



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

“Light Every Birth” Campaign Launches in Liberia: Commits to Providing Light for Childbirth Worldwide

Berkeley, CA and Monrovia, Liberia — March 9, 2017 – Berkeley, CA-based non-profit We Care Solar announced today that Liberia has become the first country to pledge to "Light Every Birth" at the launch of its global campaign to support healthy childbirth with affordable, accessible and clean solar lighting and electricity. Light Every Birth includes national and local leaders, foundations and non-governmental organizations. The campaign works at the intersection of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) No. 7 (energy) and No. 3 (Health), with a strong component of gender (SDG No. 5).

"As we heed the lessons of the Ebola epidemic, we are committing ourselves to equipping our frontline health clinics with the tools they need to not only fight disease, but promote health," said Bernice Dahn, Liberia's Minister of Health. "That starts with healthy mothers and babies. Our midwives and doctors need light at night and electricity to do the jobs for which they are trained—preventing needless deaths in childbirth by skillfully treating well-known complications such as hemorrhage, eclampsia, obstructed labor and sepsis."

Liberia has pledged to use both grid-tied electricity service and high-quality, medical-quality off-grid systems to equip the country's 300-plus health facilities.

Launching the national initiative on Thursday March 9th, Liberia's Vice President Joseph Boakai, Vice President of Liberia, commended We Care Solar and congratulated Dr. Stachel. "Liberia has an unacceptable rate of maternal mortality. The Solar Suitcase innovation will fill an important need in our country, helping mothers to survive and communities to thrive. The Government of Liberia is proud to be partnering with We Care Solar on such an essential initiative," he added.

This initiative was sponsored by UNDESA, UBS Optimus Foundation, Gilead Foundation and private donors. UNDESA sent a representative to attend the Liberian launch, and United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Wu Hongbo, offered this statement. "We Care Solar was the inaugural winner of the 'UN DESA Powering the Future We Want' Energy Grant. We are thrilled that the Grant has helped make possible the Light Every Birth Campaign, and that it is contributing to saving the lives of mothers and their babies. The Light Every Birth Campaign demonstrates that energy access is critically important in development efforts to improve health care, eliminate gender inequity and build healthy communities," Mr. Wu added.

Partners working in Liberia to Light Every Birth are Africare; Energising Development; Public Health Initiative Liberia; and UNICEF, with 2016 work done by UN Women.

Since, 2010, We Care Solar has been bringing Solar Suitcases to rural health centers to support midwives and doctors providing life-saving care. The organization leads solar trainings to build capacity in solar installation, optimal usage, and maintenance. Their Solar Ambassador Program promotes women as Solar Suitcase trainers.

Dr. Laura Stachel, Executive Director and Co-Founder of We Care Solar said, “Every night, health providers around the world are expected to provide life-saving care in unimaginable conditions. It is unacceptable for any primary health clinic to lack the basic lighting and electricity needed for effective medical care. We look forward to working hand in hand with our Light Every Birth partners to improve the functioning of off-grid health centers, and to advocate for the fundamental right for all mothers to deliver with reliable lighting and power.”

About We Care Solar:

In 2008, We Care Solar co-founders Dr. Laura Stachel and Hal Aronson developed the Solar Suitcase, an economical compact solar electric system for medical lighting, mobile communication and essential medical devices. They are designed to be simple, safe, and durable. Once installed, midwives and doctors can identify pregnancy complications and conduct routine and emergency obstetric care without delay. Health workers using the We Care Solar Suitcase® report greater confidence and reduced strain during night shifts and midwives report that they no longer fear night duty. We Care Solar has enabled thousands of midwives and doctors to provide lifesaving care. Over the past seven years, the award-winning Solar Suitcases have brought lighting and essential power to over 2,400 health centers in more than 20 developing countries, serving nearly one million mothers and newborns. We Care Solar conducts training, installation and maintenance programs in collaboration with international partners to ensure effective Solar Suitcase deployments. Solar Suitcases have provided 6 million hours of nighttime medical lighting and replaced candles, kerosene lanterns, and diesel generators, reducing the risk of fire, and averting more than 30,000 tons of CO2.

Contact:

Kevin Schoeler
kevin@wecaresolar.org
(310) 866-3255

We Care Solar
2150 Allston Way, Suite 340
Berkeley, California, 94704 USA
www.wecaresolar.org

###