

If you have no electricity supply or one that is unreliable, and you would benefit from a cleaner and brighter source of light, then you might like to hear about solar lanterns. Although the lantern has to be paid for, lantern owners soon start to see a saving because you will need to buy less kerosene and candles.

Margaret from Kenya was part of a Practical Action pilot project for the Glowstar solar lantern, designed by ITC and manufactured by Sollatek: "Initially it helped me because I used to buy kerosene more frequently than now, so my costs have gone down. Unless I use my small lamp for the kitchen, I don't have any need for kerosene any more. In a month we would spend 120 Ksh on around five litres of kerosene. Now I spend only about 40 Ksh per month."



How do solar lanterns work?

Photovoltaic technology, known as Solar PV, transforms the energy of sunlight into electricity. When the Glowstar solar lantern is plugged into a solar photovoltaic cell, its rechargeable battery stores the electricity produced so that it can be used to light your home or power a radio. When fully charged, the lantern will give light for 4 to 5 hours, and the radio will run for 15 hours. If both are used at once, the listening and lamp time will be shorter. Although it may take longer, the photovoltaic panels can still charge the solar lantern on a cloudy day.

Many models of portable and static lanterns and torches are available. Durability and battery capacity are the qualities to assess when buying.



What are the benefits?

Light from a solar lantern extends the hours of the day available for reading, sewing, cooking, study and many types of cottage industry. Margaret said: "As soon as we got this lantern we could see that it was better. When the lantern is on we can't see that the kerosene one is on. When we are doing something outside it lights my way. And when my children are doing their homework it helps them too - they get about two hours of work to do."

Acknowledgements

This Action Sheet was prepared by Nancy Gladstone, using information from the Practical Action and Glowstar lantern websites. Glowstar Lantern.

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