ADJUSTING OPERATIONAL PRACTICES FOR OFF-GRID SOLAR COMPANIES

Lockdown and social distancing measures implemented in many countries to prevent the spread of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) have an immense impact on the business operations of off-grid solar companies in sub-Saharan Africa. This information sheet summarizes general guidance on how off-grid solar companies can potentially adjust their operations to mitigate the impact and disruptions caused by the pandemic and take advantage of possible opportunities.

ADOPT ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT & PIVOT PRODUCTS

Off-grid solar companies should assess and consider adjusting their current business models to adapt to the immediate impacts of the pandemic and prepare for the post-crisis period as needed.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT PROCESSES:

- Identify key staff to form a crisis response team. Meet regularly and streamline decision-making processes to respond rapidly to the evolving situation.
- Reassess business model – including goals, budget, and targets – and adjust regularly for each market segment and geography.
- Collect relevant data to ensure lean and cost-effective operations are implemented across departments and smart decisions are made. This may include an analysis of customers based on existing information or developing surveys that can be carried out by call center staff.
- Explore plug-and-play and open access digital tools that can help provide guidance on improving analytical and decision-making capabilities and do not require a reliance on direct face-to-face interaction.

For more information, refer to:
Boston Consulting Group: https://bcg01.egnyte.com/dl/q2jvgqEENN/

OTHER AREAS OF OPERATIONS:

- Explore more cost-effective marketing strategies such as ramping up use of social media to reduce customer acquisition costs.
- Consider partnering with local companies/distributors to optimize resources, access new customers, and offer new/more relevant products.

ADJUSTING EXISTING & NEW PRODUCTS:

- Start targeting products to potential new customers, such as urban workers that have relocated to more rural areas or office workers working from home.
- Explore developing or facilitating the delivery of educational products to help customers access critical information about COVID-19, such as through their TVs, radios, and mobile phones.
- Consider developing alternative products for health-related uses, such as making face masks, supplying water for washing, and electrifying health facilities – particularly as new funding sources emerge.
- Use the lockdown period to fast-track research and development on new products so that these are ready to be launched once movement restrictions are lifted.

For more information, refer to:

STAY INFORMED & PREPARE FOR BOLD MOVES

Off-grid solar companies may be able to look for new opportunities to adjust their business operations moving into new products and models of operations.

- Develop innovative methods for gathering market intelligence, such as using sales teams to collect data from customers, distributors, and suppliers through remote outreach surveys.
- Continuously assess the situation in the country and region to help inform operational changes.
- Ensure appropriate internal and external capacity to respond to potential shifts in demand.
- Monitor consumer confidence and identify opportunities for introducing new products and operational models.

For more information, refer to: