

REA Off-Grid Solar (OGS) Publicity and Information Dissemination Strategy in Zambia



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Africa Clean Energy
Catalysing Africa's Solar Markets



TETRA TECH
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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| Acronym | Definition |
|----------------|---|
| ACE TAF | Africa Clean Energy Technical Assistance Facility |
| OGS | Off-Grid Solar |
| REA | Rural Electrification Authority |
| REF | Rural Electrification Fund |
| REMP | Rural Electrification Master Plan |
| SAS | Stand-Alone Solar |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The development of this OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy was necessitated by the need to accelerate the uptake of off-grid solar (OGS) solutions in Zambia, both by private sector and consumers, in order to reach the targets for universal electricity access. The strategy sets out a tactical pathway for the Rural Electrification Authority (REA) and its partners to engage in effective and coordinated communication interventions that will increase awareness of the benefits of stand-alone solar (SAS), thereby increasing household uptake of off-grid solar (OGS) technologies.

The development of this strategy was undertaken with support from the Africa Clean Energy Technical Assistance Facility (ACE TAF) using a mixed methodology and tools. Firstly, an institutional assessment was undertaken to review REA's current communication strategy and approaches and how they integrate the component of OGS. This assessment revealed the need to strengthen the component of OGS communication within the current strategies.

Informed by this assessment, an Off-Grid communications situation and gap analysis was undertaken to explore strategies for an effective OGS communication drive including identifying key themes. Additionally, a multi-stakeholder consultation was undertaken to further inform the process.

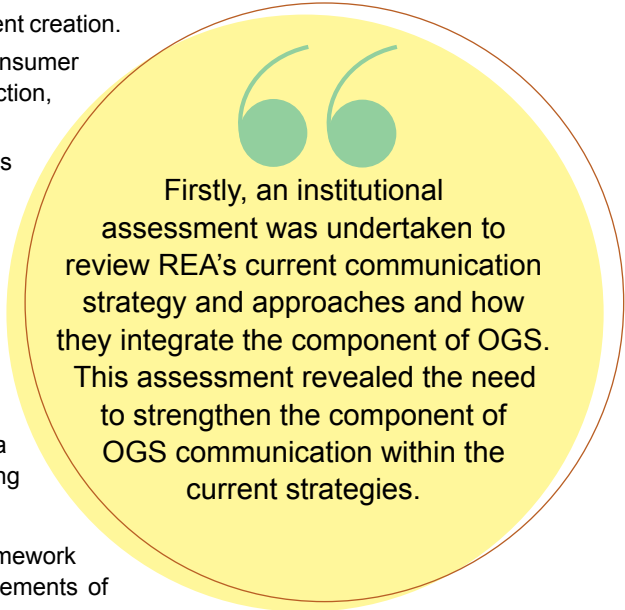
The strategy therefore outlines key communication interventions anchored on priority themes which includes off grid category solar awareness, implementer capacity and buy-in, evidence-based publicity and information dissemination as well as sector wide partnerships.

Based on these themes, the strategy proposes to apply the following strategic interventions in order to achieve the set objectives successfully:

1. Develop OGS and consumer awareness implementation capacity in order to build a strong OGS belief among Publicity and Information Dissemination implementers.
2. Consolidate and leverage private sector end-user awareness input to build a common approach to category awareness creation.
3. Enhance evidence-based orientation by developing a structured insight gathering strategy (new and existing data) including partnering with relevant government agencies to get latest data and information.
4. Develop a structure for identifying and creating segment specific messages and interventions, including in local languages.
5. Design a general process for consumer awareness content creation.
6. Enhance OGS policy dissemination as part of consumer awareness focusing on counterfeit and consumer protection, among others.
7. Mainstream Gender, Social and Financial inclusion as key affirmative actions in end user messaging.
8. Engage the media as strategic partners.
9. Increase OGS awareness by implementing a bottom-up OGS Publicity and information dissemination strategy as an addendum to the overall REA communication strategy.

To ensure these strategic interventions are practical, a demo model was developed alongside this strategy using a sample intervention to ensure the desired capacity building and learning is achieved.

Lastly, the strategy outlines a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework that will objectively establish progress towards the achievements of the objectives of this Publicity and Information Dissemination.



Firstly, an institutional assessment was undertaken to review REA's current communication strategy and approaches and how they integrate the component of OGS. This assessment revealed the need to strengthen the component of OGS communication within the current strategies.

1. INTRODUCTION

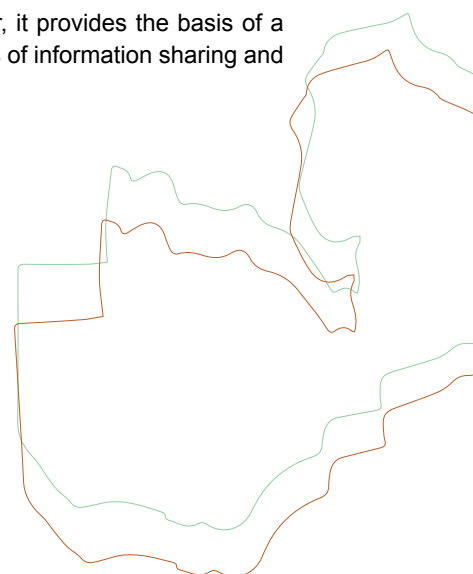
The Rural Electrification Authority (REA) was established by an Act of Parliament No. 20 of 2003 with the primary mandate of increasing access to electricity in rural areas in order to contribute to improved productivity and quality of life of the rural population in Zambia. Furthermore, REA is mandated with the tasks of administering and managing the Rural Electrification Fund (REF), developing and implementing the Rural Electrification Master Plan (REMP), mobilizing funds to support rural electrification, encouraging private sector participation in rural electrification through provision of smart subsidies, competitive bidding and community mobilization, financing project preparation studies for rural electrification, as well as, recommending to government, suitable policies.

While there is consensus that off-grid solar (OGS) solutions provide an untapped opportunity that can significantly contribute towards achieving the country's electrification goals, an overall assessment revealed several gaps and limitations in awareness levels on the benefits of stand-alone solar (SAS) in Zambia. Furthermore, there were several identified challenges and barriers relating to the administration of solar energy solutions. These include, a perception of solar energy as an inferior source of electricity among some communities, lack of information on quality solar products, lack of information on how to use solar as an energy mix as well as general misapplication or misuse of solar energy systems.

Accordingly, this Publicity and Information Dissemination Strategy was developed to enable REA to better support the effective delivery of OGS communications and raise greater awareness of these technologies particularly for rural households. As well as this, to engage in effective advocacy around consumer protection, after-sale service, and maintenance of products.

This strategy supplements REA's current Communication and Stakeholder Management Strategy which is aligned to the overall institutional Strategic Plan (2019-2021). This strategy should be interpreted as having elements of a Communication Campaign. It is a strategy that seeks to clearly articulate the goals, major directions and standards for guiding how OGS publicity and information dissemination is to be used and organized for achieving rural electrification goals through REA. The document also brings on board elements of a Communication Campaign by piecing together a possible coordinated set of media related activities (and non-media-related ones) in an indicative way within an annual timeframe, in order to achieve the goals set out in REA's Strategic Plan. The document is also aligned to and cognizant of the policy imperatives being pursued by the Government of Zambia such as the Seventh National Development Plan (7NDP) whose main focus is 'Accelerating development effort towards vision 2030 without leaving anyone behind'.

It is expected that this document will remain dynamic rather than a static referral document which lays out strategic considerations that govern REA's OGS communication agenda. It therefore allows room for continuous innovation and improvement even as it is under implementation. Moreover, it provides the basis of a high-profile marketing and communications campaign for REA and Zambia for purposes of information sharing and dissemination of the issues and debates emanating from the OGS solutions.



2. SITUATION ANALYSIS

Zambia's electricity sector is largely dependent on hydro power. However, due to erratic rainfall patterns resulting in the declining water levels in the Kariba Dam which is the main source for hydro power generation, the country has faced a severe electricity supply deficit since 2015. This deepening electricity crisis presents a significant potential market for OGS energy solutions. With a national electrification rate of 28% and more than 2 million off-grid households, the market opportunity for OGS solutions is estimated at more than EUR 210 million per annum according to GETInvest market insights.

However, this opportunity can be better optimized with the right enablers such as responsive policy frameworks, fiscal incentives, as well as effective communication strategies on OGS to increase consumer awareness and uptake. According to SolarAid research (2015), an estimated 11% of the nation's population reported to either have or know someone who has a small solar product. While there are various interventions to disseminate information on solar technology, consumer awareness remains relatively low in most parts of the country. In rural areas, awareness may even be much lower due to the remote nature of settlements and weak communication infrastructure as well as strategies.

Furthermore, a recent in-depth analysis revealed the following major challenges that limit the uptake of OGS in Zambia:

- ☀️ General social perception among communities of solar energy being an inferior source of electricity compared to hydropower and grid connections.
- ☀️ Inadequate active and genuine ownership of solar projects by recipient communities.
- ☀️ Inadequate information about quality solar products giving solar energy a negative image. Counterfeit Products that give the category a bad name.
- ☀️ Inadequate information on how to use solar as an energy mix.
- ☀️ Low level of awareness on energy efficiency leading to misuse and damage.

While REA is currently implementing its communication and stakeholder management strategy under its fourth strategic plan, a review of its current communication strategy and capacity in OGS communication undertaken by external consultants revealed several gaps. These include, the lack of specific reference to an evidence-based OGS awareness creation, minimal emphasis on implementer buy-in and capacity growth around OGS, a lack of a targeted private sector partnership and inadequate information for various end user target segments. Furthermore, the current communication strategy and approach is skewed towards promotional PR communication on REA's mandate rather than advocacy and issue-based communication. Equally, there is no content creation guide for developing communication tools.

3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Specific objectives for the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy include the following:

1. To increase public awareness and improve knowledge on off-grid solar solutions.
2. To build support for OGS among stakeholders in both public and private sectors.
3. To create confidence among individuals and communities on OGS as a viable electrification solution.
4. To create demand for use of OGS among rural populations in a bid to support achievement of SDG 7.

3.1 Identified Themes

Informed by the situation analysis, the following themes were selected to guide the development of the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy:

1. Off-Grid Solar category awareness

The ToR indicates that there is inadequate awareness of OGS as a viable electrification among the target audience. Therefore, there is need to provide adequate category awareness to aid potential OGS users in decision making on adoption, types of solutions and how to use the selected solutions. Designing and implementing an OGS centric publicity and information dissemination strategy will go a long way in building acceptance, conversion and best use of available OGS solutions thus contributing to REA's overall electrification strategy.

2. Implementer capacity and buy-in

Both Internal (REA) and external implementers of the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy need to be well equipped with general and technical knowledge of OGS to be able to effectively address barriers to OGS adoption. It is therefore imperative for the strategy to address implementer capacity as a theme.

3. Evidence-based publicity and information dissemination

There is need to ensure that as REA responds to the need to re-enforce data collection, interpretation reporting and application. Such data includes audience profiles, gender needs. In the same regard, the Authority's reporting should also encompass consumer demands statistics disaggregated by gender so as to respond to the gender energy gaps through relevant statistics.

4. Sector-wide partnership

While positive strides have been and continue to be made towards strengthening of partnerships around OGS, it was observed that this should be strengthened even further to include more private sector players, such as brand owners/manufacturers in order to consolidate category growth efforts for the benefit of all.

Some of the strategies considered in this document include the following:

- a) Increase OGS awareness by developing a bottom up OGS publicity and awareness creation strategy as an addendum to the overall communication strategy.
- b) Develop OGS and consumer awareness implementation capacity in order to build a strong OGS belief among consumer awareness implementers.
- c) Include both private sector and end-user/consumer input to build a common approach to category awareness creation.
- d) Increase evidence-based orientation by developing a structured insight gathering strategy (new and existing data); Partner with relevant government agencies to get latest data and information.
- e) Develop a structure for mapping and creating segment specific messages and interventions (including in local languages).
- f) Enhance OGS policy dissemination as part of consumer awareness focusing on counterfeit, consumer protection, impact of OGS on rural electrification, among others.
- g) Design a general process for consumer awareness content creation referencing the common challenges outlined in the situation analysis.

Furthermore, components of gender, social and financial inclusion will be integrated in consumer awareness messaging as key cross cutting thematic areas.

4.0 KEY AUDIENCES

The Strategy focuses on communicating to, and with, key audiences including end users, decision makers, influencers, implementers and gatekeepers among others. The following groups and individuals will form part of the key target audience:

Primary Target Audience

- i. Individuals who make decisions about their households' energy sources.
- ii. Communities who play hosts to SAS establishments.

Secondary Target Audience

- i) Private sector players who are brand owners and behavior change partners.
- ii) Relevant government agencies.
- iii) REA staff who are key implementers, owners and drivers of OGS communication activities.



Steven Miyoba shows the solar panel on his roof, which he bought from Fenix International and pays for through mobile money.
Photo courtesy: www.bgfz.org

5.0 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACHES

5.1 Guiding Principles

This Strategy takes cognizance of four key guiding principles for effective communication which should guide the design and implementation of communication campaigns aimed at addressing the identified themes. These are: accessibility, adherence to the communication continuum, credibility that leads to action as well as innovation.

5.1.1 Accessibility

All communication should be accessible to the target audience. Ensuring accessibility can be made possible at different levels but mainly through content, language and channel. A clear understanding and profiling of the target audience is a pre-requisite to making communications accessible. Communication channels will generally fall in three categories namely:

i) Mass media

Mass media is characterised by the benefit of broad reach. Mass media channels proposed for consideration by REA are:

- ♦ Radio (preferably National and community radio stations that broadcast in local languages)
- ♦ Outdoor (e.g. wall branding in local languages)
- ♦ Television and newspapers for targeted high-level communication (e.g. stakeholder communications)
- ♦ Direct messaging via Short Messaging Service, WhatsApp, Facebook and other social media platforms
- ♦ Transit advertising (e.g. billboards)

ii) Mid-mass media

Mid-mass channels reach a smaller number of audience groups as compared to mass media. They present the benefit of selective reach, targeting specific groups, communities or individuals based on geography or other common attributes. The following channels will be considered in implementing mid-mass communication campaigns:

- ♦ Open air market activation
- ♦ Roadshow caravans
- ♦ Direct group messaging (e.g. through social media, WhatsApp). Targeting secondary audience including urban based sponsors of the primary audience
- ♦ Institutional engagements (e.g. through religious and other social institutions)
- ♦ Flyers, banners, posters

iii) Interpersonal communication

Word of mouth is perhaps the most trusted communications channel, apart from which it also allows for two-way communication. Personal one on one discussions are critical catalysts of decision making and behaviour modification as they are based on experience and opinion sharing. Implementation of WOM communication by REA can be actualised through the following:

- ♦ National and community level OGS ambassadors
- ♦ Village level opinion shapers
- ♦ Gatekeeper engagement
- ♦ Leveraging local leadership structures (traditional/cultural and official)
- ♦ User testimonials

Table 1: Target Audience Channel Mix

| Target Audiences | Description | Communication needs, | Face to Face/ Virtual | Mid Mass | Annual reports | Websites | Outdoor | Social media (1) | Direct Messaging(SMS, Whatsapp) | Outreach events | Workshops | Implementer team Meetings | Mass Media, | Flyers , posters and Banners |
|---|---|--|-----------------------|----------|----------------|----------|---------|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| End Users | Individuals/ communities | To understand the benefits of OGS, available solutions. | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Key Implementing organization | REA staff | To have a indepth understanding of OGS as a viable energy solution and maintain a healthy attitude towards OGS solutions. | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Key stakeholders | Private Sector players, relevant government agencies | To have a good understanding of OGS in general and participate in sector wide activities to grow the category. | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Policy makers, influencers and opinion leaders at national and local levels | Those who can influence, set or advise on policies that OGS adoption e.g Government Ministers development | Appropriate and non-technical information that provides them with the evidence to promote and support policies that will benefit OGS adoption. | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |

5.1.2 Behaviour Change Communication Flow

Communication can only be effective if it is delivered in an orderly and consolidated manner. The intended result of OGS communication is adoption and sustainable use of solar energy solutions which only happens when a decision is made to take a behaviour modifying action. REA will therefore pay attention to the communication continuum in the ordering of publicity and information dissemination activities/interventions.

The target audience, particularly the end users in target communities, need first of all to be aware of the problems that electrification will solve in their lives. It is assumed that a good number of the target audience already know the benefits of being connected to electricity, however, they may not see it as achievable hence the need to reinforce the general awareness aspect and connect its relevance to their individual situations before exposing them to available solutions.



6.0 STRATEGIC THEMES AND STRATEGIES

Theme: Implementer capacity and buy-in

Both internal (REA) and external implementers of the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy need to be well equipped with general and technical knowledge of OGS to be able to effectively address barriers to OGS adoption. It is therefore imperative for the strategy to address implementer capacity as a theme.

Strategy

6.1 Develop OGS and consumer awareness implementation capacity; Build a strong OGS belief among Publicity and Information Dissemination implementers

The implementer side communication is an important precursor to effective consumer awareness creation and information dissemination given the importance of implementer capacity and commitment. This strategy proposes a continuous multi-departmental buy-in, capacity building and information platform aimed at informing, educating relevant REA personnel on OGS benefits, available technologies, communication approaches and consumer feedback. Part of the continuous improvement package is an analysis of past project performance, assessment of ongoing projects as well as upcoming project updates. The programme will be driven by the REA's corporate communications and the PR team, and will provide an opportunity for planning of awareness, communication and publicity activities. It is desirable that the team continues to uphold unparalleled teamwork, hence, it is proposed that there be regular team building activities with members drawn from relevant departments.

a) Internal information needs

The practical information needs that are required internally, though the list may not be exhaustive, include:

- i. Work plan, main calendar activities of REA OGS projects and awareness information dissemination interventions;
- ii. Work plans and monitoring/progress reports relating to key activities;
- iii. Highlights of main achievements and main challenges to OGS communications activities;
- iv. Events (community engagements, workshops, announcements and launch of reports);
- v. Sector and category information such as statements, reports, developments, etc.;
- vi. OGS Knowledge management system within REA;
- vii. Guiding principles on media and partner management; and
- viii. Regular category data such as awareness and uptake data levels.
- ix. Technological developments

b) Implementation:

OGS specific work plans and awareness and information dissemination calendar will be generated by REA every end of year to guide activities for the following year. Such calendar of activities will be detailed living documents that are reviewed monthly with the aim of maximizing results and making them as practical as possible. A continuous flow of information among the REA implementing team is imperative, however, scheduled engagement should be weighted up for set goals to be achieved.

Regular implementer round-table meetings bringing together REA's OGS and corporate communications focal staff as well as representatives from other relevant departments is proposed to keep everyone on the same page. Such meetings should be held at least once monthly to plan for succeeding months while taking stock of previous months. During the monthly meetings, technical capacity will a focus to equip the focal teams with new technical developments necessary for effective performance of their roles. REA should identify relevant resource persons to provide capacity building for the team.

Cognizant of the fact that OGS implementation sits with REA but draws interest from other government agencies such as the Ministry of Energy and the Energy Regulation Board (ERB), quarterly roundtable meetings involving all relevant stakeholders will be held. The quarterly meetings will be championed by REA in consultation with relevant players such as the Off-Grid Task Force. The importance of such meetings will be seen in consolidating OGS learnings and having a common approach to the enhancement of OGS adoption.

Table 2: Internal Capacity Strengthening Table

| Audiences | Methodologies | Tools and Materials | Outcome indicators | Illustrative Partners |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <p>Interdepartmental OGS Technical working groups within REA</p> <p>Officers in relevant agencies whose activities have a bearing OGS</p> | <p>Orient the implementing team on the communications and information dissemination strategy</p> <p>Provide OGS technical updates to relevant REA staff</p> <p>Provide project updates, learnings and challenges</p> | <p>Workshops and Seminars</p> <p>Technical assistance</p> <p>Communication planning templates</p> | <p>Successful implementation of the OGS awareness and information dissemination strategy</p> <p>Increased communication capacity within REA as measured by increased OGS communication activities</p> | <p>Energy ministry</p> <p>Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies</p> <p>Private sector players</p> |

Theme: Sector-wide partnership

While positive strides have been, and continue to be, made towards strengthening of partnerships around OGS, it was observed that this should be strengthened to include more private sector players, such as solutions providers/ brand owners or manufacturers in order to consolidate category growth efforts.

Strategy

6.2 Consolidate and leverage private sector end-user awareness input to build a common approach to category awareness creation

It is assumed that private sector players, namely, solar brand owners, resellers and contractors share a common vision with REA to grow OGS category awareness and adoption. It will only be of additional benefit if REA and the private sector players came together and harmonized category awareness creation to complement each other. The strategy proposes areas of possible cooperation and suggests a category awareness partnership approach that will offer a win-win for both parties. This process will start with mapping of all relevant private sector players and where they fit in REA's deliverables.

While developing their annual OGS work plan, REA will identify relevant private players to partner with in each activity and define how to involve them in a way that works to better the outcomes of the planned activities. Table 3 is a sample work plan summary with a private partner column to be populated as relevant.



Table 3: Sample OGS partner involvement work plan Summary

| Objective | Activity | Target audience | Resources | Private Partners | Partner Role | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 |
|-----------|----------|-----------------|-----------|------------------|--------------|----|----|----|
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

The following private sector partners will be considered for partnership:

- a.) Media
- b.) Contractors
- c.) Trade players

Theme: Evidence-based publicity and information dissemination

There is need to ensure that as REA responds to the need to re-enforce data collection, interpretation reporting and application. Such data includes audience profiles, gender needs. In the same regard, the Authority’s reporting should also encompass consumer demands statistics disaggregated by gender so as to respond to the gender energy gaps through relevant statistics.

Strategy

6.3 Enhance evidence-based orientation by developing a structured insight gathering strategy (new and existing data); Partner with relevant government agencies to get latest data and information

Any intervention not based on reliable information often falls short in terms of its communication objective achievement. It is noted that there exists an elaborate insight gathering methodology that is both structured and non-structured. A further step is proposed to cover documentation and definition of different aspects of the insight gathering process, providing a general roadmap that allows for flexibility. Use of sector-wide data and reliance on government and credible non-governmental reports is encouraged, where they exist.

REA will have a structured knowledge management system that spells out data mining activities covering methodology, cycles as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting of OGS project implementation (including awareness and information dissemination projects). It is assumed that REA will continue to conduct primary research where necessary as they collaborate with other agencies that already have the necessary data such as the Ministry of Community and Social Development that could be a credible source of target audience profile data to be used ahead of communication campaign designs.

Data areas of interest, among others, include:

1. Target audience socio-demographic characteristics such as age, level of education, economic activities, etc.
2. Target audience current practices (e.g. levels of adoption).
3. Audience attitudes, biases and perceptions.
4. Barriers to OGS adoption (individual, communal and environmental).
5. Factors promoting OGS adoption.
6. Sector performance in the geographical target areas.
7. Brand realities (performance, cost, access, positioning, etc.).



8. Contractor attitude/perceptions.
9. Community social structures.
10. Day in the life of the target.
11. Audience relationship with existing communication channels.

Resource allowing, there should be dedicated insights personnel to support with Knowledge management component to support both technical and communication projects design, monitoring and evaluation.

Theme: Off-Grid Solar Category awareness

The ToR indicates that there is inadequate awareness of OGS as a viable electrification among the target audience. Therefore, there is need to provide adequate category awareness to aid potential OGS users in decision making on adoption, types of solutions and how to use the selected solutions. Designing and implementing an OGS centric publicity and information dissemination strategy will go a long way in building acceptance, conversion and best use of available OGS solutions thus contributing to REA's overall electrification strategy.

Strategies

6.4 Develop a structure for identifying and creating segment specific messages and interventions, including in local languages

Knowing the audience is the first step toward behaviour modification. Regular target audience definition is suggested following guidelines generated from audience insights discussed in 6.3 above to allow for targeted communication with specific identified segments. Segmentation can be based on specific criteria based on findings. Table 4 below is a sample of a simplified audience segmentation criteria that can be used.

Table 4: Simple Audience Segmentation Criteria

| Socio-Demographic | Geographic | Behavioral | Psychographic |
|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Age ▪ Gender ▪ Level of education and/or experience ▪ Ethnicity/language ▪ Household type | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Urban ▪ Rural ▪ Peri urban | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Current behavior (current OGS user/previous/non-user) ▪ Barriers to behavior – Expectation, Ability, Opportunity, Motivation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Benefits sought ▪ Attitudes/opinions about OGS |

Table 5 below provides a sample segmentation table that takes into account potential channels and influencing factors that then point the messaging direction.

Table 5: Target audience segmentation template

| Potential Audiences | Potential Primary Channels | Potential Influencing Factors |
|---|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Demographic Characteristics Age, gender, etc. | | |
| Geographic Characteristics Region, urban or rural, proximity to OGS project | | |
| Socio-Cultural Characteristics Language, culture, place in society, religion and ethnicity | | |
| Behavioral Characteristics Behaviors that affect or impact OGS | | |
| Psychographic Characteristics Personality, values, attitudes, interests, lifestyle etc. | | |
| Ideational Characteristics such as knowledge, beliefs and attitudes about OGS, expectations and attitudes about Solar, perceived disadvantages, environmental supports and constraints, norms and self- image | | |

6.5 Design a general process for consumer awareness content creation

6.5.1 Designing Targeted End-User Messages

Understanding the audience will make it possible to design targeted messaging and select appropriate channels to deliver the same. Designing effective OGS messages will follow the simple procedure illustrated below:

- Step 1: Definition of communication information dissemination objectives (single out the desired audience action)
- Step 2: Target audience definition/ segmentation
- Step 3: Draft the relevant OGS messages
- Step 4: Pre-test the drafted messages with a sample of the target audience
- Step 5: Refine the message
- Step 6: Apply the message on selected material and roll out
- Step 7: Monitor and improve

Table 6: Sample OGS Message Design

| Audience | Audience Characteristics | Desired behavior | Barriers | Message |
|--|--|---|--|---|
| Adult household head, 25-50 years old | Key household decision maker and provider, motivated by cost and convenience. Hopeful and always looking for progress. | Start and consistently and correctly use OGS energy. | Believes that OGS is inferior to grid hence would rather wait for the grid power. | <i>Why wait? Go Solar, Go Far!</i> |
| Adult household head, 25-50 years old | Key household decision maker and provider, motivated by cost and convenience. Hopeful and always looking for progress. | Change perception of solar products, purchase quality assured product | Lack of information about quality solar products giving solar energy a negative image. | Careful! Not all Solar is worth your money! <i>Look out for ZABS Mark of Quality</i> |
| Adult household head, 25-50 years old | Key household decision maker and provider, motivated by cost and convenience. Hopeful and always looking for progress. | Correct deployment and use solar gadgets for increased efficiency benefits. | Lack of information on how to use solar as an energy mix leading to misapplication hence bad experience. | Know your Solar! (KYS) |
| Adult household head, 25-50 years old | Key household decision maker and provider, motivated by cost and convenience. Hopeful and always looking for progress. | Environmental conservation | Inadequate focus on environmental conservation and linkage of the same to energy consumption | <i>Solar Today, Better Tomorrow</i> |

6.6 Enhance OGS policy dissemination as part of consumer awareness focusing on counterfeit and consumer protection, among others

Consumer awareness of policies that relate to OGS will come a long way in giving consumers the much-needed confidence, enabling them make informed decisions and seek their rights. REA will be at the forefront in disseminating relevant policies to consumers and other market players as part of consumer rights awareness and education. Such communication will be integrated with technical messaging to create a mental association between the two and increase chances of affinity for OGS. Policy dissemination will be included in the different components of communication to address challenges such as the link between counterfeit products and category perception.

6.7 Mainstream Gender, Social and Financial Inclusion as key affirmative actions in end user messaging

As part of this strategy implementation, REA will champion specialised communication, engagement and positive description of vulnerable and marginalised groups such as women, youth and persons with disabilities to ensure



no one is left behind in the targeted areas. REA will take deliberate action to ensure disadvantaged groups such as women headed households are accorded special attention to enable them benefit from information and other project elements. Women, youth and persons with disabilities will be involved in the implementation of the communication strategy as frontline workers as much as is practical. This will include community engagement activities such as community forums that will be facilitated by trained local personnel. Visual messaging through outdoor and print media will also seek to incorporate female models as relevant.

6.8 Media as Strategic Partner

A key strategy is to have a deliberate media advocacy to promote accurate and balanced coverage of OGS as a viable solution and raise REA's general profile nationally. The media will be leveraged as a strategic partner through a proactive media relations programme. The media will be a key channel for communicating and influencing perceptions on OGS. REA will proactively engage media organizations by providing them with information and tools to facilitate accurate OGS reporting. Targeted media training workshops will be designed to provide journalists with general and technical knowledge on OGS in order to get their buy-in and encourage accurate reporting to the general public.

Table 7: Media Engagement Matrix

| Audiences | Key message themes | Methodologies | Tools and channels | Outcome indicators | Illustrative Partners |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
| Editors of media bodies Journalists in media organizations | Holistic nature of electrification (Grid and off-grid) and the positive contribution of OGS to livelihoods Progress being made and challenges being faced in Implementing rural electrification | Increase knowledge of editors/reporters through training workshops and editorial briefings Facilitate accurate coverage of OGS issues by developing and disseminating informative media content | Training workshops, radio & TV discussion programmes, talk and editorial briefings Case studies of successful OGS initiatives News items, TV and radio programmes, feature articles, call- in programmes | Increased knowledge on the holistic nature of electrification among editors and reporters Percentage increase in coverage of rural electrification and OGS Percentage increase in accurate reporting on solar solutions | Media houses Media Owners' Professional media organizations |

6.9 Increase OGS awareness by implementing a bottom up OGS Publicity and information dissemination strategy as an addendum to the overall communication strategy

The general public will be targeted with continuous OGS awareness creation through channel integration for enhanced reach. Special highlight will be on interpersonal communication by word of mouth which will take the form of small group forums within target communities. Innovative tools will be employed to fast track consideration and action by the targeted end users. One such tool is the Education Through Listening (ETL) approach that community forum facilitators will be trained on and allowed to implement. Education through listening technique allows for an interactive discourse on the subject issue. It takes the approach of motivational interviewing which allows both the facilitator and participant to freely share views around the topic.



Table 8: Grassroots Level OGS Awareness Creation Matrix

| Audience | Key Message Themes | Methodologies | Tools and Channels | Outcome Indicators | Illustrative Partners |
|---|---|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| General public at the grassroots level | Benefits of OGS Available OGS solutions Quality: Brand/Solution truth | Community forums One to one discussions Public meetings | Information and education material (IEC) Road shows Education through Listening | Increased percentage in of rural population' aware of the benefits of OGS Increased confidence in OGS solutions | Local government administration |

6.9.1 Opinion Leaders as Influencers

Working with opinion leaders across board will boost OGS communication through amplification of messages carried through other media channels in an interpersonal and cost-effective way. Target opinion leaders would include political leaders, religious leaders, technocrats and celebrities, among others.

Table 9: Opinion Leaders Communication Matrix

| Audience | Key Message Themes | Methodologies | Tools and Channels | Outcome Indicators | Illustrative Partners |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Opinion leaders at the national, regional and local levels | Benefits of OGS solutions Available OGS solutions Quality: Brand/Solution truth | Disseminate information to opinion leaders on the benefits and progress made in rural electrification via OGS | Briefing materials Organizational meetings | Increase in the number of opinion leaders driving OGS conversations | National and Local leadership structures |

7.0 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Implementation of the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy will be the responsibility of REA and will be aligned to REA's overall strategic plan, the communication and stakeholder management strategy as well as the communication policy. REA will implement an on-going publicity and information dissemination programme, project-based awareness creation or need-based awareness campaigns. On-going communication implementation will be done internally by REA's corporate affairs department. However, REA will take discretion on whether to partner with communication agencies on specific campaigns or not, depending on scale. Table nine provides an illustrative implementation plan which can be customized based on REA's overall strategy, annual plans and budgets.

7.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation will be essential to objectively establish progress towards the achievements of the objectives of this Publicity and Information Dissemination Strategy and in assessing OGS growth. The monitoring and evaluation activities will seek to monitor activities as they happen and assess the outcomes of the same in line with level of awareness and OGS adoption.

Simple methods are proposed such as exit interviews from interpersonal communication interventions, spot checks, data from other agencies, and at least one formal survey each year to measure progress, specifically the level of awareness and appreciation of OGS solutions among target audiences. The results will determine whether the strategy is on course, any adjustments that may be required and resultant risks that need to be managed. Media monitoring will be an integral part of monitoring and evaluation and will be conducted by specialized media monitoring agencies. Some indicative monitoring and evaluation guidelines are provided below in line with the strategic objectives:

a) To increase public awareness and improve knowledge on off-grid solar solutions

Indicator: Percentage change in OGS awareness among the target audience

A lot of input will go towards addressing this objective with the aim of creating and/or increasing OGS awareness levels among the general public and specific target audiences. Monitoring of this objective will start from defining demographically disaggregated OGS awareness level baseline that will form the basis for demonstration of progress. The baseline will be set from secondary sources such as existing studies, with a possibility of primary sources, resource allowing.

REA, in conjunction with relevant stakeholders such as state agencies and development partners, will conduct an annual study to unearth changes in awareness levels, appreciation and adoption of off-grid solar technologies among the reached audience.

Apart from the general awareness tracking, activity level tracking will also be conducted, based on activity level baselines that will be defined using pre- engagement interviews and activity success measured using post engagement interviews. The pre-and post-engagement interviews will be based on the activity content and will be a good avenue for checking the effectiveness of each activity type in increasing awareness.

b) To build support for OGS among stakeholders in both public and private sectors

Indicator: Increase in the number of private and public sector stakeholders involved in OGS growth activities.

A multi-sectorial partnership towards the growth of OGS has been highlighted as a key strategy, especially coordinated private sector involvement. Measurement of the performance of this objective will be based on an increase in the number of private and public sector players providing meaningful OGS growth support to either

directly or together with REA. Such partners will be those that sign up to the proposed round table activities (as proposed in strategy 6.2) and are active on other common OGS platforms. While REA will set their annual targets, and general increase in their numbers will suffice to show progress.

c) To create confidence among individuals and communities on OGS as a viable electrification solution

Indicator: Percentage Increase in the number of individuals willing to recommend OGS to their networks.

The net promoter score approach will be adopted to measure confidence in OGS among the target population. As part of the annual awareness survey capture under objective 1 above, a section on willingness to recommend OGS will be included to cover this objective.

d) To create demand for use of OGS among rural populations in a bid to support achievement of SDG 7

Indicator: Increase in the number genuine OGS solutions sold/installed by brand owners

REA will rely on in-country brand representatives to aggregate total sales in number of units disaggregated by solution type to assess active demand for OGS solutions in rural Zambia.

It is noteworthy that REA will still need to define micro monitoring and evaluation plans for specific interventions developed in the application of this strategy and based on specific objectives for such interventions.

7.2 Strategy Demo Model

To ensure practicability of the strategy, a sample intervention is desired for capacity building and learning. A demo campaign will be aligned to an upcoming project which will be implemented by REA, and learnings documented for improvement. The design and implementation of the pilot project will be done by REA, with the support of the consultants after the strategy workshop. It will be designed for scalability, giving REA an upper hand in the design and implementation which will preferably include the use of emerging behaviour change communication channels such as bulk messaging and social media. The intervention will be monitored on an ongoing basis to isolate unique factors for future use. Below is a description of the proposed demonstration campaign direction.

Proposed OGS Awareness Campaign

The proposed OGS awareness campaign will be an integrated and targeted issue-based communication and information dissemination intervention that is aimed at addressing barriers to OGS adoption, while informing the target populations of the benefits of OGS energy, relevance of OGS in their lives, available solutions and where to purchase the solutions.

The campaign will be targeted in that it will have OGS is general as the overall content with a funnelled approach to focus on an upcoming OGS project by REA.

The general approach of the campaign will mirror the approaches contained in the OGS communications and information dissemination strategy, adhering to the design and message creation process, beginning with definition of the need for the intervention. The campaign will be layered into three to align with the behaviour change continuum and consolidating the messaging for better understanding and recall at different levels.

Level one: Top of mind awareness

This level will seek to provide general information about OGS to the target audience. Information dissemination channels to be used at this level will majorly be mass biased as it will be aimed at creating top of mind awareness of the existence of OGS, what it can do, the on-going campaign, available solutions and where to purchase the same. At this level, communication will not be granular in detail as the next level will focus on more tailor-made communication.



Specific channels proposed for this first level will primarily be community radio which will have unique content as described below:

Radio Campaign

This will take the interactive route as far as is practicable, deviating from the traditional approach of pre-recorded advertisement. It will involve live presenter activations with listener participation via call-ins, attached to rewards. Another approach on the radio will be a co-created community relevant drama series where short episodes will be played and listeners invited to call in and predict the next episode for a chance to win a prize. The drama will be based on comical community experiences around energy.

The drama series will allow for creation of an OGS character who will then be the 'smart voice' promoting and educating on OGS across all other channels. Also, to be explored is poetry where short 30 second 'Power Poetry' sessions are played in local languages to entertain and inform the target audience on OGS. The radio campaign will set pace and announce the arrival of the next stage which will be the community activation.

Level 2: Communal Barrier Neutralization

Community Activation

As the second level of the campaign, community activation will be aimed at continuing the OGS conversation started via the radio campaign. The community component of the campaign will specifically seek to address post awareness barriers to OGS adoption. It will offer more depth in OGS communication as relevant within specific communities, addressing communal barriers such as group-help perceptions of OGS energy. Community activation will be implemented by community sourced and trained frontline personnel, including local opinion shapers and influencers with support from local administrative structures. This will allow for acceptance and cost minimization.

Community activations will bring to life the content of the mass awareness in innovative ways including the use of Education through Listening (ETL) technique to reinforce the messages. Implementation will be through ETL session with existing or ad hoc small groups within the target communities. Covid-19 prevention protocols will be adhered to including limiting the number of the ETL participants to not more than 10 and having the sessions in open air venues while maximizing social distancing.

Level 3: Personal Barrier Neutralization

Interpersonal Communication

Word of mouth has been billed as the most effective approach to addressing personal barriers to behaviour adoption. This is even more effective if it is 'word of relevant mouth'. It is therefore proposed that the third level answers to personal fears and knowledge gaps by exploring peer communication through physical and digital communication channels. There already exists a high number of daily interactions among people living in same villages or communities. Also, the mobile phone has presented a huge opportunity through which one to one communication can be enhance. Interpersonal communication will employ the use of community based OGS ambassadors who will reach out to individual networks with the OGS messages and receive feedback from the same to further a and adoption.

The community OGS ambassadors will be identified and selected based on their level of influence within their communities and the size of their networks. They will then be guided to develop network reach plan that will make their communication viral within their communities. The ambassadors will follow the developed plans to reach their networks in an effective manner and deeply discuss and instigate action to adopt OGS energy. It is expected of the ambassadors to create a snowball effect that will eventually cover the entire community with the OGS messages. Implementation of the network reach will be through physical word of mouth, phone calls, and WhatsApp where applicable.

Innovative use of WhatsApp

To further peer communication, digital OGS ambassadors will employ an OGS Node communication approach which will be named 'The Progress Link'. These will be temporary WhatsApp groups formed by community level



peer influencer, targeting their networks. The ambassadors will create the groups, invite their close networks, bring them up to speed with the rationale for the same and allow their networks to invite more peers into the group. The group will employ ETL technique to discuss energy challenges and how it relates to the communities and groups individual members, the group members will join in the discussion and a common direction created before the group is disbanded in 48 hours or retained if members so wish. This will continue until a specific ambassador has reached all his or her networks.

Bulk messaging

REA and the consultants will identify a mobile communications provider to partner with to set up a bulk messaging platform for disseminating important targeted OGS communication to specific group. Further a partner with existing suitable contact database will also be identified and engaged to provide audience contacts, based on a desired profile to help reach the target. Messages carried on the bulk messages will be short, attractive and informative and will direct the target on the next engagement to allow for continuous communication. For example the message could announce the arrival of a mini-grid, its key benefit to the community and invite the participant to the public launch event.

Learning

An ongoing campaign monitoring by REA is proposed to isolate and document learning, right from the design stage to post implementation. It would be good to have baseline and end-line studies so as to assess success of the campaign. Such baseline should cover the current audience status in terms of OGS awareness levels among members of the target community, knowledge attitudes and beliefs around energy sources, current levels of OGS use and types of solutions in use, to mention but a few. Ongoing activity monitoring should employ the use of entry and exit interviews to see if any changes have occurred during the activities.

7.3 Assumptions, Risks and Mitigation Measures

Key assumptions (Success factors):

- (i) Availability of adequate, skilled and committed human resource
- (ii) Availability of adequate budget required for the implementation of the strategy
- (iii) Availability of other key resources including operational tools and equipment
- (iv) Demonstrated ownership, leadership and supportive management by REA
- (v) Strong partnership and buy-in from key stakeholders

| Risks | Mitigation Measures |
|---|---|
| The COVID-19 pandemic impact on the strategy implementation. | The strategy has been developed with factored in plans in the event that the pandemic persists beyond anticipated periods. This includes, use of digital tools and mass media for outreach where physical meetings and events could have been held. |
| Significant changes in the planned OGS projects by REA for 2021 implementation. | The strategy has been developed to be a living document that is adaptive and not confined to specific projects to ensure agility, replicability and scalability. |
| Institutional changes within REA including staff turnover | The strategy has been developed through a multi departmental involvement of REA staff and capacity building training will be provided to several relevant staff for the sustainable implementation of the strategy. |



Table 10: Illustrative Implementation plan

| ACTIVITY | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| <i>Increasing OGS awareness by implementing a bottom-up OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy as an addendum to the overall communication strategy.</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design the campaign message, Create campaign iconography (theme, logo, slogan) and produce information materials, radio and TV spots, outdoor etc. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop the information materials | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Coordinate media placement | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Disseminate materials and information through various channels | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Link mass media to community level activities by mobilizing partner bodies at different levels | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Working with opinion Leaders as Influencers</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify relevant opinion leaders to partner with | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organize (or leverage existing) forums for different groups | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Place articles in professional pages | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Support and coordinate community outreach forums | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Working with media as a strategic partner</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify target media | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Plan and hold media training Workshop | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement a proactive media relations programme | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Consolidate and leverage private sector end-user awareness input to build a common approach to category awareness creation</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify potential private sector partners | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| ACTIVITY | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEPT | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Produce and disseminate information materials to the identified partners | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create/identify appropriate forums and disseminate information and seek partnership | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <i>Develop OGS and consumer awareness implementation capacity; Build a strong OGS belief among Publicity and Information Dissemination Implementers</i> | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Produce and disseminate briefing materials | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hold team briefing sessions | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Orientation and training for inter-departmental focal teams | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Prepare and implement monthly and quarterly update meetings | | | | | | | | | | | | |



ANNEX I

REA OGS REVIEW AND GAP ANALYSIS

| Gaps | Opportunities | Potential Theme |
|--|---|--|
| The current communication and stakeholder management strategy does not integrate OGS-specific publicity and awareness dissemination plan. | Explore integration of OGS elements in the main communication strategy. | Increase OGS awareness by developing a bottom-up OGS Publicity and awareness creation strategy as an addendum to the overall communication strategy. |
| Lack of a targeted Private Sector Partnership component (e.g., Manufacturers, contractors) to build synergy and coalition. | Develop a private sector partnership programme with prequalified players to pool resources and bolster OGS category awareness for acceptance and adoption. | Consolidate and leverage private sector end-user awareness input to build a common approach to category awareness creation. |
| The current approach lays little emphasis on implementer buy-in and capacity growth around OGS. | Create an ongoing implementer engagement for OGS buy-in and capacity growth (Target: REA staff and other relevant agency personnel) | Grow OGS and consumer awareness implementation capacity; Build a strong OGS belief among PACS implementers. |
| There is no specific reference to evidence-based awareness creation. | Include insight gathering in the awareness creation approaches. Leverage existing data and conduct regular category awareness audits. | Increase evidence-based orientation by developing a structured insight gathering strategy (new and existing data); Partner with relevant government agencies to get latest data and information. |
| Inadequate focus on end user centric communication in the strategy. | Define and segment target audience and create a living plan to address specific needs for relevant segments. | Develop a structure for mapping and creating segment specific messages and interventions. (Including in local languages) |
| There is need to have a content creation guide for developing communication tools. | Create content creation guide and tools addressing the key challenges including the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. General social perception among communities of solar energy being an inferior source of electricity compared to hydropower and grid connections; ii. Lack of active and genuine ownership of solar projects by recipient communities; iii. Lack of information about quality solar products giving solar energy a negative image. The wide sale of non-reputable brands in the market has vastly contributed to this undesirable picture; | Design a general process for consumer awareness content creation. |

| Gaps | Opportunities | Potential Theme |
|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> iv. Lack of information on how to use solar as an energy mix; Limited economic capacity by communities to meet capital investment costs for suitable solar energy systems; v. Unprofessional or incompetent installation of solar energy systems by unqualified persons; vi. General misapplication or misuse of solar energy system and vandalism. | |
| <p>Further, the current communication strategy and approach is skewed towards promotional communication on REA's mandate rather than advocacy and issue-based communication.</p> | <p>Explore REA's strategic positioning in the sector to engage in effective advocacy communication.</p> | <p>General consumer awareness on OGS technologies, consumer protection advocacy as well as shaping policy and practice.</p> |
| <p>The current communication strategy does not adequately address specific information needs of all of REA's target audience. This includes a lack of consumer awareness messaging on OGS technologies.</p> | <p>There is a pipeline solar home system connection project targeting 15,000 consumers in all 10 Provinces of Zambia. This presents a strategic opportunity to drive the implementation of the OGS publicity and information dissemination strategy.</p> | <p>Consumer awareness messaging on OGS technologies.</p> |

ANNEX II

OGS COMMUNICATION SITUATION AND GAP ANALYSIS

| Gaps | Opportunities for an effective communication drive |
|--|--|
| <p>Fragmented communication interventions and messaging on OGS within the sector. Current communication focuses on promoting individual OGS solutions at the expense of building critical mass in category awareness generally.</p> | <p>There is an opportunity for REA to maximize its strategic position to drive large scale coordinated OGS communication campaigns while leveraging synergies with the private sector, development partners and civil society.</p> |
| <p>Weak attitude and behavioral change communication to reshape public perception on OGS.</p> | <p>Ensure high impact and sustained communication focus on attitude and behavioral change targeting end users. E.g., integration of OGS messaging in popular local soap operas.</p> |
| <p>Current communication approaches are mainly through mainstream channels such as TV and Radio.</p> | <p>Explore and utilize both social and technological innovations for effective communication in both rural and urban areas including use of new media.</p> |
| <p>Current OGS communication lacks human interest approach and strategies.</p> | <p>Use human-centered communication approach to effectively impact end users including using public influencers such as celebrities, traditional leaders and other opinion shapers as OGS champions.</p> |
| <p>Limited consumer education communication approaches that ensure consumers are well informed on the benefits of solar, use and access to quality products.</p> | <p>Integrate effective consumer awareness and protection messaging.</p> |
| <p>Limited data to help various segments of the value chain make informed decisions.</p> | <p>Ensure communication approaches that provide critical data to various segments of the value chain including manufacturers, distributors, retailers and end users to make informed decisions.</p> |
| <p>To a great extent, most of the available resource materials on OGS is quite technical for general public information.</p> | <p>Ensure development and dissemination of more simplified resource materials for effective public information.</p> |
| <p>Limited media training and knowledge on OGS, resulting in low media coverage of the subject.</p> | <p>Investing in effective media training and buy-in strategies to increase media coverage on the subject.</p> |

ANNEX III

SAMPLE OGS INDICATOR DEFINITION TEMPLATE

| Key Guiding Questions | Example indicators you could use (Mass Media/interpersonal/digital) | What those indicators tell you? | What those indicators don't tell you |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| What was the reach of the output(s)? | Number of people reached | An estimate of the number of people who accessed the communication | Whether the audience understood the message |
| Did you reach the right audience? | Proportion of the right audience reached | If your connection point is relevant for the target audience | |
| Is OGS awareness growing? | Percentage change in OGS awareness | Effectiveness of the communication strategy | If awareness leads to purchase |
| Is OGS adoption growing? | Percentage growth in OGS solutions purchase | Intervention effectiveness | |
| | Number of shares or clicks to the output Events: • Number of attendees | Popularity of the event Whether you reached your target audience | Level of awareness generated from the view/click |
| | Number of shares or clicks to the output | | |
| | Number of copies distributed | | |
| | Number of online viewers | | |



Africa Clean Energy
Catalysing Africa's Solar Markets



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