Solar-powered kiosks in Africa offer groceries, light and electricity

Italy has already trialled solar powered utility kiosks in the form of Turin's Smart Booth scheme. Taking this idea a step further, the German-designed SOLARKIOSK aims to be a vital source of electricity for those living in off-grid communities.

According to the team behind the project – which includes members of Berlin-based GRAFT architects – some 1.5 billion people still live in areas where there is no access to electricity. The SOLARKIOSK is a small booth that harnesses energy from the sun in order to provide communities with electricity. Having successfully launched its first booth near Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, residents can now access facilities such as mobile phone and car battery charging, refrigeration, music, TV and internet. The electric lights also provide a safer and cheaper alternative to the kerosene lamps often used by families in off-grid areas, which give off hazardous fumes. Electric cookers can help stop the deforestation that occurs to provide wood for heating food.

The startup aims to place networks of these kiosks in off-grid communities. Each one will be operated by a member of the local community, who will be trained on programs run by the company at high schools and universities in the area. These courses will teach them how solar power and solar products work and give them the skills to successfully run a small business. These operators can then employ others and pass on their knowledge.

SOLARKIOSK projects could cut the danger and costs associated with non-electric fuel consumption, provide employment and learning opportunities and give communities a place to socialize and connect with the outside world. Plenty of inspiration here for eco and socially-minded entrepreneurs!

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