



LIVELYHOODS CASE STUDY:

WHERE ARE THE WOMEN IN THE ENERGY SECTOR?



WPOWER

PARTNERSHIP ON WOMEN'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN RENEWABLES



Prioritizing women's engagement across the household clean energy value chain is critical to the success of any grassroots initiative in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia. The two most important aspects of this goal remain building an evidence base of why this engagement is necessary, and how the leap from understanding women's vital roles into action can be made. The Partnership on Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables (wPOWER) is a champion for promoting women as key change agents to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all) and works to build evidence, promote best practices, and advocate for clean energy entrepreneurship.

wPOWER, under this series "Where are the women in the energy sector?", has two goals - first, to share the evidence that exists that makes the business case for women's involvement across the energy value chain, and second, to highlight various approaches and best practices in recruiting, retaining, and promoting women within the energy industry. The series makes a case for building on the 'why' of gender inclusiveness and the 'how' to showcase shining examples on where it's been done successfully. The tipping point for gender inclusiveness is here - we tell you why, where and how.

Promoting Women's Employment through an Innovative Distribution Model

The current combined unemployment and underemployment rate in Kenya stands at 27.8%¹, with an overrepresentation of women in both brackets. According to the United Nations Development Fund, high unemployment rates among women is a direct result of fewer employment opportunities for them. Regardless of the type of sector - formal or informal - the proportion of employed or engaged women remains lower than that of men across all ages, with women's disadvantage in accessing informal jobs at its worst at the age of 25 years. When it applies to access to formal jobs, the disadvantage between women and men continues to widen throughout the entire youth period².

These disparities in employment across genders reinforces the need for women-focused employment strategies and policies. These approaches should be designed to engage more women in income generating activities. By offering training and job opportunities, LivelyHoods has provided unemployed women with an opportunity to generate income, learn valuable professional skills, reduce poverty levels and subsequently enhance adoption of clean energy technologies

within their communities.

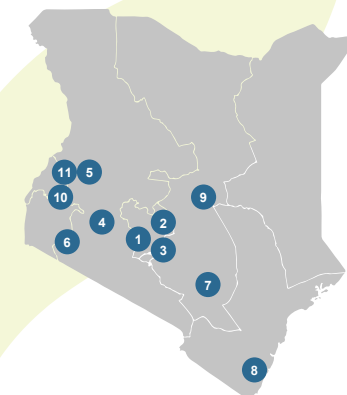
This case study will explore the training, distribution and support model employed by LivelyHoods, highlighting the accomplishments, challenges and lessons learned along the way. The goal is to provide evidence of the vital role of women in clean energy initiatives, allowing for the prioritization of their involvement across the household clean energy value chain.

What is LivelyHoods?

LivelyHoods is a non-profit organization founded in 2011 that trains and employs women and youth living in informal settlements as sales agents to distribute clean energy technologies and household products (improved cookstoves, solar lamps, water filters and household appliances) within their communities.

Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, LivelyHoods has 11 branches located in:

1. Kawangware
2. Mathare
3. Makadara
4. Nakuru
5. Eldoret
6. Kisii
7. Kitui
8. Mombasa
9. Meru
10. Kisumu
11. Bungoma.



LivelyHoods' vision and purpose is based on establishing a sustainable solution to unemployment and the lack of clean energy access in Kenya's low income, high density informal settlements (commonly referred to as slums), originally through the provision of financial support to business startups run by youth. When the initial microfinance pilot failed to take off due to lack of business management skills by the youth, LivelyHoods shifted focus to training and employing women and youth directly as sales agents. While LivelyHoods offers the same training and employment opportunities to men, better results have been witnessed by women over the years, prompting LivelyHoods to deliberately focus on supporting women as sales agents. Currently, women comprise 65% of the LivelyHoods workforce.

“When I co-founded LivelyHoods in 2011, we set out to tackle two issues which we saw as being barriers to development in Kenyan slums: youth unemployment and a distribution bottleneck for innovative, clean energy, products. What we didn't realize was that we were creating a powerful model for women, in particular, to earn an income and become community influencers by educating other women on the benefits of modern energy technologies, like clean cookstoves and solar lamps.” Tania Laden, LivelyHoods co-founder and Executive Director.

Engaging Women at LivelyHoods

In the process of recruiting and employing women as distributors of clean energy technologies, LivelyHoods identified several gaps that hindered the effective engagement of women in clean energy adoption. Firstly, women did not have many opportunities to access training and employment opportunities; secondly, there was poor penetration of these technologies in low income communities due to ineffective distribution models; and thirdly, there was limited support, coaching and mentoring of women sales agents. To address these gaps, LivelyHoods adopted a model that encourages the involvement of women in the distribution of clean energy products, increases the number of products sold and ultimately increases the adoption of clean energy products within local communities.

LivelyHoods' sales agent-based model comprises four components:

1. Interactive training and soft skills development
2. Door-to-door distribution
3. Layaway payment plan
4. Mentoring, support and coaching

1. Interactive Training and Soft Skills Development

Many women in rural and low income areas remain unemployed due to a lack of secondary and tertiary education, compounded by a lack of essential job skills such as effective communication, time management and financial management.

Similarly, although some organizations may offer training opportunities, very few of these training opportunities directly result in income generation or employment for the women.

To address this need, LivelyHoods focuses on recruiting unemployed and/or disadvantaged women through flyers, brochures and active outreach within communities. To ensure more women are recruited into training sessions, attaining a certain education level is not a requirement for qualification. To date, 68% of recruited trainees have not completed their secondary education. The trainees undergo a free three-week long training³ conducted by qualified trainers, typically in groups of 15 - 20 trainees per class. The training programs are conducted on a quarterly basis across all of LivelyHoods' 11 branches across Kenya.

The training program entails structured in-classroom sales and marketing instruction, soft skills coaching, role playing and practical (field) classes. Through these interactive activities, trainees are taught sales techniques, effective communication, financial management, time management and goal-setting. Trainees are also coached on soft skills such as proactivity, self-confidence, strategic thinking, teamwork, decisiveness and optimism, which are critical during field classes where trainees engage potential customers with the aim of executing a sale.

Evaluation of the success of a trainee is based

on their full attendance, active participation in the training, and interest to join the sales team, as well as having made at least one sale during training. Trainees who meet the full evaluation criteria graduate to become sales agents. LivelyHoods employs about 75% of trainee graduates, with additional opportunities for promotion to positions including senior sales agent, branch manager or trainer. The trainees also receive a certificate upon graduation, which provides a professional reference that can be used when seeking new employment opportunities. Currently, 87% of sales agents who leave LivelyHoods are engaged in productive employment or entrepreneurial activities, or pursuing further education.

2. Door to Door Distribution

In the process of evaluating the number of sales made by the sales agents, it was noted that men recorded lower sales as compared to their women counterparts. Men sellers were also facing difficulty engaging the end users who are largely women, due to cultural barriers which sometimes limit interactions between both genders.

By employing women sales agents in a door-to-door distribution model while simultaneously leveraging their wide community networks, women were shown to have wider reach. This allowed them to effectively engage community members on the technical and practical benefits of clean energy technologies, including reducing household fuel costs, fuel use and smoke emissions. In ranking the top 10% of sales agents by number of products sold, 90% of them were

found to be women.

3. Layaway Payment Plan

Relatively high costs of clean energy technologies has made it difficult for low income households to adopt these technologies. Improved cookstoves cost at least \$45 (KES 4500). This amount is unaffordable for many households in Kenya where 35.6% of the population live below the international poverty line of \$1.90 per day⁴.

To address this challenge, LivelyHoods introduced a layaway⁵ payment plan called LIPA (LivelyHoods Instalment Payment Arrangement), which has boosted sales with more customers now able to pay in affordable installments. In surveys conducted by LivelyHoods, 80% of total customers (81% of whom are women) stated that LIPA has created access to clean energy technologies.

4. Mentoring, Support and Coaching

Women sales agents at LivelyHoods were often faced with numerous challenges leading to high attrition. Such challenges include lack of spousal and family support for a woman working outside the home, discouraging women from pursuing income generating activities. Other challenges faced by all the sales agents included harassment by local government authorities who obstruct their engagement within the communities by falsely claiming they are working with invalid permits as well as stigma from door to door selling which is negatively viewed as hawking.

To address these challenges and increase retention rates, sales agents are required to attend daily team meetings and engage in a structured group mentoring program. In the daily meetings, sales agents get the opportunity to refresh their skills and receive additional feedback and guidance on effective sales techniques. In addition to this, sales agents attend an individualized performance review, which involves goal setting and codevelopment of working strategies (with branch managers) for subsequent months.

To reinforce the skills learned during the initial training, women sales agents also attend a three-week long structured group mentoring program, aimed at addressing specific challenges. In these meetings the women share their experiences, successes and challenges while offering encouragement and support for one another. This group mentoring, financed by the Women's Empowerment Fund from the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves, fosters time-management, work-life balance, goal-setting, teamwork and financial management. While these skills were covered during the initial training, additional support in these areas was identified by women sales agents as vital to their ability to fulfill their full potential, hence launching a dedicated mentoring program for purposes of reinforcing these skills.

This program is in line with wPOWER's best practice principle that identified coaching and mentorship as a key component for business sustainability.

Opportunities in Working with Women Sales Agents

Despite the successes experienced in empowering women as sales agents, LivelyHoods recognized a number of opportunities to enhance implementation of its training, distribution and support models to support women sales agents. These strategies are explored below.

	THE CHALLENGE	THE SOLUTION
Training	<p>Cultivating support networks is not easy when young men and older women (50 - 60 year olds) are combined in the same classroom, as their needs and experiences are vastly different.</p> <p>Maintaining training schedules is sometimes difficult due to household responsibilities and child-rearing.</p>	<p>Engaging women through women-only recruitment drives ensures that bonds among trainees are stronger.</p> <p>Offering flexible training days and reporting times allows women the opportunity to complete training and still attend to their household responsibilities.</p>
Distribution	<p>Effectively engaging potential customers is sometimes hampered by local authorities, who harass sales agents as they carry out their work.</p> <p>Distributing clean technologies door-to-door is resource and time intensive, it also comes with a negative association with hawking an activity that is generally frowned upon. This stigma sometimes results in sales agents getting rebuffed by potential customers.</p>	<p>Engaging the local government is key to deterring challenges presented by local law enforcement.</p> <p>Supporting sales agents is crucial in keeping high morale and fostering resilience.</p>
Support and Coaching	<p>Measuring the impact of support and coaching on women sales agents is difficult without segregated pilots.</p> <p>Mentoring on its own may not always increase sales.</p>	<p>Gathering qualitative and quantitative data through focused and granulated monitoring & evaluation is essential in determining the role and impact of mentoring programs on women.</p> <p>Employing proven commercial marketing strategies ensures effective sales techniques are utilized by sales agents.</p>

Key Findings from LivelyHoods

- Creating accessible training opportunities for women allows them to develop the essential job skills needed to generate a stable income, in the present and future.
- Leveraging women's networks during distribution of clean energy technologies leads to more fruitful engagement with the end user.
- Ongoing mentoring, support and coaching is crucial in developing the skills of sales agents, particularly women, allowing them to be more effective in making sales.

Women's Success at LivelyHoods by the Numbers

- 65% of the workforce at LivelyHoods is comprised of women.
- 1600 women have completed LivelyHoods training.
- 26 is the average age of the women trained at LivelyHoods.
- \$75 average monthly increase in income.
- 14,000 clean energy products have been sold by women sales agents.
- 90% of the top 10% sales agents are women.
- 89% decrease in poverty likelihood one year after joining LivelyHoods.
- 12 months average tenure for a woman sales agent at LivelyHoods.
- 85% are engaged in other employment opportunities after graduating from LivelyHoods.

Summing Up

LivelyHoods reports that women experience significant positive changes in attaining financial independence and economic stability. Furthermore, many women report that their confidence levels and ability to make decisions and work towards long term goals have improved greatly. This is significant progress considering the great odds that women faced before engagement with LivelyHoods, such as lack of education, employment experience and professional skills.

LivelyHoods not only equips women with essential skills, they also provide the motivation for them to succeed in sales, and access to products allowing them to carry out their work effectively.

“When it comes to clean energy, it’s our job as a job creator and distributor to ensure that women are supported, promoted and offered opportunities, to the same extent as men, but with targeted support to overcome the specific barriers they face as women.” Claire Baker, Director of Development, LivelyHoods.

When effective training, distribution and support models are implemented in clean energy initiatives, transformative impact on women is seen in their success as sales agents, and the ripple effects can be witnessed in their communities. Women’s leadership in clean energy access is no longer a lofty proposal; organizations such as LivelyHoods have shown us that women’s involvement is a crucial factor for success. It is time for us to ensure that the central role of women in promoting clean

energy access is implemented as best practice throughout the sector.

¹Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2018). *Kenya Integrated Household Budget Survey; Labour Force Report*. KIHBS

²UNDP (2013), *Kenya Youth Unemployment Challenge*.

³The training is inspired by the ‘*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*,’ the Behavior Change Communication curriculum from *Population Services Kenya* and empowerment techniques developed by the *Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves*.

⁴The World Bank (2018). *Poverty incidence in Kenya declined significantly, but unlikely to be eradicated by 2030*

⁵*Layaway* is a purchasing method in which a consumer places a deposit on an item to “lay it away” for later pick-up when they come back and pay the balance. Layaway also allows the customer to make smaller payments on the product until the purchase is paid in full. A layaway plan ensures the consumer will get their chosen merchandise once they pay for it in full. Layaway works for consumers who have a limited amount of disposable income and are unable to make larger purchases all at once.

Meet the Women at LivelyHoods

Rachel Mogaka, Senior Sales Agent

“Before joining LivelyHoods I was just from a broken marriage. I had just moved to Nairobi and I could barely get rent to pay for the house, let alone food. Since joining LivelyHoods I now never have to worry about what to eat or where to get money for rent. A few months after joining LivelyHoods I got money to claim my kids’ custody and I’m now able to care for them and even pay their school fees and their upkeep. I was given a chance here, given the skills I was missing, and it made me become one of the best sellers; I am now a senior sales agent.”



Maureen Adhiambo, former LivelyHoods Sales Agent

“LivelyHoods gave me the opportunity to work. The change it brought about in me was tremendous. I now run my own business, not too far from where I first learned how to be a good sales person. I really gained the confidence and the communications skills to convince customers and market products to the public. I am now earning the money I need to take care of myself. I have my independence.”



Lilian Mungai, Branch Manager

“I first thought I couldn’t sell, but after going through the training I made the decision to at least try it out, though I had to work on my confidence. I truly love working in the community, and I now have the confidence to do it. Being a part of the change at LivelyHoods and contributing to the organization’s goals, whilst also achieving my own goals, is something I am very proud of.”





About wPOWER

The Partnership on Women's Entrepreneurship in Renewables is a US-Department of State funded project, with a mission to promote the central role that women must play in clean energy entrepreneurship and in addressing climate change, and a vision to empower 8,000 women in clean energy entrepreneurship to deliver clean energy access to 3.5 million people globally by 2018.

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