

Solar Home Systems for Safe Homes in Rural Uganda

In Pakarukwe, a village in the Ugandan district of Moyo, Azuruku Godwill Wilma, owns a one light (SP-1) Solar Home System (SHS). Mr. Azuruku is a teacher by profession in Arra Primary School. He heads a family of four (4) household members.

Wilma's days end with extra readings, marking of students' assignments and drawing the lesson plans for the following day. For the five (5) years since becoming a teacher the 30-year-old gentleman has been battling with how to accomplish these daily tasks starting from 7:30 pm with the utter darkness in the village with lack of access to the National grid electricity. He relied on the local lighting lamp commonly known as 'Kadobo' in the Madi dialect.



Mr. Azuruku Godwill Wilma Infront of his house where the SHS is installed.

With the *kadobo* 30 minutes was maximum study and planning time for Mr. Azuruku and his one school going boy Emmanuel doing his homework. The time was not sufficient for all the scheduled activities for evening which most of the times forced him to leave earlier i.e. 6:30am than usual to catch up with the school opening time from 8:00am. Often times he arrived late for his lessons as he takes more time on the compound to plan. Furthermore, studying with lamp caused itching of their eyes and sometimes end up with headache because of the dim light which strained the eyes. Spending 3,000 Ugandan Shillings monthly to purchase paraffin to sustain the night reading, he says; ***"Sitting to get a proper view from the small lamp was difficult for me and my son whereby we ended with back pain, i would wonder why we got cough more frequently"***. He always had fear of leaving the children alone with lamp due to the history of fire accidents in the community.

Like any other rural based citizen, the Social Studies teacher incurred excessive phone maintenance bills where routine charging from Arra trading centre costed a fee of 1,500 Ugandan shillings monthly.



A teacher in Arra P/S gets enough light for drawing his lesson



In January 2020, Mr. Azuruku a member of Joint Effort Group which has partnered with Moyo District Farmers Association (*Project CSO in Moyo*) for distribution of the project products got the knowledge about the Renewable Energy Technologies from Mr. Amoko Sunday a Community Based Trainer, MDFA during their awareness and marketing and also previously from LC V of Moyo District but needed evidence to pick interest. With clear understanding of the functionality and quality of the Solar Home System, he acquired one for his household at Ugandan Shillings 120,000. The solar is a product of Rural Initiative for Community Empowerment West Nile (RICE-WN's) four years project funded by Norad and European Union through World Wide Fund for Nature Uganda Country Office (WWF-UCO) with an overarching goal of ensuring that communities in the Albertine Graben adopt renewable energy alternatives to avoid overdependence on biomass for their energy needs. The project is implemented in the originally six West Nile districts i.e. Arua, Moyo, Adjumani, Nebbi, Maracha and Koboko in partnership with sixteen (16) CSOs across the project districts.



A bright SP-1 solar bulb in Wilma's house.

With increased reading and lesson planning time to four (4) hours for Mr. Azuruku and his son, he gets early for lessons and well prepared with the subjects. With no complaints of back pain due to comfortable reading positions since bright light rays flow from above. He saves 4,500 Uganda shillings which was previously spent on phone charging and purchase of paraffin and other medical expenses of approximately 3,000 UGX used to treat cough occasionally - the money saved is now used for buying basic household items like salt, soap, cooking oil, books for the child.

Wilma's wife also finds it easy to cook clean food at night, he further charges for neighbors upon request and has encouraged them to acquire the solar too, he says; ***"I have sensitized my neighbors about the quality of the product out of experience"***.

Joint Effort Group members have all together acquired five (5) solar home systems and seven (7) improved cook stoves with all the members excited about the products. Wilma appreciates that; ***"This sub county of ours is very far and we rarely receive services ... I want to appreciate RICE-WN and her partners for the services offered, personally it has changed a lot in my family life and teaching life"***. On realizing the benefits of being in a group he added; ***"The group approach has helped us to acquire the products which would have been difficult on individual basis."***