

Transforming Urban Cooking: The ENACT Project's Impact in Kisenyi Informal Settlement, Kampala, Uganda

At the heart of Kampala, Uganda, lies Kisenyi, an informal settlement grappling with the challenges of traditional cooking practices. The dense smoke from inefficient stoves and the heavy reliance on charcoal continue to degrade air quality and strain household budgets, while also contributing to environmental degradation and a wide array of health, social and economic challenges. It was in this setting that the Enabling African Cities for Transformative Energy Access (ENACT) project, funded by UK aid and implemented by ICLEI Africa with support from Mercy Corps-Energy 4 Impact, launched an initiative to modernize cooking practices in this community.



Aerial view of Kisenyi, Kampala

Kisenyi's kitchens were once dominated by traditional metallic stoves, with two-thirds of residents relying on inefficient cooking methods. Charcoal, used by 86% of households, placed a financial burden and exacerbated the destruction of the environment. Many residents purchased fuel daily, a reflection of the precarious hand-to-mouth existence prevalent in the settlement.

A vivid example of these hardships is Mr. Abbasi, a 33-year-old landlord in Kisenyi who lives with his two wives and eleven children in a flood-prone area. He spent 21,000 Ugandan shillings (UGX) each week on firewood and charcoal, creating smoke that left his family struggling with chronic coughing and eye irritation.



Traditional charcoal stoves and ICS stacking in use in Kisenyi

Recognizing the deep-rooted nature of traditional practices, the ENACT project, in collaboration with Wana Solutions and Green Bio Energy, and the key government authorities - Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) and Kampala Capital City Authority (KCCA) - faced the formidable task of introducing clean cooking technologies to this community. The consortium led by Wana Solutions, employed a multi-faceted approach, introducing electric pressure cookers, LPG stoves, improved cookstoves, and briquettes as alternative fuel sources. Tailoring their approach to meet the diverse needs of Kisenyi's residents, the project sought to address both practical and cultural barriers to change.

For Mr. Abbasi, the **intervention was a lifeline**. After attending a community meeting organised by Wana Solutions in February 2024, he purchased the LPG technology. This transition **reduced his fuel costs to UGX 55,000 per refill**, which lasts a month, compared to his previous monthly expenditure of UGX 84,000 on charcoal. The switch has significantly improved his family's health and their living conditions.

[Watch this video to hear more transformative stories like this](#)

As clean cooking solutions were rolled out across Kisenyi, the impact was rapid. The use of traditional metallic stoves dropped to 30%, while improved cookstoves gained popularity among 28% of households. LPG stoves and electric pressure cookers accounted for 15% and 11% of usage, respectively.

Implementation was key to the project's success. An end-line survey of 245 respondents conducted in June 2024, including households and small businesses, provided crucial insights into community needs and preferences.

Notably, the survey found that 85% of transactions were made in cash, which reflects the community's preference for immediate payments characteristic of its predominantly Muslim population, as well as the project's efforts to make technologies affordable through diverse payment options. To accommodate financial constraints, the project had offered various payment models, including cash payments and in-house credit options.

The project's success also hinged on community ambassadors like Mr. Kiberu, who began his role in March 2024. Equipped with a megaphone and flyers, Mr. Kiberu mobilized residents, raised awareness about the different clean cooking fuels and technologies (EPCs, ICSs, LPG and briquettes) being introduced, and addressed safety misconceptions.



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His dedicated outreach was instrumental in overcoming resistance and promoting the benefits of clean cooking. In recognition of his influence in promoting these technologies, the community members have nicknamed the stoves "Kiberu Stoves".

The community has experienced significant benefits: over half of the respondents reported time savings and faster cooking processes, improved air quality with smoke-free kitchens, and economic relief due to reduced fuel costs.

Mr. Abbasi's family, for instance, now enjoys a healthier home environment and faster meal preparation since switching to LPG. Due to the efforts of Mr. Kiberu and his fellow ambassadors, these advantages spread through the community and drove a cultural shift toward cleaner cooking methods, as documented in a video highlighting improvements in clean cooking access within Kampala's informal settlements.

The project's success was underscored by high user satisfaction levels. An impressive 99% felt safer with their new stoves, and the same percentage expressed a commitment to continue using clean cooking technologies. Overall satisfaction was remarkably high, with nearly all respondents reporting they were either very satisfied or satisfied.

Impact also extended beyond individual households. Over a third of users received positive feedback from neighbours about their switch to clean cooking, and 88% of them expressed a desire to acquire additional clean cooking technologies. This growing interest signals a robust community appetite for further improvement and innovation.

Wana Energy Solutions are actively engaging the community and providing continuous support to tackle issues raised by early adopters, including difficulty lighting the briquettes, the demand for more training and support, the high upfront cost of the products, and unreliable and poor quality electricity supply for the EPCS, amongst other concerns.

The ENACT project in Kisenyi provides valuable insights for similar interventions in urban informal settlements. Its success demonstrates the community's willingness to invest in affordable solutions, the importance of offering a range of technologies to address their diverse needs, and the necessity of ongoing support and training.



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Kisenyi residents with the ENACT team at the Kisenyi community engagement event (25 June 2024)

Building on these achievements, future efforts should focus on addressing training and awareness gaps, exploring innovative financing options, and ensuring consistent fuel quality. The strong interest and support from the community, especially amongst its leaders, shows promise for expanding clean cooking solutions to other communities in Uganda.

The transformation in Kisenyi exemplifies the remarkable impact of strong multi-sectoral collaborations, public-private partnerships, and targeted interventions in driving meaningful change within urban informal settlements. Once characterized by smoky, hazardous kitchens, the area now boasts cleaner, safer, and more efficient cooking spaces—demonstrating the potential for improved quality of life through sustainable energy solutions. As the scent of meals prepared on clean stoves fills the air, Kisenyi's residents are embracing a future marked by healthier families, stronger communities, and a more sustainable urban environment.



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