

**AFRICA CLEAN ENERGY (ACE)
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Enforcing quality standards will protect stand-alone solar consumers in Nigeria

Hannatu Yakubu, 23 years, is married and has two children. She lives in Kafin Madaki, a small town in Bauchi State, Nigeria. Since 2017, Hannatu has been running a small shop where she sells household goods. However, for a long time her business premises did not have electricity and it affected her business. She used a dim kerosene lamp to light her shop for a few hours after dusk, yet that was the time she had more customers visiting the shop. She also had another kerosene lamp in her house and the children complained about the smoke from the lamp.

At 46% electricity access, Bauchi is one of the states in Nigeria with low electrification. The others are Gombe (46%), Katsina (38%), Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara (37%), Jigawa (35%), and Taraba (34%). According to the International Energy Agency, there are about 77 million people without access to electricity in Nigeria.

Things changed for Hannatu about a year and a half ago when a friend advised her to consider replacing the kerosene lamps with solar lanterns. After saving N 4000 over three months, she bought two solar lanterns, one for the house and another for her shop.

Hannatu has used the lanterns for about one year and she is happy to have a reliable source of light for her shop. This enables her to keep the shop open for longer and make more sales. The children no longer strain to read in the evening and they do not have to deal with the smoke that was irritating their eyes. Hannatu has her eyes set on a larger solar home system (SHS) that will enable her to charge her phone, light multiple rooms, power a radio and possibly a television set, and she is saving up for it. She is not aware of any consumer financing options that can allow her to purchase the SHS on credit.

Hannatu says that even though she later learnt that her solar lanterns were quality-verified, she did not know what a low-quality product looks like. She just got the brand that was recommended by her friend. According to a market survey by the Africa Clean Energy Technical Assistance Facility (ACE TAF), Nigeria has over 50 solar lantern brands in the market and only 22% of these are quality verified¹. Hannatu notes that if she had bought a low-quality product, she would have been so discouraged considering it took her so long to save up for the lanterns. Similarly, many traders selling the solar



¹ ACE TAF (2021) Nigeria stand-alone solar deep dive (Unpublished report)

products do not know the difference. According to the ACE TAF survey, only about 66% of traders can identify a genuine SAS product.

The existence of many low-quality products in the Nigeria market can easily erode consumer confidence. In the wake of the Solar Naija Program that aims to deploy 5 million connections through SHS and mini-grids, the government needs to work with the private sector and development partners to enforce the mandatory IEC stand-alone solar (SAS) standards that were approved in June 2020 by the Standards Organization of Nigeria. The enforcement of the standards among the manufacturers and importers of SAS products will be necessary to reduce the number of low-quality products entering the market.

The mandatory standards need to be complemented by a massive awareness campaign so that both traders and consumers are able to determine whether a product meets the quality requirements or not². That way, consumers like Hannatu will not lose confidence in solar and will instead encourage others to take up solar. In so doing, government will make significant progress on universal electricity access by 2030, while ensuring that low-income earners get value for the hard-earned money they spend on solar.

² ACE TAF (2020) [Standards for stand-alone solar: Guidance for governments](#)