



The WEEK project focuses on three value chains: improved cookstoves, solar products, and biomass briquettes.

THE MODEL

Practical Action Eastern Africa, in partnership with Sustainable Community Development Services (SCODE) is implementing the Women in Energy Enterprises in Kenya (WEEK) project. Practical Action and SCODE are working with women entrepreneurs in Kenya to build and expand businesses in three renewable energy markets: improved cookstoves, solar products, and biomass briquettes.

The overall objective of this project is to strengthen women's capacity to effectively participate in and benefit from energy markets. Using an enterprise development model to empower women economically, the project provides women entrepreneurs with tailored support in market assessment and helps expand and strengthen entrepreneurial associations for business owners.

THE STORY

A single mother of three, Margaret Kariuki sold milk to earn a living in Lanet Umoja two in Kenya's Nakuru county. Now she runs a successful briquette business.

Venturing into the occupation because of financial hardship, she did not have a business plan. Margaret understood the basic concepts of bookkeeping, but product promotion and marketing were entirely new to her.

"I started with a capital of 200 shillings and I was able to produce 90 kilograms of briquettes," Margaret said. "Even so, I did not reach positive cash flow until Practical Action sent mentors who provided technical and business skills training. They advised me on good marketing approaches, and how to ensure a minimum quality standard for my briquettes."

One of her biggest challenges was convincing people to use briquettes — many people in Lanet were used to charcoal and not willing to try out the new product. Margaret applied some of the strategies she learned during her training and began providing target customers with free samples.

"After about one month, I began receiving positive feedback from customers, and my sales doubled," Margaret said. "The training I received from Practical Action, and specifically the guidance I received from mentors, was really helpful in growing my business. Their support has made a big difference in my financial life."



Practical Action and SCODE are lobbying and advocating for women's economic empowerment regionally, nationally, and internationally.

THE IMPACT

The project aims to reach 730 women-led micro and small enterprises (MSEs), that will in turn reach 364,200 beneficiaries, including women, men, children, and institutions in need. The entrepreneurs will provide their communities with options for cleaner energy technologies and contribute to environmental preservation. In addition, as the businesses grow,

an additional 450 men and women in rural and peri-urban areas in seven counties across the country will be employed by the women entrepreneurs. So far, 675 women have been recruited for training under the WEEK project. To heighten the potential of success, each entrepreneur is linked to a technology mentor and a business mentor.



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ADVOCACY & AWARENESS

Practical Action and SCODE lobby for the adoption of women's economic empowerment approaches in delivering new targets for universal modern energy access nationally, regionally, and internationally. For example, they work with Kenya's Ministry of Energy & Petroleum to ensure gender inclusion and decentralized energy systems remain embedded in Kenya's SE4All Action Plans. They also work with ENERGIA's Kenya-based CSO partners, government, donors, the private sector, and the media to mainstream gender in regional and national energy plans and investments. Their national gender and energy outreach campaign aims to reach 2 million people. Through this advocacy work, the organisations hope to ensure that energy advocates include gender-aware approaches to their energy access projects.