

such as education, access to health-care and employment so that people can afford better energy sources.

BUSINESS VENTURE

Since discovering the benefits of modern cookstoves in 2016, Amweya decided to do something to help women in her community transition to improved cookstoves to save their health and lives.

She joyfully welcomes us to her tidy kitchen, furnished with three modern improved jikos (modern cook stoves).

She says she likes keeping her kitchen clean and ready to welcome any visitor.

You can comfortably sit in the kitchen while she prepares a meal without fear of inhaling smoke from the firewood.

This is because she has replaced the conventional three-stone cooking stove she had used for many years.

To realise her resolve to assist fellow women in her village, she attended crucial training by the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) to learn more about the improved jikos and how to make and instal them.

GIZ gave the group modern jikos to instal in their kitchens and use to improve their moulding skills.

Armed with this knowledge, she shared the idea with the Ichingo Women Self-Help Group members.

She says the group, which was initially started to support widows in the community, became involved in making and installing the improved jikos, which was a turning point for many of them.

“More than seven years ago, we started doing it as a business, and we could charge people a small fee for the installation,” she adds.

“But one was required to buy the materials needed to instal the improved jiko. We later built a workshop for the smooth working of our improved cookstove-making initiative.”

The group started with 30 women but the number increased to 200 in a span of two years as the improved jikos gained popularity in the area.

They decided to split the number into three groups based on the different locations so as to accommodate more women.

Amweya says within five years, they had installed more than 1,000 stoves and that all the women had put up an improved cooking stove in their kitchens.

Amweya recalled with nostalgia the struggles many women went through before this since they wholly depended on their husbands for support.

“But when we started this project, we could fend for ourselves and even pay school fees for our children. Now we get to educate other women on making the improved jikos as an income-generating venture.”

Amweya has since retired from installing the improved jiko in other people’s homes and instead recruited Kaudensia Malova, her widowed daughter-in-law.

“When my husband passed away, I was worried about how I would support my six children since he had been the breadwinner,” Malova says.

“But my mother-in-law was kind enough to train me to mould the jikos and instal them in people’s homes for a fee. I took over from my mother-in-law, who is now aged and cannot



travel to instal the jikos, and we earn money from it,” she said.

Depending on the size of the improved cooking stove, they charge between Sh2,000 and Sh3,000 for each jiko, including installation.

She makes between Sh8,000 and Sh10,000 monthly, which she complements with earnings from her farming.

HIGH INSTALLATION COST

The high cost of installation is a significant limitation. Thus, despite their

Rosalia Amweya cooks using an improved cooking stove /AGATHA NGOTHO

availability and huge benefits, modern cookstoves remain out of reach for poor people, Malova says.

Consequently, women and young children in most rural areas of Kenya remain exposed to high levels of indoor air pollution every day, resulting in complications like lung cancer and child pneumonia, leading to premature deaths.

Children, women and older people who sleep in smoke-filled huts or use traditional kitchens fitted with three-stones are the most affected.

According to the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, there is a growing shift from biomass fuels to cleaner fuels, such as LPG, ethanol and electricity for domestic cooking.

However, most households in developing countries continue to use biomass fuels notwithstanding the availability of cleaner fuels.

This is attributed to high household poverty levels in most developing countries, which prohibit the adoption of cleaner fuels in households.



Rosalia Amweya uses a fireplace installed with an improved cooking stove in her kitchen /AGATHA NGOTHO



Installed improved cooking stove /AGATHA NGOTHO