

UpEnergy Uganda – stories from the front line

A taxi driver turned into a businessman

I first met Aaron Okello when he picked me up from the Kampala city center last year on his boda, the ubiquitous motorcycle taxis in Kampala. I briefly explained my work in Uganda, selling wood-efficient stoves for UpEnergy. Aaron jumped on the opportunity telling me he would be more than happy to market the stoves. I told him he could always send his CV my way but perhaps he could try buying and selling one stove.

On 1st December 2011, he brought 28,000 UGX to the office (11 USD) and bought one stove. We saw him return to our office 5 days later to buy another stove and on 9th December, he bought 2. By the end of December, he was already our best distributor with 162 stoves representing 8% of our total December sales. Only two partners funded by aid managed to sell more.

Aaron Okello didn't stop there. By the end of December, he identified and presented to us another distributor – an established professional who bought on the spot 150 stoves. In total, he generated an astounding 16% of our December sales.

His short professional success has had a strong impact on both his professional and his personal life.

After seeing his parents, brothers and sisters decimated by AIDS, Aaron was able to reunite with his wife and his three children (of which two were adopted) who until now lived 400 kms in a village in the North of Uganda. His increased income enabled him to move from a one room flat to a self-contained two room flat, and to pay for the school fees of all his children. He was also able to pay 50% of the dowry for his wife, an important step towards recognition and respect.

In 2012, Aaron Okello managed to consolidate his sales, making up more than 8% of total UpEnergy sales.



Aaron has abandoned working as a boda driver and now uses it as a means to transport stoves, piling up to 10 at the same time.