Namibia Oil and Gas Conference — 3rd Edition

From exploration to action:
Positioning Namibia as the next energy frontier

ENDORSED BY

Ministry of Industries, Mines and Energy, Republic of Namibia

Technical Session 6:
Environmental Sustainability and Energy Transition

Stakeholder Engagement:
How to manage and meet expectations

Sue Reuther, SLR MEA Energy Sector Lead

14 August 2025

HOST

economic association of namibia — ean

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

NIPDB — Namibia Investment Promotion & Development Board, Office of the President

Hanns Seidel Foundation

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

NAMCOR

SNC INCORPORATED — LAWYERS & BUSINESS ADVISORS

RHINO RESOURCES

#NamibiaOGC25

Overview

SLR Consulting:

- Range of environmental sustainability services and solutions:

  - Decarbonising, DD, market analysis

  - Sustainability reporting

  - Waste and closure planning / engineering

  - Permitting (ESIA), environmental monitoring and compliance

  - Land quality and remediation

- Several require stakeholder engagement

- SLR operates globally with presence in Namibia

Presentation Content:

1. Why Stakeholder Engagement

2. How Expectations Form

3. Everyone has Expectations

4. *Why* Manage Expectations

5. How to *Manage* Expectations

6. How to *Meet* Expectations

7. Summary

Why Stakeholder Engagement

- Many reasons:
  - Responsible corporate citizen
  - Regulatory requirement
  - Improving chances of stakeholder cooperation / buy -in
  - Reducing risk of delays due to unaddressed concerns
  - Obtaining specific stakeholder input / outcome (agreement, design, suppliers)

- Risks:
  - Inviting unrealistic expectations on and from project
  - Creating gate keepers and dominant voices
  - Surfacing tensions or opposition to the project
  - Generating stakeholder fatigue and disengagement without clear outcomes

- We are all stakeholders at times

How Expectations Form

- Expectation = what people consider most likely to happen in future when faced with uncertainty

- Expectations are formed based on:

  - Past experiences

  - Perception of similar projects (could be [un]realistic, [un]representative)

  - Information provided by media and other stakeholders

  - Personal / community needs and aspirations

➜ Expectations are stakeholder-specific and varied
   (for any one and across stakeholders)

➜ Expectations are often emotional and less rational
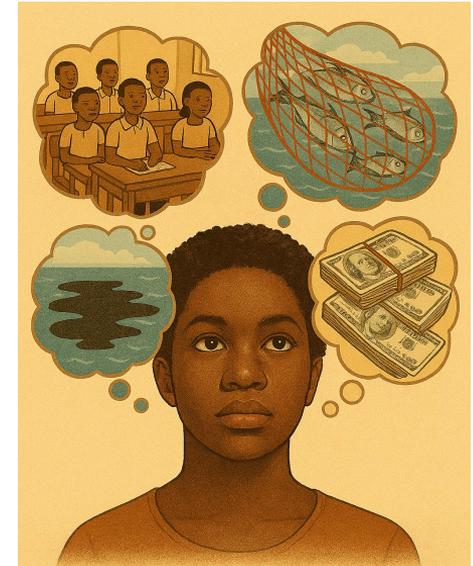
Everyone has Expectations (Examples)

Stakeholders

No direct influence, limited understanding, possibly affected

- Fully understand project
- Influence project design
- Gain tangible benefits (personal / community)
- Get individual attention
- Advance other interests (status, rights)

➜ Warrant effort of getting involved

➜ Maximise future opportunities

Proponent

Specific objectives, technical understanding, influence over project

- Predictable engagement process
- Address all stakeholder concerns
- Buy in from stakeholders
- Clear implementable outcomes

➜ Reduce risks to project

➜ Reasonable effort and cost

Authorities

Some understanding and influence, decision-maker

- Alignment between stakeholders and proponent
- Minimal negative societal impacts
- Maximal societal benefits

➜ Straightforward decision-making

➜ Broad acceptance of outcome

Why Manage Expectations

- Expectations affect project acceptance now and/or later:

    - $Expectations \geq Baseline/Reality$ **Cooperation now and later**

    - $Expectation < Baseline =$ **Opposition now**   (fear off loss)

    - $Reality < Expectation =$ **Disappointment / opposition later**   (negative attitude towards project)

- Misalignment often due to limited information and understanding of project capabilities

    ➔ More likely where a project is:

    - First of its kind (limited stakeholder experience)

    - Prominently discussed in society (raising expectations of impact / benefit potential)

    - Perceived to threaten existing livelihoods / resources (fear of loss creates opposition)

    - Perceived as a sole solution in the absence of other opportunities (outsizing its importance)
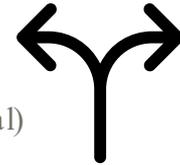
How to *Manage* Expectations – Before Engagement

Expectations are stakeholder-specific – solutions must be too

- Understand stakeholders:
  - Dynamics (social, political, economic)
  - Expectation, hopes and needs (through engagement, surveys etc)
  - Capacity and capability to engage

- Group stakeholders based on their capacity, capability, expectations, project familiarity and potential impact
  - ➔ Fewer groups allows more attention on each group

- Determine purpose and desired outcome of engagement for each group

- Tailor engagement strategy: Match message, engagement method, timing and frequency to stakeholder group and desired outcome

How to *Manage* Expectations – During Engagement

1) Set the scene with stakeholders:

- Discuss each party's **role** and **expectations** in relation to project

- Discuss specific **objectives** of this engagement (information, specific input, approval, future involvement, compensation..)

- Discuss engagement **method** preferred by stakeholder group

- Be transparent about what can and cannot be delivered – communicate **constraints**

2) Agree and record clear commitments and realistic timelines - break those into interim steps

How to *Manage* Expectations – During Engagement

3) Adhere to good engagement principles:

- Transparent and **consistent** communication

- Use messages and *messengers* that stakeholder groups can **relate to** (are familiar with)

- **Repeat** key information at every opportunity, break down complexity (with examples people can relate to)

- Employ cultural sensitivity, personal empathy and active listening **skills**

➔ **Build trust with stakeholders** – over time

4) Periodically re-evaluate engagement – are objectives being met, does format still work

How to *Meet* Expectations

- DELIVER on agreed objectives, commitments and timelines
  - **Report** to stakeholders on progress in meeting commitments
  - **Explain** if and why something has changed / cannot be met
  - **Show** stakeholders how their input is used
  - **Jointly** track items for addressing in future
- Track and discuss any changes in expectations and objectives
- Jointly decide adjustments to engagement process over time

Expectations management in action:

Stakeholders' views and reactions are varied – depend on personal or cultural background, experiences, circumstances and aspirations (even within the same community)

➔ Do not expect stakeholder engagement to result in uniform / permanent opinions

➔ Rather aim to build trust and enable informed and constructive participation
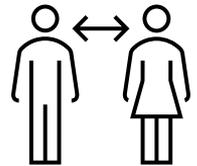
Conclusion

- Projects happen within societal context

  - Various forms of stakeholder engagement are almost always required

  - Beware of pitfalls

- Meeting expectations is critical to achieving constructive partnership with stakeholders – requires:

  - *Managing* expectations through appropriate communication and realistic commitments

  - *Meeting* expectations through delivery on commitments (or joint adaptation)

➔ Build trust and enable ongoing informed and constructive participation
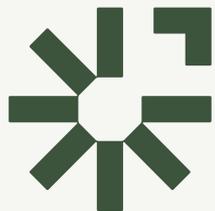
Making
Sustainability
Happen

SLRCONSULTING.COM

Sue Reuther

SLR MEA Energy Sector Lead

M +27 84 424 5197
E sreuther@slrconsulting.com