

FROM TRAINING TO PRODUCTIVE CAPABILITY

Building Namibia's Workforce and
Indigenous Contractor Base
Around Real Energy Sector Projects

SESSION C • CONTRACTORS

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THE WARNING SIGNAL

When opportunity is not built at home, people follow opportunity elsewhere.

The Atlantic route to Spain's Canary Islands is a stark expression of a wider jobs-and-opportunity problem—not a simple story about “unskilled migration.”

46,843

irregular arrivals to the
Canaries in 2024

17,788

arrivals in 2025 — down 62%

1,214

dead or missing in 54
shipwrecks in 2025

The policy question is not how to stop mobility. It is how to make staying, learning and building at home a credible economic choice.

Sources: IOM DTM (2025); Frontex (2025). Photo: Canary Islands migrant rescue, Canarias7.

Africa does not have a shortage of ambition. It has a conversion problem.

Skills and aspirations must convert into productive jobs, firms and industrial capability.

>1 in 4

African youth are NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training.)

ILO, 2024

85%

of global working-age population growth to 2050 will be in Africa

OECD/AUC, 2024

17%

of tertiary-educated African-born people lived abroad in 2020

OECD/AUC, 2024

80% → 8%

youth aspire to high-skilled work; only a small share obtain it

OECD/AUC, 2024

Meanwhile, OECD countries continue to use labour migration to respond to skill shortages and demographic change. The “pull” is real. Africa’s answer must be equally real: competitive work, credible careers and productive firms.

NAMIBIA'S WINDOW IS OPEN

The discoveries are geological. The dividend must be institutional.

36.9%

national unemployment rate reported from the 2023 census labour-force analysis

2030

target cited for first oil — with major development decisions expected before then

This is the capability-building runway: map demand now, train against it, attach learning to projects, and graduate local firms into execution.

Sources: Namibia Statistics Agency (2025); Reuters (2025); Namibia Petroleum Commissioner reporting.



The pivot: train for the project pipeline — not the certificate pipeline.

- Which capabilities should Namibia prioritise over the next three to five years?



01	PROJECT DEMAND	Start with work packages, occupational demand and timing.
02	COMPETENCY	Define what a person must be able to do safely and independently.
03	CERTIFICATION	Use standards as evidence of competence—not as the end product.
04	WORK EXPOSURE	Require supervised practice on live or simulated industrial systems.
05	PLACEMENT / CONTRACT	Measure whether training converts into work and local execution.

Build the workforce around real energy-sector work packages.

A practical 3–5 year capability map for Namibia.

Asset integrity

Corrosion • coatings • cathodic protection • NDT / inspection

Construction

Welding • fabrication • rigging & lifting • mechanical completion

Operations

Instrumentation & control • electrical • rotating equipment • maintenance

Offshore / HSE

Process safety • permit-to-work • lifting • emergency response • marine awareness

Project delivery

QA/QC • planning • cost control • document control • supply chain

Digital layer

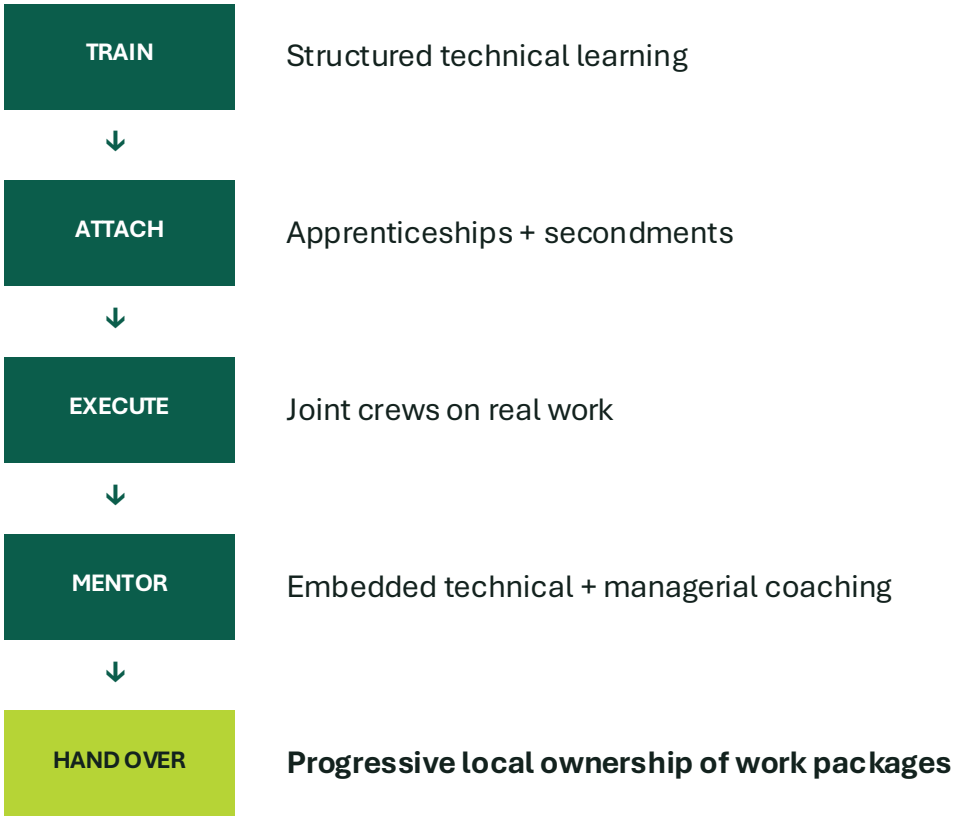
Automation • data capture • condition monitoring • AI-enabled maintenance

Priority should follow verified project demand and procurement schedules; this is a capability map, not a forecast of guaranteed jobs.



Technology transfer is not a workshop. It is a transfer of responsibility.

- What mechanisms actually build local know-how and managerial capability?



Measure: tasks independently executed • local supervisors qualified • defects/rework • HSE • local supplier spend • repeat contracts

An African lesson: capability grows when policy meets plant, people and projects.

Solewant Group's Nigerian experience illustrates the sequence from local-content intent to industrial execution.



- PLANT** Pipe milling, coating, fabrication, laboratory and preservation facilities
- PEOPLE** Engineers, technicians, coating specialists and training pathways
- PROJECTS** Execution for local and international oil & gas clients
- STANDARDS** NDT, QA/QC, corrosion protection and industrial process discipline

Solewant's stated objectives include employment generation, engineer training and local-content technology transfer.

What Namibia should copy — and what it should consciously avoid.

- African lessons should be translated into design choices, not country rankings.

COPY

- ✓ Tie training to awarded / forecast work packages
- ✓ Create supplier-development ladders, not one-off SME workshops
- ✓ Use international standards while building local testing / QA capability
- ✓ Require joint execution and progressive transfer of scopes
- ✓ Track local value by capability, productivity and repeatability

AVOID

- ✗ Certificate counts as the headline KPI
- ✗ Front companies / nominal ownership without capability
- ✗ Local-content targets detached from cost, quality and schedule
- ✗ Training cohorts with no placement or work-exposure pathway
- ✗ Waiting until FID / construction peak to start capability building

THE CONTRACTOR DEVELOPMENT LADDER

Local participation should mature into local execution.

1 REGISTER

Visible local supplier

2 QUALIFY

HSE • QA • financial systems

3 PARTNER

JV / mentoring / OEM support

4 EXECUTE

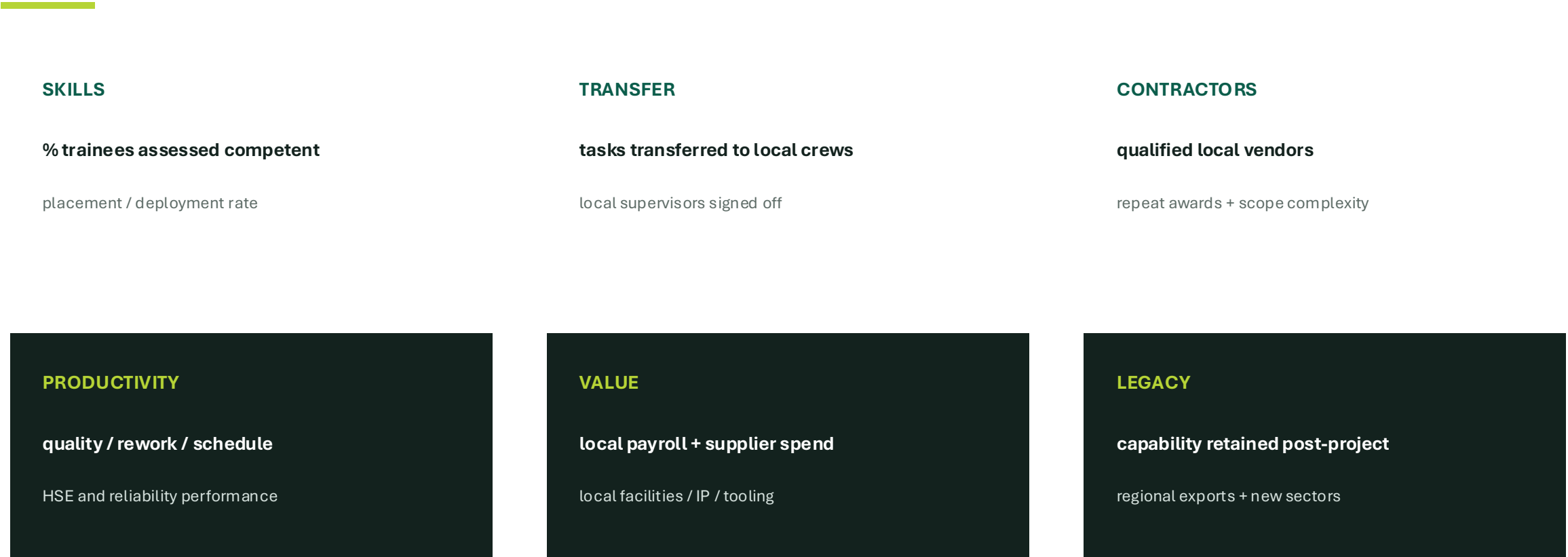
Defined work package

5 LEAD

Repeat delivery + regional export

Change the scoreboard: measure productive capability, not activity.

A local-content dashboard for government, operators, EPCs, trainers and contractors.



If the dashboard cannot show rising independent execution, technology transfer is not yet complete.



C12 • ONE MEASURABLE COMMITMENT

Build a “Training → Exposure → Competence” pathway before first production.

- 01 Select occupations from verified project demand
- 02 Train to recognised competency standards
- 03 Attach trainees to supervised industrial exposure
- 04 Assess workplace competence—not attendance
- 05 **Track deployment and contractor absorption**

Commit to a published cohort + placement target once partners and project demand are validated.

THE RESOURCE CURSE IS NOT A DESTINY. IT IS A DESIGN FAILURE.

Richard Auty's warning: mineral wealth can distort an economy rather than transform it when institutions, competitiveness and diversification do not keep pace.

RENT

Resource revenue without capability

IMPORT

Projects without domestic value chains

DEPEND

One sector crowds out productive diversification

Namibia can invert the paradox: convert resource projects into skills, firms, technology and exportable industrial capability.

Source: Auty, R. M. (1993), Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis.

Do not merely produce oil. Produce capability.

Demand → Skills → Exposure → Technology Transfer → Indigenous Contractor Capability → Measurable Local Value

The real local-content legacy is what Namibians can still design, build, operate, maintain and export after the construction boom has passed.

Thank you

Dr. Benjamin A. Ubleble • Solewant Energy Training Institute

Selected evidence base

APA-style references used in the presentation.

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Solewant Group. (2026). Company website: facilities, competencies, projects and local-content objectives.

Image credits: user-supplied Solewant Group operational photographs; Canary Islands migration image (Canarias7); Namibia offshore rig image (Bizcommunity). Solewant web research used to verify company capabilities and context.