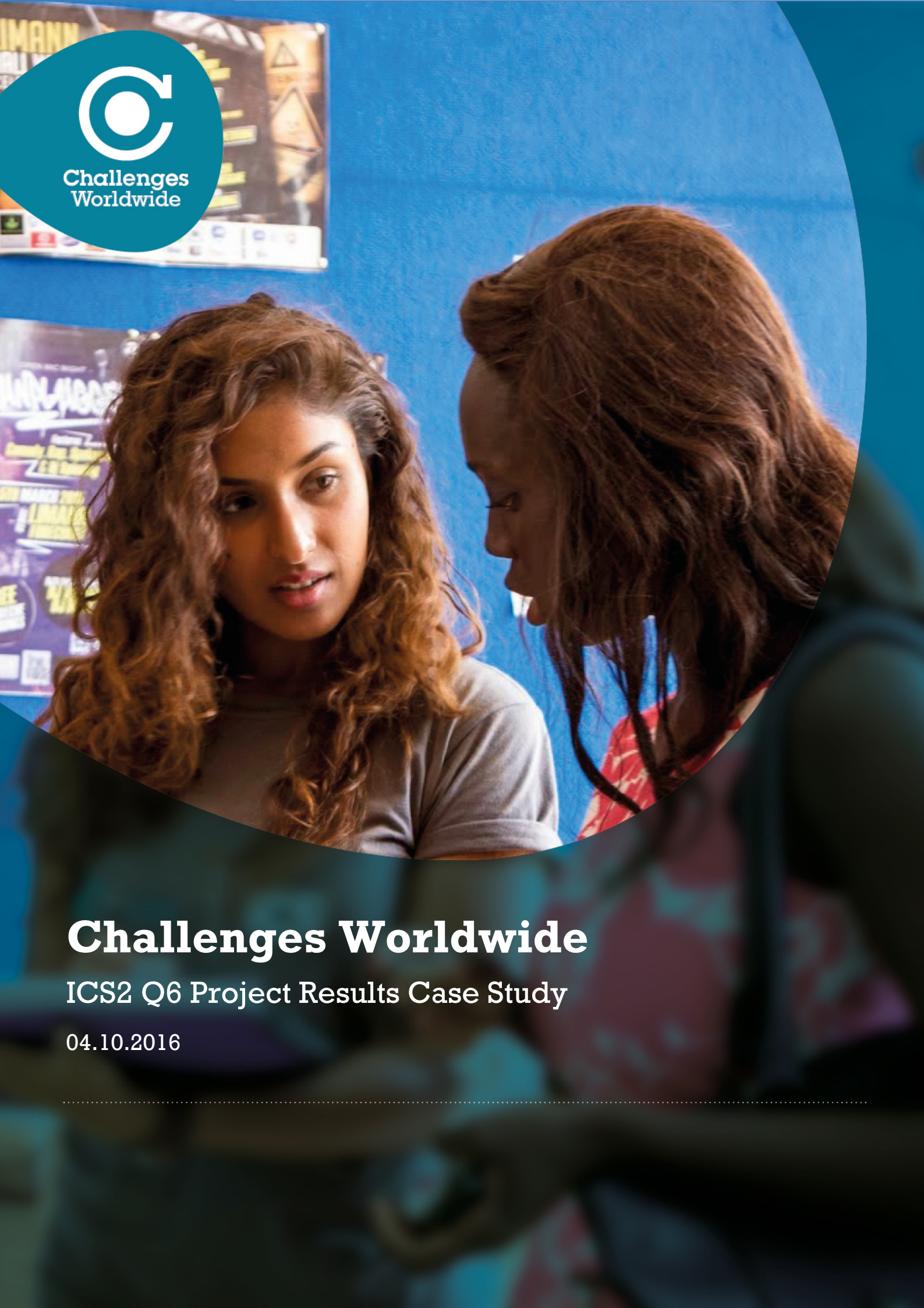




Challenges  
Worldwide



# Challenges Worldwide

ICS2 Q6 Project Results Case Study

04.10.2016

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## Vitalite, Lusaka, Zambia

**Volunteers: Melissa Hamalambo, Emmanuel Muntanga, Helen Wright, Edward Lowe**

This case study provides an example of the ideal Challenges Worldwide impact – an enterprise which is providing employment and training for a range of people, is having a social impact (in this case health and environmental) and is profitable – ensuring sustainability and growth options. This is then combined with exceptional experience for the volunteers, resulting in employment for our ICVs and continued engagement with global issues for all volunteers.

Deforestation is a huge issue in Zambia, with over 250,000 hectares of forest cleared every year - a significant proportion of this to create charcoal for fuel. This is hardly surprising with only 26% of the population having access to electricity<sup>1</sup> and frequent 'brownouts' resulting in no electricity for up to eight hours at a time. Charcoal provides the cheapest form of energy, but this has a devastating effect on the environment and people's health.

Vitalite, a social enterprise in Zambia, are trying to address these issues by providing alternatives to charcoal – through efficient cook stoves, sustainable fuel and solar solutions. In 2014 Vitalite impacted over 3,000 households and 15,000 people<sup>2</sup>, this was before the introduction of their pay as you go system which has increased their reach even further and has huge potential. The largest company of this kind, M-KOPA in Kenya, has connected 400,000 homes to affordable solar power – demonstrating the huge potential of this kind of intervention.



<sup>1</sup> IEA (2014) *Africa Energy Outlook 2014*

[https://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/WE02014\\_AfricaEnergyOutlook.pdf](https://www.iea.org/publications/freepublications/publication/WE02014_AfricaEnergyOutlook.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Vitalite (2015) *Company Brief 2015*

<http://www.vitalitegroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/VITALITE-Company-Brief-March-2015.pdf>





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Challenges Worldwide placed 4 ICS volunteers in Vitalite; Helen, Emmanuel, Ed and Mellissa. The volunteers utilised the Challenges Worldwide Enterprise Support Framework to identify key issues that Vitalite could address in order to improve their operations and therefore reach more customers more efficiently. This included:

- More efficient tracking of sales
- Creating a scalable process for product assembly
- Creating formal brand guidelines to support marketing
- Undertaking market research
- Introduce consistent training processes
- Produced measures to better track Vitalite's impact

These activities will enable Vitalite to run its business operations more efficiently, saving staff time and supporting Vitalite to focus on expanding their customer base. For example the new training processes improve the quality of information that customers receive – enabling them to make informed decisions and for staff to bring on customers more effectively.

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#### Challenges Worldwide

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## Long Term Impact: Enterprise Growth

As well as the short term changes the volunteers worked on, Challenges have been working with Vitalite to identify potential future funding opportunities and work to support them in securing these. We are currently working with Vitalite on our post-ICS finance runway, including presenting them to the ACRE consortium.

ICS has allowed us to do this as the analysis completed by the volunteers ensures that Challenges has an in depth understanding of Vitalite's needs so we can match them to the right opportunities. Without ICS it wouldn't be possible for Challenges to identify as many businesses or understand their needs as quickly.

Any funding is likely to take time to secure, however the last 4 months has seen positive steps towards securing this funding. Funding would allow Vitalite to scale up and move a step closer to their vision of being the leading provider of a complete range of home energy solutions that meet the varied energy needs of Zambian households.



## Immediate Results: People

Our volunteers have developed tremendously since their placement with Vitalite. All four of the volunteers have completed their action at homes and gained employment, contributing to social impact and economic growth in both the UK and Zambia.

### Helen Wright

We noticed Helen's talent and she was eager to continuing working with us. She is now the Challenges Worldwide ICS Programme Manager for Zambia and oversees multiple businesses in Lusaka and Kitwe. Her new position also involves identifying host homes, recruiting businesses for the CW ICS Programme and ensuring there is a mutual benefit for both volunteers and enterprises working together.



Helen ensures that Team Leaders are empowered to lead their teams and is always on the lookout to support Team Leaders and Volunteers. When a Volunteer or Team Leader feels that they don't have the authority to make recommendations to a business and thinks 'I'm only a young person, I'm not qualified to say this'. Helen admits that she was the same but also underlines the fact that this is all "part of the process" and is exactly why we provide accredited CMI training to all those who participate in our CW ICS Programme.

Indeed, how to run a business, the tools and how they work, as well as being flexible and having "open conversation about what we each thought we were good at and how we could work together allowed us to get above and beyond done" were all central to Helen's success.

Being able to work in a different culture was crucial experience that demonstrated she was capable of representing and working for Challenges Worldwide in Zambia. Working with people, especially the management of her peers as part of the Media Committee allowed her to demonstrate that she could not only lead people but excel in doing so. Encouraging and supporting others to produce digital content with her counterpart Daniel Zimba was key to exposing Vitalite to the market and highlighting its success to future clients and investors.

We asked Helen, "What advice would you give to volunteers about to go out on placement?" she insists that she would have given the same points even if she was not over seeing Zambia!

"Come with an open mind and also an awareness this is not a three month holiday – yes you will have fun but this is the beginning of the rest of your life." Approximately 85% of our Alumni are working within 6 months after finishing their placement and approximately 12% go onto further education.

## Melissa Hamalambo

As you can see from Melissa's Action at Home report, Melissa sees her Challenges Worldwide ICS placement as directly inspiring her to take part in the Firestarter project. The ongoing project sees Melissa utilizing the monitoring and evaluation skills that she refined during her time observing and analysing business operations with Vitalite. The action is also Youth led and focuses its efforts towards "supporting, connecting and developing the capacity of youth-led and youth focused organisations in Zambia". Much like the Challenges mission statement to "Support, Grow and Connect People and Enterprises". This makes us hopeful that Melissa's Action at Home will have a secondary impact on empowering youth across Zambia to take the lead as enterprise savvy active citizens.



### Action at Home Report

I was selected upon application to sit on the Project Accountability Team for the Queens Young Leaders Firestarter Initiative Zambia project of 2016, being implemented by Action Aid Zambia. This was done in a bid to ensure that the project is a transparent and accessible sub-granting scheme for youth organisations in Zambia. Action Aid called on and brought together youth volunteers as part of the Project Accountability Team (PAT) to assist in overseeing the fund, its implementation, monitoring and evaluation and learning. The project, 'This is Our Moment-Youth Changing Zambia', is supporting, connecting and developing the capacity of youth-led and youth focused organisations in Zambia through the reactive and open small grants scheme. The scheme targeted youth organisations and initiatives aim at enabling youth to mobilize, participate, engage and be represented in decision making processes at local and national levels and become change agents in their communities. The project is also developing the programmatic and institutional capacity of the youth-driven organisations through a holistic approach to strengthen their sustainability and impact.

### How many people attended?

>30

### Did your Challenges Worldwide ICS experience inspire this action?

Yes

### Have you done something like this before?

No

### What did you learn during this project?

The project has introduced me to elements of project management and report writing and how to carry out a baseline study. It has also opened up my mind to how youth can better be engaged and



involved in matters that affect them in their local areas by choosing to work with and engage civic local leaders.

**Have you any future plans related to this project?**

Yes I do as it is an ongoing project running for the next 4 years.

**How was your action Youth Led?**

The project itself is run by a youthful team of action aid staff members with backup support from the project accountability team which comprises of 8 youth volunteer members among others, of which I am a member. As stated above, the project is about youth helping youth, it is youth focused and has youth involved at all stages of the project.

**How did your action make a Connection?**

This project came in to fill the gap and aid small start-up youth organisations gain funding and grow their internal skill set through offering capacity building training, facilitation training and of course the grant funding.

**How did your action make a Change?**

My action is making a change in that my willingness to involve myself in this project on a personal level is giving me experience and I have found it to be a productive way to spend my time and education and skill set to date. As I relate with the grantees as we carry out M&E, I will take steps to share experiences from my time with Challenges Worldwide ICS and impart some of the skills I learnt during the programme such as how to carry out a SWOT analysis, amongst others. The project as a whole hopes to see youth better represented at levels of decision-making in Zambia by the end of the 4 year period.

**How did your action engage others?**

"This project and action has seen the engagement of civic leaders in local areas of operation increase in that the youth organisations are now partnering with ministries and offices to aid them carry out their activities in governance, leadership, entrepreneurship and decision making.

**Please provide detail about any media coverage you had**

The project was launched and an article was done which appeared in the Daily Mail-Zambia. ActionAid Zambia and Activista Zambia Facebook pages as well covered the launch of the event.

## Emmanuel Muntanga

Emmanuel did not expect to become such an integral part of a company that focuses on increasing access to improved energy products in low-income communities. Since volunteering with Vitalite Emmanuel has been hired by Vitalite and now over sees a wide range of areas within the enterprise, from marketing research to proposal writing for investments and partnerships.

He never expected that he would secure such a position so soon and attribute his experience with Challenges Worldwide ICS to the rapid progress he has had in his career. Emmanuel was keen to shine and show off the skills he had already as well as use this opportunity to demonstrate that he could continually develop within the workplace. His optimism accompanied with hard skills evidently made him shine!



One specific skill that Vitalite recognised was his ability to communicate, in addition to conducting himself in a professional manner which was outlined in his CMI training. In fact, he was so successful, that he met International Development Minister Nick Hurd in Zambia to discuss how the Challenges Worldwide ICS programme supported Emmanuel with his aspirations but also those of the local community. Stating that;

*"Challenges Worldwide ICS is a wonderful programme something especially Africans really need as we need to shift from our current educational system, and Challenges Worldwide ICS provides such a platform"*

As well as advocating for the programme, Emmanuel would encourage future volunteers to simply be themselves and honest, as there is always help from Team Leaders, staff, Technical Assistants and Mentors.

Read the story about Nick Hurd's visit to Vitalite:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-at-forefront-of-energy-and-climate-issues-in-africa>



## Edward Lowe

Oxford graduate Edward has gone from strength to strength since his placement with Challenges Worldwide ICS. His professional development has accelerated since providing direct support to Vitalite in Zambia.

At Challenges Worldwide we seal real value in supporting our volunteers to become young professionals, both through the CMI accredited learning and optional qualification. One way we support our volunteers is through employability workshops and reflective sessions at the return volunteer event.

We also encourage them to join LinkedIn to promote themselves through their experience with Challenges Worldwide ICS. Here you can see Edwards' career progression to a Management Consulting Analyst with Accenture immediately after returning home from his placement.



Edward has also stayed involved with Vitalite as a Strategy and Finance Advisor. Supporting Vitalite by "defining Metrics to improve business performance and drive better strategic decisions".

[See Edwards' LinkedIn](#)

You will also see that Edward is a featured blogger for The Huffington Post and had several of his blogs published about the energy industry in Zambia while he was on his placement. He was active in the communications committee and took it upon himself to mentor his fellow volunteers with their content creation, advising them on not only language use and grammar but having an awareness SEO and readability; vital considerations for any content that is intended to be used digitally.

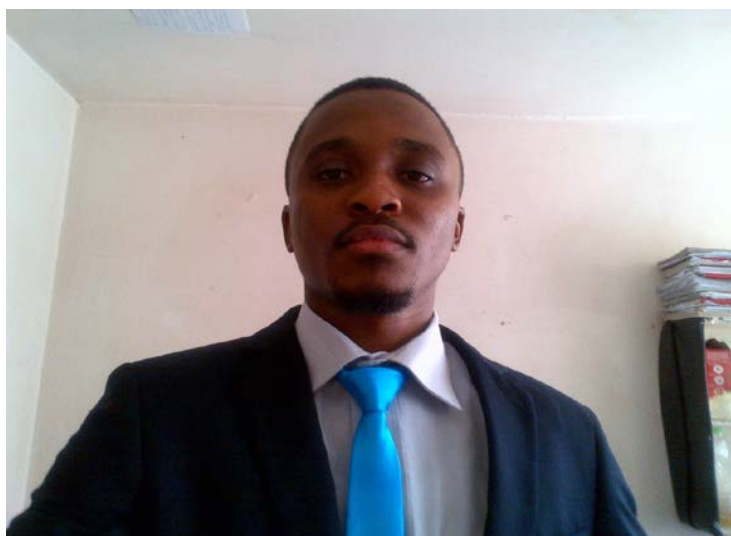
[Read Edward' blogs on the Challenges Worldwide ICS blog](#)

## Secondary Impact

### Shared Value Africa | William Makubalo

William is currently working as a Project Assistant for Share Value Africa (SVA) after his placement with Challenges Worldwide ICS as a Business Support Associate in SVA. Where does his story fit into this case study?

Well, as you will know, Challenges Worldwide supports the enterprises our volunteers work in after their Challenges Worldwide ICS placement. We focus on the supply chain and how the businesses we work with sit in that chain. SVA is the sister company of Vitalite and supports Vitalite by conducting market research that will allow Vitalite to develop an informed strategic growth plan.



When asked, "And looking back, did you ever think you would end up where you are now?" William answered "Definitely not". William highlights three crucial areas that he believes the Challenges Worldwide ICS programme has allowed him to develop:

- Better work ethic
- Time management
- Eye for detail

In addition to these areas, he identified the fact that his CMI training has set him on a trajectory, as the knowledge and skills he has learned will become even more useful as his career progresses. Indeed, for those that wish to follow the same path, he advises volunteers to;

- Keep an open mind
- Be ready to compromise
- Always be ready to be the best you can

We chose to include Williams's story as evidence that our model of enterprise support and capacity building for young people is transferable and scalable. Vitalite will continue to benefit from the follow on support being provided by Challenges Portfolio Managers and have gained two very skilled employees in the form of Emmanuel and William. We have the same high hopes for SVA.

## Conclusion

We chose to write about Vitalite because all four of the volunteers placed with Vitalite have exceeded expectations in terms of personal and professional development whilst showing the characteristics that define an active citizen: Helen is continuing to support both people and enterprises through her role as ICS Programme Manager for Zambia; Melissa's follow on work with ActionAid should have a positive impact on youth development across Zambia; Emmanuel and Edward are both still working with Vitalite directly, helping them with decision making that will hopefully see them grow and be able to provide clean and affordable energy to thousands of families across Zambia. The potential impact of Vitalite spans several social metrics, from economic growth, job creation and providing access to credit for communities to impacting healthcare and environmental factors such as reducing deforestation and carbon emissions by offering an affordable alternative to charcoal stoves and fossil fuels.



*Vitalites first PAYG customer unboxes their Solar System*