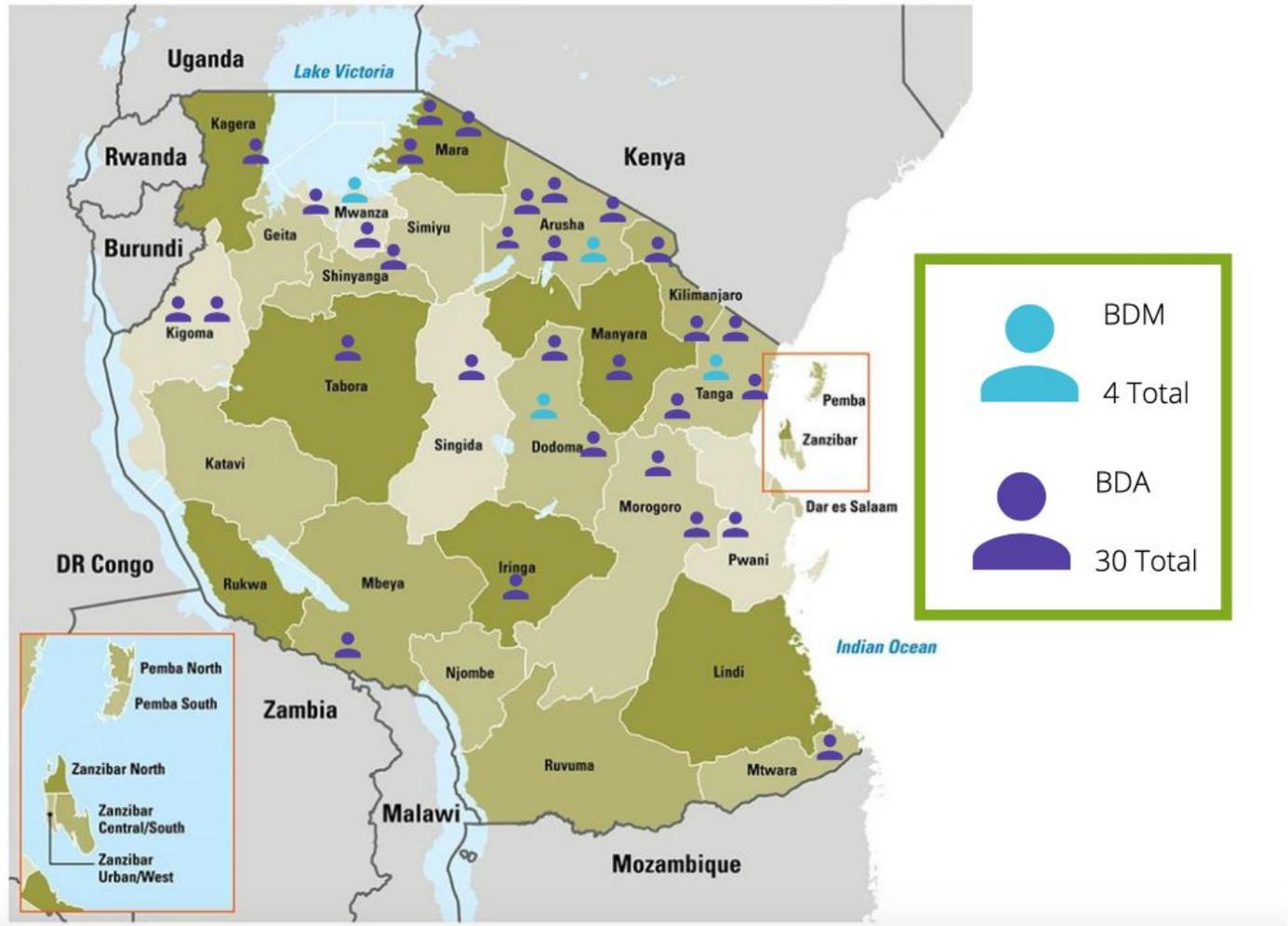


Fig 1. Solar Sister employee distribution throughout Tanzania. These 30 BDAs and 4 BDMs serve 2369 SSEs.

Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## *Misaligned BDA Expectations*

BDAs' success is measured through four main KPIs each month: recruit five new SSEs, maintain 20 active SSEs, reach a sales target of four million shillings, and train 20 SSEs/month. Our interviews with staff indicated that these KPIs are often not feasible for BDAs. Every time that we asked a question about recruitment targets, interviewees answered that the goal of recruiting five new SSEs each month is rarely met. Reaching this target is particularly challenging for BDAs during non-harvest months because more women do not have the capital necessary, 100,000 shillings, to join and customers have less capital to purchase lights. Regardless of the month, BDAs are held to unfluctuating KPIs that do not reflect this seasonal shift. We also noted that if a BDA met this target each month, then she would be responsible for 60 new SSEs by the end of her first year in addition to all the SSEs handed down to her by the previous BDA (without accounting for SSEs who become inactive). There is currently no limit to the number of SSEs that a BDA can be responsible for supporting.

**Reference Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Phase One for direction.**



Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## High BDA Turnover

Out of the eleven BDAs we interviewed, seven had been hired within the past two years and three within the past six months. Both of the two BDMs that we interviewed were hired within the past six months. Fig 2. shows the length of employment for 50 of the 52 past Solar Sister BDAs; over ¼ stayed with Solar Sister for less than six months. BDA and BDM consistency is important not only to maintain working relationships with partners, but also to support SSEs. In several interviews we heard that there is often confusion among SSEs when a BDA leaves or is replaced as they are unsure of who to reach out to for help. As one BDM explained, when BDAs leave or are removed, it “destroys the relationship with the SSE, which is most important.” This relationship is intimate and difficult to rebuild. She also mentioned that sales tend to drop immediately after a BDA leaves or is replaced. It will not be beneficial to scale out before this problem is addressed.

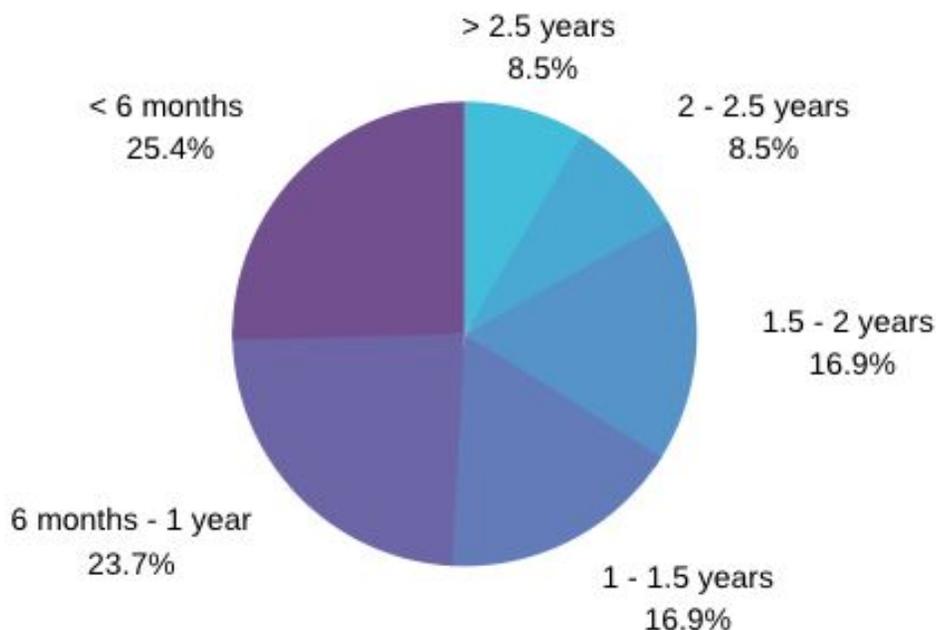


Fig. 2: BDA length of employment

Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

During a few partnership visits we learned that weak relationships emerge when BDAs quit or are fired. In one instance, a BDA did a poor and inconsistent job working with the partner, eventually leaving Solar Sister. A BDA from another region had to fill in and work with the partner until a new BDA was hired almost a year later. As the Country Manager explained, “partnerships are best developed through strong relationships between Solar Sister employees and partner employees”. Again, before Solar Sister scales it will need to decrease the turnover rate. Solar Sister will struggle to maintain robust relationships with new partners if it continue to cycle through new BDAs over the course of just a few months.

**Reference Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Phase One for direction.**



Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## External Opportunities for Growth

### *Incomplete BDA Training*

Each BDA that we interviewed and observed worked with partners somewhat differently. It was clear that there are currently no clear guidelines for BDAs to follow when interacting with partner organizations. Most BDAs seemed to treat partnerships as a peripheral task, not as though the relationship was fundamental to their job. We recommend that BDAs receive specific training to equip them with the skills necessary to partner successfully.



**Reference BDA Partnership Training Module.**

### *Neglected MOUs*

All of the active partnerships that we researched have formal MOU agreements. However, in several cases we discovered that MOUs were expired and neither Solar Sister nor the partner prioritized their renewal. The Country Manager even expressed frustration when partners were not proactive about renewing MOUs and she had to follow up multiple times. Existing MOUs did not seem to be valued or adhered to. The Country Manager explained that it is difficult to hold partners accountable to MOUs, especially when the benefits they receive from the partnership are not clearly understood.



**Reference BDA Partnership Training Module and Appendix C: RACI Diagram for direction.**

Prepared by:

# Research Findings: Current Approach to Partnerships Cont.

## *Undefined Task Delegation*

The Country Manager is currently the main point person for all partnerships. When we asked BDAs and BDMs about partnership management, nearly everyone told us that this was not at all their responsibility. One BDA expressed a genuine understanding of the value that partnerships can provide saying, “I need them. I am always looking for networks”. But when asked whether she plays a part in forming partnerships, she said, “my job is to train and find new SSEs”, not facilitate partnerships. Even a BDM that we interviewed explained “partnerships are under [the Country Manager’s] jurisdiction. I don’t think about that”. With so many other critical responsibilities, concerning the Country Manager with lower level problems and operations is not a sustainable model for scaling. If she deals with mostly strategic management aspects of the partnership, then she can better direct her attention towards Solar Sister’s holistic growth and development. Implementing the recommendations in this manual will require a restructuring of who does what, with an emphasis on delegating tasks to the BDMs and BDAs.

 **Reference Appendix C: RACI Diagram for direction.**



Prepared by:

# Benefits of Effective Partnerships

If maintained effectively, partnerships for implementation will benefit Solar Sister as it scales into new geographies. We describe the three main benefits as:

1

More productive BDAs

2

More committed and connected BDAs

3

Increased accountability

## *More Productive BDAs*

Recruiting SSEs is a challenging yet critical aspect of a BDAs job. Infiltrating untapped markets requires grit, hard work and perseverance in addition to taking up a lot of time and resources. As mentioned earlier, BDAs often have to travel for several hours each way to get from their home to recruitment sites; some locations are so remote that they will stay overnight. Many BDAs that we interviewed describe having to visit new villages multiple times before women are ready to commit. It is typical that a BDA will make her first visit to a community and meet with the village chairman to ask if he could recommend trustworthy and well-respected women who he thinks would excel as an SSE. Then the BDA will return on a different occasion to pitch the opportunity to the women that the chairman recommends. Even if a woman is interested in the work and understands the potential benefits for herself and her community, she often needs several months to save the capital, 100,000 schillings, required to register. Sometimes just to recruit one new SSE, a BDA will have to devote several full days to travel. Many BDAs we interviewed accept this process as the nature of doing work in last mile communities. But we imagine a new reality for recruitment that is less time consuming.

Prepared by:

# Benefits of Effective Partnerships Cont.

Partnering with other development organizations that work in the communities Solar Sister strives to scale into has immense potential to streamline the recruitment process for BDAs. Many partners that we interviewed form groups of women and provide them with financial counseling or entrepreneurship trainings. These pre-existing groups are an amazing resource for BDAs. Instead of having a meeting with the village chairman to ask about groups of women, the BDA can leverage the partner's relationship with the community and pitch directly to a group of well-connected women who have access to capital. Many of the groups that Solar Sister partners with connect people to some way of saving or accessing a loan through either a SACOS, VICOBA, or through the partner's fund. Many partners also offer BDAs transportation into the field, not only saving the BDA's time and money but also providing her with a safe route. Partnerships can expedite the process of recruitment, propelling BDAs to recruit more SSEs and have more time to support their existing SSEs.

## *More Committed and Connected BDAs*

As mentioned earlier, many BDAs feel isolated in their job. Their office is their home, they often have to relocate to remote locations far away from home, and they have limited interaction with their colleagues. Particularly isolated BDAs only meet face to face with other BDAs once or twice per year at the annual BDA summit and it may be months after being hired before they meet their BDM. They also often fail to meet their targets and many leave the company because they feel uninspired in their work. When we asked about their five year plans, many BDAs said they did not strive to work at Solar Sister in the long term.

We believe that partnerships can elevate the daily routine for many BDAs. Working with partners that have field offices close to the communities Solar Sister works in can provide a BDA the community necessary to create an aminating purpose in her work. Instead of storing products in her house, she can keep her inventory at the partner's office. Some partners provide a desk and office space for BDAs to work alongside them. Relationship building and cultivating sentiments of belonging is important in any workplace and positions BDAs better for success.

Prepared by:



# Benefits of Effective Partnerships Cont.

## *Increased Accountability*

A significant challenge for Solar Sister's operations in Tanzania is the distrust that HQ staff feel towards BDAs. But accountability is difficult to infuse into daily activities. In several interviews with HQ staff, employees suspected that this issue was due to their lack of in person interaction with BDAs. Outside of the Arusha team, BDAs do not have regular meetings face to face with BDMs or HQ. When HQ staff or BDMs call to check in with them, they assume that BDAs are not always truthful about their work. It is assumed that many of the BDAs do not work their full hours and lie about their whereabouts. BDAs are paid on a salary, meaning that even if they are not meeting their KPIs, they still get paid the same amount. This payment structure in combination with the lack of accountability and inconsistent face-to-face connection with other supervisors can enable unproductive BDAs.

A productive partnership will rely on a heavily engaged and hardworking BDA. If a BDA does not show up or prove herself to be an asset to the partner, the relationship will not thrive and supervisors will notice. It also means that bad partnerships will be addressed with more urgency because BDAs will view a healthy partner relationship as necessary to her own success.



A productive partnership will rely on a heavily engaged and hardworking BDA

Prepared by:



# Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations

## Phase one: Address In-House Inefficiencies

### *Strengthen BDA Selection*

To build better relationships with partners, we recommend that Solar Sister first prioritizes strengthening internal operations. This begins with the hiring process, particularly the hiring of BDAs. BDAs are the primary interface between Solar Sister and its partners, responsible for making the partnership work on the ground. A qualified candidate is a BDA who meets the following criteria:

1

Experienced and culturally competent in rural community development work

2

Hardworking, patient, and excellent with people skills

3

Understands how to use a tablet and can easily learn Taroworks

4

Confident and well spoken

5

Ambitious and innovative

6

An excellent problem solver

7

Committed to working with women and spreading clean energy

8

Knowledgeable about business skills

9

Is willing to commit to an extended (multi-year) engagement with Solar Sister at a fair rate of pay

Prepared by:

# Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Cont.

## *Boost BDA Network*

To strengthen the BDA network, we have two suggestions. The first is to organize additional opportunities for BDAs to convene face-to-face outside of the annual BDA summit. This could be done by hosting all-BDA summits more frequently perhaps on a bi-annual or tri-annual basis. It could also mean hosting smaller regional BDA meetings on a more frequent basis. Providing BDAs with an increased travel stipend may be necessary to support these additional meetings.

Another solution is to send out a monthly newsletter that provides insights into strategy from the DC office, current projects and initiatives from the HQ offices, and updates from BDMs and BDAs across all regions. The newsletter will help to keep all employees informed and up-to-date with major decisions, to celebrate accomplishments, and to increase connectivity between BDAs who do not regularly visit the Arusha office.



The newsletter will help to keep all employees informed and up-to-date with major decisions, to celebrate accomplishments, and to increase connectivity between BDAs who do not regularly visit the Arusha office.

We suggest highlighting a BDA of the month, who has excelled in position (either recruiting or supporting SSEs), and including some tips about what lead her to success. Here is where the Solar Sister community can be informed about new partnerships and where BDAs who do an excellent job working with them can be recognized. We hope that this will encourage more BDAs to seek out partners or establish better rapport with existing ones. The newsletter should be relatively short (a page or two) and written with a professional but lighthearted tone. Ideally, the newsletter would be written in Swahili, the language most accessible to employees and the language in which they communicate on the job day-to-day. BDAs should be encouraged, but not required, to read the newsletter each month. If created effectively, the newsletter will be something that they look forward to receiving.

Prepared by:



# Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Cont.

## *Rethink Expectations and Offer Incentives*

As mentioned earlier, our research indicates that BDAs do not view recruiting 5 new SSEs every month as a viable goal. We recommend implementing new KPIs that better measure BDA performance and encourage BDAs to strive for improvement. One option is to have BDMs determine a maximum number of SSEs that one BDA realistically has the capacity to support. Then once a BDA reaches this target, she can stop recruiting. This will allow the BDA to transition her effort solely towards supporting her existing groups and working with SSEs who need TLC or are at risk of becoming inactive. Only when an SSE goes inactive will a BDA revert back to refilling her quota. This could also mean that BDAs have more opportunities to check in with inactive SSEs and support them in working to regain their active status.



We recommend implementing new KPIs that better measure BDA performance and encourage BDAs to strive for improvement.

We also suggest that BDAs receive rewards for meeting their KPIs through either financial incentives or additional titles. Each KPI could have its own monthly bonus and an additional bonus could be awarded to BDAs who meet all four. These can be increased when BDAs meet all of their KPIs across many consecutive months. Using incentives with BDMs will motivate them to be more engaged with their BDAs. Awarding a bonus to BDMs when their BDAs achieve their targets, will compel them to invest more in supporting BDAs. Rewarding positive partnership practices can also be accomplished through formal recognition. We suggest that BDAs who manage partnerships receive additional titles and salary bonuses for each partner that they work with. Similar to the case of the BRAC partnership, a BDA who works with a partner will become a Partner Manager, a position with additional responsibilities and a pay upgrade. In addition, BDMs can receive a small bonus for each additional BDA they manage who works successfully with a partner.

Prepared by:



# Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Cont.

## Phase two: Reform Partnership Practices

### *Formalize Selection Tactics*

Solar Sister excels at selecting compatible organizations to partner with. In the future, it should reference the partnership selection checklist found in  **Appendix B** which codifies and documents existing practices. This checklist seeks to organize and clarify selection criteria when considering the strengths and weaknesses of a potential partner, much like the existing Community Entrance checklist aids BDAs in determining the fit of a new community into Solar Sister's recruitment model.

### *Tap Into Existing Networks*

In addition to identifying new partners to work with, Solar Sister should also seek out opportunities to scale within existing partnerships. While some of Solar Sister's partners are small groups with limited regional spread, others are international organizations with many field offices scattered throughout the country. BDAs should be aware of all the geographies their partners exist in, even those beyond the region they themselves work in. The BDA working closely with a partner in one region can connect other BDAs to the same partner through branches in their respective regions.

### *Administer BDA Partnership Training*

Because BDAs play a fundamental role in day to day interactions with partnerships, they can benefit from training specific to these encounters. We provide a  **BDA Partnership Training Module** for onboarding training. In this module BDAs will learn to contextualize partnerships and to articulate the value exchange, what to look for in partners, and how to utilize partners.

Prepared by:

# Implementation Roadmap: Operational Recommendations Cont.

## *Confirm Partnership Roles and Responsibilities*

To formalize the roles involved in maintaining partnerships, we offer several key tools for delegating tasks. The  **Organizational Chart and Employee Table in Appendix A** explain how Solar Sister is structured and how each employee contributes to the operations. In  **Appendix C: The RACI Diagram** (responsibility, accountability, consulting, informed) functions as a modifiable worksheet be used for delegating tasks specific to partnerships among employees.

## *Measure Success and Failures*

Solar Sister uses KPIs to track employee performance but does not utilize KPIs to measure the success of partnerships. We suggest that several specific KPIs are tracked and updated for each partnership on a monthly basis. Whoever fills the role, “partnership evaluation and KPI monitoring” in the RACI diagram (see Appendix C), will be responsible for this, which in most cases will be the BDA. These can be found in  **Appendix D: KPIs**. We also suggest that BDAs work with their BDMs to develop KPIs specific to the circumstances of each partnership in reference to the MOU.



Prepared by:

# Strategic Value

The recommendations outlined in the previous section directly address the opportunities for growth presented in our research findings. Improving partnerships have potential to contribute to strategic value for Solar Sister. This can be broken down into three main categories: trust and value exchange, shared responsibilities, and increased impact.

## *Trust and Value Exchange*

Improving trust is integral to a successful partnership. Before there can be trust, there must be understanding. Therefore, it is integral that the value exchange between Solar Sister and its partners is clearly defined and mutually understood. Choosing partners using the selection checklist will ensure good fit. Once a partnership has been established, partners will help recruit SSEs with whatever market access and resources they have available. The value Solar Sister may seek from a partner depends on what that partner has to offer. Similarly, while Solar Sister's contributions remain the same across all partnerships, different resources may be more or less valuable depending on the partner's specific mission and goals. Therefore, it is important for Solar Sister to know the needs of a potential partner so that it may market itself effectively to the partner. Only when both players develop a mutual understanding of what they are giving and receiving in the partnership as well as the value that emerges as a result, are the purpose and expectations of the relationship solidified. Once trust is established, it is maintained through accountability and consistency. These are built through adherence to the MOU and a strong, reliable relationship with BDAs. Utilizing incentives and the RACI diagram will create an organizational structure that promotes accountability in BDMs and BDAs.



It is integral that the value exchange between Solar Sister and their partners is clearly defined and mutually understood

Prepared by:



# Strategic Value Cont.

## *Potential Elements of Value Exchange Between Solar Sister and a Partner*

	<b>Social Impact</b>	<b>Community Advantages</b>	<b>Practical Offerings</b>
<b>Solar Sister's Assets</b>	<p>Women's economic empowerment</p> <p>Improved educational outcomes for children</p> <p>Decreased health risks</p> <p>Holistic community development</p>	<p>Trust networks between SSEs and customers</p> <p>Positive reputation among beneficiaries</p>	<p>Lights and cookstoves</p> <p>Purchases under warranty</p> <p>Entrepreneurship trainings</p> <p>Operations not dependent on a partner</p>
	<b>New Markets</b>	<b>Belonging &amp; Accountability</b>	<b>Logistical Support</b>
<b>Solar Sister's Needs</b>	<p>Women in need of economic opportunity</p> <p>Rural communities</p> <p>Systems that connect women to financial capital</p> <p>A demand for solar</p> <p>Culture in which women can work outside of the home</p>	<p>Office space available for a BDA</p> <p>Colleagues to build camaraderie</p> <p>Face-to-face interaction</p>	<p>Storage space for inventory</p> <p>Transportation into the field</p>

Prepared by:

# Strategic Value Cont.

## *Shared Responsibility*

Increasing clarity of BDA and BDM roles and delegating tasks more effectively will increase agency among all employees across Solar Sister. Each person will have more defined tasks that will be supported through improved KPI management. Strengthening the BDA network through increased cross-organizational communication will improve morale and promote unity. In addition, making the organizational shift in scaling priorities towards a greater focus on partnering and developing formalized training for partnering will better equip Solar Sister employees to partner more effectively.

## *Increased Impact*

Most BDAs recruit new SSEs by approaching a village leader and asking him to recommend a qualified champion. As explained earlier, this process can take an incredibly long amount of time. Partnering with an organization that already has village connections to groups of women, especially those with financial training, can help connect BDAs to potential recruits without all the stress and drained resources that normally ensue. In most cases partnerships can also expedite transportation and provide a feeling of belonging for BDAs as they travel to remote areas. It holds them accountable because they have more consistent face to face interaction with colleagues and it places less demands on the Country Manager's limited time. If BDAs recruit SSEs more efficiently, Solar Sister will scale its impact by providing more communities with clean energy and more women with economic opportunity.

“ If BDAs recruit SSEs more efficiently, Solar Sister will scale its impact by providing more communities with clean energy and more women with economic opportunity.

Prepared by:

# Conclusion

Solar Sister has a bright future as it continues to recruit SSEs in new geographies, scaling out its impact to communities all over Tanzania. The recommendations in this document are geared at accelerating this process through improved partnerships with organizations that facilitate more efficient recruitment. After observing operations at headquarters and in the field, interviewing Solar Sister staff, partners, and SSEs, we analyzed strengths and inefficiencies in Solar Sister's relationships with partners. We suggest that Solar Sister implement the recommendations offered in our Implementation Roadmap through a two step process; first through improving in-house inefficiencies and then through reforming partnership practices. Ultimately, we hope that this playbook will enhance the benefits and strategic value of scaling through partnerships, increasing Solar Sister's impact in last mile communities.

We want to conclude by expressing that we recognize the importance of recruiting SSEs through diverse methods. While recruiting through partnerships has the potential to increase efficiency, we also found that recruiting through traditional approaches such as utilizing village leaders or internal networks of existing entrepreneurs can be successful and are necessary to reaching last mile communities. Partnering is beneficial for scaling the Solar Sister network but should not be the only recruitment practice. Providing economic opportunity to women in new communities, particularly those who have no pre-existing connections to or relationship with other service providing organizations, is at the heart of Solar Sister's mission. We hope that partnerships will not only connect Solar Sister to the shared beneficiaries of its partners but will also spread the impact of solar light and women's enterprise to even harder to reach communities.

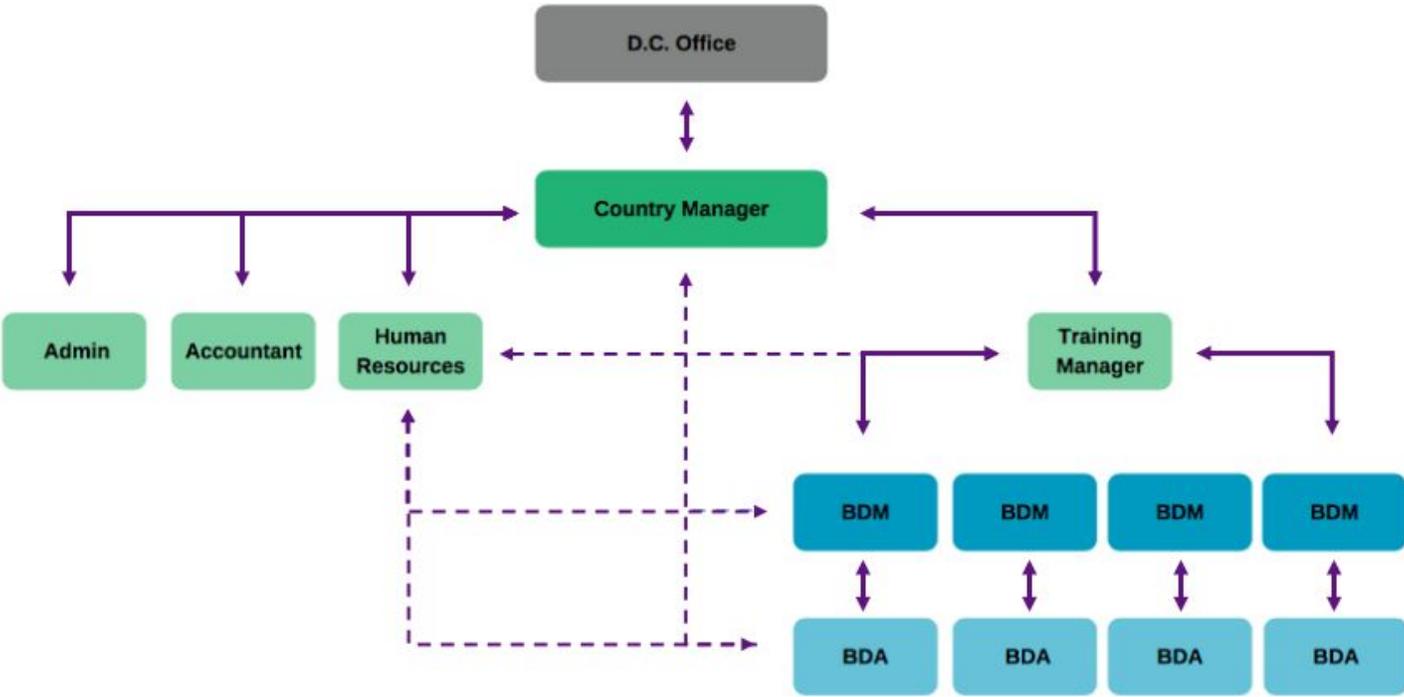
Prepared by:



# Appendix A: Organization Chart and Employee Table

The chart below depicts the organizational structure of Solar Sister in Tanzania. Solid lines designate direct reporting while dashed lines indicate a less formal, secondary reporting relationship. This chart and the employee table demonstrate the roles, responsibilities, and systems of accountability that we found in our research. These do not include our recommendations, which instead require the use of the RACI diagram in Appendix C.

## Organization Chart



Prepared by:



# Appendix A: Organization Chart and Employee Table

## Employee Table

Position	Responsibilities
Country Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reports to DC office</li> <li>2. Oversees all in country operations</li> <li>3. Manages Arusha HQ staff</li> <li>4. Forms partnerships</li> <li>5. Develops enterprise strategies</li> </ol>
Accountant	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manages finances</li> </ol>
Administration	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Compiles inventory reports</li> <li>2. Manages Salesforce and Taroworks data</li> </ol>
Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Hires BDMs and BDAs</li> <li>2. Works with underperforming employees</li> </ol>
Training Manager	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leads onboarding training for all BDMs and BDAs</li> <li>2. Provides BDAs with SSE training modules</li> <li>3. Visits BDMs and BDAs in the field to evaluate trainings</li> </ol>
Business Development Managers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Manage and check in with BDAs weekly</li> <li>2. Support BDAs, especially those with many SSEs</li> <li>3. Meet sales targets</li> </ol>
Business Development Associates	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recruit and train SSEs</li> <li>2. Meet sales targets</li> </ol>

Prepared by:



# Appendix B: Partnership Selection Checklist

## Partnership Selection Checklist

This checklist will assist BDAs or other employees responsible for seeking out and establishing new partnerships to expand SSE recruitment. Criteria are divided into three categories of prioritization and organization can be ranked according to how well it fulfills each criterion..

Highest Priority		Poor	Fair	Excellent
The organization must...	Serve the poor and marginalized through community-based initiatives			
	Recognize women as key agents of sustainable development			
	Work with women's group to expand their economic opportunities			
	Provide financial services or trainings to boost income generating activities			
	Make frequent trips into rural villages			
	Work in communities with a market for solar			
	Work in regions where it is socially acceptable for women to work outside of the home. If not, they provide community-based education to change the culture			
	Maintain a trusting relationship with the community			
	Be flexible and open to adjusting their model to work with Solar Sister			
Have the resources available to commit, including an employee who will prioritize the partnership				

Prepared by:

# Appendix B: Partnership Selection Checklist Cont.

Second Priority		Poor	Fair	Excellent
The organization should...	Work in communities with limited grid access			
	Work with community groups to create SACOS or VICOBAS			
	Be excited to share transport into communities with BDAs			
	Have an office space that they can allocate to a BDA			
	Have multiple field offices or a network of other branches/ congregations across the country			
Third Priority		Poor	Fair	Excellent
Other assets include...	Work in communities completely off the grid			
	Successfully partnered with social enterprises or NGOs in the past			

Prepared by:



# Appendix C: RACI Diagram

## RACI Diagram

This matrix outlines the tasks required to maintain a successful partnership. The purpose of filling this in and allowing it to guide operations is to eliminate confusion and intentionally disseminate tasks across employees. We highly suggest assigning roles and responsibilities using this framework and communicate the choices with everyone involved. It is important that each employee understands which partnership activities they should be involved with and who they report to with their progress.

### Who is responsible?

Who actually does the work to complete the task?

Are they qualified?

Do they have time?

### Who is accountable?

Who owns the task?

Who delegates work and reviews the task?

In some instances this will be the same as the responsible party.

### Who is consulted?

Who assists with the task?

Who should offer feedback?

Who has useful knowledge to help with the task?

### Who is informed?

Who should be aware of the task?

Who should be updated about decision making and progress of this task?

Prepared by:

# Appendix C: RACI Diagram Cont.

Task	Who is responsible?	Who is accountable?	Who needs to be consulted?	Who needs to be informed?
Researching organizations to partner with				
Make introductions to potential partners				
Meeting with partners for the first time				
Writing MOUs				
Ensuring MOUs are followed				
Maintaining weekly communication with the partner				
Going into the field with partners				
Sharing an office space with partners				
Partnership evaluation and KPI tracking				
Strategizing about the future of the partnership				

Prepared by:

# Appendix D: Key Performance Indicators for Partnerships



## Partnership KPIs

These KPIs should be measured in every partnership. We recommend that BDAs are primarily responsible for collecting this data. Additional KPIs may need to be considered on an individual partner-basis according to the specific circumstances of each partnership.

➤	Number of SSEs recruited
➤	Number of new villages infiltrated
➤	Number of lights sold
➤	Number of village meetings attended
➤	Number of people exposed to Solar Sister messaging
➤	Number of lives improved
➤	Length of time in partnership
➤	Number of days BDA spends with the partner per month
➤	Revenue gained from partnership

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods

In the summer of 2019 we traveled to 8 regions in Northeast Tanzania to research Solar Sister partners, entrepreneurs, and Business Development Associates. Our research methods combine ethnography, semi-structured interviews, and structured surveys. All conversations that were conducted in English or in Swahili translated for us into English. We interviewed representatives from 9 partner organizations, surveyed 56 SSEs, and interviewed 10 BDAs, 2 BDMs, and 4 HQ staff (16 Solar Sister employees in total). We also observed two congregations of Catholic Sisters at a 2 day SSE summit, 1 recruitment session, and 6 sisterhood meetings.

## Interview Guides:

### **For Partners**

#### Background on their organization

1. Ask a question about their values/mission specific to each organization after reviewing them before visiting
2. How big is your organization? How many employees do you have?
3. Where do you work? What regions, cities, villages?
4. Does your organization have an explicit gender focus?
5. What are the biggest challenges that your organization faces?
6. What are your proudest accomplishments within your organization?

#### Available Resources

1. Who are your customers? Where are they? How many are there? What is your relationship like with your customers?
2. Do you work with groups of women?
3. Which of your initiatives focus on gender ?
4. What community-based organizations do you engage with in the field?

#### Prior Experience with Partners

1. Have you partnered with other organizations in the past? Can you explain these partnerships? What made them successful or unsuccessful and why?

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods Cont.

## How They Measure Success

1. Do you have impact assessment reports?
2. What are your key impact metrics?
3. For current partners: do you know how many new beneficiaries emerged as a result of this partnership? Or, how have your organization's beneficiaries been impacted more positively as a result of this partnership?

## Relationship to Solar Sister

### *Future Partner*

1. What do you know about Solar Sister?
2. What type of partnership are you interested in pursuing? What do you look for in a partner?
3. Who would be the point person in your organization for partnerships?

### *Current Partner*

1. How was the partnership formed? Please share the history: who initiated it, how it developed, initial challenges and successes.
2. Can you share some insight into your relationship with Solar Sister?
3. Do you have a formal agreement/contract regarding what each of you will provide to the other?
4. Who is the point person for the Solar Sister partnership in this organization?
5. What have you worked on in collaboration with Solar Sister? What have you accomplished together?
6. How has the partnership evolved from its initial phases?
7. Has this partnership grown your organization? How?

### *All Partners*

1. How much of a priority is a partnership with Solar Sister? Extremely important, somewhat important, neutral, somewhat unimportant, unimportant.

## Value Exchange

1. How does working with Solar Sister benefit your organization?
2. What do you want from a partnership with Solar Sister?

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods Cont.

## For SSES

1. What is your age?
2. What level of education have you completed?
3. What is your region?
4. How long have you been an SSE?
5. What did you do before becoming an SSE?
  - a. Occupation, source of income, other roles...
6. How did you learn about Solar Sister?
7. Who recruited you to be an SSE?
8. Where did you get the finances to buy your first lights?
  - a. (e.g. Socas, VICOBA's, Farmers Union, husband/family member, etc)
9. Where do you get financing now?
  - a. (e.g. Socas, VICOBA's, Farmers Union, husband/family member, etc)
10. What village organizations do you work with?
  - a. Do you work with any other organizations?
11. How many products do you sell on average per month?
12. How many small system versus larger systems?
13. What tactics do you use to sell your products?
14. Who do you mostly sell to?
  - a. Please rank: family, friends, neighbors, open markets, door to door, other (please specify).
15. If "other" please specify
16. How do you find new customers?
17. Where do you sell?
  - a. Please rank: your village, neighboring village, far village, other (please specify).
18. Have you inspired and recruited any other women to become SSEs?
19. How many and who were they?
20. Who was the first SSE that you recruited?
  - a. Where was she from and how far is that from you?
  - b. How did you know her?
21. Who is the person who has been most important to your success?
22. What characteristics or circumstances have made you such a successful SSE?
23. What are your main challenges?

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods Cont.

## **BDA Focus group**

1. How long have you been a BDA?
2. What did you do before you became a BDA?
3. What is your educational background?
4. How many SSEs are you responsible for?
5. How much of your time is spent recruiting new SSEs vs supporting existing SSEs?
6. Besides recruiting and supporting SSEs, what else does your job entail?
7. How many new SSEs do you recruit per month on average?
8. How do you normally recruit new SSEs?
9. Are you paid by the hour or by salary?
10. How often do you communicate with your BDM?
11. How often do you communicate with Fatma?
12. Do you work with any other BDAs?
13. What information do you have to report to your BDM?
14. What information do you have to report to Fatma?
15. How important to you is Solar Sister's growth and success as a business outside of your region?
16. What do you know about Solar Sister's strategic plan? Do you have specific goals/tasks associated with the plan?
17. Do you work with any other partner organizations?
18. Do you constantly think of new and innovative ways to recruit new SSEs?
19. What are your career goals?
20. What are your biggest challenges as a BDA?
21. Why did you apply to become a BDA?

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods Cont.

## For BDMs

1. Why do some BDAs have more SSEs than others (9 vs 70)?
2. How often do you have to hire new BDAs?
3. We noticed that there are lots of SSEs and few BDAs. Each BDA has several SSEs they have to support and are expected to recruit 5 more per month. We were curious about the sustainability of this model? Are you planning on hiring more BDAs? How many SSEs per BDA do you think is the ideal number?
4. What do you think are the biggest challenges that the BDAs face?
5. What challenges do you face as a BDM?
6. What do you know about the strategic plan?
7. Do you think there is incentive for you or for BDAs to fulfill the strategic goals?
8. Do you think there is incentive for you or for BDAs to partner?

## For Training Manager

1. Could you describe an average work week?
2. How much of your time is spent in the office versus in the field?
3. Can you explain the training process? Do you train BDMs as well?
4. Why do some BDAs have more SSEs than others (9 vs 70)?
5. How often do you have to hire new BDAs?
6. What do you think are the biggest challenges facing the BDAs?
  - a. BDAs have mentioned SSEs lack of capital, demand of solar decreasing, solar competition, transportation, etc
7. What are your biggest challenges working with the BDAs?
  - a. Fatma mentioned issues of accountability (because BDAs never meet other BDAs/BDMs face-to-face), lack of successful and motivating incentives, more trust in SSEs than BDAs, etc
8. Do you include discussions or advice about partnerships in your training?
9. Do you think BDAs could pursue partnerships with other community organizations/larger NGOs?
10. How important do you think partners are?
11. What do you know about the strategic plan?

Prepared by:

# Appendix E: Methods Cont.

## For Human Resources

1. What are the incentives for BDAs?
2. Is it easy for BDAs to earn the incentives?
3. What are KPIs for the BDAs?
4. What is the interview process like for BDAs?
5. How does the firing process work for BDAs?
6. What are the qualities of the best BDAs?
7. What are the qualities of the best BDMs?
8. Is it difficult to manage the BDAs?

## For Country Manager

1. Who typically forms partnerships? Do you? Does Katherine? Have partnerships ever been formed by BDAs?
2. How much communication between partners is necessary for success?
3. How long is the planning process to form partnerships?
4. How important are MOUs to you and how much do you follow them?
5. What do you think makes a successful partnership? What makes a partnership challenging? What challenges have you had with previous/current partners?
6. These are some of the challenges we heard about Solar Sister from SSEs/BDAs
  - a. Transportation
  - b. Bags to carry lights
  - c. Sales demand of solar is decreasing → more competition
  - d. Large products are not sold as often as smaller products because of cost and perception barriers
  - e. Price
  - f. How is Solar Sister working to address these challenges? Are there any other challenges you face?
7. We noticed that there are lots of SSEs and few BDAs. Each BDA has several SSEs they have to support and are expected to recruit 5 more per month. We were curious about the sustainability of this model? Are you planning on hiring more BDAs? How many SSEs per BDA do you think is the ideal number?
8. What do you know about Solar Sister's strategic plan?
9. How often do you talk with the DC office/the Nigeria office?

Prepared by: