ESWATINI ELECTRICITY COMPANY

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

FOR

Eswatini Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (P508960)

(Based on SEP prepared for

NETWORK REINFORCEMENT AND ACCESS PROJECT)

December 13, 2024

DRAFT

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CANGO	Coordinating Assembly for NGO's
CES	CES Environmental and Social Advisory Services
CLO	Community Liaison Officer
CSS	Construction Site Supervisor
EEA	Eswatini Environmental Authority
EEC	Eswatini Electricity Company
EHS	Environmental, Health and Safety
ENTC	Eswatini National Trust Commission
ENL	Eswatini Nation Land
ESF	Environmental and Social Framework
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoKE	Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini
GRC	Grievance Redress Committee
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
I&AP	Interested and Affected Parties
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
KII	Key Informant Interview
kV	Kilovolt
LMP	Labor Management Procedure
MCC	Marketing and Corporate Communications
MNRE	Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy
MTK	MTK Sustainability Consultants
MVA	Mega Volt Amp
NATIC	Nhlangano AIDS Training Information and Counselling Centre
NERCHA	National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS

NGOs	Non-government organizations
NRAP	Network Reinforcement and Access Project
NSC	National Steering Committee
PAP/s	Project Affected Person/s
PCP	Project Contact Person
PIU	Project Implementation Unit
Project	Eswatini Network Reinforcement and Access Project
RA	Regional Administrator
RAP	Resettlement Action Plan
RPF	Resettlement Policy Framework
SCADA	Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SHERQ	Safety, Health, Environmental, Risk and Quality
SSO	Social Standards Officer
WLSA	Women and Law in Southern Africa-Swaziland
WB	World Bank

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Grievance mechanism	A grievance mechanism is a process for receiving, investigating, responding to and closing out complaints or grievances from affected communities in a timely, fair and consistent manner
Grievance	A formal expression of discontent concerning company or contractor actions raised by one or more stakeholders. Same as ‘concern’, ‘complaint’ and ‘issue’
Complainant	An individual, group or organization who submits a grievance to the company.
Concern	A formal expression of discontent concerning company or contractor actions raised by one or more stakeholders. Same as ‘complaint’, ‘grievance’ and ‘issue’.
Anonymous Grievance	Grievances where the identity of the complainant is not known to the company.
Community	A group of people who share a common sense of identify and interact with one another on a sustained basis.
Stakeholder	Individuals or groups who can affect, or are affected by, or have a legitimate interest in the company’s performance. Stakeholders can include, but are not limited to: government officials, communities, NGOs, media, contractors, business organizations and legislative and regulatory authorities.

Gender-based violence	Is an umbrella term which includes many harmful behaviors? These include Sexual Exploitation and Abuse ("SEA") and Sexual Harassment ("SH").
Project Affected	Any individual who, as a result of the land acquisition required for the Project, Person (PAP) loses the right to own, use, or otherwise benefit from a built structure, land residential, agricultural, pasture or undeveloped / unused land), annual or perennial crops and trees, or any other fixed or moveable asset, either in full or in part, permanently or temporarily.
Resettlement	The displacement or relocation of an affected population from one location to another within the national territory, and the restructuring or creation of comparable living conditions.
Resettlement Action Plan (RAP)	A plan that provides a comprehensive set of actions for addressing impacts related to physical and economic displacement. It describes the procedures and activities that will be taken to compensate for losses, mitigate adverse project impacts, and provide development benefits to those who will be resettled or displaced as a result of a project.
Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF)	A requirement for projects with sub-projects or multiple components that cannot be identified before project approval. The framework clarifies resettlement principles, organizational arrangements, and design criteria to be applied to subprojects to be prepared during project implementation.
Sexual exploitation	any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power or trust for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another (UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 2017, pg. 6).
Sexual harassment	Any unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.
Sexual Abuse	Actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions (UN Glossary on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse 2017, pg. 5).
Service provider	An organization that provides a holistic approach in responding to GBV survivors

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview

This document is the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) for the proposed **Eswatini Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation Project (P508960) -** ASCENT (the ASCENT, referred to hereinafter as "the Project").

1.1.1 Project Background

To achieve universal access to electricity by 2030, the Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini (GoKE) needs to provide 10,000 new household connections per year for 2025-2030 which is a 21% increase compared to 230,000 in 2022. Concessional funding is critical to provide on-grid and off-grid solutions to the remaining 18% of the population in Eswatini who are the poorest. In 2019, the World Bank approved the Network Reinforcement and Access Expansion project (NRAP-U$40 million equivalent IBRD) to reinforce the networks and provide 8,000 new household connections in Shiselweni, the poorest region in the country. To further strengthen the support, World Bank is proposing the ASCENT Eswatini project under the regional multi-phased approach to leverage lessons learned in NRAP and in other electrification activities in the country.

1.2 Project information

The Government of the Kingdom of Eswatini (GoKE), through the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE) and the Ministry of Finance (MoF), intends to apply for a loan of $50 million of IDA) from the World Bank for the implementation of the proposed ASCENT project. The project aims to connect 50,000 new household connections per year by the year 2030 with a specific yearly target of 10, 000 connections beginning 2025. The proposed ASCENT Eswatini will build on the existing NRAP in terms of implementation arrangements. This means that the Eswatini Electricity Company (EEC) will be the Project Implementation Agency and will manage the project on behalf of GoKE and, in this regard shall be responsible for project fiduciary and safeguard aspects.

1.3 Project Development Objective (PDO)

The proposed development objective of the Project is to *"to improve reliability of the distribution network and connect non-electrified household and public facilities in the country into the grid in Eswatini".*

1.4 Project Components

Component 1: On-grid Peri-urban and Rural Electrification

The objective of this Component is to improve the reliability of the distribution network and connect non-electrified household and public facilities in the country into the grid. It will finance various medium voltage (MV) and low voltage (LV) distribution works to reinforce weak segments of the distribution network, install control equipment in key segments of the network, and install LV distribution lines for last mile electrification. Specific activities will include: (a) construction of new feeders; (b) construction of new MV and LV distribution lines; (c) upgrade of existing MV distribution lines; (d) installation of remotely controlled protection equipment (auto-reclosers); and (e) installation of transformers; and (f) last mile electrification including installation of ready-boards

Component 2: Off-grid Electrification

This Component will support the establishment of Off-grid Finance Facility to mitigate risk and improve overall viability in the distribution of Solar Home Systems and installation of mesh-grids to provide connection to rural households. It will provide results-based and catalytic grants.

Component 3: Technical assistance, studies, capacity building, and implementation support

This Component will support various technical assistance activities among others on sector policy reforms, and resilience and sustainability; provide implementation support on monitoring and evaluation, procurement, contract management and supervision, safeguard, and gender; and support capacity building activities to strengthen sector capacities. It will also finance key sector development studies to enhance security of supply, network's reliability and efficiency, and sector financial viability.

1.5 Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP)

The SEP seeks to define a technically and culturally appropriate approach to consultation, disclosure and grievance redress. The goal of this SEP is to improve and facilitate decision making and create an atmosphere of understanding that actively involves project-affected people and other stakeholders in a timely manner, and that these groups are provided sufficient opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns that may influence Project decisions. The SEP is a useful tool for managing communications between EEC and its stakeholders.

1.5.1 Key Objectives of the SEP

The key objective of this SEP can be summarized as follows:

- Understand the stakeholder engagement requirements of the Kingdom of Eswatini legislation;
- Provide guidance for stakeholder engagement such that it meets the standards of International Best Practice;
- Identify key stakeholders that are affected, and/or able to influence the Project and its activities;
- Identify the most effective methods, timing and structures through which to share project information, and to ensure regular, accessible, transparent and appropriate consultation;
- Develops a stakeholders engagement process that provides stakeholders with an opportunity to engage in project planning and design and its implementation;
- Establish formal grievance/resolution mechanisms;
- Define roles and responsibilities for the implementation of the SEP;
- Define reporting and monitoring measures to ensure the effectiveness of the SEP and periodical reviews of the SEP based on findings.

1.6 Regulations and requirements

Statutes and Regulations

This SEP takes into account the existing institutional and regulatory framework within the context of the following Kingdom of Eswatini legal instruments:

- ✓ Environmental Management Act, 2002
- ✓ Electricity Act of 2007
- ✓ Environmental Audit, Assessment and Review Regulations, 2002
- ✓ Industrial Relations Act, 2000
- ✓ Employment Act 1980
- ✓ Occupational Health and Safety Act, 2001
- ✓ Factories, Machinery and Construction Works Act, 1972
- ✓ Workman's Compensation Act 7, 1983
- ✓ Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Act, 2018

- ✓ Children's Protection and Welfare Act 6, 2012
- ✓ The Constitution of Eswatini, 2005

In addition to Kingdom of Eswatini legal instruments, the SEP also takes into account the following international guidelines and standards:

- ✓ World Bank Environmental and Social Framework (ESF) which provides a set of Environmental and Social Standards (ESS)
- ✓ WB Environmental, Health and Safety (EHS) General Guidelines (2007) and EHS Industry-Specific Guidelines for Electricity Transmission and Distribution (2007).

1.7 Scope of Stakeholder engagement

As highlighted above, stakeholder engagement within the project environment is guided by the Environmental and Social Standard- 10 and the Electricity Act of 2007, Environmental Management Act, 2022, and the Constitution of Eswatini which stipulate that a person shall not be deprived of land without the due process of the law and where a person is deprived, that person shall be entitled to prompt and adequate compensation for any improvement on that land or loss consequent upon that deprivation unless otherwise provided by law. The Electricity services act states that the Company (Article 54), must first secure the land for the servitude through a negotiated agreement with the landowners and may place any conduit above and below the ground across any land upon which no buildings have been constructed in consultation with the municipality, chiefdom, whichever is applicable.

1.8 Engagements Considerations

In consideration of risks that might hinder active engagement with stakeholders, the project has identified Covid-19, extreme weather conditions which destroys communication lines, roads and other infrastructure and political unrests to be the highest risk and therefore precautionary measures have to be put in place.

1.8.1 Covid-19 considerations

In the event that Covid-19 restrictions in Eswatini are enacted, alternative ways will be adopted to manage consultations and stakeholder engagement in accordance with the local laws, policies, WHO Health and Safety Guidelines and new social norms in effect to prevent virus transmission should there be need during implementation of the project. This means effective and meaningful consultations to meet project, and stakeholder needs and adhere to the restrictions put in place by

the government and international best practices to contain virus spread. The alternate approaches to be practiced for stakeholder engagement will include having consultations in small groups as smaller meetings were now permitted while ensuring that distance and mask requirements are adhered to during the meeting, or else make reasonable efforts to conduct meetings through

1.8.2 Political unrest considerations and Extreme weather conditions impacts

With unforeseen political unrests that erupt over the night as well an extreme weather conditions that erupt anytime impacts the project at this point try to keep informed stakeholders at project level and community level using different approaches. At project level, the expectation is that stakeholders at this level such as government ministries, departments, NGO;s etc have access to ICT solutions effective for communication hence meetings through online channels (e.g., Zoom, Skype, etc.)will be employed for their engagement. This aims to diversifying means of communication and relying more on social media, chat groups, online platforms, and mobile Apps (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp groups, project web links/websites, etc.) for meeting, workshops and or feedback lines of communication. For those in communities, CLO's shall be used to share any information needed until a time it is safe to engage on the ground or damaged roads and bridges fixed. The above-mentioned approaches shall be reviewed and adjusted from time to time to stay in alignment with current country and company level regulations and or changes.

1.9 World Bank Requirements

Stakeholder engagement is a requirement for Investment Project Financing (IPF) supported by the World Bank. This SEP is designed to fulfil the project's requirements as stated in ESS-10 of the ESF. Its goal is to promote and support inclusive and transparent participation of all stakeholders in the design and implementation of the ASCENT. Specific objective of this SEP is to promote inclusiveness by crafting project level engagement plan (s) that will:

- Identify stakeholders and build and maintain a constructive relationship,
- Assess the level of stakeholder interest and support for the project,
- Promote and provide means for effective and inclusive engagement with project- affected parties,
- Ensure that appropriate project information on environmental and social risks and impacts is disclosed.

2 AN OVERVIEW OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

2.1 What is Stakeholder Engagement?

Stakeholder Engagement will be free of manipulation, interference, coercion, and intimidation, and conducted on the basis of timely, relevant, understandable and accessible information, in a culturally appropriate format. It will involve interactions between identified groups of people and to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to raise their concerns and opinions (e.g. by way of meetings, surveys, interviews and/or focus groups), and ensures that this information is taken into consideration when making project decisions.

An effective stakeholder engagement aims to develop a "social licence" to operate and will depend on mutual trust, respect and transparent communication between EEC and its stakeholders. It will thereby improve decision-making and performance by:

- **Managing costs:** Effective engagement can help project EEC avoid costs, in terms of money and reputation;
- **Managing risk:** Engagement helps project EEC and communities to identify, prevent, and mitigate environmental and social impacts that can threaten project viability;
- **Enhancing reputation:** By publicly recognising human rights and committing to environmental protection, EEC and financial institutions (World Bank) involved in financing the project can boost their credibility and minimise risks;
- **Avoiding conflict:** Understanding current and potential issues such as land rights and proposed project activities;
- **Improving corporate policy:** Obtaining perceptions about a project, which can act as a catalyst for changes and improvements in EEC corporate practices and policies;
- **Identifying, monitoring and reporting on impacts:** Understanding a project's impact on stakeholders, evaluating and reporting back on mechanisms to address these impacts; and
- **Managing stakeholder expectations:** Consultation also provides the opportunity for EEC to become aware of and manage stakeholder attitudes and expectations.

2.2 Principles for Effective Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement shall be informed by a set of principles defining core values underpinning interactions with stakeholders. Common principles based on International Best Practice include the following:

- **Commitment** is demonstrated when the need to understand, engage and identify the community is recognised and acted upon early in the process;
- **Integrity** occurs when engagement is conducted in a manner that fosters mutual respect and trust;
- **Respect** is created when the rights, cultural beliefs, values and interests of stakeholders and affected communities are recognised;
- **Transparency** is demonstrated when community concerns are responded to in a timely, open and effective manner;
- **Inclusiveness** is achieved when broad participation is encouraged and supported by appropriate participation opportunities; and
- **Trust** is achieved through open and meaningful dialogue that respects and upholds a community's beliefs, values and opinions.

2.2.1 Stakeholder Engagement Considerations

The following considerations shall be made when planning for stakeholder engagement:

- Time and resources**:**

It takes time to develop and build trust-based relationships with stakeholders. The consensus from practitioners is that from the outset relationships with stakeholders should develop and grow, and that these relationships should be nurtured and fostered not to fade.

Additional stakeholders might be identified that also want to be engaged. No willing stakeholder should be excluded from the process of engagement. Some stakeholders will need to be educated about the concept of engagement itself, as well as on the complex issues requiring specialised and technical knowledge. These demands can increase the cost of consultation required to meet external expectations, and often this occurs at a time when a project lacks the internal capacity and resources to implement a broad engagement strategy.

- It raises expectations**:**

Stakeholders can have unrealistically high expectations of benefits that may accrue to them from a project. As such EEC from the outset shall be clear on what they can and cannot do, establishing a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

In Eswatini, the engagement processes shall provide EEC with an opportunity to develop relationships with stakeholders and potential project partners who can assist with implementing corporate social responsibility projects.

- Securing stakeholder participation**:**

Cultural norms and values can prevent stakeholders from freely participating in meetings. Often there are conflicting demands within a community, and it can be challenging for a project to identify stakeholders who are representative of common interests. This shall be avoided by employing local consultants who are sensitive to local power dynamics, which will require project proponents to develop an awareness of the local context and implementing structures to support and foster effective stakeholder engagement.

- Consultation fatigue**:**

There is evidence to suggest that stakeholders can easily tire of consultation processes especially when promises are unfulfilled, and their opinions and concerns are not taken into consideration. Often stakeholders feel their lives are not improving as a result of a project and this can lead to consultation meetings being used as an area to voice complaints and grievances about the lack of development. This shall be avoided by coordinating stakeholder engagement during the ESIA process, and by ensuring practitioners do not make promises to stakeholders, but rather use the public consultation process as an opportunity to manage expectations, challenge misconceptions, disseminate accurate project information, and gather stakeholder opinions which are feedback to the client and other project specialists.

2.3 Stakeholder Identification

In order to develop an effective SEP, it is necessary to determine who the stakeholders are and understand their needs and expectations for engagement, and their priorities and objectives in relation to the Project. This information shall then be used to tailor engagement to each type of stakeholder. As part of this process, it shall be particularly important to identify individuals and

groups who may find it more difficult to participate and those who may be differentially or disproportionately affected by the project because of their marginalized or vulnerable status.

It is also important to understand how each stakeholder may be affected – or perceives they may be affected – so that engagement can be tailored to inform them and understand their views and concerns in an appropriate manner.

Stakeholders have been and shall continue to be identified on a continuing basis by identifying:

- Various stakeholder categories that may be affected by, or be interested in, the Project; and
- Specific individuals, groups, and organizations within each of these categories taking into account:
- The expected Project area of impact, that is the geographical area over which it may cause impacts (both positive and negative) over its lifetime, and therefore the localities within which people and businesses could be affected;
- The nature of the impacts that could arise and therefore the types of national/local government entities, NGOs, academic and research institutions and other bodies who may have an interest in these issues.

In general, engagement is directly proportional to impact and influence, and as the extent of impact of a project on a stakeholder group increases, or the extent of influence of a particular stakeholder on a project increases, engagement with that particular stakeholder group shall intensify and deepen in terms of the frequency and the intensity of the engagement method used. All engagement shall proceed on the basis of what are *culturally acceptable* and *appropriate methods* for each of the different stakeholder groups targeted.

2.4 Stakeholder identification and consultation methods

There are a variety of engagement techniques that shall be used to build relationships with stakeholders, gather information from stakeholders, consult with stakeholders, and disseminate project information to stakeholders.

When selecting an appropriate consultation technique, culturally appropriate consultation methods, and the purpose for engaging with a stakeholder group shall be considered. The technique mostly used in Eswatini are:

Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement Techniques

Engagement Technique	Appropriate application of the technique
Correspondences (Phone, Emails,letters)	Distribute information to Government officials, NGOs, Local Government, and organisations/agencies Invite stakeholders to meetings and follow-up
One-on-one meetings	Seeking views and opinions Enable stakeholder to speak freely about sensitive issues Build personal relationships Record meetings
Formal meetings	Present the Project information to a group of stakeholders Allow group to comment – opinions and views Build impersonal relation with high level stakeholders Disseminate technical information Record discussions
Public meetings	Present Project information to a large group of stakeholders, especially communities Allow the group to provide their views and opinions Build relationship with the communities, especially those impacted Distribute non-technical information Facilitate meetings with presentations, PowerPoint, posters etc. Record discussions, comments, questions.
Focus group meetings	Present Project information to a group of stakeholders Allow stakeholders to provide their views on targeted baseline information Build relationships with communities Record responses
Project website	Present project information and progress updates Disclose ESIA, ESMP, RPF and other relevant project documentation
Direct communication with affected crops/asset owners (Road component only)	Share information on timing of road clearance Agree options for removing crops and relocation of fences.
Road signs	Share information on project activities Reminders of potential impacts (e.g. for road clearance activities; remind crop owners to harvest crops and replant outside the road reservation)

Project leaflet	Brief project information to provide regular update Site specific project information.

2.5 Stakeholders identified

2.5.1 Stakeholder Government Ministries

Engagement with government shall serve two main purposes:

(i) Involve the ministries, departments and committees in each step of the Project to build consensus and ownership; and

(ii) Identify the governance framework for socio-economic development and environmental management.

Table 2 shows the potential role, interest and influence of each of the target audiences captured in the Project in as far as the mandate, history of involvement, resources and authority in development planning and decisions making are concerned.

Table 2: Stakeholder Government Ministries

Government			
Stakeholder	**Involvement in the project**	**Interest**	**Influence**
• **Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy** • **Ministry of Finance** • **Ministry of Health**	• Responsible for establishing the program implementing the access component. Perform quality assurance and approve payments for completed house connections • Provide oversight and control of disbursement project funds to the implementing agency. Monitor compliance of financial reporting of project funds by the implementing agency • Public Health Section shall assist with educating project stakeholders on health issues such as prevention of HIV • The Gender Department and Family Issues Assists with policies regarding vulnerable	High	Medium

• **Deputy Prime Minister's Office**	people and educating stakeholders about the legislation for preventing occurrence of gender based violence (GBV). • The National Children's Coordinating Unit (NCCU) Evaluate and review all existing National Legal instruments governing the treatment of children to ensure compliance with International children treatment standards, provisions and practices. Monitor and evaluate all National children, policies, plans & Programs and ensure that all stakeholders collaborate and contribute towards a National Children Development agenda • Department of Social Welfare develop, facilitate and monitor the implementation of effective policies and strategies on integrated social welfare services that meet the needs of all vulnerable groups. Implement comprehensive social welfare services focusing on all vulnerable groups. (families, older persons, disabilities, children, Ex-servicemen, substance abuse people, persons affected with HIV/AIDS) • National Disability Unit within the Department of Social Welfare is currently responsible for the coordination of interventions for Persons with Disabilities.		

2.5.2 Stakeholder Parastatals/Agencies

Table 3: Stakeholder Parastatals/Agencies

Government parastatals/agencies			
Stakeholder	**Potential Involvement in the project**	**Interest**	**Influence**
Eswatini Environmental Authority (EEA)	• Have the overall oversight and responsibility of ensuring compliance to environmental and social regulations by all organisations, persons, companies whose actions and processes have a potential environmental and social impact. • The Project will, from time to time, be required to obtain permits and authorisation prior to implementation of certain components of the project. Furthermore, EEA will frequently carryout inspection of the project implementation process to ensure compliance to the environmental and social regulations.	High	High
Eswatini National Trust Commission (ENTC)	• To be consulted on sensitive areas of nature conservation such as game reserves, heritage sites, etc. that the Project may affect.	Medium	Low
Town Boards of different impacted Towns	• The overriding institutions in the different Towns to be impacted by the project across the country. The councils governs private, commercial and government owned land in the different towns of the country. • The Project is expected to encroach and affect municipal land used for the provision of municipal services. The town councils shall from time to time be engaged to provide guidance and permission to use encroached land.	High	High

Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority	• Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority is a statutory Energy Regulatory Body established through the Energy Regulatory Act, 2007 (Act No.2 of 2007). The responsibilities include exercising control over the electricity supply industry (ESI) and regulation of generation, transmission, distribution, supply, use, import and export of electricity in Eswatini. • The Authority will provide information and guidance in resolving land disputes between parties affected by Project.	High	High
Regional Administrators	• According to the laws of the country, Regional Administration (RA) is the second level of government after National Government, which makes the all RA's to be affected by the project in the different regions important stakeholders. RA provides structures for national government to allocate resources in an efficient, effective and more equitable way to communities in the country. • Throughout the project life-cycle, Regional Administrators from the different affected regions shall be involved in the following when the need arises: • Facilitate resolution of community conflicts and land disputes in the Chiefdoms • Facilitate and monitor the implementation of the Project.	High	High
Traditional Authorities • **Chiefs** • **Community Liaison Officers**	• Local community leaders acting as representatives of their local community. Meetings with traditional authorities shall follow local practices and be held prior to any wider communication in local communities in order to respect the cultural and social structures. • Be involved in and facilitate the resolution of community conflicts and land disputes at community level in each affected chiefdoms of the	High	High

	project across all regions affected. • Facilitate and monitor the implementation of the Project. • Liaison Officers will be selected from each chiefdom to be a link between the community, chief and EEC.		
Eswatini Royal Police Service	• They are responsible for keeping law and order. The Project can bring crime, violence and other criminal offences. The services of this stakeholder will be on a as needed basis. • Their services shall also be requested to be used by the affected local communities to report Gender Based Violence Incidents. • The Eswatini Police has a department that is dedicated to address this kind of reports, making it a safe and fully capable environment to deal with Gender Based Violence cases. • The Police shall also assist in any disputes by community members on the project which might have violence risks.	Medium	Medium

2.5.3 Stakeholder Communities

For the On-grid Peri-urban and Rural Electrification component and maybe certain activities under Component 2, there shall be a need to communicate directly with owners of crops and fences who will be affected by clearance of the servitude. It is it not possible to identify these individuals at this stage, but the EEC shall be responsible for preparing a communication plan to discuss potential impacts and agree timing for Transmission clearance activities. However, communication on the timing of works is a crucial component of minimizing impact to crop/fence owners.

The On-grid Peri-urban and Rural Electrification shall cross communal land and smallholder farms; land used for grazing and subsistence farming, which is under traditional governance. The areas targeted by the project are both peri-urban and rural in nature and the population density differs according to area formation (peri-urban/rural), with scattered settlements and homesteads under rural areas and clustered settlements and homesteads in peri-urban areas. Additionally, with

the On grid and rural electrification component traversing a significant distance, stands to impact different regions scattered across the country, the relative impact is anticipated to be moderate-to medium high.

Furthermore, local communities might be affected during the construction of the distribution lines under the Rural electrification component as well as the Solar Home Systems and installation of mesh-grids. However, the extent can only be determined at a later stage of the project.

A ***provisional list of affected regions*** at this point can only be identified, further consultation and engagements shall identify each chiefdom affected specifically. These are listed below:

- Manzini region
- Lubombo region
- Hhohho region

2.5.4 Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) stakeholders

This project shall affect groups in the communities. These stakeholders shall provide information and guidance to ensure that marginalized groups in the communities are considered and involved in the project implementation.

- **Nhlangano AIDS Training Information and Counselling Centre (NATCIC)** – NATICC has been assisting as the GBV specialist for the NRAP project. They are well trained and experienced now in World Bank requirement particularly GBV response according to the Bank's requirements. They are also one of the leads GBV specialist in the country with a huge radio following of over 100,000 listeners. With such background, they shall assist with training of communities and workers on available programs for prevention of GBV in the workplace and in communities, including case managements and reporting, partner with key stakeholders to provide technical expertise on best practices in GBV prevention and response, educating and enforcing the Child Protection and Welfare Act 2012 as well the SODV Act of 2018. They shall also assist HIV prevention programs, counselling and testing for HIV for workers and also communities.
- **Coordinating Assembly for NGO's (CANGO)** - The Coordinating Assembly of Non-Governmental Organisation commonly referred to as CANGO was established in 1983 primarily as a network for NGOs working in Primary Health Care in Swaziland, then in

1987 assumed the overall Coordinating body for the Non-Governmental Organisations in the country.. The core mandate is to facilitate coordination of the NGO sector, building capacity of its members to fulfil their organizational-specific mandates, and to influence national and international policies through advocacy.

- **The National Emergency Response Council on HIV and AIDS (NERCHA)** - to coordinate and facilitate the National Multi-sectoral HIV/AIDS response and oversee the implementation of the national strategic plans and frameworks. NERCHA is not an implementing body, its goal is rather to organize and manage the nation's war against the AIDS epidemic. Acting as the conduit for monies received from Government and the U.N. Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, NERCHA works with organizational and community partners across all sectors to ensure that comprehensive services are delivered at the grass-roots level throughout the nation
- **FODSWA –** is the umbrella body for all associations of Persons with Disabilities which works closely with the National Disability Unit (NDU) in the Deputy Prime Minister's Office whose mandate is to work with persons with disabilities, including those with long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments. In particular, its mission is to champion significant improvement in the quality of their life and to collaborate with organizations representing Persons With Disabilities in promoting and supporting disability issues, to raise public awareness, to promote measures to prevent disabilities, to conduct relevant trainings (sign language and Braille communication) and to implement the national disability policy in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities.

2.5.5 Vulnerable/Disadvantaged Groups Stakeholders

It is likely that project-affected parties in the communities will include vulnerable /disadvantages groups. At this stage these groups have not yet been determined, however, they shall be identified after the ESIA exercise. Vulnerable /disadvantages groups are community members likely to be affected by the project but may have difficulty in engaging with the stakeholder consultation process and thus may not be able to fully express their concerns regarding the proposed Project.

Particular attention shall be paid to adverse impacts on Vulnerable/ disadvantaged groups who, because of their social position, may be vulnerable to changes brought about by project activities or excluded from project benefits. This group is likely to include the following:

- physically disabled
- women-headed households
- child/orphan-headed households
- households below the poverty line, and
- The youth

Discussions with the vulnerable/disadvantaged groups affected by the Project aim to provide opportunities for ground investigation on potential social impacts as a result of the construction of the transmission line, distribution line and associated substations in the Shiselweni Region.

To ensure that consultation with local communities is inclusive of disadvantaged groups, presentations shall be conducted in siSwati because many community members may be illiterate in the rural areas and some parts of the peri-urban areas. Where necessary, additional formats such as location sketches shall be used to enhance understanding. The assistance of community leaders shall be needed to encourage effective representation of Vulnerable /disadvantages groups in group discussions throughout the project phases.

3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND PRINCIPLES

The SEP has three corporate objectives, a number of project-specific operational objectives, and key principles. The stakeholder engagement programme will aim to achieve the objectives and comply with the principles.

i. Communal objectives

The corporate objectives of stakeholder engagement are

- A coordinated approach to all engagement actions;
- Consistency of messaging;
- Management of stakeholder expectations; and

- Reduction in the potential for delays in future project-related decision-making for issue of project approvals and permits or the need for costly redesign of operations/facilities.

ii. Operational objectives

The operational objectives of stakeholder engagement are:

- Acquisition of information from certain stakeholders to assist preparation of the ESIA report;
- Provision of information on ASCENT and the ESIA to stakeholders;
- Ensuring that stakeholders have an understanding of how they might be affected and their potential role in ASCENT implementation and impact management;
- Provision of opportunities for stakeholders to express their opinions and concerns in relation to the ESIA and ASCENT and for these opinions and concerns to be taken into account in the ESIA and ASCENT -related management decisions; and

Ensuring that stakeholders understand EEC's corporate and operational aims and requirements, with respect to ASCENT and have confidence in EEC's ability to manage environmental/social risks in a responsible and transparent manner.

iii. Key principles

The SEP will ensure that the following key principles are applied to all engagement activities:

- Timing and number of engagement events designed to maximize stakeholder involvement and to avoid disruption to the 'daily business' of local stakeholders and also stakeholder 'fatigue';
- A senior EEC staff member to be present and participate actively at all engagement events;
- Engagement events occur in line with the SEP schedule so that there is clear linkage between engagement activities and the key stages in the ESIA assessment process;

- Ensure that engagement is managed so that it is culturally appropriate, adequate and timely information and opportunities are provided to all stakeholders to be involved/contribute; and
- Ensure that engagement is free from coercion, undertaken prior to key decisions and informed by provision of objective and meaningful information, and that feedback is provided to stakeholders after engagement has concluded.

EEC employs a protocol governing all stakeholder engagement activities. No interaction with any stakeholder related to the ESIA and ASCENT can be undertaken without the EEC's permission.

3.1 Stakeholder Engagement Activities

All stakeholder engagement activities shall be informed by and regularly updated according to an iterative process of stakeholder identification, analysis and mapping and based on comments received on the stakeholder engagement process. Prior to the commencement of stakeholder engagement activities, meetings shall be scheduled with relevant traditional authorities, Civic Leaders, Community Representatives, Political leaders, Heads of Government departments, Members of Parliament in the project area, representatives from NGOs and CSOs, the Media and other Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs). The purpose of these meetings shall be to refine the stakeholder engagement strategy so as to meet the requirements of I&APs and ensure that future communication is effective and cognizant of social and cultural sensitivities.

The objectives of engaging stakeholders during the ESIA process include the following:

- **Ensuring understanding:** An open, inclusive and transparent process of culturally appropriate engagement and communication to ensure that stakeholders are well informed about the proposed. Therefore, whenever information is disseminated, the siSwati language will be considered to ensure full understanding of communication.
- **Involving stakeholders in the assessment:** Stakeholders will be included in the scoping of issues, the assessment of impacts, the generation of mitigation and management measures and the finalization of the ESIA reports. They will also play an important role in providing local knowledge and information for the baseline to inform the impact assessment.
- **Building relationships:** Through supporting open dialogue, engagement will help establish and maintain a productive relationship between the ESIA team and stakeholders.

- **Engaging vulnerable groups:** An open and inclusive approach to consultation increases the opportunity of stakeholders to provide comments on the proposed Project, and to voice their concerns. Some stakeholders, however, need special attention in such a process due to their vulnerability. Special measures will be considered to ensure that the perspectives of vulnerable stakeholders are heard and considered.
- **Managing expectations:** It is important to ensure that the proposed Project does not create or allow unrealistic expectations to develop amongst stakeholders about proposed Project benefits. The engagement process will serve as a mechanism for understanding and managing stakeholder and community expectations, where the latter will be achieved by disseminating accurate information in an accessible way.
- **Ensuring compliance:** The process is designed to ensure compliance with both local regulatory requirements and international best practice.

One of the key outcomes of engagement should be *free, prior and informed consultation* of stakeholders, where this can be understood to be:

- ***Free***: engagement free of external manipulation or coercion and intimidation;
- ***Prior***: engagement undertaken in a timely way, for example the timely disclosure of information before a development is undertaken and/ or participation is sought with regard to the identification of issues of concern; and
- ***Informed***: engagement enabled by relevant, understandable and accessible information.

Table 4: Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Stage	Objective	Key Activities	Target Stakeholder
Preliminary Engagements	• To gain a preliminary understanding of the scope of the Project, appropriate and legislated engagement requirements and relevant stakeholders.	• Field visit; and • Stakeholder identification process.	• Government • Government parastatals/agencies • Local/traditional communities • Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups

Stage	Objective	Key Activities	Target Stakeholder

Scoping
 	
Engagement
	• To meet key stakeholders and introduce them to the Project and ESIA Process;
	• To disclose the Project in the public domain to all interested and affected stakeholders;
	• To gather issues of concern and through this identify a list of potential impacts;
	• To consult key stakeholders on the next steps in the ESIA process;
	• To generate feedback on the Draft Scoping Report, including the scope, approach and key issues to be investigated further for the ESIA.
		• Meetings with key stakeholders to facilitate the broader stakeholder engagement process
		• Dissemination of engagement materials (background information document, posters, media notices etc.)
		• Consultation on the proposed Project and associated ESIA through meetings and workshops with identified stakeholders. Details may include:
		  ○ Nature, purpose and scale of the proposed project
		  ○ ESIA & stakeholder engagement process
		• Confirmation of issue identification and feedback from stakeholders;
			• Government
			• Government parastatals/agencies
			• Royal Krals and Chiefs
			• Regional administration office
			• Local/traditional communities
			• Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups
			• Non-government organizations (NGOs);

ESIA Disclosure	• To discuss the identified impacts and proposed mitigation measures with stakeholders allowing for their input; and • To provide stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on the Draft ESIA report.	• Dissemination draft ESIA Report to all stakeholders. • Copies of the ESIA report will also be distributed in public buildings in the vicinity of the site of the proposed project. • Availability of the draft ESIA Report will be advertised through print and electronic media for public review.	• Government • Government parastatals/agencies • Local/traditional communities • Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups • Business Community • Contractors & Contract Workers • Non-government organizations (NGOs);

Stage	Objective	Key Activities	Target Stakeholder

		• Consultation on the draft Impact Assessment Report. This will include:
		  ○ Identification of impacts in the draft ESIA and proposed mitigation;
		  ○ Identification of stakeholder concerns and opinions on the impacts identified;
		  ○ Involvement of stakeholders in assessing the efficacy and appropriateness of the proposed mitigation measures; and
		  ○ Identification of revisions or additions to the draft ESIA report where necessary.	

Formal Submission of Final ESIA	• Submission of final ESIA Report with comments incorporated from the ESIA engagement and disclosure stage	• Submission of the Final ESIA for approval.	• EEA • World Bank

Resettlement Policy Framework (RPF) disclosure and stakeholder consultation	• To share draft policy framework based on national legislations, current practices in the country and Environmental and Social Standards of the Bank and finalised based on feedback and inputs	• Dissemination draft RPF to all stakeholders. • Copies of the RPF will also be distributed in public buildings in the vicinity of the site of the proposed project and uploaded on EEC website. • Availability of the draft RPF Report will be advertised through print and electronic media for public review. • Consultation on the draft RPF. This will include: o Identification of impacts categories based on preliminary survey report and possible entitlements and eligibility criteria; Key principles of resettlement and broad institutional arrangement. o Identification of stakeholder concerns and opinions on the contents of the RPF; o Involvement of stakeholders in assessing the appropriateness of the proposed resettlement principles, impact categories, entitlements; institutional arrangement for preparation and implementation of RAP.	• Government • Government parastatals/agencies • Local/project affected communities • Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups • Business Community • Royal Krals and Chiefs • Regional administration office • Non-government organizations (NGOs); •

Stage	Objective	Key Activities	Target Stakeholder
		• Assess adequacy of RPF during ESIA and RAP preparation • Identification of revisions or additions to the draft RPF where necessary.	

Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) disclosure and stakeholder consultation	• To share draft RAP based on RPF and specific impact area as per designs subsequently finalise based on feedback and inputs	• Dissemination of cut off date and census survey of all affected through structured questionnaire • FGDs and community level meetings facilitated by Chiefs and Community Laison Officers • Dissemination of draft RAP to all stakeholders. • Use of Leaflets on non technical summary of RAP and folk media for the project affected • Copies of the RAP will also be distributed in public buildings in the vicinity of the site of the proposed project and uploaded on EEC website. • Availability of the draft RAP Report will be advertised through print and electronic media for public review. • Consultation on the draft RAP. This will include: o Identification of impacts categories based on specific impact area based on designs, entitlements and eligibility criteria; Key principles of resettlement and specific institutional arrangement for implementation and GRM. o Identification of project affected concerns and opinions on the identified impacts, RAP	• Project affected Persons • Other project affected communities • Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups • Business Community • Royal Krals and Chiefs • Regional administration office • Non-government organizations (NGOs);

Stage	Objective	Key Activities	Target Stakeholder
		implementation Plan and project schedule; ○ Involvement of stakeholders in assessing the appropriateness of the identified impacts, list of PAPs , entitlement options; institutional arrangement for implementation of RAP and GRM. • Identification of revisions or additions to the draft RAP where necessary.	

Table 5: Stakeholder Engagement Communication Plan

Stakeholder	Communication	Method of Engagement	When
Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy	Project Concept Note Preparation Field Missions Project Approval and Contracting Electrification instructions and verifications Progress Reports Record discussions	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	December 2024 Monthly
Ministry of Finance	Project Concept Note Preparation Field Missions Project Approval and Contracting Record discussions	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters	December 2024 Monthly

		-Press Statements -Project brief document	
Ministry of Commerce	Discussion on future plans of commercial and industrial development Implementation steering committee progress reports record discussions	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	Frequency yet to be determined
Ministry of Health	Project brief Discussion with the related department on issues of health relevant to the project. Record discussions	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	Once Off Yearly
Deputy Prime Minister's Office	Project brief Disseminate technical information Record discussions	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	Frequency yet to be determined
Ministry of Tourism and Environmental Affairs	Project brief	-Formal meetings -Email	Frequency yet to be determined

	Disseminate technical information Record discussions	-Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	
Ministry Works and Transport	Project brief Allow group to comment – opinions and views Build impersonal relation with high level stakeholders Site visits	-Formal meetings -Email -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief document	Frequency yet to be determined
Eswatini Environmental Authority (EEA)	Project Brief and request for categorization Site visits Periodic compliance reports	-Formal meetings -Email -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief documents	December 2024 January 2025 Monthly/Quarterly

Town Councils of Affected Towns	Project Brief and discussion of council procedures for servitude acquisition Compliance and Monitoring meetings	-Formal meetings -Email -Workshops -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief documents	January 2025 On-going
Regional Administrator	Preliminary Meeting Present information on the Project Induction and trainings on the Project Allow group to comment – opinions and views Build impersonal relation with high level stakeholders Resettlement engagement Meetings (Refer to RPF and RAP)	-Formal meetings -Email -Workshops -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements -Project brief documents	December 2024 January 2025 March 2025 On-going and frequency yet to be determined
Eswatini Royal Police Service	Distribute non-technical information	-Formal meetings -Site visits	Frequency yet to be determined

	Facilitate meetings with presentations and PowerPoint Allow the group to provide their views and opinions especially in issues of the keeping order during project in cases where there are disputes.	-Posters -Press Statements	
Eswatini National Trust Commission (ENTC) Eswatini Tourism Authority	Present information on the Project Allow group to comment – opinions and views Build impersonal relation with high level stakeholders Site visits where necessary	-Formal meetings -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements	Frequency yet to be determined
Chiefs (Community Leaders) Community Liaison Officers	Preliminary Meeting Present information on the Project to the community leaders Induction and trainings on Project Allow the group to provide their views and opinions Build relationship with the communities, especially those impacted	-Formal meetings -Interviews -Email -Workshops -Site visits -Public Meetings -Posters -Press Statements	January 2025 January 2025 On-going and frequency yet to be determined

	Distribute non-technical information Facilitate meetings with presentations, PowerPoint, posters etc. Resettlement engagement Meetings (Refer to RPF and RAP) Site visits		
Local Schemes & Communities Lubombo & Shiselweni schemes Manzini & Hhohho schemes	Present Project information to a large group of stakeholders, especially affected community members Allow the group to provide their views and opinions Build relationship with the communities, especially those impacted Distribute non-technical information Facilitate meetings with presentations, PowerPoint, posters etc. Resettlement engagement Meetings	-Focus group discussions -Interviews -Public meetings -Workshops -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements	 11 December 2024 12 December 2024 Jan/Feb 2025 March 2025 On-going and frequency yet to be determined

• Nhlangano AIDS Training Information and Counselling Centre (NATIC) • Coordinating Assembly for NGO's (CANGO) • Youth Organisation/Associations • Women Organisations/Associations • Organizations for disabilities • Organizations for prevention of Gender based violence and Violence against Children • Organizations on HIV • Organizations on labor rights	Distribute non-technical information Facilitate meetings with presentations and PowerPoint Allow the group to provide their views and opinions Request guidance on how to handle issues related to their target groups as NGOs especially the vulnerable parties likely to be affected.	-Formal meetings -Email -Workshops -Site visits -Posters -Press Statements	December 2024 January 2025 Frequency yet to be determined

Table 6: Communication Channels

Communication Channel	Objective	Target Stakeholders
Media (newspaper) Posters	• Make announcements regarding the Project and ESIA process; • Inform stakeholders of meetings or the availability of project data. • Inform stakeholders of meetings or the availability of project information.	• Government • Government parastatals/agencies • Local/traditional communities • Vulnerable/disadvantaged Groups • Non-government organizations (NGOs);
Email	• To distribute all project notification material to those parties with access to this facility; • To inform stakeholders of availability of project data including tabling of ESIA reports (Scoping report, draft ESIA report etc.).	• Government • Government parastatals/agencies • Non-government organizations (NGOs); •
Face to face meetings: • Workshops • Formal meetings • Community meetings • Focus Group Discussions	• To transmit information about the Project and ESIA process and reinforce two-way dialogue.	All stakeholder groups to be targeted through one of these engagement needs.

3.2 Considerations for the Engagement Process

Focused efforts will be made to engage with directly relevant stakeholders, including vulnerable groups at the local level. Affected individuals shall be consulted directly and via their representatives, and other influential people within communities. In addition, special efforts will be made to meet with representatives of potentially vulnerable groups who may not be reached through established structures.

All meetings shall follow local practices and norms. Meetings with the local administration and with traditional leaders will be held prior to any wider communication in the communities in order

to respect traditional structures. Furthermore, all affected communities and groups will be made aware of the Project feedback and grievance mechanism.

3.3 Culturally appropriate engagement

It is critical that engagement is culturally appropriate, especially, but not exclusively, in terms of impacted communities. EEC existing NRAP PIU are all familiar with the ethnic and cultural complexity of Eswatini. Most stakeholder engagement shall be with rural community inhabitants and it is known from previous engagement under the NRAP that with such communities traditional social and cultural norms are respected by almost all inhabitants. Local people have expectations that 'outsiders will proceed through the 'correct' customary channels involving an appropriate local leader(s) before beginning work or initiating consultations with community residents. It is intention that the ESIA local consultant be procured by the EEC shall manage and, as appropriate, lead engagement events leading up to EISA development and disclosure. The EEC PIU shall continue with further engagements. Also, it is expected that all engagements shall be in Eswatini.

Prior to any engagement event the following actions shall occur:

- Preparation of standard 'question and answer' sheets tailored for specific stakeholder types (based on 'lessons learnt' analysis and common issues raised in previous engagement);
- Planning/design of engagement action(s) with PM, consultants and then key 'traditional' and 'formal' authorities;
- Reaching an internal ESIA team agreement on the role of local and international consultants during stakeholder events and whether the presence of a EEC staff is appropriate;
- Selection of individual stakeholders with whom engagement will occur;
- Selection of methods for disclosure of information (including such topics as format, language, and timing);
- Selection of location and timing for engagement event(s) (avoiding busy work times, which may be seasonal, and days/times when special events may be occurring);

- Agreeing mechanisms for ensuring stakeholder attendance at engagement event(s) (if required);
- Identification and implementation of feedback mechanisms to be employed.

3.4 Monitoring Stakeholder Engagement Activities

It is important to monitor the ongoing stakeholder engagement process to ensure that consultation and disclosure efforts are effective, and that stakeholders have been meaningfully consulted throughout the process.

There are two keyways in which the stakeholder engagement process shall be monitored:

3.4.1 *Review of Engagement Activities in the Field:*

During engagement with stakeholders the ESIA team will assess meetings by asking questions to participants, depending on the stakeholder group, to ensure that messages are being conveyed clearly.

Conduct debriefing sessions with the engagement team while in the field. This will help to assess whether the required outcomes of the stakeholder engagement process are being achieved and provide the opportunity to amend the process where necessary.

The use of engagement tools developed through the ESIA engagement include:

a) Stakeholder database
b) Issues and Response table, and
c) Meeting records of all consultations held.

Moreover, the tool can be used to manage ongoing issues, and for stakeholder identification and analysis processes.

3.4..2 *Reporting Stakeholder Engagement Activities*

Performance shall be reviewed following the engagement sessions conducted in the field. In addition, there will be an opportunity to review and assess performance in-between the engagement sessions depending on the level of feedback received from stakeholders during these periods.

Evaluation of performance shall be assessed based on the extent to which the engagement activities and outputs meet those outlined in this SEP. In assessing performance, the following will be considered:

- Materials disseminated: types, frequency, and location
- Place and time of formal engagement events and level of participation including specific stakeholder groups (e.g. women, youth, community leaders)
- Number of comments received on specific issues, type of stakeholder and details of feedback provided
- Numbers and type of stakeholders who come into contact with the Project team by mail, telephone and any other means of communication
- Meeting minutes, attendance registers and photographic evidence
- Comments received by government authorities, community leaders and other parties and passed to the Project
- Numbers and types of feedback and / or grievances and the nature and timing of their resolution, and

The extent to which feedback and comments have been addressed have led to corrective actions being implemented.

4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: PROJECT LIFE-CYCLE

This SEP needs to be updated and refined throughout the lifecycle of the Project. During this process the focus and scope of the SEP shall be updated to ensure that the EEC addresses external changes and adheres to its strategy.

The key life-cycle phases to be considered when implementing stakeholder engagement are briefly discussed below.

- *Design/Plan*: the process of ensuring that systems and components of the Project are designed, installed, and maintained to prescribe / agreed requirements;
- *Implementation:* the process and activities are implemented as planned

4.1 Stakeholder Engagement and Project Cycle

Stakeholder engagement within the project preparation and implementation process is critical for supporting the project's risk management process, specifically the early identification and avoidance/management of potential impacts (negative and positive) and cost-effective project design.

Stakeholder engagement is an on-going process throughout the life of the project:

- Planning/design (including disclosure);
- Construction
- Commissioning
- Decommissioning

Disclosing and consulting on the draft results of the ESIA process is an integral part of the engagement process. Within the overarching ESIA engagement objectives, the specific objectives for the ESIA phase are to:

- Provide feedback to the stakeholders on the draft impact assessment and associated management/mitigation measures of the proposed project.
- Gather stakeholder input on the impact assessment and outlined mitigation and enhancement measures for the proposed project.

The disclosure and consultation activities shall be designed along with some guiding principles:

- Consultations must be widely publicised particularly among the project affected stakeholders/communities, preferably 2 weeks prior to any meeting engagements
- Allow non-technical information summary to be accessible prior to any event to ensure that people are informed of the assessment and conclusions before scheduled meetings
- Location and timing of meetings must be designed to maximise stakeholder participation and availability
- Information presented must be clear, and non-technical, and presented in both local language and mannerism
- Facilitate in a way that allow stakeholders to raise their views and concerns
- Issues raised must be answered, at the meeting or at a later time

Targeted stakeholders may comment on the ESIA within the time indicated. The EEA process is usually a 6 week period for public review.

There are various avenues that will be employed in the stakeholder engagement process:

a. **Community Forums**: To facilitate effective consultation with the communities during implementation of the project, the Project Manager (PM), establishes community forums through local community established leadership to disseminate project information to community members.
b) **Local Government**: Government representatives (Government Representatives on respective Tinkhundla Centres, District/Town Officers, Chief's Royal kraals, etc) as a channel to disseminate information on the project.
c) **Information Boards**: Notice boards are effective mechanisms to inform the communities and wider audiences about the project. These can be installed on specific areas of impact (communities).
d) **Media**: Newspapers commonly read in the project area will be used notify the general public.

5. RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The management, coordination and implementation of the SEP and its integral tasks will be the responsibility of dedicated team members within EEC PIU, its regional offices and local sub-contractors. The roles and responsibilities of the organizations are presented below.

1. **The Project Implementation Unit (PIU)** will be responsible for the preparation and physical implementation of the project. This unit will be under the oversight of the General Manager, Research and Development, comprising the following staff: Project Manager, Procurement Officer, Transmission and Substations Engineer, Social Development Officer and an Environmental Officer.
2. **The Social Standards Officer** who is part of the PIU be responsible to manage all social development aspects of the ASCENT. The Social Standards Officer (SSO) will oversee all planned stakeholder engagement activities or in process of being implemented. Responsibilities of the SSO include the following:

- Develop, implement and monitor all stakeholder engagement strategies/plans for the Project/ESIA;
- Oversee all stakeholder engagement related activities for the Project;
- Manage the grievance mechanism;
- Interact with related and complementary support activities that require *ad hoc* or intensive stakeholder engagement (community development and land acquisition/resettlement planning and implementation);
- Liaise with the project managers to ensure that stakeholder engagement requirements/protocols are understood; and
- Proactively identify stakeholders, project risks and opportunities and inform the PM / senior management to ensure that the necessary planning can be done to either mitigate risk or exploit opportunities.

3. **Owner's engineer (Consultant)** shall be recruited to provide institutional capacity and support to the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) with: (a) overall project management and supervision including procurement, design, contract management; and (b) oversee the overall implementation, monitoring, and reporting of safeguards aspects such ESMPs, LMP, SEP and RAPs. After familiarizing themselves with the project area through reading and consultations with the EEC Project Unit, the consultants will design appropriate questionnaires intended for data collection at project location levels. The consultant will design questionnaires for data collection from various households, individual farm units, depending on the nature of information source. The RAP development, as well as monitoring and implementation, will be done in close collaboration with all impacted households, affected community members, chiefs, Royal kraal council members and other interested and affected parties. The consultations will be on-going, and an integral part of the project as set out in this RPF.
4. In order to advance the proposed Project, the PIU shall work collaboratively with some of the **EEC departments and stakeholders** such as (i) Commercial Services, (ii) Finance, (iii) Corporate Communication and Marketing, (iv) Operations Division, (v) Corporate Services, (vi) MD's Office. The roles and responsibilities, their interest and potential influence, and the internal coordination and communication arrangements are summarized below.

Table 7: EEC departments Internal and stakeholders

EEC Departments	Role	Interest	Influence	Coordination	Frequency
Commercial Services	coordinate overall procurement under the project and prepare and revise Procurement Plans as needed	High	High	Hold meetings to update procurement plans and review delivery timelines that have high project risk impact	Regularly
Finance	account for the deposits and withdrawals of project funds with Financial institution(s) and perform the audits and provide financial reports in accordance with the World Bank rules and guidelines	High	High	Hold meetings to evaluate project financial performance	Regularly
Corporate Communication and Marketing	Work with the Social Officer to conduct stakeholder engagement and project disclosure and outreach activities	High	Low	Hold meetings to review and update stakeholder engagement plan	Regularly
Operations Division	Ensure timely and efficient construction and	High	High	Hold project progress meetings to highlight	Regularly

EEC Departments	Role	Interest	Influence	Coordination	Frequency
	commissioning of the transmission line, substations and quality control.			project challenges and risks	
Corporate Services	Recruitment of PIU staff such as the Social Officer and Procurement Officer	Medium	Medium	Share PIU staff requirements	As needed
MD's Office	Ensure timely approval of procurement processes and	High	High	Provide updates on project progress through reports and meetings to discuss project risks that need their intervention	Regularly

6. **Community Liaison Officers** - EEC through the assistance of the Chiefs (Community Leaders) will hire Community Liaison Officer who will be the direct contact for PAP in the local communities. They will provide EEC with assistance during consultations, identification of PAPs, and conducting of interviews, where required. The EEC considers the Community Liaison Officers to be an extension of the PIU and therefore will be entitled to a stipend according to traditional practices for similar community office bearers and therefore will not be salaried like the PIU staff.

7. Resources

The EEC Marketing and Corporate Communications (MCC) Department shall be responsible for the design proper implementation and monitoring of the SEP. This department is responsible for the company-wide stakeholder management program at EEC. The MCC Manager will provide management oversight of SEP and will work closely with Project Team

Members for expertise in the different functions required in the project. This is to ensure that the SEP is implemented in a successful manner.

- *Training*

All parties involved on the SEP will attend a workshop that will orient everyone about the Project and appraise all individuals of responsibilities and reporting structures.

- *Budget*

The Marketing and Corporate Department has an adequate standing budget allocated towards the Stakeholder Management Program. This is a budget that, as when is necessary, shall be supplemented an increase or by other budgets related to the activities required for the SEP. Also, the HR Department will be engaged to consider the extra staff hired and include in the EEC payroll database.

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6.GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

6.1 Definitions and Grievance Procedure

A grievance mechanism has been developed for potential use by external stakeholders. The aim of the grievance mechanism is to achieve mutually agreed resolution of grievances raised by such stakeholders. Labor related grievances shall be addressed in accordance with the Labor Management Procedure (LMP) to be developed for the ASCENT and Resettlement related grievance shall be addressed in accordance with the Resettlement Policy framework (RPF) to be aligned with the existing NRAP RFP.

This grievance mechanism ensures that complaints and grievances (see 'definitions' below) are addressed in good faith and through a transparent and impartial process, but one which is culturally acceptable. It does not deal with 'concerns' which are defined as questions, requests for information, or perceptions not necessarily related to a specific impact or incident caused by a project activity. If not addressed to the satisfaction of the person or group raising the concern, then a concern may become a complaint. Concerns are not registered as a grievance but shall be managed via the EEC external communications plan.

Key definitions are as follows:

- **Complaint**: an expression of dissatisfaction that is related to an impact caused by the project activities, which has affected (i) an individual or group adversely, (ii) the interests of an individual or group and who wants a proponent or operator (or contractor) to address and resolve it (e. g. problems related to dust deposition, noise or vibration). A complaint is normally of a less serious nature than a grievance; and
- **Grievance:** a claim raised by an individual or group whose livelihood, health and safety, cultural norms and heritage are considered to have been adversely affected (harmed) by a project activity which, if not addressed effectively, may pose a risk to EEC operations (through stakeholder actions such as access road blockages) and the livelihood, well-being or quality of life of the claimant(s).

The grievance mechanism described in this section includes both *complaints and grievances* (hereinafter referred to only as 'grievances').

Grievances raised by stakeholders need to be managed through a transparent process, readily acceptable to all segments of affected communities and other stakeholders, at no cost and without retribution. The grievance mechanism should be appropriate to the scale of impacts and risks presented by a project and beneficial for both a proponent/operator and external stakeholders. The mechanism must not impede access to other judicial or administrative remedies.

This grievance mechanism sets out the following steps to be taken to resolve grievances, the role of different staff members involved and timeframes to reach a decision on grievances. The types of grievances stakeholders may raise include, but are not limited to:

- Negative impacts on communities, which may include, but not be limited to financial loss, physical harm and nuisance from construction or operational activities;
- Health and safety risks;
- Negative impacts on the environment; and
- Unacceptable behavior by staff or employees.

It is critical that stakeholders understand that all grievances lodged, regardless of the project phase or activity being implemented, will follow one single mechanism.

6.2 Grievance Redress Process

A grievance redress mechanism (GRM) is presented below to uphold the project's social and environmental safeguards performance. The purpose of the GRM is to record and address any complaints that may arise during the implementation phase of the project and/or any future operational issues that have the potential to be designed out during implementation phase. The GRM is designed to address concerns and complaints promptly and transparently with no impacts (cost, discrimination) for any reports made by project affected people (PAPs). The GRM works within existing legal and cultural frameworks, providing an additional opportunity to resolve grievances at the local, project level.

The key objectives of the GRM are:

- Record, categorize and prioritize the grievances;

- Inform proposed project concerns from the public to be addressed before project implementation.
- Settle the grievances via consultation with all stakeholders (and inform those stakeholders of the solutions)
- Forward any unresolved cases to the relevant authority.

As the GRM works within existing legal and cultural frameworks, it is recognized that the GRM shall comprise community level, project level and Eswatini judiciary level redress mechanisms. The details of each of those components are described as follows.

6.3 Community Level Grievance Redress Mechanism

Local communities have existing traditional and cultural grievance redress mechanisms. It is expected that some disputes at the community level may be resolved using these mechanisms, without the involvement of the contractor(s), and or Government representatives at local and national level. This is primarily concerned with the extended family members.

However, regarding disputes that include differences between households over land, or boundaries, even on issues triggered indirectly by the Project, the mechanism will involve the Town Officer, landowner(s) concerned, and if required, the representative from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Energy.

It is expected that any land dispute issues pertaining to the Project would be resolved at this level given the nature of land ownership and the significant authority (Boarder Assessment Committee) vested under the Minister for Natural Resource and Energy.

Where issues caused by the project are raised and resolved through these existing community level grievance redress mechanisms, it is important that a mechanism for reporting them to the EEC is established. The points of access for grievances will be shared as part of consultation with all PAPs and through broader community consultation. Social Standards Officer will serve as the overall point of registration for any resettlement related complaints coming from each royal kraal Community Liaison Officer and oversee the process to reach resolutions. The issue can be logged as an anonymous grievance.

PAPs may complain or raise a grievance for a variety of reasons associated with resettlement impact and compensation, including but not limited to:-

(a) Identification of affected land and associated assets within the Project area;
(b) Ownership/responsibility for the land and associated assets;
(c) Valuation of land or associated assets;
(d) Quality of replacement assets;
(e) Other compensation allowances;
(f) The timing or manner of compensation payments;
(g) Conduct of Project staff/representatives, or their methods in dealing with compensation.

When a grievance is logged by the Social Standards Officer, The Social Standards Officer will acknowledge the complaint, unless the issue is logged anonymously. If the issue is registered anonymously, it shall be automatically referred to the head of the Project Unit. Upon registration, the Social Standards Officer will refer the issue for resolution or mediation to relevant officials. The aim is to resolve all grievances within four weeks. Any grievance which is not resolved within that timeframe shall be reported in detail in monthly Project Unit report and quarterly reports to the World Bank. All other grievances will be aggregated to track trends for managerial response.

In principle, where the complaint is related to Eswatini Nation Land, the Social Officer will seek to mediate the situation through the community liaison officer. Where an issue related to deeded or land on 99-year lease, the Social Standards Officer will liaise with the project unit to determine proposed resolution.

6.4 Project Level Grievance Redress Mechanism

The objective of the project level GRM is to bring the GRM closer to PAPs. Issues that are not resolved at project level GRC shall be handled at the project level. All effort shall be made to resolve issues at the first instance.

Many project related grievances are minor and site-specific. Often, they revolve around nuisances generated during construction such as noise, dust, vibration, workers dispute etc. Often, they can be resolved easily on site. Other grievances are more difficult especially when it’s about land

boundaries, or misunderstandings between affected households and the Contractor regarding access arrangements. Most of these cannot be resolved immediately and on site.

In circumstances where disputes cannot be resolved by on site or through first instance dispute resolution arrangements, the dispute shall be directed or transferred to the Project Level GRM.

The PAPs Community liaison officer shall carry out the following as regard to redressing grievances:-

a) Hear the grievances of the PAPs, and provide an early solution to those they able to;

b) Immediately bring any serious matters to the attention of the Project unit or Social Standards Officer;

c) Inform the aggrieved parties about the progress of their grievances and the decisions of the Project unit.

A Social Standards Officer shall register the grievance raised by the PAPs and address the grievance forwarded by the PAPs representative.

The Social Standards Officer shall try as much as possible to arrive at a compromise for the complaints raised. This may be obtained through a series of conciliations, mediations and negotiations exercises conducted with the PAPs. In situations where PAPs are not satisfied with the outcome, the PAPs have the right to file the case to project GRM and Wold Bank GRM described below or have the option to take his/her case directly to the established legal system as provided by Eswatini law[1]:.

The project level GRM shall have the following Grievance Redress Committee (GRC) members:-

(a) Regional Administrator (RA), Chairperson
(b) Supervising Consultant, Member
(c) PIU Project Manager, Member
(d) The Contracting Entity, Member
(e) Community Liaison Officer
(f) PAPs' representative

[1] As regulated by Eswatini Energy Regulatory Authority Act, Electricity Act, and the Acquisition of Property Act.

The project level GRC shall resolve or reach *a decision five (5) days* from the date the complaint is received. The chairperson of the GRC shall communicate the committee's decision to the aggrieved PAPs in writing and maintain a record of all decisions related to each case.

A committee of knowledgeable persons, experience in the subject area, shall be constituted at the EEC to handle complaints that have not been addressed or resolved at the Project level in the impact area or the project area corridor. The EEC level GRM shall be comprised of the following members:-

(a) General Manager, Chair person
(b) Legal Compliance Officer, Member
(c) Social Development Officer, Member
(d) Safety Health Environmental Risks and Quality Manger (SHERQ)
(e) PAPs Representative

The EEC level Grievance redress committee shall do everything possible to hear and determine the issues within five (5) days from the date the case has been transferred to it from the GRC. The chairperson of the GRC shall communicate the outcome to the aggrieved PAP(s) in writing. The GRC shall maintain a record of all outcomes related to each case.

If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the aggrieved party, it will then be referred by the EEC Secretary to the National Steering Committee (NSC). The NSC will be required to address the concern within 1 month.

Should measures taken by the National Steering Committee fail to satisfy the complainant, the aggrieved party is free to take his/her grievance to the Ombudsman's Office, and the Ombudsman's decision will be final. It is possible that for land issues, it would be advisable for the complainant to take his/her issue to the Minister of Lands for a final pronouncement.

It is rare for a complaint to be unresolved after the Ombudsman's decision or for MNRE's resolution to be taken further. However, on both cases, the very last resort will be at the Courts, or Land Court for land disputes.

It is vital that appropriate signage is erected at the sites of all works providing the public with updated project information and summarising the GRM process, including contact details of the relevant Project Contact Person. Anyone shall be able to lodge a complaint and the methods

(forms, in person, telephone, forms written in English and SiSwati) should not inhibit the lodgement of any complaint.

The Complaints Register shall be maintained by the Social Standards Officer as the PCP, who will log the: i) details and nature of the complaint; ii) the complainant's name and their contact details; iii) date; iv) corrective actions taken in response to the complaint. This information will be included in EEC's progress reports to the Bank.

The project level process can only act within its appropriate level of authority and where appropriate, complaints will be referred on to the relevant authority such as those indicated.

6.5 Judiciary Level Grievance Redress Mechanism

The project level process will not impede affected persons access to the legal system. At any time, the complainant may take the matter to the appropriate legal or judicial authority as per the laws of Eswatini.

Table 8: Grievance Redress Process at Project Level

Stage	Process	Duration
1	The Aggrieved Party (AP) will take his/her grievance to through community liaison persons or Construction Site Supervisor (CSS), Social Standards officer (SSO) or call/email/WhatsApp/ the EEC PIU who will endeavour to resolve it immediately. Where AP is not satisfied, the CSS will refer the AP to the Project's Contact Person (PCP). For complaints that were satisfactorily resolved by the CSS, he/she will inform the PCP and the PCP will log the grievance and the actions that were taken.	Anytime
2	On receipt of the complaint, the Project PCP will endeavour to resolve it immediately. If unsuccessful, he/she then notifies PIU Project Manager	Immediately after logging grievance
3	The PIU Project Manager shall endeavour to address and resolve the complaint and inform the aggrieved party. If it's a land issue, the Project Manager will advise the EEC CEO, to engage the MLNR. The Project Manager will also refer to the EEC Project Manager other unresolved grievances for his/her action.	
4	If the matter remains unresolved, or complainant is not satisfied with the outcome at the project level, the EEC Project Manager, will then refer to matter to the National Steering Committee (NSC) for a resolution.	1 month

5	If it remains unresolved or the complainant is dissatisfied with the outcome proposed by the NSC, he/she is free to refer the matter to the Ombudsman's Office or MLNR if it is land matters.	Anytime
6	Land related issue, EEC CEO may seek the assistance of the MLNR CEO.	Immediately after stage 3
7	If the issue remains unresolved through the Ombudsman's decision or the Minister of Lands decision, then the ultimate step will be for the Courts or Land Court respectively to deliberate. Any such decisions are final.	Anytime

7 MONITORING AND REPORTING

Monitoring and evaluation of the stakeholder process is considered vital to ensure EEC is able to respond to identified issues and alter the schedule and nature of engagement activities to make them more effective. Adherence to the following characteristics/commitments/activities will assist in achieving successful engagement:

- Sufficient resources to undertake the engagement;
- Inclusivity (inclusion of key groups) of interactions with stakeholders;
- Promotion of stakeholder involvement;
- Sense of trust in EEC shown by all stakeholders;
- Clearly defined approaches; and
- Transparency in all activities.

Monitoring of the stakeholder engagement process allows the efficacy of the process to be evaluated. Specifically, by identifying key performance indicators that reflect the objectives of the SEP and the specific actions and timings, it is possible to both monitor and evaluate the process undertaken.

Two distinct but related monitoring activities in terms of timing shall be implemented:

- During the engagement activities: short-term monitoring to allow for adjustments/improvements to be made during engagement; and
- Following completion of all engagement activities: review of outputs at the end of engagement to evaluate the effectiveness of the SEP as implemented.

A series of key performance indicators for each stakeholder engagement stage have been developed. Table 8 shows the indicators, and performance against the indicators will show successful completion of engagement tasks.

Table 9: Key Performance Indicators by Project phase

Phase activities	Key Activities	Indicator
Planning for construction ESIA Implementation	Share updates on project activities	Bill Boards displayed in allocated locations by time specified; Affected community stakeholders, with at least 30% women, have received and understand the NRAP/ESIA information disclosed and attended the public meetings; Communities provided feedback; No complaints about non-receipt of materials received.
ESIA Implementation	Confirmation that the ESMP tasks are defined as specific individual or grouped environmental and social clauses in contract bid documents.	EEC/PIU (Contract Manager) to draw on ESIA/ESMP/SEP for bidding documents
	Confirmation that environmental management criteria are included as part of the contractor selection process, including their experience preparing and implementing ESMPs, etc	EEC/PIU (Contract Manager) to draw on ESIA/ESMP/SEP for Contractor selection process
Project Implementation	A safeguards advisor located and retained as an advisor by the PIU, providing assistance with ESMP implementation, contractor briefing on habitat protection, contractor ESMP supervision (including observations during construction), and participation in community consultation	EEC/PIU safeguard strengthening

Project Implementation	Compliance monitoring checklists prepared and being used by the contractor and safeguards consultant and due diligence notes, completed as defined in the ESMP, and making the notes available in an easily accessible file for the contractor, Technical Coordinator, PIU Project Manager and others to use.	ESIA/ESMP/SEP to guide management and monitoring processes

The identification of ASCENT-related impacts and concerns is a key element of stakeholder engagement that shall occur over the complete ASCENT life cycle. As such, the identification of new concerns and impacts as the ESIA and ASCENT progresses shall serve as an overall indicator for the utility of the stakeholder engagement process.

In the ESIA Reports there shall be a review of the engagement activities conducted; levels of stakeholder involvement (particularly for affected communities, women and vulnerable people/groups); the issues discussed and outcomes; and the extent to which stakeholder issues, priorities and concerns are reflected in the ESIA Report, particularly with respect to mitigation and monitoring strategies contained in the ESMP.

7.1 Review of Engagement Activities in the Field

During engagement with stakeholders the engagement team shall assess meetings using a feedback evaluation form or asking questions to participants, depending on the stakeholder group, to ensure that messages are being conveyed clearly.

The engagement team shall conduct debriefing sessions while in the field. This assesses whether the required outcomes of the stakeholder engagement process are being achieved and provides the opportunity to amend the process where necessary.

The use of engagement tools developed through the ESIA engagement including:

- Stakeholder database;
- Issues Log or Issues and Response table;
- Meeting records of all consultations held.

Moreover, the tool can be used to manage on-going Project issues, and for stakeholder identification and analysis processes.

7.2 Reporting Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Performance shall be reviewed following the engagement sessions conducted in the field. In addition, there shall be an opportunity for the ESIA engagement team to review and assess performance in between the engagement sessions depending on the level of feedback received from stakeholders during these periods.

Evaluation of performance shall be assessed based on the extent to which the engagement activities and outputs meet those outlined in this SEP. In assessing performance, the following will be considered:

- Materials disseminated: types, frequency, and location;
- Place and time of formal engagement events and level of participation including specific stakeholder groups (e.g. women, youth, community leaders);
- Number of people attending public or formal meetings
- Number of comments received on specific issues, type of stakeholder and details of feedback provided;
- Numbers and type of stakeholders who meet the Project team by mail, telephone and any other means of communication;
- Meeting minutes, attendance registers and photographic evidence;
- Comments received by government authorities, community leaders and other parties and passed to the Project;
- Numbers and types of feedback and / or grievances and the nature and timing of their resolution; and the extent to which feedback and comments have been addressed and have led to corrective actions being implemented.

8. REFERENCES

1. Stakeholder Engagement Plan for Network Reinforcement Access Project (NRAP) - December 2022.

2. https://consultations.worldbank.org/Data/hub/files/consultation-template/review-and-update-world-bank-safeguard-policies/en/materials/revised_factsheet_ess10_july_29_aki.pdf

9. ANNEXES

9.1 ASCENT Description

ASCENT Eswatini_Descriptions_

9.2 Preliminary engagements

The project has engaged various schemes with one from each region to introduce the project, take concerns and suggestions before implantation of the project. Below is meeting minutes from the various schemes spread across the four regions of the country:

1. Lubombo region

Purpose	Introduction of ASCENT Project, KaMkhweli Electricity schemes (3) – Lubombo region
Date	11 December 2024
Time (from – to)	10:45 – 12:30pm
Venue	KaMkhweli Umphakatsi
Minutes taken by	Simtholile Dlamini

Agenda			
	Activity	**Responsible**	
1.0	Opening remarks	All 3 Schemes chairperson	
2.0	Introductions	ALL	
3.0	Project description and discussion	MNRE	
4.0	Connection in schemes	MNRE/EEC	
5.0	Social safeguards	EEC	
6.0	Questions & Answers	ALL	
7.0	Closing remarks	Scheme chairperson	
Item	**Description**	**Responsible**	**Due Date**

1.0	***Opening remarks***	Scheme chairperson	
	Meeting was opened with word of prayer and the scheme chairperson welcomed all to the meeting and thanked members for making it in numbers.		
2.0	**Introductions**	ALL	
	MNRE Team leader introduce the project team to the meeting.		
3.0	**Project description and discussions**	MNRE team lead	
	• MNRE received request for funding for scheme in the area. • Under the MNRE, the NRAP has been assisting schemes through funding from World Bank and only focused on Shiselweni region. • The new project being introduced today is designed to now cover all Eswatini		
	Component 1 (with 34 US dollars million load funding). • Activities to includes strengthening the line route so more homesteads can be connected. • Homestead connections including the three schemes in the area that requested funding. **Component 2 (with 50millon US dollars loan funding)** • Explained to the community is that under this component, homesteads connections shall be done which is the schemes. • Ready board to be used for households that do not qualify to wire or cannot afford it. • But it has limitations of how much you can plug using the ready boards. • The main intention or goal of the project is to connect all Emaswati by the year 2030.		
	• The MNRE further explained that from lessons learnt under the NRAP, certain issues noted have are going to be addressed by this project. • These issues or lesion include the issue of squatters and landowners who do not want EEC infrastructure. Yet these squatters join group schemes and then MNRE finds it hard to connect them due to land rights issues and laying of EEC infrastructure.		

	• Consequently, Emaswati shall be connected with off grid solutions (solar) which includes the promotion of clean energy while connect those with such issues.		
	• Furthermore, optical fibre to be used in the strengthening activities so Internet access can also be achieved through the EEC lines (but at a charge).		
	• Gender and youth challenges to be considered and addressed through the project including ensuring that more youths and women are connected to the grid and also another energy related issues that affected gender equality in communities across the country.		
4.0	**Connection in schemes**	MNRE	
	• Active engagements need to be done to ensure that all scheme members are ready for connection to avoid delays when contractor is on site. • No household will be connected or EEC infrastructure in a homestead with no structure. No pole will be left outside an empty land as previously done before as with World Bank this does not quality as connecting someone if its not a structure. • This is also costly and waste of resources.		
	• Issue of putting relatives or someone who was not initially in the scheme to be connected should not happen in this project as it brings a lot of challenges for the project. • If change happens, such changes should be communicated in time to MNRE so a recount can be done through the EEC. • Aim is for contractor to connect all those registered under the scheme.		
5.0	**Social Safeguards**	**EEC**	
	Stakeholder engagement: • Request to spread the word on the project. • Neighbours refusing the allow infrastructure to pass through and not stop development due to conflicts. Request to be accommodative and allow development.		
	Accommodation • Request to assist contractors to secure accommodation preferably NCPs.		

	• If it's a house it should not have under 18 ages as mainly contractors are males (GBV issues).		
	GRM process *Community advised to report concerns, suggestions, grievances and issues through the following channels:* • Chairperson of schemes • MNRE • EEC Call centre		
	Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Contractors to be taught on GBV and not allowed to have any relationship with community members especially young girls. • Community to also carry themselves in good conduct such as young girls and wives. • EEC to conduct GBV session with project GBV specialist NATICC starting in January as the project wants to ensure positive development in these communities and not leave burdens.		
6.0	**Q&A**	ALL	
	Q - Found pole in his homestead, without prior engagement and reported to BB and have not assisted to date. A - EEC requested information from customer and shall assist accordingly.		
	Q - When will schemes be approved? A - From January things will start moving as its holidays now.		
	Q - If we find out that someone has already been connected can we remove them simply in scheme list? A - Yes, but notify the MNRE and also verifications shall be done prior to commencement of actual works.		
	Q - If a person is removed from scheme should we report with EEC or MNRE? A - It's most preferable that first come to MNRE and recount to be done by EEC. Scheme is formed 2 people and above. If left out from a scheme, that group can form a new group and request from MNRE.		
	Q - If the scheme is funded, do the scheme refund the members the 10% or if I decide to pull out can I get a refund as a scheme member?		

	A - If the project had not started, yes you can get a refund. Fill in form and will be paid back through the EEC office. You can connect a house inside the homestead as exposed to putting neighbours.		
	Q - Are these schemes funded already? A- Not yet they will be funded through Ascent. And first schemes to be done from here as a commitment made by MNRE as first engagement was with these schemes.	MNRE	Jan-March 2025
7.0	**Closing remarks**		
	The MNRE thanked everyone for listening and asking question. The group chairperson further thanked the MNRE & EEC for the development that is coming, and the meeting was closed with a word of prayer.		

2. Manzini region

Purpose	Introduction of ASCENT Project, Sigombeni Electricity schemes – Manzini region
Date	12 December 2024
Time (from – to)	10:00am – 11:30am
Venue	Sigombeni Inkhundla
Minutes taken by	Simtholile Dlamini

Agenda		
	Activity	**Responsible**
1.0	Opening remarks	Bucopho
2.0	Introductions	ALL
3.0	Project description and discussion	MNRE
4.0	Connection in schemes	MNRE/EEC
5.0	Social safeguards	EEC
6.0	Questions & Answers	ALL
7.0	Closing remarks	Indvuna

Item	**Description**	**Responsible**	**Due Date**
1.0	***Opening remarks***	Bucopho	
	Meeting was opened with word of prayer and the area Bucopho welcomed all to the meeting especially MNRE/EEC and thanked members for making it to the meeting.		

2.0	**Introductions**	ALL	
	MNRE Team leader introduce the project team to the meeting**.**		
3.0	**Project description and discussions**	MNRE Team lead	
	• MNRE received request for funding for scheme in the area. • Under the MNRE, the NRAP has been assisting schemes through funding from World Bank and only focused on Shiselweni region. • The new project being introduced today is designed to now cover all Eswatini		
	Component 1 (with 34 US dollars million load funding). • Activities to includes strengthening the line route so more homesteads can be connected. • Homestead connections including the three schemes in the area that requested funding. **Component 2 (with 50millon US dollars loan funding)** • Explained to the community is that under this component, homesteads connections shall be done which is the schemes. • Ready board to be used for households that do not qualify to wire or cannot afford it. • But it has limitations of how much you can plug using the ready boards. • The main intention or goal of the project is to connect all Emaswati by the year 2030.		
	• The MNRE further explained that from lessons learnt under the NRAP, certain issues noted have are going to be addressed by this project. • These issues or lesion include the issue of squatters and landowners who do not want EEC infrastructure. Yet these squatters join group schemes and then MNRE finds it hard to connect them due to land rights issues and laying of EEC infrastructure. • Consequently, Emaswati shall be connected with off grid solutions (solar) which includes the promotion of clean energy while connect those with such issues.		
	• Furthermore, optical fibre to be used in the strengthening activities so Internet access can also be achieved through the EEC lines (but at a charge).		

	• Gender and youth challenges to be considered and addressed through the project including ensuring that more youths and women are connected to the grid and also another energy related issues that affected gender equality in communities across the country.		
4.0	**Connection in schemes**	MNRE	
	• Active engagements need to be done to ensure that all scheme members are ready for connection to avoid delays when contractor is on site. • No household will be connected or EEC infrastructure in a homestead with no structure. No pole will be left outside an empty land as previously done before as with World Bank this does not quality as connecting someone if its not a structure. • This is also costly and waste of resources.		
	• Issue of putting relatives or someone who was not initially in the scheme to be connected should not happen in this project as it brings a lot of challenges for the project. • If change happens, such changes should be communicated in time to MNRE so a recount can be done through the EEC. • Aim is for contractor to connect all those registered under the scheme.		
5.0	**Social Safeguards**	EEC	
	Stakeholder engagement: • Request to spread the word on the project. • Neighbours refusing the allow infrastructure to pass through and not stop development due to conflicts. Request to be accommodative and allow development.		
	Accommodation • Request to assist contractors to secure accommodation preferably NCPs. • If it's a house it should not have under 18 ages as mainly contractors are males (GBV issues).		
	GRM process *Community advised to report concerns, suggestions, grievances and issues through the following channels:* • Chairperson of schemes		

	• MNRE • EEC Call centre		
	Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Contractors to be taught on GBV and not allowed to have any relationship with community members especially young girls. • Community to also carry themselves in good conduct such as young girls and wives. • EEC to conduct GBV session with project GBV specialist NATICC starting in January as the project wants to ensure positive development in these communities and not leave burdens.		
6.0	**Q&A**	ALL	
	Q- How do you get refund if paid already in the scheme yet now scheme is getting funding? A -EEC does have a process to refund schemes. This includes form filling, supporting evidence such as a letter from master's court if the member is now deceased. Members also have an option to use the money for tokens when connected or sent via account or ewallet.		
	Q - Can it be allowed that a big house connects with a ready board just one room in that house? A – No it is not allowed by EEC wiring & connection standards.		
	Q - How can those that are not part of scheme be helped at this point? A - Form their own scheme, request quotation from EEC then make request with MNRE		
	Comments: -Appreciated knowledge on the changing of members and how it delays schemes connection. -Appreciating funding finally after waiting for 8yrs		
7.0	**Closing remarks**	Indvuna	
	The indvuna thanked the MNRE & EEC for their informative session and the development they are bringing to their community. He further requested that EEC considers hiring of locals through their contractors when works begin on the ground. The meeting was closed with a word of prayer.		

3. Shiselweni region

Purpose	Introduction of ASCENT Project, Mbowane Electricity schemes – Shiselweni region
Date	11 December 2024
Time (from – to)	14:00pm – 15:10pm
Venue	Mbowane by the shops
Minutes taken by	Simtholile Dlamini

Agenda		
	Activity	**Responsible**
1.0	Opening remarks	Scheme chairperson
2.0	Introductions	ALL
3.0	Project description and discussion	MNRE
4.0	Connection in schemes	MNRE/EEC
5.0	Social safeguards	EEC
6.0	Questions & Answers	ALL
7.0	Closing remarks	Scheme chairperson

Item	**Description**	**Responsible**	**Due Date**
1.0	***Opening remarks***	Scheme chairperson	
	Meeting was opened with word of prayer and the scheme chairperson welcomed all to the meeting and thanked members for making it in numbers.		
2.0	**Introductions**	ALL	
	MNRE Team leader introduce the project team to the meeting.		
3.0	**Project description and discussions**	MNRE	
	• MNRE received request for funding for scheme in the area. • Under the MNRE, the NRAP has been assisting schemes through funding from World Bank and only focused on Shiselweni region. • The new project being introduced today is designed to now cover all Eswatini		
	Component 1 (with 34 US dollars million load funding).		

	• Activities to includes strengthening the line route so more homesteads can be connected. • Homestead connections including the three schemes in the area that requested funding. **Component 2 (with 50millon US dollars loan funding)** • Explained to the community is that under this component, homesteads connections shall be done which is the schemes. • Ready board to be used for households that do not qualify to wire or cannot afford it. • But it has limitations of how much you can plug using the ready boards. • The main intention or goal of the project is to connect all Emaswati by the year 2030.		
	• The MNRE further explained that from lessons learnt under the NRAP, certain issues noted have are going to be addressed by this project. • These issues or lesion include the issue of squatters and landowners who do not want EEC infrastructure. Yet these squatters join group schemes and then MNRE finds it hard to connect them due to land rights issues and laying of EEC infrastructure. • Consequently, Emaswati shall be connected with off grid solutions (solar) which includes the promotion of clean energy while connect those with such issues.		
	• Furthermore, optical fibre to be used in the strengthening activities so Internet access can also be achieved through the EEC lines (but at a charge).		
	• Gender and youth challenges to be considered and addressed through the project including ensuring that more youths and women are connected to the grid and also another energy related issues that affected gender equality in communities across the country.		
4.0	**Connection in schemes**	MNRE	
	• Active engagements need to be done to ensure that all scheme members are ready for connection to avoid delays when contractor is on site.		

	• No household will be connected or EEC infrastructure in a homestead with no structure. No pole will be left outside an empty land as previously done before as with World Bank this does not quality as connecting someone if its not a structure. • This is also costly and waste of resources.		
	• Issue of putting relatives or someone who was not initially in the scheme to be connected should not happen in this project as it brings a lot of challenges for the project. • If change happens, such changes should be communicated in time to MNRE so a recount can be done through the EEC. • Aim is for contractor to connect all those registered under the scheme.		
5.0	**Social Safeguards**	MNRE/EEC	
	Stakeholder engagement: • Request to spread the word on the project. • Neighbours refusing the allow infrastructure to pass through and not stop development due to conflicts. Request to be accommodative and allow development.		
	Accommodation • Request to assist contractors to secure accommodation preferably NCPs. • If it's a house it should not have under 18 ages as mainly contractors are males (GBV issues).		
	GRM process *Community advised to report concerns, suggestions, grievances and issues through the following channels:* • Chairperson of schemes • MNRE • EEC Call centre		
	Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Contractors to be taught on GBV and not allowed to have any relationship with community members especially young girls. • Community to also carry themselves in good conduct such as young girls and wives.		

	• EEC to conduct GBV session with project GBV specialist NATICC starting in January as the project wants to ensure positive development in these communities and not leave burdens.		
6.0	**Q&A**	ALL	
	Q – What are the expected project timelines? A- Project has already started with such a meeting already done, it will officially run 2025 – 2030.		
	Q- Since the formation of the current scheme, many community members have built homesteads which are not connected can these benefit from the project through the existing scheme? A – No, they will have no form a new scheme as already everyone in the existing scheme has been counted for.		
	Q – How can we ensure that our names are still in the scheme list? A – The list can be requested from the MNRE, however people do make false claims stating they did register their names when they know they did not.		
	Q- The scheme has 193 members but the list from EEC shows 188 people only, how come? A – The scheme has been revised by the EEC post their assessment and counting on the ground. A follow up will be done so members are aware why the other 5 meembers did not make the cut.		
7.0	**Closing remarks**		
	The MNRE thanked everyone for attending and asking question. The group chairperson further thanked the MNRE & EEC for the development that is coming, and the meeting was closed with a word of prayer.	MNRE/ Scheme chairperson	

4. Hhohho region

Purpose	Introduction of ASCENT Project, Emvembili Electricity schemes – Hhohho region
Date	12 December 2024

Time (from – to)	10:30 – 12:30pm
Venue	Pigg's Peak
Minutes taken by	Simtholile Dlamini/Philsiwe Mabuza

Agenda		
	Activity	**Responsible**
1.0	Opening remarks	Chairperson
2.0	Introductions	ALL
3.0	Project description and discussion	MNRE
4.0	Connection in schemes	MNRE
5.0	Social safeguards	EEC
6.0	Questions & Answers	ALL
7.0	Closing remarks	Chairperson

Item	**Description**	**Responsible**	**Due Date**
1.0	***Opening remarks***		
	Meeting was opened with word of prayer and the chairperson welcomed all to the meeting and thanked members for making it in numbers.		
2.0	**Introductions**		
	MNRE Team leader introduce the project team to the meeting.		
3.0	**Project description and discussions**		
	• MNRE received request for funding for scheme in the area. • Under the MNRE, the NRAP has been assisting schemes through funding from World Bank and only focused on Shiselweni region. • The new project being introduced today is designed to now cover all Eswatini		
	Component 1 (with 34 US dollars million load funding). • Activities to includes strengthening the line route so more homesteads can be connected. • Homestead connections including the three schemes in the area that requested funding. **Component 2 (with 50millon US dollars loan funding)**		

	• Explained to the community is that under this component, homesteads connections shall be done which is the schemes. • Ready board to be used for households that do not qualify to wire or cannot afford it. • But it has limitations of how much you can plug using the ready boards. • The main intention or goal of the project is to connect all Emaswati by the year 2030.		
	• The MNRE further explained that from lessons learnt under the NRAP, certain issues noted have are going to be addressed by this project. • These issues or lesion include the issue of squatters and landowners who do not want EEC infrastructure. Yet these squatters join group schemes and then MNRE finds it hard to connect them due to land rights issues and laying of EEC infrastructure. • Consequently, Emaswati shall be connected with off grid solutions (solar) which includes the promotion of clean energy while connect those with such issues.		
	• Furthermore, optical fibre to be used in the strengthening activities so Internet access can also be achieved through the EEC lines (but at a charge).		
	• Gender and youth challenges to be considered and addressed through the project including ensuring that more youths and women are connected to the grid and also another energy related issues that affected gender equality in communities across the country.		
4.0	**Connection in schemes**		
	• Active engagements need to be done to ensure that all scheme members are ready for connection to avoid delays when contractor is on site. • No household will be connected or EEC infrastructure in a homestead with no structure. No pole will be left outside an empty land as previously done before as with World Bank this does not quality as connecting someone if its not a structure. • This is also costly and waste of resources.		
	• Issue of putting relatives or someone who was not initially in the scheme to be connected should not happen in this project as it brings a lot of challenges for the project. • If change happens, such changes should be communicated in time to MNRE so a recount can be done through the EEC. • Aim is for contractor to connect all those registered under the scheme.		
5.0	**Social Safeguards**		
	Stakeholder engagement: • Request to spread the word on the project. • Neighbours refusing the allow infrastructure to pass through and not stop development due to conflicts. Request to be accommodative and allow development.		

	EEC Core values/CoC • Core values of the company were shared with the community to remind them of the expected conduct of all those that shall be engaged to work in the project on behalf of EEC. • The core values discussed include Service excellence, Honest and integrity, Respect, and social responsibility		
	Accommodation • Request to assist contractors to secure accommodation preferably NCPs. • If it's a house it should not have under 18 ages as mainly contractors are males (GBV issues).		
	GRM process *Community advised to report concerns, suggestions, grievances and issues through the following channels:* • Chairperson of schemes • MNRE • EEC Call centre		
	Gender Based Violence (GBV) • Contractors to be taught on GBV and not allowed to have any relationship with community members especially young girls. • Community to also carry themselves in good conduct such as young girls and wives. • EEC to conduct GBV session with project GBV specialist NATICC starting in January as the project wants to ensure positive development in these communities and not leave burdens.		
6.0	**Q&A**	ALL	
	Q – Are we included in the 2030 target as a scheme? A – Yes, the fact that project has been introduced to your scheme it means the scheme has already been selected to be part of the project beneficiaries.		
	Q – With our scheme going to received funding, can scheme members get a refund of their contributions? A – Yes, all funded schemes shall be refunded. There is a process to be followed in this regard especially from the EEC side which included filling in a form. Otherwise, all shall be refunded 100%.		
7.0	**Closing remarks**		
	The chairperson thanked the MNRE & EEC for the development that is coming and expressed in detailed how excited they are as a community, and the meeting was closed with a word of prayer.	Chairperson	

9.3 Pictures

Figure 1: MNRE Phisiwe Mabuza speaking on scheme connection during meeting under Lubombo region

Figure 2: Views of the three schemes members under Lubombo region engaged 11 December 2024

Figure 3: MNRE discussing the project with scheme members under Shiselweni region

Figure 4: Views of Mbowane community under Shiselweni listening to the discussions

Figure 5: EEC Marketing Officer speaking to scheme members under Hhohho emuva region

Figure 6: Views of those attendance with both females and males well represented under Mvembili community under Hhohho region.

Figure 7: EEC Social expert discussing social safeguards in Sigombeni community under Manzini region

Figure 8: EEC Commercial officer explaining refund process to scheme members under Sigombeni community (Nkomiyahlaba scheme)

Figure 9: MNRE explaining in detail how schemes shall be connected including the do's and don'ts.

Figure 10: MNRE Team lead explaining the project and its scope.

9.4 Attendance registers

Emvembili attendance register.p Hhohho region

Sigombeni attandace registers 121224.pdf Manzini region

Mbowane - Shiselweni Attendace Shiselweni region

KaMkhweli Attahdance registers Lubombo region

World Bank & EEC project apprasial 091

Project appraisal meeting