

# Midwives Test the Solar Suitcase

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## **“We don’t have to fear delivering at night anymore”**

In September we blogged about how we were procuring [50 Solar Suitcases to provide sustainable lightning](#), and thereby improve and encourage newborn delivery at health facilities in Uganda. Since then, midwives and health personnel have been testing the suitcases in their daily (or rather nightly) work.

We interviewed four midwives on their feelings about using the Solar Suitcase: Ms. Mutikat Martha, Midwife in charge of the maternity ward at Amudat Hospital; Mrs. Chepkomon Paulina, Enrolled Midwife at Karita Health Centre III; Mr. Longok Paulinos, Comprehensive Nurse at Lobangit HC II who conducts deliveries in the health unit; and Mrs. Harriet Catherine Ayato, Midwife at Lorengedwat HC III.



Midwife inspecting a newborn delivered at night with the help of a headlight which is part of the Solar Suitcase.  
1Sr. Magdalene Komol, Nduget Health Centre III

“Before the Solar Suitcase, we were using all kinds of unreliable lighting to conduct night deliveries – hand lamps, phones, and hand torches donated by UNICEF especially for repairing the episiotomies at night”, tells Ms. Mutikat Martha. This often required an attendant to handle the torch. The poor lighting made the repair of episiotomies very slow and difficult and for this reason staff were not readily performing them at night.

According to Ms. Martha, after the installation of the Solar Suitcase the lighting has been very good, making procedures like the episiotomy repair far easier. “We don’t need an attendant to hold the light anymore which offers better privacy in the labour ward. The light is conveniently movable and can be positioned as desired, you can even attach it on a bed. The Solar Suitcase has also helped us to keep our phones charged and improved communication between the hospital staff and other health units.” With the help of the Solar Suitcase supplies, the number of deliveries at Amudat hospital has increased from around 20 to over 50 deliveries per month.



*Sr. Magdalene Komol, Nduget Health Centre III*

*Midwife checking the readiness of the delivery kit with the help of a headlight provided with the Solar Suitcase.*

*Elizabeth Chepochongil, a 23-year old mother of two tells about her experiences with delivering under the light from the Solar Suitcase at the hospital where Ms. Martha works:*

*“I was brought by a Boda-Boda (Motorcycle taxi paid by the project) to Amudat hospital at 2:30am. I was received in the hospital under bright light both in the maternity and labour ward where I was examined and delivered comfortably, unlike my first born, who I delivered in the village under smoke from firewood.*

*I have enjoyed the benefits of delivering in the health unit. The message I will pass on to the expecting mothers in my village is to encourage them to come and deliver in the health unit now that there is good lighting and better services.”*

Mrs. Chepkomon Paulina has had very similar experiences with an increasing amount of deliveries at the health facility where she works and recounts that the mothers and staff don't have to fear delivering at night anymore. With the new reliable and effective light sources, they are now confident doing procedures even when daylight has passed.

According to Mr. Longok Paulinos life was rough before the suitcase was installed at the facility. In fact, his health facility almost gave up on night deliveries with the constant disappointment of poor quality, easily broken lamps that they used to buy from hawkers. "Sometimes we used the light of my phone to conduct a delivery. The light from the Solar Suitcase has encouraged the staff in Lobalangit to work even at night unlike before when they dreaded night deliveries because of the dark. I wish the light could be made even brighter so that we could view the whole room."



*Sr. Magdalene Komol, Nduget Health Centre III*

*Midwife supporting a mother to initiate breastfeeding after the delivery of the baby with the use of the Solar Suitcase at the health centre Nduget III.*

Mrs. Harriet Catherine Ayato has also struggled with darkness conducting deliveries at Lorengedwat HC III. "Before, we had poor lighting that was installed by the district. It was not reliable and it could break at any time and leave me in darkness for long periods of time. I used to use a phone torch by putting it in my mouth to conduct deliveries at night. At times I used my personal torch in the delivery room but it was expensive to get the batteries.

After installing the Solar Suitcase, it has been very nice to work with a very bright light that stays on for many hours. The light can be left with the mother and baby even after delivery for the whole night. Mothers appreciate the light in the labour room and they don't fear to come and deliver at night compared to before when there was no light at all."

"Last night, I had three mothers in labour. One came at 3:00am from Longoleyek village and delivered a 3.1kg male baby with the apgar score of 9/10 at 5.48am. The second mother came at

3:30am from Lokwamoru village and delivered at 6.00am, a 3.7kg male baby and the apgar score was 9/10. The third mother came at 5:30am from Lokwamoru village and delivered a 3.4kg male baby at 6.12am, the apgar score was 9/10.

My solar light did not even blink, it remained bright the whole night”, she concludes.

You can read the full interviews here: [Ms. Mutikat Martha and Mrs. Chepkomon Paulina](#), [Mr. Longok Paulinos](#), and [Mrs. Harriet Catherine Ayato](#).

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