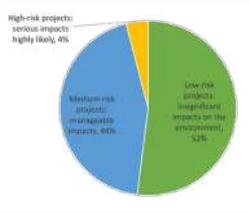


EIA Insights

Issue 1 March 2026

The Value of Information

How to use the EIA Tracker and other online tools



New Guidelines Available

New guides for landowners and all Namibians



Professional Council

The case for an EAP professional council



Introducing EIA Insights

The environmental assessment sector in Namibia plays a vital role in sustainable development for the country, in accordance with the Environmental Management Act of 2007 (EMA) and associated 2012 Regulations.

Every significant development project requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process as part of an Application for an Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) to the Office of the Environmental Commissioner (OEC) in the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT). In addition, ECCs need to be renewed every three years at present, requiring proof of compliance to the Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) through regular Environmental Performance Reports, as well as updates of the approved EMPs. By following national legislation and relevant (international) best practices, and conducting effective EIAs, Environmental Assessment Practitioners (EAPs) can assist the OEC with informed decision-making and guide development in ways that bring positive socio-economic outcomes while causing the least social and biophysical harm.

The Environmental Assessment Professionals Association of Namibia (EAPAN) is the largest formal professional body representing EAPs in Namibia. Its purpose is to promote ethical, competent, and standardised practice in EIAs through registration of practitioners, promoting a professional code of conduct, and capacity building (see next page for further details on EAPAN).

While many EAPs endeavour to align their work with the objectives of EAPAN, ongoing professional development is not always given sufficient emphasis. In addition, there is not adequate legislation in place to ensure that EAPs leading complex EIA processes possess the appropriate expertise and qualifications for this role. As a result, some practitioners feel that professional recognition remains limited, and concerns have been



raised regarding inconsistencies in the quality of EIAs. This, in turn, reduces the effectiveness of the EIA sector in supporting sustainable and positive development within the country.

EIA Insights will provide an avenue for EAPs, the OEC, competent authorities, and other stakeholders to share their thoughts, ideas, and concerns regarding the state of this sector, both positive and negative, and to suggest where improvements are required. This newsletter aims to provide an open forum for constructive discussion on EIAs, the current state of sustainable development in Namibia, and sharing of lessons and experiences to help improve policies, practices and accountability for the benefit of all Namibians and our environment.

The three partner institutions behind this newsletter – EAPAN, the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE), and the Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society (NEWS) – will share their latest initiatives and reflections relating to the sector.

We therefore invite all EAPs, civil servants within the OEC, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and other concerned stakeholders to submit thought pieces, suggestions, graphics and photographs to **EIA Insights** as contributions to future editions of this bi-annual newsletter. Email gailsfelines@gmail.com for more information on how and what to submit.

The value of information for better environmental management practices

Not all of the relevant information pertaining to past EIAs* is publicly available. After ECCs are approved for a project by the OEC, the approved EIA report, with Specialist Studies, the EMPs, and all other supporting documents for those projects are removed from the system. This lack of information makes it difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate the current status of a project or whether the project proponents are adhering to their EMPs.

For this reason, we recommend that all latest approved EMPs (as well as the approved EIA reports with Specialist Studies) should be made available and accessible to both the general public and to all company employees on a permanent basis, on company web sites and that this be mandatory and included in the revised EMA.

Further, we recommend that a 24-hour whistleblower hotline be established to the OEC for both the public and employees to anonymously report practices that violate the requirements of the ECC, EMP and EMA. A register of reports must be maintained, and follow-up action implemented as necessary.

Announcements for public comment and stakeholder engagement for projects requiring EIAs are scattered among national newspapers and therefore easy to miss. It is in the interest of the Namibian public, and especially Interested and/or Affected Parties (I&APs) related to each project, to know how, where, and when developments are taking place in the country.



The Environmental Information System (EIS) hosts a wide variety of information on Namibia, including EIAs going back to 2019

It is the responsibility of the experienced Lead EAP to ensure that the public participation process—including the identification of Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs), appropriate information sharing, and related activities—is carefully planned and tailored to each project and its context, in line with the EIA Regulations and recognized best practices. All reasonable efforts should be made to engage I&APs. This is important for several reasons: (i) to ensure stakeholders are properly informed, reducing speculation, rumours, and unnecessary concern; (ii) to involve stakeholders early in the process; and (iii) to draw on the knowledge, experience, and insights of stakeholders, helping to identify key

What is the Environmental Assessment Professionals of Namibia (EAPAN)?

The Environmental Assessment Professionals Association of Namibia (EAPAN) is a forum and voluntary association under Namibian Common Law established in 2012 for advancing innovation, promoting international best practice and developing capacity in all forms of environmental assessment at local, regional and national levels in Namibia. EAPAN's vision is to provide a national network on best practice in the use of environmental assessment for informed decision-making regarding policies, programmes, plans and projects.

Members of EAPAN include experienced and emerging EAPs and environmental managers who abide by the EAPAN Code of Conduct in their professional service provision. This Code emphasises professionalism, transparency, honesty, and adherence to legal and ethical principles when conducting professional activities in the environmental sector.

Each year, EAPAN hosts a mini-conference alongside its AGM (please see <https://eapan.org/resources> for outputs from past conferences), where knowledgeable practitioners and expert guest speakers present on topics relevant to the environmental and EIA sectors. These events provide an opportunity for EAPs and other stakeholders to network, share experiences, and enhance their professional capacity.

One of EAPAN's goals is to introduce students to the sector and provide guidance for early-career practitioners. Since conducting environmental and social impact assessments requires experience and knowledge, EAPAN provides a pathway for young Namibians to enter the sector and ultimately establish their own professional enterprises.

For more information on how to become a member of EAPAN, visit <https://eapan.org/>.



*Sometimes referred to as Environmental and Social Impact Assessments (ESIA), although social issues are implicit in EIAs, as should be economic matters.

environmental and social aspects and associated potential negative and positive impacts to be assessed in the EIA process.

A key concern is that public participation processes are not always adequately planned or implemented to achieve the intended objectives of consultation within the EIA process. In some cases, ineffective practices can limit meaningful public engagement and weaken the overall quality of the EIA, for example through poorly visible media notices, use of less accessible publications, or timing during December holiday periods. Furthermore, appropriate engagement tools should be tailored to different communities to ensure that relevant I&APs and key stakeholders are properly informed and consulted, which is not always consistently achieved.

We recommend that, where a public participation process has been inadequately undertaken, the EAP should be required to submit a plan to the OEC detailing how the process will be improved prior to a decision on the application for an ECC. The plan should demonstrate how I&APs' comments and concerns will be addressed and how reasonable opportunities to comment on draft reports will be provided. As part of its EIA review, MEFT should consider substantiated stakeholder complaints regarding inadequate public participation. In addition, outlining the proposed public participation approach in the Background Information Document (BID) would allow MEFT to assess its adequacy at an early stage and avoid delays later in the process (More information on the BID in the next section).



Good news on information sharing: the EIS and EIA Tracker

To make information more readily available to all stakeholders, NCE set up several public databases as part of the [Environmental Information Service for Namibia](#). The [EIAs for Public Comment](#) database includes all of the documents associated with current and past development projects, along with their respective deadlines for public comment. Once entered in the database, these documents remain on the site permanently, which allows the user to find EIAs and related documentation for development projects going back to 2019. There are currently more than 6,150 EIAs on the system.

Even more details are available for EIAs registered since 2023 through the [EIA Tracker](#), a collaboration between NEWS and NCE. The Tracker presents current and past EIAs (these can be filtered by date, type of project, risk category, and other criteria) on an interactive map of Namibia. Collecting the relevant information to populate the Tracker has revealed some cracks in the current system, as some EAPs have refused to provide Background Information Documents (BIDs) upon request (even though this is illegal). Read more about these issues [here](#).

The BID is an important way of sharing key information on a proposed project with stakeholders, early in the EIA process. It typically includes:

- the name of the project,
- the proponent and EAP,
- the proposed project activities and facilities with relevant locality and layout maps,
- its location,
- the receiving environment (ecological and social),
- public participation process,
- a timeline,

What is the Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE)?

The Namibian Chamber of Environment (NCE) is a non-profit non-governmental membership-based umbrella organisation currently representing 86 organisations working in the environmental sector in Namibia. EAPAN and some of its members are members of NCE.

NCE's aspirational objectives are to: 1) conserve the natural environment; 2) protect indigenous biodiversity and endangered species; 3) promote best environmental practices; and 4) support efforts to prevent and reduce environmental degradation and pollution.

These aspirations are achieved through the following strategic programme areas: 1) represent the environmental interests of NCE members; 2) act as a consultative forum for NCE members; 3) engage with policy and lawmakers to improve environmental policy and its implementation; 4) build environmental skills in young Namibians; 5) support and advise NCE members on environmental matters; and 6) facilitate access to good quality environmental information.

NCE membership is free and open to Namibian-registered NGOs or businesses that are involved in environmental matters (full members) or individuals and non-Namibian NGOs that are similarly engaged in the Namibian environmental sector (associate members). To find out more about NCE and how to become a member, visit <https://n-c-e.org/>.

- anticipated impacts, and
- contact details of the EAP.

There are, however, numerous instances where no BID is prepared, or where the BID is of poor quality or lacks sufficient information. This undermines its purpose of adequately “setting the scene” for the public participation process and limits meaningful engagement by I&APs. Also, there are some EAPs who are reluctant to share BIDs with stakeholders. By law, an EAP must share the BID with whoever registers as an I&AP. It is not within the authority of EAPs to decide on who may or may not receive these documents.

We recommend that no EIA may proceed until the project BID is loaded onto the MEFT EIA website. We further recommend that, when stakeholders report EAPs to the OEC for not sharing BIDs, that the OEC instructs the EAP to halt all work until an adequate BID, with appropriate technical information, has been shared.

The EIA database kept by the Tracker has given some interesting insights to EIAs in Namibia. Analyses of the data in 2024 revealed that 52% of the projects are considered ‘low-risk’, having negligible social and environmental impacts, while 44% are ‘medium-risk’ and only 4% are ‘high-risk’ – projects that could have serious impacts. This suggests that the OEC could save time and resources by developing simpler and more efficient processes for low-risk projects. This will free up resources for better evaluations and long-term monitoring of medium- and high-risk projects.

Since each project is categorised in the Tracker according to its kind of development (e.g. mining, agriculture, tourism), one can determine trends over time. An analysis of EIAs registered from 2019 to 2024 reveals that EIAs for exploration and mining increased significantly (Figure 2), while all other developments combined have declined (Figure 3). Mining companies must go where the minerals occur. Other sectors tend to go where the investment environment, ease of doing business and related policies are most favourable. These worrying trends are confirmed by economic data.

Another service offered by NCE is the dissemination of newspaper adverts for EIAs. By law, all stakeholder meetings and calls for public input into EIAs must be advertised in local newspapers. It is easy to miss these adverts if you do not buy newspapers regularly, which is why NCE collects them from all newspapers every week and disseminates them via email. If you would like to join the mailing list to keep track of these adverts, contact admin@n-c-e.org.

Learning from the EIA Tracker data

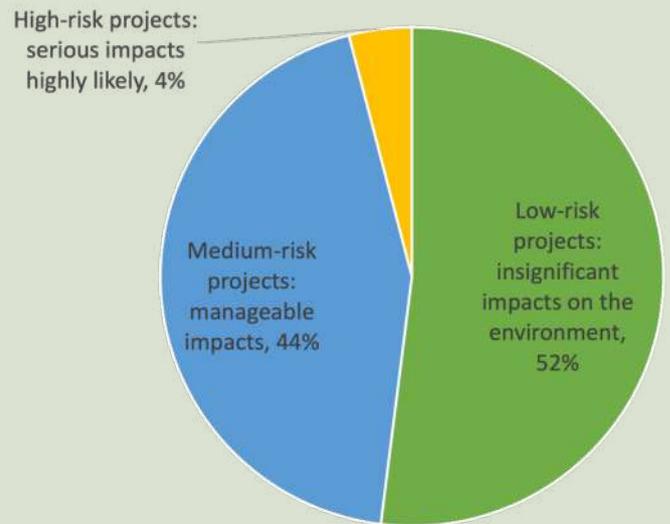


Figure 1. Percentage of EIAs rated as high, medium and low risk out of 615 EIAs on the EIA Tracker system in 2024.

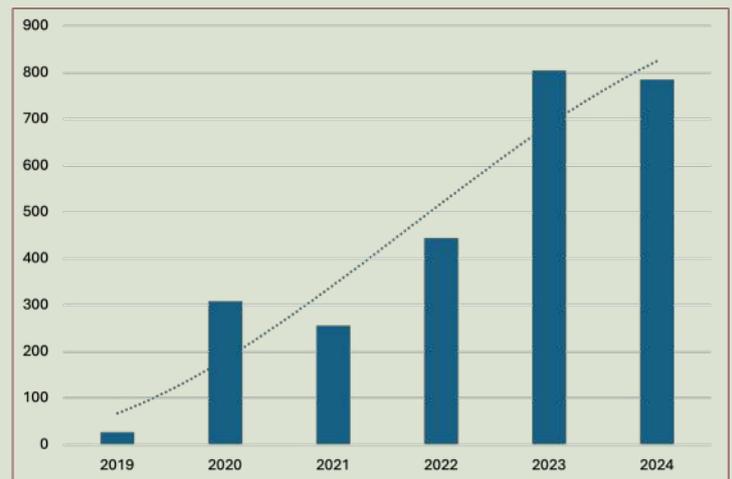


Figure 2. Exploration and mining EIAs registered with the Office of the Environmental Commissioner, 2019 - 2024

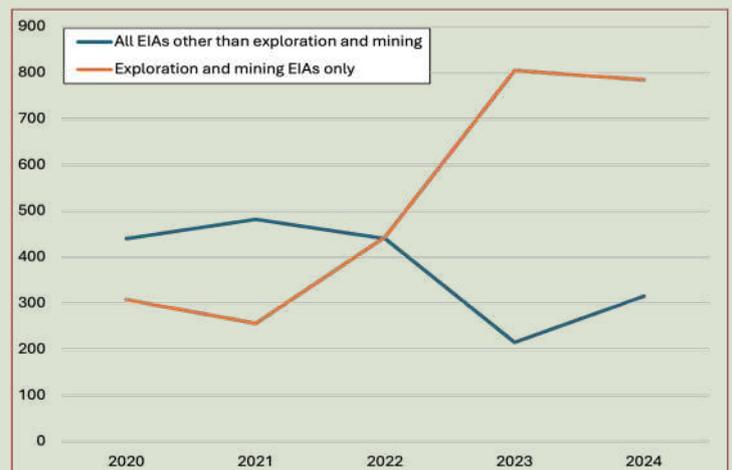


Figure 3. EIAs in Namibia, 2020 to 2024

Guide to EIAs for landowners and custodians



Many landowners and custodians (community institutions on communal land and managers of national parks) do not fully understand the EIA process or their rights once an EIA has been granted. NCE and EnviroScience therefore produced a set of guidelines for landowners and custodians that describes the whole EIA process, including points at which Interested and Affected Parties (IAPs) can provide input.

If an EIA is granted for mining exploration or prospecting, then landowners and custodians have options for limiting the negative impacts of these activities and ensuring that the prospector or geologist conducts their operations responsibly. The document includes template agreements that cover exploration visits (no samples may be taken) and prospecting visits (samples may be taken).

A formal agreement provides a means for the landowner or custodian to protect their operations (e.g. farming, tourism) and environment from irresponsible exploration and prospecting activities. The agreement should hold the prospector to the terms of the legally binding Environmental Management Plan (EMP). If the terms of agreement are broken, especially those relating to the EMP, the landowner or custodian could prevent the prospector from entering their land and report their conduct to the OEC and Mining Commissioner.

You can obtain these guidelines by contacting admin@n-ce.org.

Coming soon: Guide to the Environmental Rights of all Namibians



The right to a healthy environment is enshrined in the Namibian Constitution, yet few Namibian citizens know their rights as they relate to a clean, healthy, and safe environment. There is also a lack of awareness regarding national regulations that ought to safeguard these rights. As a result, when rights are trampled in favour of development proponents, little or nothing is done about it.

To create greater awareness about the environmental rights of Namibians, NCE is collaborating with the Environmental Lawyers Network of Namibia, the Legal Assistance Centre and the Office of the Ombudsman to produce a handbook entitled: Guide to the Environmental Rights of all Namibians. This handbook, still in draft, provides an overview of international and national laws that pertain to human rights and associated environmental rights.

Critically, the handbook explains the procedural rights relating to the Environmental Management Act, which include: access to information, public participation, and access to justice. If more Namibian citizens made use of these rights, the EIA process would improve, and development projects would involve fewer rights violations.

Another key issue the handbook addresses is the lack of secure land tenure for people living in communal areas, which makes them more vulnerable to uncontrolled and illegal development practices than freehold farmers. Communal farmers can nonetheless pose some constraints on mining prospectors if they use the Guide to EIAs referenced previously (and included in the handbook as an Annex).



The case for a Professional Council for EAPs



The environmental assessment and management profession in Namibia is currently unregulated. Any individual can therefore set up an environmental assessment company and offer services to development proponents to conduct EIAs, and draft and implement EMPs, with limited or no qualifications and experience in the environmental sector.

Further, since EAPs are not currently held to any standards of professionalism or code of conduct, there is much scope for conducting EIAs in a manner that undermines the provisions and purpose of the Environmental Management Act.

This situation allows for unqualified and unscrupulous individuals to conduct substandard EIAs and prepare EIA Reports and EMPs that do not meet the required standard. Young Namibians who want to enter this profession have no guidelines as to the kinds of qualifications and experience required to become an EAP, and no means to distinguish themselves from non-qualified EAPs if they are suitably qualified.

It is therefore necessary to establish an Environmental Assessment Practitioners Council of Namibia that will fulfil a similar role to the Health Professions Council of Namibia and the proposed Teaching Profession Council of

Namibia. The Council would function as a self-regulatory juristic body that maintains a register of qualified environmental assessment professionals who subscribe to a code of professional conduct. It would report directly to the Minister of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) on its activities and provide advice to the Minister on EIA and environmental matters as required.

This body will be tasked with setting standards of competence (e.g. through exams and/or recognition of existing qualifications) required for EAPs and Lead EAPs (those with at least five years' experience who lead EIA teams). Once registered, the EAP (or Lead EAP) would receive a certificate that would allow them to undertake EIAs – development proponents would be required by law to employ registered EAPs only.

The Council will have the power to establish a code of conduct (subject to ministerial approval) and implement disciplinary measures against registered EAPs that do not adhere to the code. This measure would serve to root out corruption, illegal actions, and substandard services within the sector, to the benefit of professional, principled EAPs and development proponents, ultimately ensuring negative impacts from project activities are avoided / minimised and positive impacts enhanced.

As a voluntary association, EAPAN would continue to provide services, training opportunities, and professional networking for EAPs alongside this statutory body. These two bodies could therefore work together to upgrade the skills and capacities of Namibian EAPs, thus promoting responsible, sustainable development.



What is the Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society (NEWS)?

The Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society's (NEWS) vision is to be an influential, membership-based environmental organisation with a country-wide network of members and partners in order to make an active and positive contribution to the conservation of our natural environment and sustainable development.

NEWS provides a forum for public discussion of environmental topics of interest and concern in Namibia. It focuses on education and outreach to inspire young Namibians to care for their environment and get involved in nature conservation with pride and passion.

NEWS membership includes affordable options for individuals (free membership for students) and schools, while corporate memberships provide an avenue for private companies to support NEWS. Their activities include regular talks, excursions, and publications that seek to create awareness and promote understanding of a wide range of environmental matters that affect Namibia.

To find out more about NEWS and how to become a member, visit <https://news-namibia.org/news-what-we-do/>.



Acronyms used in the environmental assessment sector

BID	Background Information Document
DEA	Department of Environmental Affairs
EAP	Environmental Assessment Practitioner
EAPAN	Environmental Assessment Professionals Association of Namibia
EC	Environmental Commissioner
ECC	Environmental Clearance Certificate
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
EMA	Environmental Management Act
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
I&AP	Interested and Affected Party
MEFT	Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism
NCE	Namibian Chamber of Environment
NEWS	Namibian Environment & Wildlife Society
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OEC	Office of the Environmental Commissioner

