

EnDev-Kenya Female Solar Gurus-A story of Resilience, from an LME to permanent employment By Evelyn Munihu

EnDev's objective is to accelerate access to clean energy for the Kenyan rural population, in particular through fuel-saving cook stoves and small solar systems. The EnDev Kenya Country Programme (EnDev-K) started in 2006 and covers currently 20 counties in Western, Central and lower Eastern Kenya.

EnDev-K's main focus is on capacity development at various levels to ensure long-term sustainability. Builders, installers and marketers are trained in technical, marketing and entrepreneurship skills. End users and consumers are made aware of the benefits of the available technologies. Special awareness creation is done for decision makers and other important stakeholders.

EnDev-K pursues a commercial approach. All economic activities such as stove production and installation, or importation and assembly of solar systems, are undertaken by private sector actors. Small entrepreneurs as well as medium size enterprises market their products on their own and are fully responsible for product quality.

EnDev-K has established a strong network with local administrations and community-based organizations', thus increasing knowledge, experiences and resources. Linkages have been created between financing institutions and small and medium-sized enterprises for the provision of loans

EnDev-Kenya supports access to modern lighting through promotion of high quality, affordable and efficient small solar systems. These systems provide good quality lighting and convenient electrical services such as mobile phone charging and powering of small radios/entertainment devices. The systems are useful particularly in areas with limited or no access to grid electricity.

EnDev Kenya has promoted solar Pico PV systems since the year 2012 to accelerate access of rural community to clean lighting. A story of resilience has evolved for some of the pioneer female entrepreneurs who have scaled the heights rising from making 5 sales a month to more than 200 sales a month and eventually some of them landing lucrative jobs in solar multinational companies. Dozens are self-employed hence a reliable source of livelihood.

These are entrepreneurs who started with basic knowledge of two day technical induction training by EnDev, some getting partial support from the Programme to attend T1/T2 training in Government Technical Training colleges and being able to do simple installations of solar home systems of up to 100Wts.

Women solar LMEs have stood out. Self-drive has seen one Rose Angatia, a mother of two, go back to earn herself a secondary school certificate. Rose dropped out of school at Form three due to financial constraint, She became solar entrepreneur, has saved money, partially supported herself to get T1/T2 certificate. Rose has been employed by Greenlight Planet on the strength of the trainings she received from GIZ EnDev but now she has the quest to complete high school and get a certificate. She is now sitting for her Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education.

Meet Maureen Owiti, a young lady who until 2012, the only thing she knew to do was bartender. She opened her own pub being a sole barmaid. Maureen was taken advantage of by men at an early age. Hope beamed in her life when we introduced her to solar. Now a mother two, Maureen is employed by greenlight planet, now able to take care of her children.

Philister Chizama is over 50 years. She has been in solar business from the year 2012. She never envisioned getting formal employment but with proper technical training from EnDev, she is now employed. From sales made, Philister invested in farming and harvested over 100 bags of maize which is sufficient to meet her family needs and surplus for sale. In her own words, she says it is self-actualization for her.

Greenlight planet, one of our partners in solar, had very few lady sales managers. They trust our recruitment and training processes and have since employed more than 20 of our Last mile entrepreneurs, most of them ladies.

A story of resilience, self-drive, believing in themselves that women too can make it in a field dominated by men. Our role is to give equal opportunity to all, encourage female gender to participate in all trainings. For these young ladies, the sky is the limit. They are soaring high as they discover their potentials along the solar Value chain! 60 of them in Western Cluster and still counting as more come on board.

As a programme, sustainability is key. Our main approaches include technical capacity building, entrepreneurship and business skills trainings and linkages. Most of our entrepreneurs' have now formed self-help groups doing table banking for economic empowerment. In my Cluster of operation two such groups include the Western Cluster Trainers Self Help Group and Patanisho Self-help Group. These are two groups which have given the programme a lot of recognition in the community where the programme is operating.