



The Voice of the **Off-Grid Solar Energy** Industry



Terms of Reference November 2021

Upholding Consumer Protection Standards in Agent-based models

1. About GOGLA

GOGLA is the global association for the off-grid solar (OGS) industry. Established in 2012, GOGLA now represents over 200 members as a neutral, independent, not-for-profit industry association. Our mission is to help members build sustainable markets, delivering quality, affordable products and services to as many households, businesses and communities as possible across the developing world. The products and solutions that GOGLA members sell transform lives. They improve health and education, create jobs and income opportunities and help consumers save money. To find out more, go to www.gogla.org.

2. Background to Consumer Protection and the OGS sector

The off-grid solar industry serves more than 420 million people worldwide. In response to the growth of the industry, and the prevalence of the pay-as-you-go (PAYGo) business model in which customers are exposed to increased product and finance risks, GOGLA developed the Consumer Protection Code (CP Code). The CP Code is the minimum standard of service that off-grid customers should expect from their provider. It consists of six principles (transparency, fair and respectful treatment, responsible sales and pricing, data privacy, good customer service, product quality) and a set of indicators and self-assessment tool which provides a framework for companies to measure and monitor their performance against the Code.

The CP Code aims to safeguard consumers and their rights, whilst at the same time enhancing the impacts of increased energy access for low-income consumers. We believe that widespread industry action on consumer protection is required to mitigate sector risk and accelerate responsible and impactful market growth. A growing number of companies and investors have adopted the CP Code¹ through a commitment or endorsement, showing that the industry recognises that what is good for customers, is good for businesses and the sector as a whole.

To support the implementation of the CP Code, GOGLA is developing a library of tools and resources for companies with the aim of strengthening industry performance in consumer protection, through market insights and the identification, sharing and promotion of best

¹ At the time of writing there are 44 Commitments and 29 Endorsements in place. [Commitments & Endorsements | GOGLA](#)

practice – especially for more challenging areas of the CP Code. The Consumer Protection Working Group (CPWG) has identified agent models and management as one such challenge and one that is applicable to several of the CP Principles².

The performance, behaviour, communication, and incentives of sales agents is arguably the single biggest factor in consumer protection³. A sales agent is the main point of contact for a consumer and guides them through the sales process. Thus, agents can have a significant impact on the customer experience and their overall satisfaction with a product or brand. Their performance, behaviour, communication, and incentives of sales agents is arguably the single biggest factor in consumer protection. The challenge for companies is to find structures that provide incentives to agents to drive sale whilst at the same time protect consumers and support responsible business outcomes.

3. Objectives of the project

The objective of this project is to evaluate current risks and identify best practice for agent models and management – by seeking insights from agents themselves, and providing guidance for companies to improve standards of Consumer Protection in the off-grid solar sector.

The aims of the agent study include:

1. **Improve sector-wide standards of consumer protection by helping companies mitigate risks borne of agent-based models.** The behaviour, communication and motivation of agents is inherently linked to standards of consumer protection throughout the customer journey. Furthermore, the project aims to ensure that the existing principles and indicators are applicable to best practice for agent models and management.
2. **Evaluate the impact, effectiveness and risks of different agent models and profiles, by seeking first-hand insights from OGS agents – giving a unique and novel perspective on behaviours, motivations and challenges faced by the agents themselves.** Agents are often excluded from the CP lens, which focuses on consumers, companies and investors. By seeking the views of agents, we hope to understand gaps between policy and practice, and identify best practice for effective models and management of agent networks.
3. **Provide guidance for companies looking to improve agent management practices to enhance Consumer Protection Standards.** Consolidation of existing best practice, plus identification of new lessons and insights will inform a series of recommendations for companies on how to improve agent management, recruitment and training.

4. Scope of Assignment

This project will build on the existing knowledge and literature regarding agent-based models and management, both in the off-grid solar sector and related industries such as

² Find the Consumer Protection Principles [here](#).

³ See [gogla_consumer-protection-insights.pdf](#), page 11.

microfinance and telecommunications⁴. The project will gather unique views of the agents themselves, consider customer insights data already available, and use a consumer protection lens throughout.

The outputs will include an evaluation of agent models with a CP lens, and study and report to be disseminated via a webinar and blog. As necessary, proposals for updates to the CP principles and indicators will be made.

GOGLA requires a consultant or consulting firm to undertake the following:

1. Review of the existing literature and data on agent models and management:

There is already a body of knowledge that exists around agent-based models for last mile distribution, mobile money services, and financial inclusion. A review will extract and summarise the relevant knowledge, best practice and lessons for the off-grid solar industry. Further to this, an analysis of the consumer data already collected during our 2020 consumer insights study will be analysed to identify critical agent-based insights reported by consumers⁵.

Deliverable: *A taxonomy of agent-based models with segmented analysis of features, benefits and CP risks and mitigation measures; and a consolidated list of references.*

2. Primary research including company consultations and agent interviews:

The consultant will undertake consultations with at least five OGS companies, and through these will seek to understand:

- What models and tools (e.g. apps) for agent recruitment, training, roles, management (e.g. contracting, KPIs) and incentivisation are employed by off grid solar companies; and
- What are the main challenges faced, and what has and has not worked for improvements in the past.
- How do agents view the job and the off-grid solar industry? What do they like and dislike? What is working / not working?

In addition, the consultant will undertake primary research to gather the unique insights from agents themselves and develop insightful case studies. We expect that this will be a mixture of 1-1 interviews and focus group discussions⁶. This research will seek to gather the unique views of agents themselves in areas covering job satisfaction, knowledge of consumer protection, recruitment, training and management, drivers and motivations and approach to sales/after-sales. Through these views we seek to identify good practice for recruitment and incentivisation, understand how well agents grasp consumer protection risks and what the drivers and risks are for agents themselves.

Proposals should describe the methodology that will be employed for the company consultations and primary agent research (including which markets will be included; preferably including but not exclusively east and west African markets), and how many

⁴ Such as [Rethinking Agents to Scale PAYGo Businesses - BFA Global](#) and [Shedding Light on Women in Solar: How – And Why – Off-Grid Solar Companies Should Hire More Female Sales Agents - NextBillion](#)

⁵ See analysis of data [here](#)

⁶ If COVID restrictions deem it necessary; telephone interviews may be considered.

agent interviews and/or focus groups will be targeted. GOGLA will assist with connecting the consultant researcher to OGS companies to facilitate the research.

Deliverable: *A summary of aggregated findings from consultations and analysis of data collected from agent interviews (e.g. ppt. presentation) and feedback call with participating companies. An aggregated copy of the data/transcripts should also be provided to GOGLA.*

3. Produce a study report for the off-grid solar sector

The consultant will develop a study report⁷ that evaluates the key challenges and risks of current existing agent models and management for OGS companies and consumers, using a Consumer Protection lens throughout. The study will present the findings and analysis of the research undertaken, present agent and company case studies, and share good practice and recommendations for OGS companies.

Within the budget window, we would welcome the consultant to identify existing, or develop new tools or templates that may be useful to companies looking to implement better agent-based practices, such as training materials.

Deliverable: *A Briefing Note for the Consumer Protection Toolkit, for which the final version will be provided in editable format to be published by GOGLA on the [CP Hub](#).*

4. Review the CP Principles and Indicators

GOGLA aims to periodically review the principles and indicators of the CP Code – ensuring that they remain relevant to the OGS industry and reflect evolving risks for consumers. With new knowledge and insights, the consultant should carry out a review of the existing principle and indicator texts and make recommendations for amendments as deemed appropriate.

Deliverable: *[if deemed relevant after review] Recommended text for updated principle and indicators.*

5. Produce content for webinar and blog

The consultant will support GOGLA in the dissemination and promotion of the new insights and recommendations, namely via a presentation at a webinar hosted by GOGLA and through a blog that will be shared on the GOGLA website. The consultant will produce presentation material summarizing the risks, findings from research and best practice and recommendations for OGS companies. Materials and recording from the webinar will be available afterwards on GOGLA's CP Hub.

Deliverable: *Presentation at a GOGLA CP webinar, with corresponding slide deck/materials and blog to be shared on the GOGLA website.*

6. Key Deliverables

#	Deliverables	Indicative Due Date* 2022
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⁷ See [Consumer Protection Insights](#) and [Consumer Protection Briefing Note: Transparency | GOGLA](#) for example output.

1	A summary report documenting findings and recommendations from carrying out the knowledge review	28 th February
2	Summary report and analysis from consultations and agent research	30 th April
3	A Briefing Note on Agents models and management for the Consumer Protection Toolkit	10 th June
4	[As required] Recommended text for updated CP principles and indicators.	25 th June
5	Develop and present content for a GOGLA CP webinar and blog to share the lessons and best practice for agents models and management in OGS.	25 th June

*To be agreed and finalised during contracting period. The latest date for completion of this work is 30th June 2022.

7. Approach and coordination with GOGLA CPWG and partners

The Consumer Protection Code was developed with the Consumer Protection Working Group (CPWG). The CPWG are responsible for maintaining the Principles and Indicators, and ensuring that they stay relevant to the OGS context. With any development to the Code or the assessment framework, coordination and consultation with the CPWG is essential to ensure the output is appropriate and has the buy-in from industry.

GOGLA facilitates the working group; the consultant will be required to present to the working groups periodically to share and receive feedback.

This project is funded under a programme supported by CDC, DOEN foundation, and FMO – together the donor advisory group. This group may on occasion review and provide guidance to the deliverables of this project.

8. Level of Effort and Schedule

All the work will be completed between January and June 2022, unless the appointment is extended, or a new appointment is made. The specific timeline for the deliverables can be found in section 5 of this document. The indicative budget is €40,000.

The consultant should include a project schedule and disclose the level of effort required to complete the project activities in the proposal submission, with budget breakdown.

9. Contractor Qualifications

The contractor(s) should be able to demonstrate the following qualifications/qualities:

- Significant and demonstrable previous consultancy in a related field(s);
- Experienced in the challenges/opportunities for Consumer Protection, particularly in developing markets;
- Demonstrable experience in conducting primary research;
- A presence/network in key off-grid markets would be preferable;
- Excellent written and verbal communication in English.

10. Submission requirements

Proposals should include:

- Technical proposal, that describes the approach to deliver the assignment. Proposals should include:
 - Methodology for primary research, including respondent numbers and geography;
 - Schedule and details of any proposed deviations from the scope, deliverables and timeline.
 - CVs of team with relevant experience highlighted.
 - Relevant references from similar assignments.
- Financial proposal, with budget categorised per activity/deliverable (e.g. fees, expenses, etc).

Proposals should be received via email by 1700h CET on **Friday January, 21st** 2022. For questions or clarifications and to submit a proposal, email Rebecca Rhodes r.rhodes@gogla.org and cc. consumerprotection@gogla.org.