

# Providing Access to Energy in Displacement Settings: Experiences from Ofua Village, Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement

## iCON Electronics Repair Centre (iCON)

Approximately [840 million](#) people around the world live without electricity of which half are in Sub-Saharan Africa. In Uganda only [41.3%](#) of the total population have access to electricity.

The villages of Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement are not connected to the national grid, dispersed and roughly 60–90 km away from the nearest town of Arua at which energy related services and products are available. Rhino Camp hosts approximately 130,000 refugees, registered as of September 2021, and nearly 25,000 Ugandan families live in surrounding villages.

iCON ELECTRONICS REPAIR CENTRE (iCON), operational since May 2021, has been established to bring these highly needed energy-based products and services closer to the community. It is one out of two energy kiosks, with solar-powered electricity, constructed by GIZ project Energy Solutions for Displacement Settings ([ESDS](#))<sup>1</sup> in 2020/2021. Both kiosks are managed by local community groups consisting of refugees and host community members. A community group ideally comprises a chairperson, vice chairperson, treasurer, general secretary, vice secretary, monitoring team and sub-financial committee. iCON has a total of 12 members, including a chairperson and two computer training instructors (5 female, 7 male; 2 Ugandan Nationals, 10 South Sudanese).

<sup>1</sup> ESDS is a component of the Global Programme “Support to UNHCR in the Implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus” (SUN) and is commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Project name	Energy Solutions for Displacement Settings (ESDS)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Project region	Uganda (Refugee Hosting districts)
Partner	Ugandan Ministry of Energy and Mineral Development (MEMD) and UNHCR
Executing agency	GIZ ESDS
Duration	August 2019 to December 2022

## Meet Peter

- Chairperson of iCON
- 35 years old from South Sudan
- Experienced entrepreneur in electronic services prior to iCON (7 years of running his own business in Rhino Camp and before that in South Sudan).
- Now that he is part of a group, he enjoys having an expanded product portfolio, which includes highquality solar lanterns, pico PV systems, and improved cook stoves: *“In a group and with the provision of a solar-powered energy kiosk, inventory and start-up materials I can now offer more goods & services than alone.”*
- Uses the products that he sells at home: *“The improved cook stove needs less charcoal, cooks faster, and stays hot longer.”*

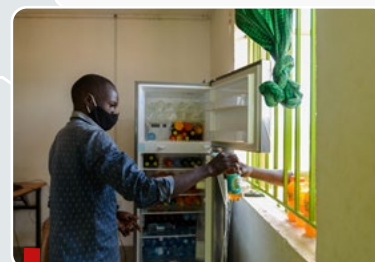


Peter Malia, the chairperson of iCON GIZ/ESDS Uganda

## iCON

The name of the kiosk was collectively chosen by its members, because they are distinctive - iconic - for providing energybased goods & services in their immediate surrounding

Opening hours: 7am-10pm every day  
 4 laptops, 1 fridge,  
 1 television powered by 12 solar panels & 12 batteries



Fridge for cold drinks to sale. Batteries for solar panels are also stored here, along with stock of goods.



Computer training  
 (Mo-Fr 8am-6.30pm)  
 Room with 4 laptops and a TV



Booth with phone charging stations and phone accessories for sale

Ofua Village,  
 Rhino Camp Refugee  
 Settlement

iCON is strategically placed in the buzzing Luruja Trading Center in Ofua Zone to attract customers, and thereby improving access to sustainable energy products for refugee and host communities. It has thus far had a monthly average sale of about 5-6 improved cook stoves (ICS) and 5-6 solar lights. Members of the energy kiosk group also travel to surrounding villages twice a week, like “mobile sales agents”, reaching both host (Ochodi Market) and refugee (Omoga 4 Market) communities. These mobile sales agents mostly use boda bodas (motorcycle taxis) for transportation and herein lies one of the biggest challenges, says Peter.

Transportation costs are expensive at a constant UGX20,000 (USD5.5) and need to be paid even if sales have not been made. Apart from the above mentioned, the kiosk also sells cold drinks

(~600units/month) from a solar-powered fridge and offer phone charging services (~1100units/month), both very popular in demand. They also sell phone accessories, offer phone repairs and secretarial services. Whenever the inventory needs restocking Peter calls his suppliers and they deliver to the kiosk. This has been one of the successes in bringing quality ICS and solar products and services closer to households and productive users of energy – a reason for suppliers to travel out that far, thereby strengthening local distribution chains.

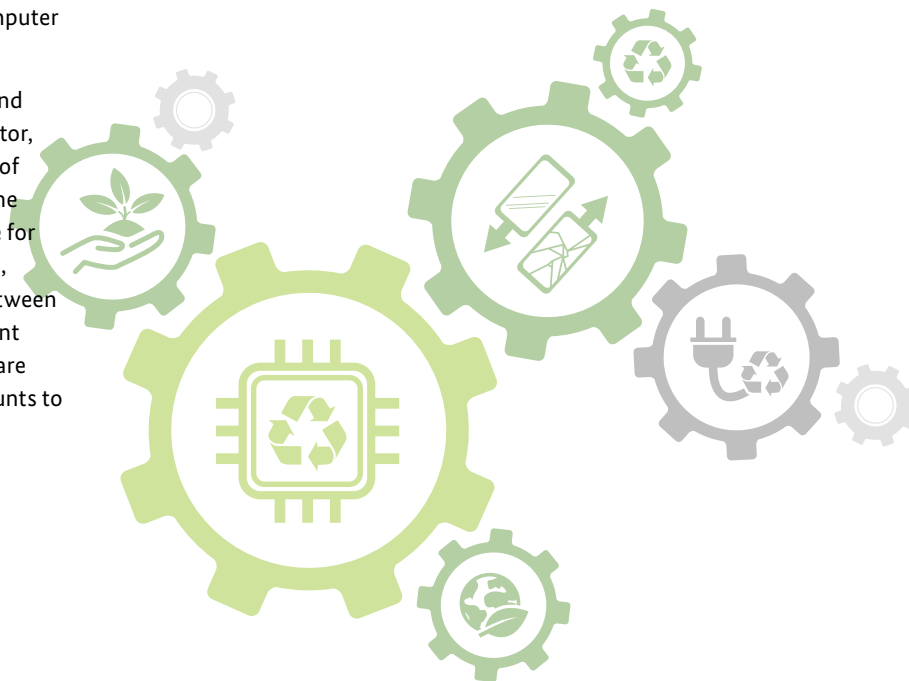
One of the biggest accomplishments is the provision of basic computer trainings which has had a total of 62 participants, with 6 on a waiting list when the interview took place in October 2021. The training consists of a three months’ course on the basic use of Microsoft, is held by 2 certified instructors, and

costs UGX180,000 (USD50) per person. Sessions are conducted from Mondays to Fridays in 2-hour slots with 4 participants at a time because only 4 laptops are available. Participants are required to be proficient in the English language, since it is the language of instruction. On Saturdays, participants are welcome to practice on their own. Most of the participants are refugees from South Sudan and Sudan above 18 years old, however exceptions are made for advanced English-speaking teens. The biggest challenge faced here is securing a reliable and affordable internet connection.

Peter refers advanced participants to other computer shops within the trading centre for routine practice and getting involved in commercial packages of music loading, videography, graphics, among others. The participants also receive clients who are interested in type setting and printing services. They use the kiosk facilities to carry out these services at a fee of UGX500 (USD0.15) per page paid to the kiosk. Participants also use the facility for online job applications to organisations both within and out of the settlement. Some have already been employed by organisations within the area, for example as training of trainers at Green Relief Initiation Youth Skills, an orphanage within Rhino Camp. Indeed, iCON promotes employment and contributes to income generation, endorses women and youth empowerment. Not only has the kiosk itself become a source of income for its 12 members, but it also enables others to pursue livelihood enhancing activities, such as ICS for productive use, or IT skills received through computer training for job applications leading to employment

Every morning Peter checks the solar panels by going behind the kiosk far enough to see them on the roof, and the inverter, making sure panels and batteries are functioning. At close of business, he makes a record of sales, which by the end of the month are accumulated to produce a performance balance for each month. Peter uses a performancebased salary system, whereby revenue of sales from products is split equally between each sales agent, including Peter. He also has a reinvestment scheme in place: 70% of revenue from computer trainings are reinvested to purchase goods such as drinks and 30% amounts to the wage of both instructors.

The energy kiosk not only offers energy-based services and products, but also represents the centre of the market, and is thus the starting point for advertising campaigns, awareness raising and product marketing. Hence, additional training, commissioned by GIZ will be provided to the energy kiosk group members to increase their entrepreneurial as well as their technical skills. The training will focus on topics such as marketing strategies, sensitisation activities (full engagement of communities in understanding options for and benefits of improved energy systems), business plan improvement, bookkeeping, management, customer services, financing schemes (e.g., payments in instalments), sales monitoring, and household satisfaction research. In the future, Peter hopes to be able to sell products at wholesale prices, “to make it more affordable for the community”. Furthermore, he would like to expand the group’s business by employing an additional person to sell coffee at the kiosk, improving the customer experience at iCON.



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