iSmart Kenya indeed demonstrated its potential in the peri-urban town of Limuru by not only exceeding the initial project targets but also completing the project several months ahead of schedule. Through their distribution network of trained sales agents, iSmart brought a total of 5,273 clean cookstoves to low-income families living in urban slums, as well as peri-urban and rural areas – and accomplished this in just eleven months.

These clean cookstoves give households access to clean energy and have essential health, economic and environmental benefits for families at the base of the pyramid.

The project received 106,673 Euros of EEP funding with the aim to demonstrate iSmart’s potential to expand operations into new areas and markets. The EEP funding enabled iSmart to expand its urban sales distribution and open its first location outside of Nairobi, bringing their products and services to informal settlements in the peri-urban town of Limuru outside of Nairobi.

Over the duration of the project, iSmart’s goal was to create sales agent jobs for 150 youth and women and distribute 5,000 clean cookstoves to the base of the pyramid in Kenya. The goal for job creation was significantly exceeded with 233 youth and women employed as sales agents through the project, and the sales peaked to over a thousand cookstoves sold in both August and September 2015.

Improved access to clean-energy

The 5,273 households reached through the project now own clean energy products that can improve the quality of life in many ways. Cookstoves reduce charcoal consumption and toxic smoke emissions, and are therefore a good investment for health, economic and environmental reasons. Clean cookstoves are estimated to reduce charcoal consumption by 50 per cent, saving the low-income customers money that can be spent on other critical needs such as food, housing, or school fees.

Environmental Stewardship

Through increased adoption of clean cookstoves, iSmart impacts the environment by reducing charcoal consumption at the base of the pyramid. This means fewer trees need to be cut down to produce charcoal and less toxic smoke is emitted during combustion, ultimately mitigating climate change and deforestation.

Vocational Training and Job Creation

iSmart’s model is designed to create job opportunities for youth and women, regardless of education or experience, so they can work their way out of poverty and realize their potential. Compensation is a combination of commission-based payment at the end of the month and weekly team-based bonuses. This structure provides incentives for both learning to budget monthly earnings with expenditures, as well as incentives to increase sales and collaborate with the team. Compensation and incentives vary among regions and are designed to bring in more revenue to support the sales agents.

Adaptation to New Markets

With the proven success of iSmart’s model in a small town of Limuru, iSmart plans to continue expansion in the Nairobi and Kiambu Counties, both in urban and rural areas. And, the expansion plans are not limited to Kenya, as the iSmart team concludes: “We expect that the growth we have been able to achieve in partnership with the Energy and Environment Partnership can be replicated in other countries and regions that will enable our growth and replication throughout Kenya and eventually East Africa.”

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