Elephant Energy is an American project developer that has a background in promoting solar energy for off-grid communities in Namibia already prior receiving the EEP grant for this project, called “Solar for all partnership”.

Currently, more than 70% of Namibia’s urban population has access to the national grid, whereas the respective figure for the rural population is only 6%. As Namibia’s population is scattered, it will take time before a larger part of the population is reached by the national grid. Given this context and Elephant Energy’s previous success with solar lamps in Namibia, the motivation to implement this project was strong.

The project started on the 1st of November 2013, and was planned to be finalised on the 31st of May 2014. Due to some unexpected delays, the project was finalised around six months after the planned finalisation date. This can be considered to be the first lesson to be learnt: it is possible that the planned project schedule needs to be adjusted.

**Project targets**

The project targeted the following issues to ensure sufficient development impacts:

1. Solar lights are not available in rural areas
2. More information on RE alternatives is needed: without providing this information, people simply cannot know about how e.g. solar lamps can make a great difference in their lives.
3. Sustainable distribution network is needed, including marketing and financing
4. Affordability of solar lamps is questionable, even if it is clear that this then less money is needed to buy solar lamps.

Due to these reasons, the aim of the project was to sell 10,000 solar lamps to rural people. High quality solar lamps with maintenance and replacement possibilities were chosen so that the desired outcomes are reached.

The project started with a wide selection of solar products (10-15 different) but along the way the product range has been updated to better fit the needs of the customers. The sale of the four lamps and one radio have a more crucial role which at the same time increases their motivation to sell and to take responsibility. The sales agents are coordinated by the regional sales managers.

**Lessons learnt and key take aways**

Although not only this project specific, it seems that people often tend to be optimistic with sales targets and the time needed to implement a project. Therefore it is worthwhile to keep in mind that although a project plan with its targets and schedules might perfectly done, this can always be one of more unexpected issues that draw the project to the opposite direction than what the original plan is. Some extra time is good to have – but along the way the product range has been updated to better fit the needs of the customers (in total five solar products: four lamps and one radio).

The planned distribution network, a sales hub and independent sales representatives have been implemented; as well as the other project activities. The capability of the project developers to update the distribution network model according to the needs of the project shows substantial flexibility: in the revised model, it is the regional sales managers that handle the sales. This way, they are the ones that increase their motivation to sell and to take responsibility. The sales agents are coordinated by the regional sales managers.

The sales results did not reach the target although the distribution network was in place. In addition, implementing a marketing campaign to educate rural Namibians about the benefits of solar energy was one of the project activities.

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