A majority of the off-grid rural population in Kenya lives in areas inaccessible due to the high terrain and rugged landscape of the rural areas. The pyramidal (BoP) also has a very limited disposable income and knowledge of renewable energy, which hinders the adoption of modern solar energy technologies. Despite the pay-as-you-go models that help to fill the financial gap, the social and cultural factors of the rural population are not favorable to solar power products as a viable solution to serve the substantial need to reach rural areas by supplying them with solar energy. However, Sollatek has already sold 700,000 portable solar lanterns and has seen significant growth in rural Kenyan markets, especially in the last mile customers. This growth was largely driven by the successful training and supported network of Solar Entrepreneurs, who are able to enter and become an independent sales agent or to continue as Sollatek field staff.

In Sollatek’s own words, one of the engines that has been driving the company’s growth and the success of the EEP project is the expanding and competitive market for solar off-grid products in the organizational culture and the entrepreneurial women who are passionate towards their work. The strong points about the off-grid market and understanding of the customer needs in the bottom of the pyramid (BoP), alongside social and effective communication team with oversight and open communication is also a key element in achieving results. A group of core entrepreneurs who were committed since the beginning have grown as salespeople in their understanding of sales techniques, balancing workload, reporting and handling difficult situations between distributors and customers. The entrepreneurs who initially knew very little about solar energy, how the technology works or the hazards of kerosene, now feel that they are helping their communities become economically and energy independent.

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Women entrepreneurs drive sales and encourage more female participation. Encouraging women entrepreneurs was not originally highlighted in the project, but once it has seen the increase in sales from the male entrepreneurs, more women entrepreneurs were hired to expand the distribution model. The women entrepreneurs were able to not only sell more lanterns, but also a flexible layering of different models and model types and are not afraid of competition to fill the financial gap. The women entrepreneurs have successfully trained and supported a network of locally recruited distributors to the last mile customers. During the EEP project, Sollatek has seen a direct impact on lives and outcomes in rural Kenya. Sollatek was a Kenyan company Sollatek Electronics wanted to tackle the challenges by presenting a range of affordable and quality solar energy products to the truly last mile customers.