**BACKGROUND**

Desperate fuel poverty

Many Filipino households are not connected to the electricity network. Some of these households are in the overcrowded, dark and insecure slums of Manila; some are in isolated island and mountain villages, where connecting to the standard network is almost impossible. Consequently, people use candles, kerosene lamps, car batteries, and generators to provide themselves with light and thereby reduce their feelings of uncertainty. Others illegally connect themselves up to a more fortunate neighbour’s meter. But these plan Bs are inadequate, very costly, and very dangerous.

**MISSION**

An appropriate lighting solution

Entrepreneurs du Monde established ATE Co. in 2015, to give these families access to an individual, affordable solar kit which provides 3 points for lighting, as well as a telephone charging point. The team offers a hire-purchase service, Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG): a flexible, cost-effective and sustainable system that helps customers afford their equipment and then gradually buy it outright. In 2019, ATECo. also began to equip remote villages with interconnected micro-grids providing solar power, thereby supplying their residents with power and offering a flexible payment system.

**METHODOLOGY**

A technician installs the PAYG kits and then collects payment for the equivalent of several days’ energy consumption on a regular basis. This modest payment triggers the release of an activation code for the solar kit, sent via text message. Within a few months, the family will own its own kit and have access to a source of quality lighting which is free, unlimited and renewable from that point on. The micro-grids use the same payment model and enable energy consumption to be monitored from a distance. They produce a larger amount of energy, which can be switched between houses on the same network, according to the needs and financial capacities of each household.

**INCUBATION**

Since its creation, Entrepreneurs du Monde has supported ATE Co. with its structuring and development at every level: legally, operationally and financially. The programme manager, who is at present French, is closely supported by the Head of Energy Programmes in Asia and the Caribbean, by the Finance team and by the Social Performance Management team. By the end of 2021, ATECo. will have become a social enterprise under local law, will have become both sustainable and long-term, and will be managed by a fully Filipino team.
ATE Co. has been chosen to take part in the ambitious REACH programme (Renewable energy access for off-grid communities and households) piloted by the European Union. The programme aims to provide the isolated communities of Northern Samar with a reliable and sustainable source of sufficient electricity to improve their living conditions, their income-generating activity, and their ability to adapt to climate change.

In 2020, ATE Co. put together a 17-strong team which adapted to the Covid crisis and achieved two vital initial steps:
- a survey of 500 isolated households
- awareness-raising for 650 people

The results of the survey revealed that 67% of households were connected to the electricity grid but that only half had a direct connection with a meter, with the other half ‘pirating’ electricity from a neighbour’s supply. The 33% of households who were off-grid relied on kerosene lamps.

Following this survey, 18 workshops were organised to raise community awareness about the advantages of renewable energy. Today, whole villages are about to get their first installations!

KEY FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>Objectives 2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of families equipped</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>1,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beneficiaries</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>1,408</td>
<td>8,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment installed</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>2,050</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which lanterns</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which SHS kits</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which household grids</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>1,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational self-sufficiency on 31/12</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

HIGHLIGHTS

Refocussing on the rural
Initially, ATE Co. served the sprawling, deprived shantytowns of Metro Manila, but recent government initiatives to facilitate energy access in these deprived, insecure neighbourhoods have allowed ATE Co. to refocus its efforts and expertise in remote areas with limited electricity supply. 2020 marked a turning point for ATE Co., which now conducts 100% of its activities in rural areas.

Powering 2,000 households
With the 3 projects in Rizal, Quezon and Northern Samar, ATE Co. aims to use PAYG kits and micro networks to provide electricity to 2,000 households, 1,875 of these through the REACH project in Samar, financed by the European Union. The COVID-19 pandemic has obviously slowed progress (movement restrictions, supply delays) but the highly trained team – expanded and reorganised in 2020 and well-known among local communities – is determined to achieve its goals!

Strategic partnerships
To allow it to serve more beneficiaries more quickly, ATE Co. has signed partnership agreements with two electric cooperatives in Quezón and Northern Samar, enabling them to work together to develop and provide electricity to these regions and to identify areas that are too remote to access the national electricity grid and for whom ATE Co.’s mini-grids represent a fanstastic and unique opportunity.

OUTLOOK

Integrating productive use activities
Existing ATE Co. equipment can power fans, televisions, radios and torches. Mini-grids can power fridges, freezers and solar pumps as well. That’s why ATE Co. is expanding its range to provide this type of productive use equipment along with training to improve income-generating activity. An in-depth study will be carried out in 2021.

CONTACTS

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