

UP-SCALE

Building Skills, Capacity, and Learning for Civil Society

A. Introduction of the UP-SCALE initiative

The UP-SCALE initiative aims to expand the ACCESS coalition's efforts of creating a global solid, cohesive and influencing voice of the Civil Society Organizations or CSOs (social entrepreneurs, NGOs/CBOs and research institutions) in the energy access space. The ACCESS goals would benefit from an innovative market-place driven knowledge sharing mechanism which underpins the dissemination of best practices and the delivery of crucial technical support to the member organizations and others. This would ultimately increase the impact of global and local stakeholders operating in the energy access space.

What is UP-SCALE?

- The **knowledge arm of the ACCESS Coalition**, a 4-year old network composed by 65 CSOs and practitioners with decades of expertise in energy access.
- A functional space to **share best practices**, including what works and what doesn't, strengthening ACCESS members' –and non-members- skills and capacities.
- A highly collaborative knowledge aggregator of expert advice, matching knowledge demand and supply with **reliable and timely technical support** delivery in implementation and advocacy, increasing impact and resource efficiency.
- A **pool of experts from global North & South entities** covering a wide range of energy-related technical topics.
- A solution to accelerate the delivery of **SDG7 as a mean to enhance the pace of achieving other SDGs** (e.g. poverty alleviation, health, education, livelihoods, women's empowerment, climate change mitigation).

B. Background and rationale

Over the recent years, and following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the creation of SDG 7, global attention and action on energy access have radically scaled up, and civil society interest has correspondingly evolved as well. This is primarily due to increased recognition of the links between clean energy access, social justice, development and environment sustainability -including climate change-, but also due to existing limitations of traditional aid/charity models.

While these links to economic growth and social development are increasingly well-recognised, there is potential for CSOs to improve how they integrate energy access into other developmental initiatives and outcomes. An increasing number of active CSOs practitioners and/or business developers working on access to energy have indicated they would benefit from accessing a knowledge network outside their organizational borders, including timely guidance, specific support and knowledge on proven methodologies and approaches for providing the energy services to the poor.

While many organizations provide internal technical support services in support of their energy access activities, these are commonly limited, run in isolation, frequently risking duplication and inefficiency. Likewise, enquirers must spend time finding qualified

independent experts, limiting the level of knowledge retained by the hosting or enquirer organizations and ultimately restraining their internal capacity building. There is therefore a critical motivation to mobilize high quality technical, timely and context specific energy-related knowledge for supporting the endeavours of local and global CSOs working in different geographies.

A consultation process with more than 15 international NGOs working in, or venturing into, the energy access space has reconfirmed the gap existing between demand and supply of knowledge. There is a need for improving and upgrading internal technical support mechanisms that boost and increase knowledge exchange resulting in increased learning and knowledge sharing.

In the current energy context, getting access to best practices, as well as to failures, and timely quality expertise for global & local specific contexts is proving to be highly challenging, especially given the limited dedicated resources/platforms for in-depth action-oriented knowledge exchange and coordination on technical and non-technical issues.

The UP-SCALE group will leverage on the available expertise and the knowledge demand from ACCESS members (and beyond), gathering most relevant practical **global & local data/information**, boosting **South-South cooperation** and **best practices sharing** and providing **specific expertise** to ultimately help increasing impact on the ground.

C. Current trends

Many CSOs have undertaken demonstration projects, seeking to influence policy and practise. Whilst there have been notable successes in some countries and sectors, overall this approach has had mixed results. Significant time and investment is required to generate, share and integrate learning from such projects, and it is even more difficult to change the mind-set of key decision-makers. Often replication of a successful project requires a shift in strategy (especially under the dynamic energy access context), injections of scarce donor funding, building of more complex consortiums, or implementation at scale by organisations lacking capacity to do so easily – rendering replication unfeasible.

Major successes from the CSO work have been seen in:

1. Raising awareness among communities and decision makers, improved representation of the energy poor, ensuring their local voices are heard in the decision-making processes. Despite good initial work in this area, it has also been challenging as a majority of CSOs in the energy space lack the capacity to speak with authority on technical issues such as the details of energy policy, regulation and finance.
2. Relevant energy access demonstration interventions often within the broader context of climate, environmental or social development issues.
3. Recently, there has been an increasing recognition of the value of broad, holistic approaches addressing a wide spectrum of barriers to progress simultaneously, mostly around expanding markets for energy access services and creating enabling environments for improved planning and delivery of these energy services. These combine support to governments, media, businesses and NGOs along the energy value chain. Such approaches build trust and legitimacy of both new and unfamiliar technologies and of new actors. They also help a variety of stakeholders to work together (NGO, government, business) adding value to universal energy access efforts.

Such approaches are new, people centred and advocacy focused, hence making fundraising difficult.

Across all these areas – demonstration projects, building markets, influencing government and other relevant actors, reaching the poorest, or representing the energy poor – ‘best practice’ approaches are beginning to emerge. Although often internally documented, best practices usually are not properly systematized or shared externally. Existing platforms or networks provide data and learning tools but are unable to mobilize systematic knowledge sharing, strategic thinking and expertise from –and provide specific support to- the global and local CSOs community. This limitation ultimately prevents civil society from coming together to present a coherent, shared and common vision on how to accelerate energy access.

As a result of this trend, Hivos, SNV, WWF, GERES and Practical Action – all CSOs with decades of experience and expertise in various aspects of energy access and active members of the ACCESS Coalition - have identified a need to promote learning sharing and expert guidance with other non-governmental and civil society actors on how they can ensure their actions foster more sustainable and positive impacts.

D. Theory of Change and Outcomes

UP-SCALE seeks to overcome current obstacles by forging an alliance based on joint learning from decades of collective experience to bring best practices out amongst expert organizations. This will ultimately lead to a much-needed increased pool of capable delivery partners for the energy access community, which will increase opportunities to establish new partnerships, create and expand existing skills and capabilities and enable more effective and increased impact in delivery energy access services to last mile communities.

What is the added value of the UP-SCALE?

- **A growing space to reach excellency:** Unlike other platforms, the initiative builds on the ACCESS Coalition -the biggest global CSO energy network- and on its members’ local expertise and current demand.
- **Sharing / training best practices:** A sharing space responding to CSOs knowledge demand, covering a wide range of advocacy/implementing energy topics and enhancing the quality of the work of these and -indirectly- other stakeholders.
- **Improving coordination and collaboration:** Partnering up with complementary organisations and network across sometimes overlapping geographies ensures best use of scarce financing, improves outcomes and increases the legitimacy of the players.
- **Expert technical service facility:** Providing timely, specific and high quality technical assistance support to enhance implementation/advocacy actions or strategies when and where they are most needed.
- **Broadening learning outside CSO space:** giving the members a convening role where others outside the CSO world can be invited (SMEs, donors, governments, investors, etc.) to challenge visions, exchange and learn from others.
- **Knowledge gap closer:** Drawing from existing ACCESS members’ and others’ knowledge, the initiative will be credited by identifying knowledge gaps and building or

Outcomes of the initiative

- Enhanced collaboration and coordination among CSOs and beyond, therefore increasing their capacity and credibility to effectively respond to the current energy access knowledge and strategic challenges.
- Increased contribution of the global CSO community to meet global implementation/advocacy development challenges in relation of SDG7 with other SDGs, especially in energy poverty communities including the poorest and most marginalized ones.

D. How can we achieve this? (work streams)

1. Knowledge Activator

It will act as the main mechanism to extract, compile and disseminate the most appropriated knowledge from the ACCESS Coalition members and beyond. The Knowledge Activator will propose an open space for knowledge sharing bearing in mind the demand and supply from the Coalition's members (including topics of regional and international relevance) and interfacing avenues with the wider energy access space.

Action 1.1. Documenting and sharing good practices

Relevant, innovative and ground-breaking practices within the ACCESS Coalition members' and beyond will be selected and shared in order to increase the learning of the CSOs and other stakeholders operating in the energy access space.

Counting on expert players in the Coalition ensures immediate access to a big pool of proven best practices and a cost-effective way of mobilizing internal knowledge resources. The group will incentivize the knowledge sharing among CSOs but also with non-energy CSOs or non-energy networks (e.g. LCEDN, Nethope or End Water Poverty) to get external approaches that could challenge and improve CSOs current work on the energy access space.

A quality-assurance mechanism would ensure that only proven best practices are selected and filtered down so that the most relevant set of knowledge gets finally shared. The mechanism would initially appoint various Global North/South champion expert organizations acting as gate-keepers for each one of the selected energy access topics. Webinars, face-to-face meetings, podcasts would be utilized to broadening the sharing and dissemination processes through ACCESS members and beyond. The initiative will collaborate with existing communities of practice (e.g. Energypedia or the Energy Access Practitioners Network) and platforms (e.g. SEforAll Peoples' Centred Accelerator, UNITAR or the Global Collective Distributors).

Action 1.2. Identifying current evidence gaps

Joint-efforts will be dedicated to identify and cover existing key data and evidence gaps relevant for helping the energy access space evolving and moving forward. The Knowledge Activator will dig into existing ACCESS members' research agendas, trends and topics of interest for the global and regional discussions. This way, and through aggregating efforts

and systematization of existing data and evidence among ACCESS members and beyond, the Knowledge Activator will become a credible one-stop-shop with evidence and information contributing to boost the sector.

2. Knowledge Delivery Facilities

Two delivery facilities will enable -but will not be just limited to- ACCESS members to get specific, high quality and timely technical assistance support from ACCESS experts. Both facilities will be adequately resourced and will count with a strict selection mechanism and dedicated expertise delivered when & where the knowledge demand is requested.

2.1. Technical Assistance Facility (TAF)

The TAF will consist of short-term and specific technical support, including but not limited to proposal design support, team capacity building or training in very specific topics or concrete delivery or research support. A clear, strict and transparent mechanism will be put in place through quality assurance safeguarding guidelines (with gatekeepers ensuring minimum quality standards) and ethics for participation (including ways to detect possible conflicts of interest).

As a very innovative element in the space, the initiative will first test a piloting phase covering two countries in the Sub-Saharan African regions (countries yet TBC), making sure the mechanism works fairly and in favour of the ACCESS Coalition and its members. A Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) tool will accompany the TAF, measuring the direct and indirect impact on the ground for the 3 first years of the project operation and ensuring clear accountability exists when knowledge is delivered.

2.2. Accompaniment Assistance Facility (AAF)

As opposed to the TAF, the AAF will cover medium-long term facilitation processes and will be composed by mentoring and strategic support in specific action-oriented knowledge areas. AAF aims to respond to individual CSOs' or groups of CSOs' request of having a tailored and long-term support to adapt to the evolving energy access space.

Like the TAF, the AAF will count with a mechanism to enable timely forging of needed knowledge alliances/partnerships leading to strategic support and potentially a long-term relationship between different ACCESS members. Unlike the TAF, the AAF assumes expert organizations will support non-expert ones in specific topics driven by the interest to forge a long-term (knowledge) partnership. AAF will actively support the interaction and mentor on ways to maximize impact.

- The following is just an example of some concrete potential activities for the first 12 months:

1. **Annual Knowledge Activating meetings;** At least 2 meetings including specific *Training Pills* (e.g. practical training modules/field visits) at members' demand and market-place activities to increase interaction in different geographies.

2. **Best practices sharing;** At least 4 webinars for, and conveyed by, the ACCESS members and other stakeholders or networks. Initial topics would include: *Productive Uses of Energy; Digital Technology in Energy Access; Partnering with the Private Sector; and Participatory Planning and Financing under decentralized contexts.*
3. **CSOs strategic papers;** Bimonthly briefs including showcasing ACCESS or ACCESS's members best practices, evidences and a general stocktake from specific topics.
4. **Evidence-gap closer;** Identification of relevant evidence and data gaps and establishment of working groups to deliver at least one ACCESS evidence report.
5. **Rolling out of TAF and AAF;**
 - a. Establishing the knowledge market-place (knowledge supply vs. demand)
 - b. Creating ACCESS's data base with existing expertise
 - c. Design of minimum quality standards and ethical standards
 - d. Selecting co-leads and expert CSOs to deliver the TAF/AAF

F. What are the next actions to make this initiative happen?

Our current priority is to secure members' ownership of the initiative. To do so, we would appreciate having inputs and suggestions on the initial concept note.

In order to also improve the level of interaction with ACCESS Coalition's Global South CSOs, the initiative is planning to organize an initial in person workshop and a second step event ideally occurring at the COP 24 in December.

Strategic analysis leads to three operational objectives over the first 12-month period:

1. Quality objective: ensuring the initiative offers a professional grade level of consistency, appropriate for the critical purpose for which it is used
2. Functional objective: delivering the TAF piloting phase with identified goals to improve initiative performance
3. Breakthrough objective: developing the capacity of our initiative and user network to deliver more complex solutions