



# African Energy Solar Success Series

## Tough Terrain No Match for Uganda's Solar Brothers

*Brothers Emmy and David share a vision to power Uganda's far flung places*



*Energy Systems Limited* is a family venture between brothers Emmy Kimbowa and David Sekalegga. Based in Kampala, Uganda, the pair founded their company in 2001.

Emmy and David saw opportunity in the need for on-site power generation in Uganda. The country is majestic, with mountains and rivers and islands, but the rugged and varied topography is part of the reason why the national grid only reaches about 12% of the country's nearly 45 million people.

"Solar energy in Uganda is a good business with a promising future," says David. "There are places where on site generation is, and will always be the only option. Right now, 15% of the population have electricity, and of those only 12% are getting it from offsite sources. Our market is 85% of 40 million people."

David's degree in economics has helped him to see and explore the scope and opportunity for solar in Uganda, whilst Emmy, who had five years experience in another solar company, brought a wealth of experience and contacts to the table.

"We were able to very quickly develop institutional clients, even in our first year," says David.

"Our first big project was for a local government just five months after we formed. We designed, supplied, and fitted thirty medical centres with solar powered lighting, computers, and medical fridges. There were more than 300 pieces of 70 watt panels to install - it was a big job, but we managed."

David believes that Energy Systems won this tender because of the high quality equipment they offered, and which they still supply today.

"We supply all the products from African Energy. These are pricier than some less quality brands, but the return on investment is plain to see," he says.

It has meant, that 95% of their business is with organisations rather than at the household level, as individuals tend to go for cheaper products.



"We always recommend Deka batteries, even to households. Their quality is unmatched, and the gel batteries can last more than ten years. But we still need to work on this proposition. Right now, 95% of our sales are to government departments or NGOs, but as trust of our brands grows, we will make inroads into the huge market at the household level."



So far, the huge demand from government institutions and NGOs has been enough for the solar brothers to grow their business to the point where their now 18 strong team is kept very busy. They have provided scoping, design, purchase, delivery and installations services to schools, previously darkened streets, medical centres, and a refugee camp for people displaced by violence in South Sudan.

The story of David and Emmy is a demonstration of the success that can come with a bold vision that is consistently pursued.

Their vision is to ensure that they continuously provide sustainable and cost-effective solar energy solutions, even as competitors succumb to the urge to sell sub-standard, if cheaper products.

"We have sold thirty container loads of Deka batteries," says David, "and in that time, we have only had to replace twenty units. To me, that is incredible. As the years pass, our satisfied customers will spread the word, and we can soon enough grow the remaining market segments."

