Teenager employs three, earns sh500,000 a month

When his benefactor died after Primary Seven, Vincent Mulera acquired training in metal fabrication to enable him raise tuition fees for secondary school. Today, at only 19 and in his S.4 vacation, Mulera owns Rafick Fabrication and Multi Fuel-saving Stoves, a sh3m metal fabrication business in Maganjo, Wakiso; earns a net profit of sh450,000 monthly and employs three people.

Mulera, who is currently in his S.4 vacation, has paid his own school fees since S.1 year. He had saved sh350,000 for school. When he joined Mukono in 2011, Mulera did not go to O’level immediately. He stayed at home for a year to look for tuition. “My grandmother, who was my caretaker, died after my Primary Seven. My parents had separated, so my elder brother and I had to look for means of survival,” he recalls.

The metal fabrication workshop Mulera and his brother joined was owned by their uncle. They joined it to get hands-on skills, from which they could earn a living. During that year, Mulera got a job at Kalagala Metal Workshop in Rubaga, Kampala. “This time, I was looking for school fees. I started living with a relative in Kawempe because Mukono was far. At the workshop in Rubaga, I learnt new skills and made many small energy-saving stoves,” he says.

Mulera said he impressed his boss, who gave him an opportunity to work with more experienced workers. His pay depended on the number of items he made and sold. At the end of the year, he had saved sh350,000 for school.

In 2013, Mulera joined Mukono Secondary School. He did not quit his job, but worked during the holidays to raise school fees.

Starting out

Having seen how the workshop was making profits, in 2015, Mulera decided to start his own business. To raise capital, he ventured into the scrap business. “I rented an open place at sh50,000 per month in Maganjo near Kawempe and erected a temporary structure made from wood and old iron sheets. This served as both my store and workplace,” he recalls.

Mulera then scoured the neighbourhoods of Kawempe, Kagoma and Maganjo collecting scrap. It is from these that he fabricated stoves. Another opportunity came his way during his Senior Four second term holiday, when he got a deal to construct a furnace for a client in Entebbe, Wakiso district. “The lady wanted a home-made bakery for her daughter. I charged her sh1.2m. From this money, I bought new iron sheets and wood, which I used to put up a proper structure, where I now operate from. I used the rest of the money to pay my school fees,” he narrates.

Mulera saved sh340,000, which he used to buy four pieces of iron sheets during his Senior Four vacation. These he used to produce his first portable furnace and an oven. He sold the portable furnace at sh450,000. At the beginning of this year, he hired three workers to help him work on customers’ orders on time.

Marketing his products

Mulera says he has embraced the use of social media, especially Facebook, to look for market. “I created a Facebook page called Rafick Energy Saving Stoves, where I share pictures of my products. So far, I have got five jobs worth over sh1m from Facebook. I am happy that people are beginning to trust my products,” he says.

Mulera says he also visits restaurants, clinics, schools and homes to market his products. He says his stoves last for over five years.

Humble beginning

After completing Primary Seven at Mukono Parents’ Primary School in 2011, Mulera did not go to O’level immediately. He stayed at home for a year to look for tuition. “My grandmother, who was my caretaker, died after my Primary Seven. My parents had separated, so my elder brother and I had to look for means of survival,” he recalls.

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