

Is this the world's cheapest solar lamp?

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For the millions without electricity in Africa, basic lighting remains a luxury. Kerosene lamps are expensive. Candles and fires are hazardous and ultimately affects a household's air quality. Manchester-based design consultancy [Inventid's](#) recent development of what they are claiming is the [world's cheapest solar light](#) could present a solution for this ongoing struggle.



Developed in collaboration with Chinese manufacturer [Yingli](#), the hand-sized lamps retail for around about R63 (\$5) and are able to stay lit for up to eight hours when fully charged. Called the SM100 solar light, it is reportedly twice as bright as kerosene lamps and features strap slots so that it can be used as a head-torch or easily strapped to a bicycle.

The lamp was trialled by about 9,000 families in Malawi, Uganda and Zambia. It was important to Inventid's founders that the product's initial trial be far-reaching in order to best address potential users' needs.



"Working closely with charities in Africa we gathered local insights into family routines, the layout of dwellings and environmental conditions," explains co-founder Henry James. "We listened to the aspirations and ideas of people whose personal experiences have shaped a product that is co-created in Africa."

Though the SM100 solar light was developed in partnership with charity [SolarAid](#), Inventid have chosen to sell them at cost rather than give them away. According to SolarAid's founding director, each lamp sold generates money for food and essentials in East Africa.

The recent winner of a silver award in the design for society and design for sustainability categories at the [European Product Design Awards](#), the SM100 solar light can also be bought online for £10 in the UK, with all extra profits going to SolarAid.

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