

Emma Semakula's Independence



Emma Semakula and her husband Mohammed live in the small village of Tonterekera in Myanzi district, Uganda. The family are maize and coffee farmers primarily, but also rear chickens to sell eggs and chicks. They've been taking part in a trial of Indigo DUO, and have had their unit for 1 month.

Emma's husband works in the fields far from their house, whilst she works in the fields which surround the house so she can look after the young children at the same time. Emma's family used kerosene for light but with 8 children there was always someone in the dark.

"I was always afraid: there are snakes, the babies can trip, the kerosene might run out".

Emma and Mohammed saved for 3 months to buy a small, handheld solar light to help them see in the dark. "I was so excited" she said, "because it was light! I waited for it to get dark so I could use it, but my husband had already taken it with him to guide his way to a friend's house. I was in darkness again."

When the children have homework, Emma has to decide which 2 children can work that evening: "there isn't enough fluid to keep going for hours and the light barely covers a page of their books". Emma gets upset every time they come home with work because she knows she will have to choose when they all want to do well. She doesn't like them using the lamp when she is not at home because they could hurt themselves, but is often too busy to be with them as they study.

"I never have to choose between my children again! Indigo brings my family together - now there is no one in the dark"

When Emma heard about Indigo from a neighbour, she jumped at the opportunity. She immediately asked her neighbour to call the agent to register for the trial. Emma asked for a security light outside so she could walk around her home at night without



being scared of the dark, and to deter thieves and wildlife from coming to her home. Her second light was installed in the main room where most of the family activities happen. Emma feels free to come home later from the field because she knows the children can study safely independently and – more importantly to Emma – together.

“I am developed. I am modernised, and important. People see my house and think “Wow, that’s a developed house. I want to live like this”, and so they visit. They buy from me because they can see I am developed.”

Emma and Mohammed’s income has increased since having Indigo because they work in the evenings to sort their grains and prepare for the market the next day: “we are the first at the market now – when everyone else is sorting their grain, we are already there!” Emma laughs. Emma has been able to buy a mobile phone of her own, something she thought she would never be able to have herself. “I feel independent. I have the choice to talk with my friends, and I’m safe because I can call my husband if I need him. My life has changed – I’m not alone anymore.”

“We host prayer meetings and my friends come around often to stay to talk in the light at night. Previously I couldn’t get friends over, now I have to ask them to leave so I can sleep!”