

ENERGY LINKS

A human development opportunity exists at the intersection of pro-poor energy and finance.

In the developing world, using a lamp or cooking the evening meal is not as simple as finding the nearest electricity outlet. Energy sources are often limited, and for 2 billion people around the world, that means daily use of kerosene, charcoal or firewood – which can be hazardous, expensive, and damaging to the environment.

On average, households in subsistence economies spend up to 30 percent of their income on lighting and cooking fuels. Children suffer from indoor smoke, and the environment suffers from the emission of greenhouse gasses and deforestation. As the developing world advances economically, pro-poor, sustainable energy solutions are needed - and they exist!



Energy Links, a project of the Center for Financial Inclusion, seeks to use micro-finance as a platform for providing and supporting pro-poor energy solutions. The objective is to create commercially-driven, scalable, affordable, and clean energy products with widespread distribution.



Find podcasts and publications at www.centerforfinancialinclusion.org/energylinks

THE ENERGY LINKS TEAM AT WORK

The resources and technology needed to bring clean, affordable energy to the poor do exist. What is lacking is effective collaboration among suppliers, financial sources, and distribution networks. The Energy Links staff, with ample experience in addressing the needs of the global poor by commercial means, acts as an intermediary, helping to establish advantageous partnerships.

Energy Providers *Supply*

Develop the technology behind clean, affordable energy. They manufacture devices like solar lamps and biomass briquette presses.

Energy Links *Facilitators*

Broker partnerships while providing guidance in product development, marketing, and outreach.

Microfinance Industry *Demand*

Understand the market and its needs, can provide finance and have existing client relationships.

CURRENT PROJECTS

Solar-powered lamps light up homes in Uganda and Mali. After careful examination of the needs of the rural households in Uganda, Energy Links identified a huge potential market for solar LED lamps. Focus groups with rural villagers helped narrow down the most marketable product and a supplier with a suitable product, Barefoot Power, was identified. Along with local and international NGOs working to promote savings groups, Energy Links helped to develop the marketing and distribution model that has sold 25,000 lamps to date, and is now spreading to Kenya.

Bolstered by success in Uganda, Energy Links began work in Mali, where savings groups have the potential to serve as a very effective outreach vehicle for solar LED lamps.

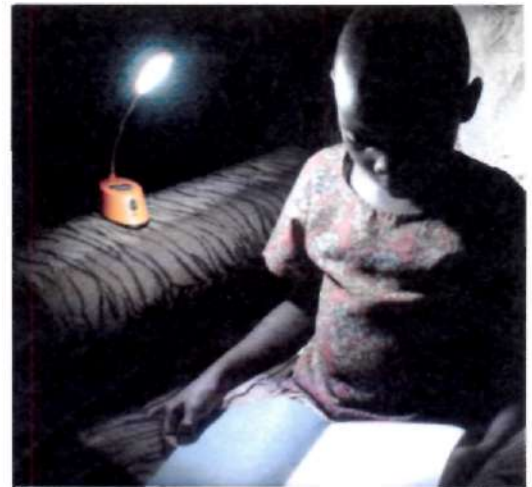
Biomass briquettes are an affordable cooking fuel alternative in Uganda. Energy Links has trained 25 community based organizers in Uganda to make cook stove briquettes out of readily accessible bio-matter, and in turn, the organizers have trained 2,000 village participants. Most participants create biomass briquettes for their own use, but some have already started to use this knowledge to create microenterprises around the product.

ON THE HORIZON

Tanzania is the staging ground for a comprehensive strategy. The Energy Links team is beginning an initiative in Tanzania that seeks to develop an entire infrastructure that supports affordable and sustainable energy for urban and rural populations. Through a wide network of partners, Energy Links is laying the groundwork for a pro-poor energy sector development.

To learn more, please visit www.centerforfinancialinclusion.org/energylinks

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ABOUT THE CENTER FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The Center for Financial Inclusion at ACCION International is an action, research center that works on behalf of the micro-finance industry as a whole to leverage private sector interest in microfinance. The Center seeks to connect the microfinance community with the major drivers of the global economy – e.g. capital markets and technology – and harness their capabilities to address the financial needs of poor people. By bringing these elements together, the Center for Financial Inclusion serves as a bridge between today's microfinance and a future of economic opportunity for all.



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