

Bags of coffee at Kasaali Farmers' Cooperative Society
Uganda

Inclusive Energy Fund Case Study 3

Building youth skills in solar maintenance

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FAIRTRADE
FOUNDATION

IEF Case Study 3

Building youth skills in solar maintenance

- Cooperative: Kasaali Farmers' Cooperative Society
- Country: Uganda
- Theme: Income diversification

Introduction

Kasaali Farmers' Cooperative society (KACFA) has been registered since 2013 and works to improve the coffee subsector in Rakai and Kyotera Districts in Uganda, promoting Climate Smart coffee production and working to improve the livelihoods of co-op members. KACFA is currently comprised of 52 fully registered producer groups in Rakai and Kyotera Districts and has approximately 1,500 members.

Project Objectives

The project's main objectives were to enhance income diversification, ensuring food and nutrition security, and employ climate-smart practices. They planned to increase access to clean and green energy products, particularly through solar development. KACFA had a strong focus on youth in their engagement and training of cooperative members on green energy and aimed to increase youth employment. They planned for solar products to play a key role in supporting youth employment - for example solar saloon kits are going to be given to them on loan to support employment and the youth members will use the solar fridges and television in cinema halls to provide entertainment to the people in the community as a small business.

Successes and Lessons Learnt

Over 360 youth were given trainings and sensitisations on clean, green energy in their community and 10 were selected and trained to work as solar technicians. By project mid-term, those youths who participated in the solar maintenance training program reported newfound skills and confidence. Some had already started small businesses providing solar maintenance services within their communities. Some youth were working on a voluntary basis to support community members with basic system repairs.

By the end of the project, some of the youths have got jobs as solar technicians which has built their technical ability, provided them with meaningful employment and income-generating opportunities, contributing to their economic well-being. Other youths have been designated as sales agents for solar products. This has not only allowed them to earn a living but also fostered entrepreneurial skills, encouraging them to take ownership of their roles. Women have bought solar fridges to increase their incomes and some have been engaged in poultry.

The cooperative leaders reflected that by creating employment opportunities and providing entertainment options, the project has contributed to the overall development and well-being of the community. They also noted that involving youth and women in a project centred on solar energy fostered a sense of responsibility towards the environment, encouraged them to be conscious consumers and advocates for clean energy.

"I always receive many phone calls from the members consulting me about the installation and repair of solar systems and some of those farmers have already invited me to install solar panels in their homes and hence earning out of the service provided in return. For example, I installed a big solar system here in Bukoba town which operates 45 CCT cameras, 26 lights and run some machines to one of the businessmen who paid me 800,000 Tanzanian shillings for the services provided. So far, I have already installed over 10 solar panel systems. And in the near future, I plan to do solar business, continue to install solar panels for farmers and train my fellow youths to become solar technicians as well... if not for the IEF Project, my skills and knowledge wouldn't be enhanced and also, I wouldn't have gotten those installation jobs."

Steven Kasumba, age 24, trained through IEF project

Challenges

Initially the cooperative leaders said it was difficult to engage young people and to effectively manage large groups of participants in training – this was resolved by working directly through youth councils who engage other youths and support a good turnout. Assigning experienced individuals to mentor or supervise youth participants provided the necessary guidance and support.

Next Steps

In the future, KACFA would like to organise more trainings for youth and to continue to improve youth employment.