In serving low-income markets, companies are facing true challenges to develop and role out innovative products and services. The process is far from “business as usual”. In fact, it marks many unforeseen hurdles.

BoP Tales tell true stories and practical solutions that have marked such journeys.

"The challenge is to find a country for conducting your pilot project that matches requirements in terms of the level of inclusiveness which you aim for in your project from product idea towards end users."

The biogas socket is an electricity socket that will allow those with biogas digesters to produce electricity in their homes. TNO developed the idea and first technological design of the product. In partnership with SNV, this project aimed to further develop, produce and sell the product in selected developing countries.

One of the countries that was selected for piloting was Rwanda. This choice was mainly based on the current presence of SNV and DGIS in the country. Market opportunities and the quality of the infrastructure in Rwanda were not adequately assessed in advance. It turned out that in Rwanda market opportunities were lower than expected. For example, in Asia more market opportunities exist for a biogas socket pilot than in Africa because of a higher availability of biogas installations.

Besides that, it was hard to find local innovative capability. It was simply not easy to find entrepreneurs or a design agency with the right mix of knowledge and skills to further develop the prototype to local standards and desires.

THE WAY FORWARD

After reflections between BoPInc, TNO and SNV, it became clear that a thorough assessment of market opportunities and innovation capability per country are vital. Based on the outcome of such an assessment, different countries can be benchmarked to optimize the decision where to conduct the pilot project.

The partner leading the project should, in case of limited innovative capability, give stricter assignments and stay more in the lead.
LESSONS LEARNED

- Base the choice of a country on thorough assessment of local innovative, entrepreneurial and high-tech capacity. Know in advance what you can expect and aim for.

- In case it turns out certain capacity is not available locally, make sure to provide clear assignments and protocols that help partners understand what is expected from them.

Encountering this hurdle raised awareness on the importance of country choice for the success of the pilot. We recommend to distinguish country selections based on:

1. Market creation: select a country or region with potential to create a local market introduction of the product and service. The assessment focuses on the ecosystem of the product or service from a market perspective.

2. Product/service creation: select the country and partners for realizing product development capacity. This focuses on assessing the ecosystem for innovation and development of products or services. This directly links to understanding required capabilities and partners.

In case of inclusive business, the overall aim is to realize sustainable shared values. Making this distinction between the market selection and product/service development enables projects to obtain broad understanding and decisions for both aspects. The importance and relative weight of ‘inclusiveness’ in relationship to the overall impact objectives should be jointly decided by project partners.

TOOLS & SERVICES

Inclusive Innovation System Analysis (IISA)

BoPInc and TNO have joined efforts to develop a methodology to analyse inclusive innovation systems. Such an analysis is typically based on rich qualitative data, as quantitative data is either lacking, unreliable or otherwise inconsistent with reality. This qualitative data comes from interviews, case studies, policy documents etc.

For more information, contact:
Emma van Sandick (TNO)
Taco de Nies (BoPInc) denies@bopinc.org

PARTNERS

simgas  SNV  TNO innovation for life  BoP INNOVATION CENTER

Our Power  DEVELOP > LEARN > ACCELERATE