



GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IN THE OFF-GRID SECTOR

What measures should we take to support vulnerable population segments that are affected by lack of electricity access in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic?



Africa Clean Energy
Catalysing Africa's Solar Markets



TETRA TECH
International Development



Presented by:

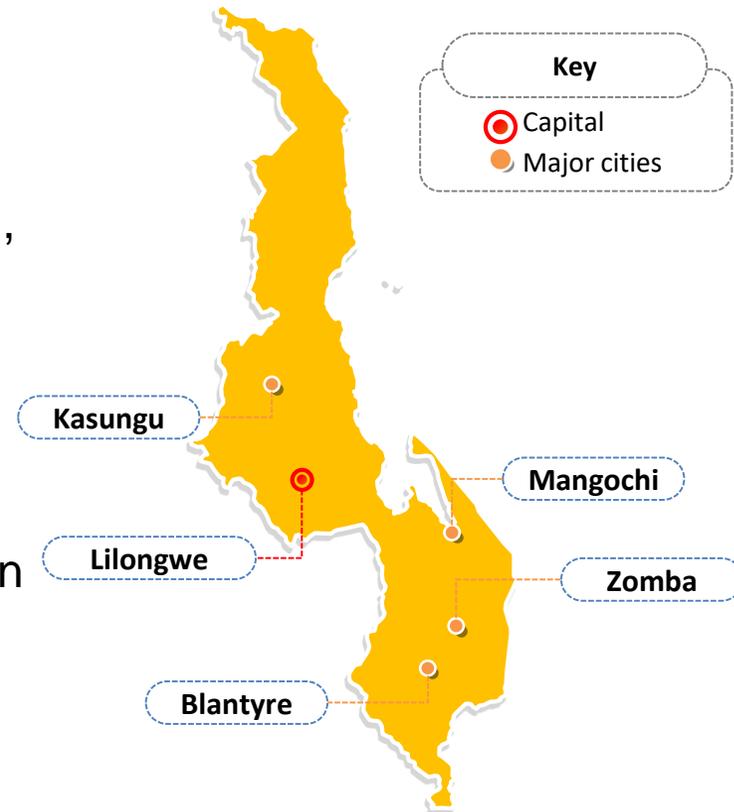
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Malawi Covid-19 context

About COVID-19 and Corona virus in Malawi

- Confirmed cases at 58, screened persons : just over 1000
- 21 day lock down was legally challenged: not rights-based, not consultative, would harm the poorest and most vulnerable
- Most visible impact in doubling of public transport costs to reduce overcrowding
- Malawi also going political upheaval due : re-run of election scheduled on 2nd July 2020





Malawi energy context

National

- Electricity access at 10% nationally
- Increasing focus off-grid solutions: micro-grids, lanterns etc
- Largely a sector that is donor dependent but three types of solar energy providers
 - Mini-grids – often part of a project
 - Formally contracted solar lantern distributors
 - Independent private retailers



Impact on solar service providers

- Dependent on model and location.....and a bit on luck
- Formally contracted provider in the city : Slight increase in demand for our solar lanterns, especially ones with phone chargers.
 - Post-harvest season with more cash
 - People were preparing for lock down and did not want to be going around to charge phones
- For solar mini-grids, largely operational. Some postponement of activities especially requiring “imported” technical support
- Independent providers typically sell cash for products.
 - Transport costs have doubled, fluctuations in sales
 - Least likely to have safety cushion for their businesses. Most likely to be smaller businesses
- Prepayment models ensure continued flow of incomes in general
- Disruptions in flow of supply, lost business

Impact on customers

- Increase in competing demands (soap, buckets, airtime, etc), uncertainty makes regular payments problematic e.g. PAYGO
- Increase in prices of basic goods but less income flow (middle class locking down, etc)
- Beyond lighting and communication (information access, good and bad), little impact
- Threat of regression in energy access; reduced funding, reduced capacity to pay etc





Another crisis: the 2015 earthquake

- Over 8790 died, 2/3 of population affected
- Almost 300 micro-hydro systems destroyed, thousands of SHS destroyed, 75,000 cooking energy systems damaged, houses and kitchens
- To a large extent, this was reflected in Mahadevsthan (destroyed homes, MH systems etc)
- Supply chains cut off
- Men largely migrated while women dealt with massive expansion of burdens overnight. Post recovery = more male migration
- While we do not know the full and/actual impact COVID will have on off-grid systems in Malawi or Nepal (numbers still very low), there is already economic and social disruption.

Some lessons for the COVID pandemic

The good

- Access itself is a critical part of resilience. For off-grid, a two-sided coin. Dispersed supply can mean some uninterrupted supply but also means dispersed recovery
- Energy systems provide adaptive capacity of poor and remote communities but not automatic. In building systems, focus needs to be beyond household access (PUE, energy for public institutions such as hospitals, water supply)
- Social safety nets: whether provided before or during disaster recovery. E.g. lanterns with charging capacity critical even in areas with grid or mini-grid allowed for rapid deployment, access to info, communication
 - In Malawi, social cash transfer and cookstove are critical to recovery post-disaster/shocks
- Local capacity: Involvement of local community in building and later, repair of facilities
- Women played a critical role in repair of infrastructure and community recovery, attaining skills and earning some cash (cash-for-work schemes)

Some lessons for the COVID pandemic

The not so good

- Poor coordination between supporting agencies led to pockets of plenty and pockets of none (Nepal, Malawi)
- Lack of sustainability and follow up immediately after relief effort (in recovery)
- Changes in gender dynamics forced by new living arrangements were not well understood e.g. in Mahadevsthan increases in women living with parents-in-law not always accessing energy technologies
- Bolstered sales of women's cookstoves but markets post-recovery collapsed, women left with massive unsold stock (Malawi)
- Cooking energy largely lagged lighting thus women's needs were not prioritized (Nepal) ; Stoves provided but rarely follow up support for use. Missed opportunity!
- Stoves focusing on efficiency hardly met the dire need for heating in the cold Himalayas



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Thank You!