



The Climate Connection

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Green careers guide

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Pakistan



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Background

For me, the biggest tragedy of climate change is that countries contributing the least to it, will bear the heaviest burden. Pakistan falls under the latter category. This is where the role of global initiatives like the Paris Agreement and UN Conference of Parties comes in.

At a country level, we cannot afford to continue using conventional fuels to meet our growing energy demand. Around 50 million people are still without grid connections and another 70 million live in bad-grid areas. For these people, due to multiple reasons, decentralized renewables like solar are the future.

Company history and business model

Harness Energy was founded in 2016 to provide access to reliable and affordable clean energy to low-income families. We currently sell solar lanterns, solar lighting kits, and solar home systems. Our products that cater to 3 basic energy needs: lighting, mobile charging, and ventilation (fans). We sell only IEC-certified solar products and were the first company in Pakistan to offer a no questions asked replacement warranty on them. But quality products have a price premium. To make sure affordability is not compromised, we have partnered with 6 microfinance institutions (MFIs) who offer these products to customers on easy installments.

Education

In 2008, I majored in Economics and Finance with a degree from the University of London. A couple of years later, went to Duke University on the Fulbright scholarship to get my MA. I did not really take courses in climate change/ green energy, but looking back in hindsight, an

economics training provided me with two key learnings: 1) a focus on unit economics to ensure financial sustainability, and 2) a long-term 'macro' vision guiding where the company is going.

Upcoming projects

We are currently working on an Efficiency for Access project to develop Pakistan's first solar stand fan powered by a bldc motor. This fan will require minimal repair and maintenance and run for 8-10 years – saving recurring expenditures for families in villages. We are also a shortlisted supplier for: 1) PRIME – a 10-year KfW financed program aiming to provide solar products on easy financing all over Pakistan, and 2) SSEP – Sindh government's initiative that will provide subsidized solar home systems to 200,000 rural households in 10 underserved districts of Sindh.

Sustainability

We have impacted over 120,000 lives since inception with a target to reach 500,000 people by 2022. Our products have made it easier for children to study at night, women to do chores, and [fans have] prevented hundreds of cases of dehydration. We've kept the business model lean, which enabled us to withstand the effects of COVID-19 lockdown earlier this year. And we're the only off-grid focused solar company in Pakistan to actually be making money.

