



Light for Learning

Response to Equity Economics' Project Evaluation: April 2023

17 April 2023

Introduction

KTF commissioned an external evaluation to examine the impact and effectiveness of the Light for Learning project in improving education and livelihood prospects, safety and security, communications, health outcomes and access to knowledge in the region. The review was conducted through review of extensive data collected via baseline and follow-up surveys at the point of installation and again approximately six months after. This evaluation reviews data collected throughout the Phase 1 installations in Oro and Western Provinces. Additionally, in-person consultations were conducted with students, solar champions, community health workers, and women to elucidate initial findings from the analysis of the data. The analysis was conducted in January and February, interviews took place in March, and the report was finalised in April. Additional analysis was conducted on a range of data provided by KTF outlining the project operations. This response outlines KTF's planned strategies to address recommendations made in the evaluation to improve upon important aspects of the program design and implementation.

Recommendations and KTF actions

EE: KTF should continue to monitor and support maintenance of solar equipment, particularly in Western Province to ensure ongoing workability of systems. The development of solar hubs will be an important next step for the project. Further education and training of solar champions and community members will also be necessary to ensure solar systems are utilised and maintained effectively.

KTF acknowledges the importance of ensuring the ongoing functionality and maintenance of the solar equipment installed in households in Western Province. We will continue to monitor the systems and provide support to households where necessary to ensure that the systems are operating effectively. We also recognise the potential for solar hubs to provide a sustainable solution for the provision of maintenance and additional solar accessories to communities. The construction of a solar hub in Oro Province has recently been completed, which will be used to guide the development and implementation of the additional hub that is planned in Balimo, Western Province. Additionally, KTF will provide further education and training opportunities to solar champions and community members to support effective utilisation and maintenance of the solar systems.

EE: Close consideration of subsidisation of replacement parts and batteries is needed. Ongoing subsidies while supporting the longevity of the equipment also reduces household independence and diminishes sustainability of the project. Further consideration could be provided to consider other ways to support households to save for replacement parts and batteries. KTF has taken the first step by training solar champions in financial literacy to support households. Consideration could also be given to using FODE centres and FODE students to encourage savings and identify income earning opportunities or other financial schemes to encourage full ownership and responsibility for replacement parts. This would help to build household autonomy and reduce reliance on ongoing KTF support.

KTF acknowledges the importance of ensuring the long-term sustainability of the Light for Learning project. While subsidies for replacement parts and batteries may be necessary in some cases, we recognise that ongoing subsidies can reduce household independence and diminish the sustainability of the project. Therefore, KTF will explore the potential for other ways to support households to save for replacement parts and batteries. We have already provided financial literacy training to solar champions to support households in managing their finances effectively. We will also consider using FODE centres and FODE students to encourage savings and identify income-earning opportunities, as well as other financial schemes that promote full ownership and responsibility for replacement parts. Additionally, KTF will leverage its existing, longstanding relationships with these communities to continue to engage with them around the importance of saving for their replacement batteries, and will check in regularly over the next several years to enquire as to how that is going. We believe that building household autonomy in this way will help to reduce reliance on ongoing KTF support and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the project.

EE: Further rollout of the project should be guided by where KTF can leverage existing connections and relationships. Supporting Light for Learning in lock-step with the establishment of FODE centres is a critical ingredient of KTF's success.

KTF recognises the importance of building upon existing connections and relationships within communities when expanding the Light for Learning project. We have found that supporting Light for Learning in lockstep with the establishment of FODE centres has been a critical ingredient in the success of the project. As we continue to expand the number of FODE centres throughout Oro and Western Provinces, we will utilise these centres as a foundation to identify the needs of communities and subsequently expand the Light for Learning project in those areas. By building upon these established relationships and centres, we can ensure that the project is implemented in a way that is responsive to the unique needs of each community and has the greatest potential for success.

Access to lights and electricity is critical for students to be able to complete their studies, particularly for those enrolled in the Flexible Open and Distance Education (FODE) program. Without electricity, students are often unable to study after dark, which limits their ability to complete assignments and prepare for exams. The Light for Learning project, by providing solar units with lights and power outlets to households, has been instrumental in addressing this issue and supporting students in their educational pursuits. By enabling students to continue their studies at home, even after dark, the project has helped to increase educational opportunities and improve academic outcomes for students in the communities where it operates. KTF recognises the importance of offering both FODE and Light for Learning in tandem to employ a holistic approach to improving development and student outcomes.

EE: A key recommendation for the survey and future surveys is to get a better understanding of the impact on women, people with a disability and other groups. It would be useful to specifically target these groups through the survey process. The proportion of women survey respondents in the current survey was low – 24% in Oro and 35% in Western Province. With respect to those women that answered the survey, it was also unclear whether their answers were based on their households' view of their own personal view. Any future evaluation would be strengthened by a more targeted approach to ensure the insights and voices of women and other groups are accurately reflected.

KTF recognises the importance of accurately capturing the insights and experiences of all community members, including women, people with disabilities, and other marginalised groups. We acknowledge the low representation of women in the current survey, and will take steps to ensure that future surveys more accurately reflect the voices and experiences of women and other marginalised groups. Specifically, we will work with community leaders and representatives from these groups to identify ways to more effectively engage with and solicit feedback from these communities, such as through targeted outreach efforts or separate focus group discussions. We will also provide additional training and support to survey teams to ensure that they are sensitive to the needs and experiences of these groups, and are able to capture their perspectives accurately. By doing so, we hope to better understand the unique challenges and opportunities faced by these groups, and to ensure that the Light for Learning project is meeting their needs and priorities.

EE: The survey would also be strengthened by surveying the same households twice - rather than different villages and households each time. Ensuring the same question was asked across all households and provinces would also improve the accuracy and reliability of the survey data.

KTF acknowledges the importance of ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the survey data. While surveying the same households twice would be ideal, it is important to balance this with

the need to collect information from a representative sample of households across the different provinces where we operate. However, we will explore ways to implement this recommendation, such as providing more detailed checklists to the enumerators to improve their ability to survey the same households in the follow-up survey as they did in the baseline survey. We will also ensure that the same questions are asked across all households and provinces to improve the consistency and reliability of the survey data. Additionally, we will continue to explore new technologies and survey methods that may further improve the accuracy and efficiency of our data collection processes.