

The BUILD Fund makes inaugural investment into East African off-grid solar energy solutions distributor

- **Mwezi is a distributor of solar products which improve the health, wealth, and environmental impact of off-grid communities in Kenya**
- **The investment will enable Mwezi to expand substantially into the next wave of solar productive products and into neighboring LDCs (least developed countries)**

Luxembourg, 17 June 2021 – The BUILD Fund ('BUILD'), an impact fund created in partnership between Bamboo Capital Partners ('Bamboo') and the United Nations Capital Development Fund ('UNCDF'), has made its inaugural investment, providing a USD\$500,000 working capital facility for Mwezi Ltd ('Mwezi'), a Kenyan distributor of solar products.

Mwezi is a last-mile solar energy solutions distributor targeting rural Kenya. The company provides high-quality solar-powered, Lighting Global accredited products. Mwezi offers customers access to these products through a Pay-As-You-Go ('PAYG') solution to address the financing barriers that have historically held back low-income households in rural sub-Saharan Africa from affording clean energy.

Mwezi sells and distributes products such as PAYG solar systems, solar lamps, solar fishing lights, energy efficient cookstoves, and solar-powered TVs, radios and torches. The company is product agnostic and offers products provided by leading suppliers such as Greenlight Planet, BioLite and Rural Spark.

Through the distribution of clean energy products, Mwezi provides rural households with access to electricity to replace the use of kerosene for cooking and lighting. Kerosene is an expensive and dangerous source of energy – continued usage leads to serious health implications and a significant negative environmental impact. The poorest African households spend approximately 10-25% of their monthly household income on kerosene.

Mwezi specifically targets low-income households. Nearly half (48%) of the company's customers live below £3.20 per day, while four in five (79%) are accessing the products it distributes for the first time. The PAYG products are sold on credit, with payment plans lasting from 273 days to 567 days, depending on the product features and pricing.

Mwezi will use the investment from BUILD to drive its expansion into solar productive products and solar agri-business products in Kenya and neighboring LDCs including Uganda, Ethiopia and Rwanda. The 'next wave' of solar products will allow customers to benefit from egg incubators, solar biodigesters, solar drip irrigation systems and solar maize mills, which – depending on the technology – will be sold with PAYG modality or on a cash basis.

Jean-Philippe de Schrevel, Founder and Managing Partner at Bamboo Capital Partners commented: *"Mwezi showcases how innovative financing solutions can make a real difference to improve access to energy for rural, off-grid communities, while simultaneously creating economic opportunities and reducing environmental damage. We are delighted that BUILD has the opportunity to play a fundamental role in scaling Mwezi and fueling its expansion plans to help the company reach more people and have an even greater impact on life in rural Africa."*

"The BUILD Fund is proving that with the right innovative blended finance vehicle, and partnerships that provide access to pipeline, concessional and commercial capital can flow to SDG-positive businesses in last mile settings—precisely the demonstration that is needed in the Decade of Action for Implementation of the SDGs," said **Preeti Sinha, Executive Secretary of UNCDF**, which partnered with Bamboo Capital Partners – the fund manager for the BUILD Fund. *"This inaugural investment of a fund that is primarily focused on the LDCs, with a transaction sourced & screened by UNCDF, is a tremendous achievement for UNCDF, the SDGs, and last mile finance."*

BUILD is an innovative impact finance vehicle designed to bring "missing middle" finance to small-and-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that have the potential for strong development impact in the world's Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Managed by Bamboo, BUILD provides growth capital to businesses identified, supported and nurtured by the UNCDF.

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About the BUILD Fund:

The Bamboo-UNCDF Initiative for the Least Developed Fund (the “BUILD Fund” or “BUILD” or “the Fund”) is an innovative impact finance vehicle designed to bring “missing middle” finance to small-and-medium sized enterprises (SMEs) that have the potential for strong development impact in the world’s least developed countries (LDCs). The BUILD Fund is a partnership between UNCDF and Bamboo Capital Partners. Managed by Bamboo Capital Partners, the Fund provides growth capital to businesses identified, supported and nurtured by UNCDF. UNCDF’s own work is intended to build a pipeline of “bankable” SMEs and projects in LDCs, by taking them from “too small and too risky” to commercial viability and bankability. The BUILD Fund is complemented by the sidecar BUILD Enterprise Resource Technical Assistance Facility (the “BUILDER Technical Assistance Facility” or “BUILDER TAF”). Together, BUILD and BUILDER TAF constitute the first investment initiative to integrate the lessons learned from UNCDF’s past experiences to create a new, innovative approach for investments into SMEs in LDCs.

About UNCDF:

The UN Capital Development Fund makes public and private finance work for the poor in the world’s 46 least developed countries (LDCs). UNCDF offers “last mile” finance models that unlock public and private resources, especially at the domestic level, to reduce poverty and support local economic development. UNCDF’s financing models work through three channels: (1) inclusive digital economies, which connects individuals, households, and small businesses with financial eco-systems that catalyze participation in the local economy, and provide tools to climb out of poverty and manage financial lives; (2) local development finance, which capacitates localities through fiscal decentralization, innovative municipal finance, and structured project finance to drive local economic expansion and sustainable development; and (3) investment finance, which provides catalytic financial structuring, de-risking, and capital deployment to drive SDG impact and domestic resource mobilization.

About Bamboo Capital Partners:

Bamboo Capital Partners (“Bamboo”) is an impact investing platform which provides innovative financing solutions to catalyze lasting impact. Bamboo bridges the gap between seed and growth stage funding through a full suite of finance options – from debt to equity – which it activates unilaterally or through strategic partnerships. Founded in 2007 by Jean-Philippe de Schrevel, Bamboo aims to improve the lives of the world’s most marginalized communities while delivering strong financial returns. Since its inception, Bamboo has raised over \$400m and invested in over 30 developing countries. Its investees have positively impacted over 184 million lives and supported 45,000 jobs, including 15,900 jobs for women. The firm has a team of 30 professionals active across Europe, Latin America, Africa and Asia. Bamboo also acts as the Asset Management arm of global impact firm Palladium, which operates in over 90 countries, following a strategic partnership in 2020. For more information, please visit www.bamboocp.com or follow @bamboocp.