

Increasing profitability

Steward Kandonga runs a homewares business and cinema in rural Isenzanya; with REDAVIA power business is flourishing.

Steward is a farmer and businessman; in 2005 he opened a small shop selling stationery, toiletries and other essentials. Before connecting to REDAVIA power he could not open after dark and his customers struggled to see the array of products available on his shelves. He invested in a solar home system but found it to be unreliable and lacking sufficient power.

“When I heard about REDAVIA’s power, I was happy that this electricity would be environmentally friendly, and it would not cut off frequently because power would be generated right here at home, in our village.”

Steward was one of the first people to connect to REDAVIA’s mini-grid. With battery storage technology, power is available around the clock and Steward has seen considerable benefits for his business. Previously he closed at 5.30pm but he now opens from 8am-8pm each day, taking a break in the afternoon for lunch and to help his family on their farm.

His well-lit shop makes products look appealing to potential customers and he has seen sales and customer numbers increase. He also offers affordable mobile phone charging locally. Previously people had to travel to grid-connected towns to charge devices, the nearest of which is 30km from Isenzanya. When he closes the shop, an outside light provides security and peace-of-mind.

Steward finds REDAVIA’s power cost-effective and simple to use: he can top up his M-Pesa account to pay for power even when he is farming or travelling. **“I press the numbers and follow the procedure, then I get electricity. Afterwards, I can go on with my other responsibilities.”**

Realising that the villagers enjoy movies but few own televisions, Steward recently established a cinema. **“People used to travel long distances to look for entertainment. During market day, which takes place once a month, people look for areas where there is a TV to enjoy and celebrate.”**

Steward’s longer-term ambition is to open a mill and he is saving profits from the shop to buy an electric motor: **“Most of the milling machines in the village still use diesel; the outcome is that the maize flour comes out with a diesel smell, with this power I could produce clean maize flour and attract more customers. I still have a young family to provide for, but I hope to one day open my mill.”**

