

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN ENERGY ACCESS



Globally, more than one billion people need one or more assistive products, which can help them to lead a healthy and productive life. It is estimated that 90% of people who require these products do not have access to them. In addition, the UN estimates that 80% of the world's disabled populations live in developing countries and are disproportionately represented in low-income rural households.

Stakeholders involved in off- and weak-grid appliance and energy access service sectors in developing countries have a crucial role in enabling equal rights and independent living for people with disabilities. Furthermore, programmes working towards improving access to electricity could play a key role in improving inclusivity across the board.

In response, Efficiency for Access published a research note titled '[How can energy access programmes address the needs of people with disabilities?](#)', authored by Richa Goyal, Senior Insight Manager, Energy Saving Trust. The report outlines key actions these stakeholders can take to ensure 'inclusive' appliance and energy service access for people with disabilities. A brief description of these actions is provided below.

CHECKLIST FOR OFF-GRID AND WEAK-GRID APPLIANCE COMPANIES



- **Design appliances in keeping with inclusive design, taking accessibility principles into account.** It is useful to identify the most suitable adaptations required to make appliances accessible and investigate associated implications for product affordability. As an example, designing products that can be controlled remotely can help reach those with mobility impairments.
- **Design products with excluded communities rather than for excluded communities.** This will involve including people with a diverse range of backgrounds when testing products with users. Planning to recruit people with common impairments such as visual or hearing for testing products is a great starting point.
- **Build diverse teams and accessible workplaces.** Building teams that represent diverse cultural backgrounds, people with disabilities, and different gender profiles can help overcome design biases and inform more inclusive business practices.
- **Reference existing accessibility standards and technical specifications.** Ensuring they focus on a variety of disability sub-fields such as built environment, education, and transport.
- **Create accessible content.** Examples of such content include any digital or print-based content, or any advertising or awareness-building collateral. Where feasible, content should be adapted for voice, sign language, or pictograms.
- **Provision of assistive products.** Off-grid appliance manufacturers could consider developing and adding assistive products to their suite of product offerings in collaboration with assistive product manufacturers. This can help expand their product portfolio and develop a newer market segment.

CHECKLIST FOR ENERGY ACCESS PROGRAMMES



- **Report the impact of enabling inclusive energy access.** Developing impact indicators that describe the impact of enabling equitable energy access can help increase awareness of the need for inclusive energy delivery.
- **Conduct inclusive research and disaggregate responses by people with and without disabilities.** It is important to incorporate people with disabilities as respondents in field research related to energy access.
- **Create accessible content and enhance capacity building.** End-user access to accessible content, products and internet needs to be continually improved. To help this, energy access stakeholders can help distribute existing resources on international best practices on accessibility within the energy access community in the near term.
- **Sector prioritisation.** Women and children with disabilities, low-income families, and humanitarian settings have the greatest need for energy service delivery.
- **Foster Research & Development in powered assistive products.** There is a need to develop durable, affordable and high-performing assistive products that can be maintained, repaired and accessed locally whilst meeting or exceeding established product quality standards.
- **Identify Research & Development opportunities in assistive technologies.** Collaboration with off-grid and solar product appliance companies will encourage greater innovation. It is essential to ensure these products are easily integrated into solar home systems and mini-grids and are easily repairable to prolong their life cycle.
- **Encourage the use of clean energy to power assistive products.** This could improve the affordability of product ownership alongside reduction in use and throw battery e-waste.