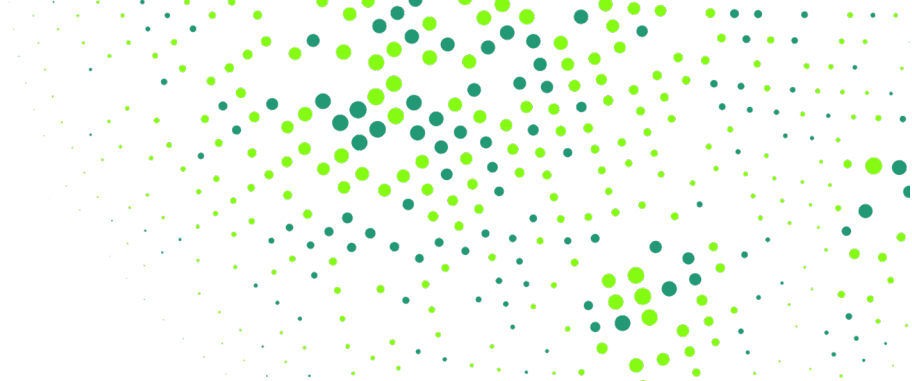


Communities, People at the Centre

What should benefit-sharing look like in a just transition?





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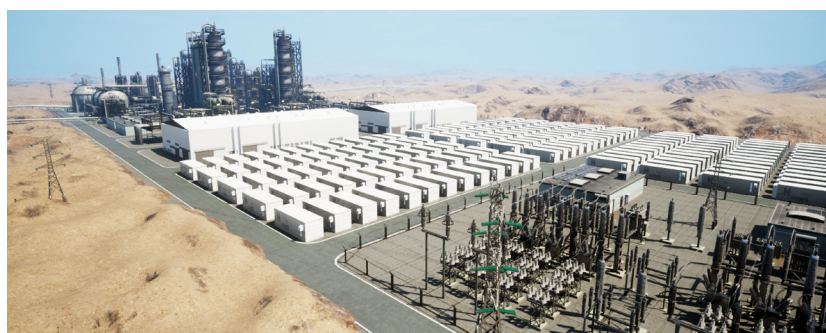
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Frederico Links

How do we ensure that communities and people benefit appropriately from Namibia's abundance and ambitions?

Across the country people want to know what's in it for them because many are still not clear about what is happening or coming down the pipeline

Over the course of 2026, the IPPR and some of its partners have been engaging with communities and individuals from across the country, especially in some of the locations of emerging or envisioned green hydrogen production, oil and gas extraction or critical minerals mining.

Through all these engagements two things have become very clear: first, many people, especially young people, feel that they are not getting enough information about developments that will potentially significantly impact them and their communities; and, second, people have repeatedly expressed that they want to see real benefits for themselves, individually and collectively.

To be clear, contrary to what some might think, the overwhelming majority of people are not against projects or emerging developments, they are simply impatient for clear answers and a clear view of what opportunities might be unlocked for them and their children.

This is what informs this edition of the *Green Hydrogen Monitor*.

The theme, as expressed in our cover headline, reflects this and serves as a reminder of what people expect: That they and their communities should be recognised as important stakeholders, and ultimately co-primary beneficiaries, of any projects and developments within, around and adjacent to them.

In our first offering, IPPR Executive Director Graham Hopwood navigates some of the pressing questions in this regard, specifically: "Are local communities benefiting fairly from projects that directly affect their lives and livelihoods? Are their rights and environment being protected? And will their communities have a sustainable future when the projects eventually come to an end?"

Similarly, and slightly more urgently, Namibia Development Trust (NDC) Executive Director Ronny Dampers notes that "the key and overriding argument is that in order for Namibia's ambitious green industrialisation agenda to succeed, it must serve as an immediate lifeline to alleviate local livelihood crises, converting future macro-economic promises into current socio-economic relief".

For her part, Toni Beukes, head of ESG & Corporate Affairs at Hyphen Hydrogen Energy, argues the following: "If Namibia and its sovereign partners can agree, as we already have with the EU and Germany, on cooperation spanning green hydrogen, local value addition, skills, research and institutional capacity, my proposition is that we should go one step further and agree the development outcomes those interventions are collectively intended to achieve, and share responsibility for achieving them. The question then becomes not simply what programmes did we fund, but how far did they move Namibia along its development trajectory?"

Finally, across two articles, Jona Musheko, Manager of External Affairs & Communications at the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NGH2P), points to examples of where visible community and individual benefits are already moving into view.

In his first contribution, Musheko however notes that green hydrogen developments could have unintended, but foreseeable, negative impacts, stating: "Large-scale industrialisation could attract significant numbers of workers to Lüderitz and surrounding settlements. While this creates opportunities for employment and business development, rapid population growth could place pressure on housing, healthcare, sanitation and other essential services."

He points out that these negative impacts are being kept in sight by the government and that pre-emptive measures are being considered.

In his second contribution, Musheko, illustrates what real benefits should be, saying: "The Youth for Green Hydrogen Scholarship Programme reflects the importance of developing local skills alongside investment in energy infrastructure and industrial projects."

As should be clear, with this edition of *Green Hydrogen Monitor* we attempt to approach this highly relevant discussion from all the positions or perspectives that matter: civil society, company or corporate, and government.

We hope you find these discussions informative and insightful.

Once again, enjoyable reading and please consider commenting and giving feedback.

Frederico Links, Editor / Project Coordinator, Green Hydrogen Monitor Project



Source: Frederico Links

Local community members at a meeting at Uis as part of the Eco Dialogue Collective project in August 2026.

Ensuring communities benefit from the green transition

• GRAHAM HOPWOOD

Will communities living alongside projects be better off because of them? Asks Graham Hopwood

Namibia's emerging green industries promise investment, employment, export earnings and economic growth. Green hydrogen, renewable energy and critical minerals could play an important role in diversifying the economy. But there is a fundamental question that needs to be asked from the outset: will communities living alongside these projects be better off because of them?

Too often, communities affected by major investments are treated as passive recipients of corporate charity rather than active participants in development. If Namibia's green transition is to be genuinely inclusive, this approach needs to change. Communities must have a meaningful say in decisions affecting their lives and receive a fair share of the economic benefits generated.

A question of human rights

Community benefits should not be regarded simply as an optional element of corporate social responsibility. Fundamentally, this is a human rights issue.

Namibia's Constitution protects human dignity (Article 8) and guarantees equality before the law and freedom from discrimination (Article 10). Article 95 commits the State to promoting public welfare, protecting the environment

and ensuring the sustainable use of living natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. Namibia is also a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which recognises the rights of peoples to development, to benefit from their natural resources and to a satisfactory environment.

Environmental, social and governance (ESG) principles should therefore be more than fashionable terminology used in investment presentations. Responsible ESG practices should give practical effect to the values already embedded in the Namibian Constitution and international commitments.

Beyond corporate charity

Namibia is still developing its understanding of what meaningful community benefit-sharing should look like in emerging green industries. The country has relatively few examples of such benefit-sharing.

One is the Daures Green Hydrogen Village, where the Daure Daman Traditional Authority and Tsiseb Conservancy hold a combined 10% equity stake. Namibia's communal conservancy model also offers useful lessons in community participation, local governance and the sharing of benefits derived from natural resources.

Benefit-sharing can take many forms: revenue-sharing arrangements, community trusts, equity stakes, employment commitments, preferential procurement, support for local businesses and investment in infrastructure.

>



Source: Frederico Links

Uis residents, at a meeting in August 2026, had questions about community benefits from green hydrogen developments and critical minerals extraction in their area.

These are fundamentally different from conventional corporate social investment (CSI), which might involve donating computers to a school or constructing a classroom. Such contributions may be welcome, but they are usually discretionary and bear little relationship to the economic value generated by a project.

Genuine benefit-sharing should establish a more lasting connection between project revenues and improvements in community livelihoods.

Let communities set the priorities

One danger is that projects deliver impressive national economic indicators while neighbouring communities see little improvement in their daily lives.

GDP growth, tax revenue and export earnings matter, but they do not automatically translate into local development.

For communities near renewable energy and green hydrogen projects, access to electricity and water may be more valuable than occasional donations. Where projects generate electricity from abundant solar and wind resources, or develop desalination facilities, there is a compelling case for examining how surrounding communities might also benefit from that infrastructure. Other communities may prioritise jobs, skills development, land access, small business opportunities or improved roads.

The essential point is that these priorities should not be determined solely by investors or govern-

ment officials. Communities themselves must be involved in identifying their needs, negotiating commitments and assessing whether promises are fulfilled.

Consultation should be continuous and meaningful, not a once-off exercise undertaken to secure project approval.

Making industry commitments count

Namibia is developing a Green Industrialisation Policy which envisages a voluntary industry charter to encourage responsible practices and community benefit-sharing. Although the draft policy has yet to be released for public consultation, the proposed charter could provide a useful starting point provided it is developed through genuine consultation with affected communities, civil society and industry.

Its effectiveness would depend on clear minimum standards, measurable commitments, public reporting and independent monitoring. Over time, consideration should be given to making such requirements mandatory, rather than relying indefinitely on voluntary compliance.

Such an approach need not discourage investment. Well-designed benefit-sharing arrangements can reduce disputes, strengthen community relationships and lower the social and operational risks facing investors.

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Where projects generate electricity from abundant solar and wind resources, or develop desalination facilities, there is a compelling case for examining how surrounding communities might also benefit from that infrastructure. Other communities may prioritise jobs, skills development, land access, small business opportunities or improved roads.



Source: Suzie Shefeni

Graham Hopwood on a panel at the African Green Industries Summit in September 2026.

“

A successful green transition cannot be measured by investment figures and export revenues alone. It must also be measured by whether the communities most directly affected are empowered, protected and demonstrably better off.

Transparency and environmental accountability

Meaningful participation depends on access to information. Communities cannot assess project impacts or negotiate fairly if important documents remain confidential or inaccessible.

Environmental impact assessments, Environmental Clearance Certificates (ECCs), environmental management plans and monitoring reports should be readily available. Communities should understand what developers have committed to and who is responsible for checking compliance.

Transparency must extend throughout a project's life, from initial planning and licensing to construction, operation and eventual closure.

Namibia's Environmental Management Act also requires review. The existing framework was not designed with the scale and complexity of green hydrogen, major renewable energy developments, critical minerals and offshore petroleum projects in mind.

Regulatory authorities need stronger monitoring and enforcement capacity, clear inspection responsibilities and the willingness to impose consequences for non-compliance, including suspension or withdrawal of environmental clearance where legally justified.

The Access to Information Act, Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) principles and

emerging green hydrogen standards offer useful approaches for strengthening disclosure, participation and accountability. But principles and standards must translate into practical obligations.

Getting it right from the beginning

Namibia has an opportunity to establish responsible practices while its green industries are still taking shape, rather than attempting to correct entrenched problems later.

Ultimately, the test of community benefit-sharing is straightforward. Are local communities benefiting fairly from projects that directly affect their lives and livelihoods? Are their rights and environment being protected? And will their communities have a sustainable future when the projects eventually come to an end?

A successful green transition cannot be measured by investment figures and export revenues alone. It must also be measured by whether the communities most directly affected are empowered, protected and demonstrably better off.

** This article is based on remarks made by Graham Hopwood, Executive Director of the IPPR, during a panel discussion on community benefit-sharing at the Green Industries Summit, held in Swakopmund on 9-10 September 2026. ■*



Source: Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

Ronny Dempers speaking from the floor at the launch of the Hyphen Hydrogen Energy Socio-Economic Development Framework, at Keetmanshoop, in 2023.

‘We can’t breathe’

• RONNY DEMPERS

Can green industrialisation produce the much-needed oxygen for Namibians to breathe again? Asks Ronny Dempers

As government officials, local and global investors, development partners, a handful of civil society actors, community and youth representatives, and environmentalists convened in Swakopmund on 9-10 September 2026 for the inaugural African Green Industries Summit, a front page article in the state-owned New Era newspaper reported a harsh reality under the headline “Namibians can’t breathe”.

The fact that a government-owned newspaper carried such a hard-hitting headline was politically and socially significant. It was an indication that the pressures of the socio-economic realities in the country had become too visibly widespread to be ignored any longer.

“

The unfortunate and harsh reality for most Namibians is that they are fighting to keep their heads above water due to rising inflation and surging living costs. The New Era article mentioned that inflation was climbing, having risen to 4.4% at the time, fueled by rising fuel, transport, municipal and other costs.

The unfortunate and harsh reality for most Namibians is that they are fighting to keep their heads above water due to rising inflation and surging living costs. The New Era article mentioned that inflation was climbing, having risen to 4.4% at the time, fueled by rising fuel, transport, municipal and other costs.

While statements by political leaders at summits proudly and loudly tout green industrialisation as a driver of GDP growth and job creation, the day-to-day reality facing ordinary Namibians tells a far louder story.

The African Green Industries Summit set out a forward-looking vision of clean energy, decarbonisation and massive structural transformation under the theme ‘Powering African Industries for Sustainable Development’, and billed green industrialisation as Namibia’s future.

The question is can it ease the squeeze on Namibian households today?

Here, the key and overriding argument is that in order for Namibia’s ambitious green industrialisation agenda to succeed, it must serve as an immediate lifeline to alleviate local livelihood crises, converting future macro-economic promises into current socio-economic relief.

That said, previous narratives seem to have mainly focused on green hydrogen as the key driver of this much-touted green industrialisation. This summit brought a different dynamic into play, one that deserves closer scrutiny.

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For many observers in the general public the core fear is the historic African paradox: Booming export sectors that exist as ‘enclaves’, yielding immense national GDP growth on paper, but failing to trickle down as local benefits or into local wallets or community infrastructure.

According to reporting, “the summit marked a broader shift in Namibia’s green economy agenda, moving beyond discussions focused primarily on green hydrogen towards a wider industrialisation strategy encompassing renewable energy, critical minerals, manufacturing, infrastructure, agriculture and value addition”.

What was noticeable at the summit was an attempt to domesticate the discussions more to Namibia’s realities, whilst allowing for learnings and reflections from selected countries, such as South Africa. Commendably, the summit provided for the inclusion of Namibian civil society in the preparations running up to the event. In this regard, while the summit looked forward to a future of clean energy, decarbonisation, and massive structural transformation, the issue of the immediate, and literal, economic breathlessness of the ordinary Namibians also featured.

What the summit offered

It has broadened the scope: The summit marked a critical shift in Namibia’s green economy strategy. It moved beyond isolating green hydrogen towards a holistic industrial ecosystem. This includes renewable energy infrastructure, manufacturing, and local critical-mineral beneficiation.

Civil society involvement on the summit board: The past Green Hydrogen Summits have largely kept civil society on the periphery. This summit made attempts to include civil society voices. Notwithstanding the commercial motive of these types of events, civil society was invited to be part from the start. Thus Namibia Development Trust (NDT) was invited on behalf of civil society to serve on the summit board. This allowed NDT raise the following issues:

- **Ensuring social and environmental safeguards:** Providing critical oversight to ensure that the summit’s agenda and the projects it promoted adhered to the highest standards of social and environmental responsibility, respecting community rights, biodiversity, and local livelihoods;
- **Communicating community needs:** Acting as a conduit to ensure that the perspectives, concerns, and aspirations of local communities, informal workers, and marginalised groups are reflected in the summit’s thematic discussions and outcomes;
- **Advocating for a just transition:** Championing the principles of a just transition throughout the summit’s programming, ensuring that discussions on green industrialisation explicitly address job

creation, skills development, social protection, and the fair distribution of expected benefits and profits;

- **Promoting inclusivity and gender equity:** Advising the summit team on strategies to ensure inclusive participation and representation in the green economy;
- **Fostering multi-stakeholder dialogue:** Encouraging constructive dialogue and partnership between civil society, government, and the private sector to build trust and co-create solutions that are both economically viable and socially just.

Dreams vs reality

While delegates discussed international off-take agreements and financing structures, the Namibians faced real-time pressures. High youth unemployment, rising costs of living, and rural distress act as immediate social and financial constraints on the country.

At the same time basic public services, such as state healthcare and urban housing provision, faced severe strain.

When billions of dollars in foreign direct investment flow into heavy infrastructure projects like ports, rail networks, and green hydrogen plants, it creates immediate friction with communities waiting for the investment to translate into localised socio-economic relief.

For many observers in the general public the core fear is the historic African paradox: Booming export sectors that exist as ‘enclaves’, yielding immense national GDP growth on paper, but failing to trickle down as local benefits or into local wallets or community infrastructure.

What communities want is tangible ‘oxygen’ that will make Namibians breathe again. Such real oxygen will, among others, include:

- A need for a different language and demonstrations. Talking only about how much green industrialisation will benefit the country and its people will remain a pipe dream unless urgent and deliberate interventions are made;
- **Fast-track local production and value addition:** There has been so much talk about local value addition. In order to make Namibians breathe again there is an absolute need for fast tracking local value addition initiatives to exploit the comparative advantages such as solar radiation, wind and available land Namibia offers. For example, in

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Source: Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

Community members and stakeholders at the launch of the Hyphen Hydrogen Energy Socio-Economic Development Framework, at Keetmanshoop, in 2023.

terms of the Green Manufacturing Strategy, Namibia's government has put in plans under the Green Industrialisation Strategy for Namibia to localise the production of solar panels, copper cables, wind turbines, and electrolyzers. A study by McKinsey & Company estimates that local solar PV cell production and module assembly could create up to 22,000 jobs and contribute roughly N\$37 billion to Namibia's GDP by 2050. It is important that these findings are translated into real actions and implementation;

- **Incentivise local and foreign Investment:** For example it is estimated that a 300 MW/year fuel cell production facility requires an estimated US\$6 million (N\$112 million) in investment, while a 300 MW/year module assembly plant requires around US\$2.5 million (N\$47 million). Simply put, what Namibians need to see now is not statements around value addition, but practical initiatives that show local value addition. Will Namibia establish a solar panel manufacturing plant for domestic job creation and electricity provision?;
- **Decentralise and enhance grassroots participation in the green industrialisation discourse:** While the private sector should be commended for its role in creating platforms through the hosting of these summits, it is not sufficient. The green industrialisation discourse must be

decentralised to regional and constituency levels. This will allow grassroots communities to not only be seen as beneficiaries of green industrialisation, but they should be co-owners and shapers of the green industrialisation strategy implementation.

- Strengthen institutions, processes that will enhance transparency, accountability, ethical and fair conduct through technical and vocational training, as well as actively integrating Namibian small-and-medium enterprises (SMEs) directly into global green supply chains;
- **Socio-economic safeguards:** Green development must include robust environmental, social, and governance (ESG) frameworks that prioritise local infrastructure, clean water access, and local community equity up front. It has become time to call for a responsive corporate social investment (CSI) framework that will at least set minimum CSI standards.

In conclusion, the time has come to transform Namibia's green industrialisation discourse from an elite endeavour into a people's project - decentralised, transparent, and owned by the communities it claims to serve.

Ronny Dempers is the Executive Director of the Namibia Development Trust (NDT).





Source: Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

Toni Beukes (centre) with pupils of Keetmanshoop Secondary School, during a Hyphen Hydrogen Energy roadshow stop on 6 September 2023.

Rethinking our energy partnerships for a truly just transition

• TONI BEUKES

A just transition should have broad and deep developmental benefits for Namibia, argues Toni Beukes of Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

The global energy transition is creating new relationships of interdependence between countries, but what should that interdependence require of us beyond the production and trade of clean energy? For Namibia, green hydrogen provides a particularly relevant lens through which to ask that question. In my last article, I explored the idea of the development deficit and argued that while the destination may be shared, the journey to net zero, and the resources required to complete it, are not. This article takes that argument one step further: if our destinations are increasingly interconnected, then surely responsibility for getting there must be shared too.

Europe needs clean energy and green molecules to decarbonise its economy, while countries like Namibia need investment, offtake markets and technology to industrialise sustainably. I've been thinking about what this interdependence requires of us in the context of three compacts or put more simply, three agreements. A compact brings countries together around common objectives and, importantly, a shared responsibility for achieving them.

The first is the climate compact. When countries came together in Paris in 2015 and adopted the Paris Agreement, we effectively agreed on a shared destination: to confront climate change collectively, substantially reduce emissions and pursue a pathway towards net zero by 2050. Countries such as Namibia made that commitment too, despite having contributed a fraction of the historical emissions that created the global climate crisis. That is an important feature of the climate compact: we accepted a shared responsibility for reaching a common destination even though our responsibility for creating the problem was vastly different.>



Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

An AI rendering of a Hyphen Hydrogen Energy pipeline along the Namibian coast.

The second is what I would call an emerging commercial compact. We've recognised that agreeing on the climate destination does not automatically create the economics required to get us there. Hyphen is a case in point. Developing a green hydrogen project at this scale requires enormous upfront capital and long-term certainty. We need bankable demand for the green ammonia we intend to produce, while prospective buyers must contend with green ammonia that, at least initially, may cost more than grey ammonia. Producing and importing nations have therefore begun developing mechanisms to bridge this commercial gap.

There is precedent for this. Wind and solar faced a similar challenge in their earlier development when costs were higher, markets were less mature and public policy and support helped create the conditions for investment and scale. Green hydrogen presents different challenges, but the underlying principle is similar i.e. achieving a shared objective may require both sides to carry some of the risk and cost needed to make it possible. H2Global's double-auction model is one example, using public funding to bridge the price gap between producers and buyers. Contracts for Difference (CfDs) similarly share some of the commercial risk required to enable the transition. Namibia's Sixth National Development Plan (NDP6) expressly envisages a CfD mechanism to support the green hydrogen industry.

But there is another part of the transition that neither of these compacts necessarily addresses; and that is development.

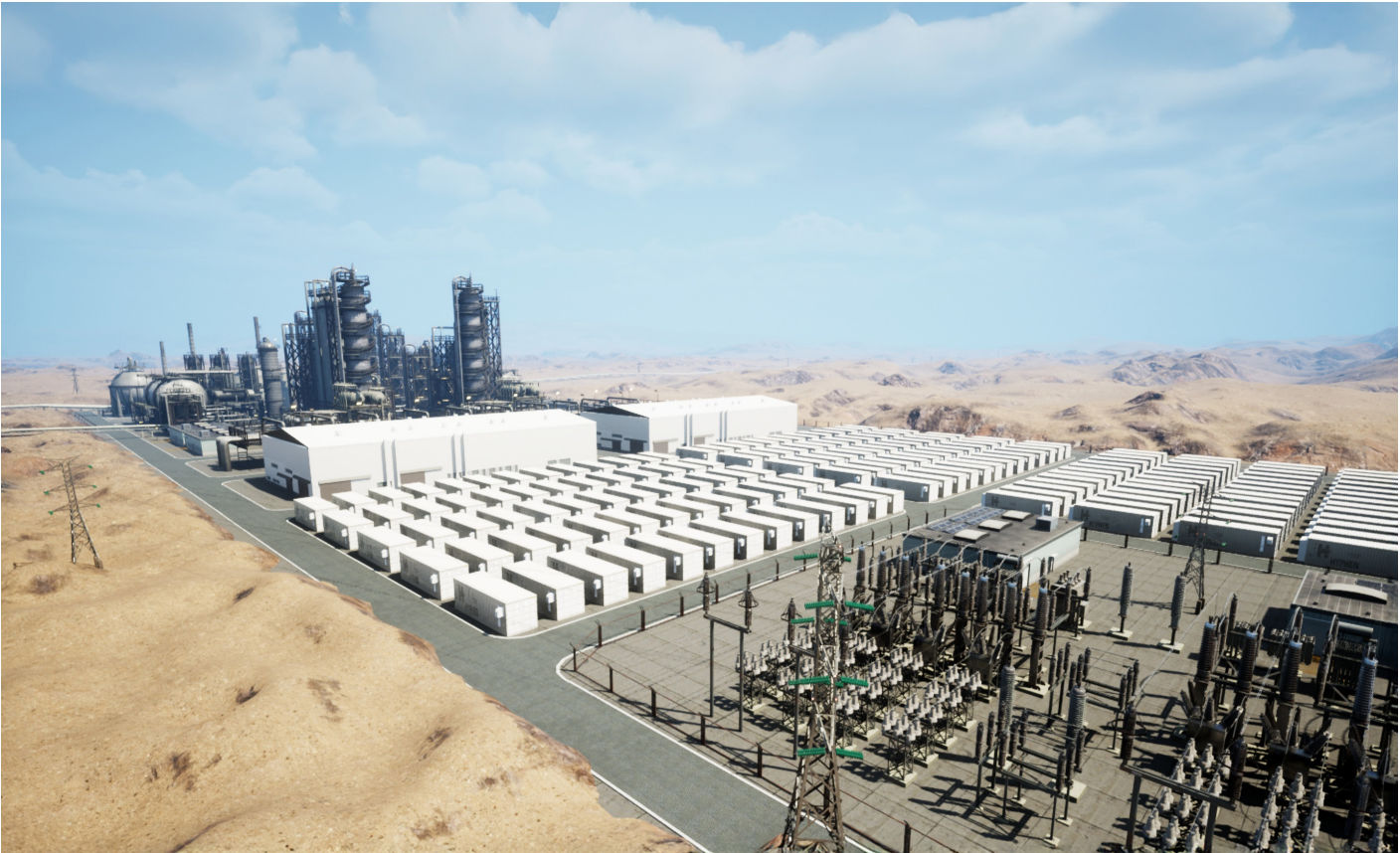
We know that getting the climate ambition right and making the commercial model work does not mean that development will naturally follow. A commercially successful energy transition can still leave deeper industrial, institutional and human capability gaps largely unchanged. And this is where I believe a third compact is missing: a development compact. Namibia's development deficit is rooted, in part, in the legacy of colonialism and apartheid and the profound inequalities they left behind, while our own choices, successes and shortcomings in the decades since independence have also shaped where we find ourselves today. But the allocation of responsibility for that history is not really the point. And there is a parallel here. Just as the climate compact accepts different historical responsibilities, and the commercial compact recognises the need to share risk and cost, a development compact must recognise our unequal starting points and the need to confront them together.

It therefore follows that, if the green hydrogen transition is genuinely to be just for Namibia, we cannot acknowledge those unequal starting points while leaving Namibia to bridge the resulting development deficit largely on its own. Yes, our development remains first and foremost our responsibility, but within these new and increasingly interdependent energy partnerships, closing that development deficit must also become part of the shared responsibility of the governments involved in achieving a just transition.

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We've recognised that agreeing on the climate destination does not automatically create the economics required to get us there.

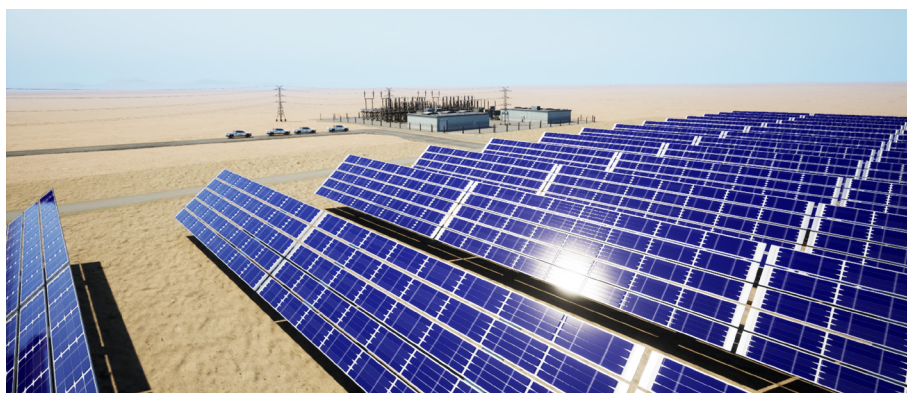


Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

An AI rendering of a Hyphen Hydrogen Energy plant.



Cabinet restricted the export of certain unprocessed critical minerals to encourage local beneficiation. Importantly, this ambition is also reflected in the 2022 EU-Namibia Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Raw Materials Value Chains and Renewable Hydrogen, which recognises local beneficiation, value addition and the development of domestic value chains as part of the partnership itself.



Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

An AI rendering of a Hyphen Hydrogen Energy solar installation.

NDP6 makes clear that Namibia's ambition for green hydrogen extends well beyond the production and export of green molecules. It forms part of a wider national objective of economic diversification, structural transformation and moving from the export of raw materials towards higher-value production and beneficiation. This reflects a clear policy stance that we must capture more of the value from our natural resources at home. Namibia reinforced that direction in 2023 when Cabinet restricted the export of certain unprocessed critical minerals to encourage local beneficiation. Importantly, this ambition is also reflected in the 2022 EU-Namibia Strategic Partnership on Sustainable Raw Materials Value Chains and Renewable Hydrogen, which recognises local beneficiation, value addition and the development of domestic value chains as part of the partnership itself. These are important foundations, but achieving the wider development ambition will depend on whether we can progressively strengthen the industrial, human and institutional capabilities that underpin them. The question, then, is not simply whether green hydrogen succeeds as an industry, but whether the partnerships being built around it also help Namibia develop the capabilities required to participate more fully in the economic opportunity it creates.

This is not an entirely new proposition. A growing body of policy and academic thinking is asking how the green transition can support African industrialisation instead of reproducing the older patterns in which resources are exported and the value created elsewhere. Encouragingly, that thinking is also beginning to find expression in practice: The 2022 EU-Namibia Strategic Partnership already encompasses local value addition, infrastructure, skills, research and institutional capacity-building, while Namibia's green hydrogen cooperation with Germany, through the 2021 Joint Communiqué of Intent and the subsequent 2022 Joint Declaration of Intent, similarly extends beyond hydrogen production to research, skills, technology transfer and the strengthening of technical and regulatory capacity.

These are important building blocks, but the development deficit is systemic and cannot be overcome by individual projects or a collection of isolated interventions. A development compact would therefore take the next step: connecting these building blocks within a deliberate, long-term development trajectory and shifting the focus from supporting development activities to jointly pursuing development outcomes.

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Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

An AI rendering of a Hyphen Hydrogen Energy wind turbine installation.



Hyphen Hydrogen Energy

Toni Beukes addressing local community members during one of the joint GRN-Hyphen roadshows.

If Namibia and its sovereign partners can agree, as we already have with the EU and Germany, on cooperation spanning green hydrogen, local value addition, skills, research and institutional capacity, my proposition is that we should go one step further and agree the development outcomes those interventions are collectively intended to achieve, and share responsibility for achieving them. The question then becomes not simply what programmes did we fund, but how far did they move Namibia along its development trajectory? Under a development compact, closing the development deficit becomes a shared responsibility, with agreed development outcomes forming part of what the sovereign energy partnership itself is expected to deliver.

Singapore offers a useful illustration. Faced in the early 1960s with interconnected constraints across employment, human capital, infrastructure and industrial capacity, its development response deliberately connected industrialisation and investment with education, infrastructure and capable institutions. Namibia's circumstances are very different, but the lesson is relevant: systemic development challenges are unlikely to be overcome through isolated interventions. A development compact would apply that principle to the new generation of sovereign energy partnerships. It would not make our partners responsible for Namibia's development but would ask us to agree where these partnerships should contribute to our longer-term development trajectory, connect interventions around those outcomes, and measure whether we are getting there. What that architecture looks like in practice still needs to be worked out, and I do not pretend to have

the answer. The principle is more important than the precise mechanism, and that is that development becomes part of how we define and measure the success of future energy partnerships itself.

The establishment in June 2026 of the new South-North Commission on Development at the Hamburg Sustainability Conference therefore comes at an important moment. Its mandate is expressly concerned with developing new forms of strategic partnership between the Global North and South and contributing concrete proposals to the post-2030 development debate. I would offer the development compact as one proposition for the Commission to consider, interrogate and, importantly, help us figure out how to implement. I have framed this argument through green hydrogen because it is the transition opportunity most immediately before us in Namibia, but the principle is broader. Whether future partnerships are built around energy, critical minerals or other emerging industrial value chains, the same question arises: if our economic futures are becoming increasingly interconnected, how do we ensure that the development required to participate meaningfully in that future becomes part of what we build together and, in doing so, part of what makes the energy transition genuinely just? Because ultimately, a just transition should not only change how the world produces and consumes energy; it should also change the development trajectory of the countries helping to make that transition possible.

Toni Beukes is Head of ESG & Corporate Affairs at Hyphen Hydrogen Energy. ■

Industrialising without compromising nature: Lessons from Namibia's first SESA

• JONA MUSHEKO

Namibia can advance green industrialisation, protect its environment, attract responsible investment and create lasting benefits for communities, notes Jona Musheko

Namibia's ambition to become a leading producer of renewable energy and green molecules presents significant opportunities for investment, employment and economic diversification. However, developing large-scale renewable energy and industrial projects in environmentally sensitive areas requires careful planning. The country's southern region, particularly the ǀKharas Region, possesses exceptional renewable energy potential, but also contains some of Namibia's most valuable biodiversity, tourism and cultural heritage assets. To guide responsible development, the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NGH2P) commissioned an independent Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA), undertaken by Environmental Resources Management (ERM). A multi-sectoral steering committee led by the Ministry of

Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), with participation from civil society guided the SESA process. The final report, finalised in September 2026, provides an important evidence base for government, investors and communities as Namibia advances its green industrialisation agenda.

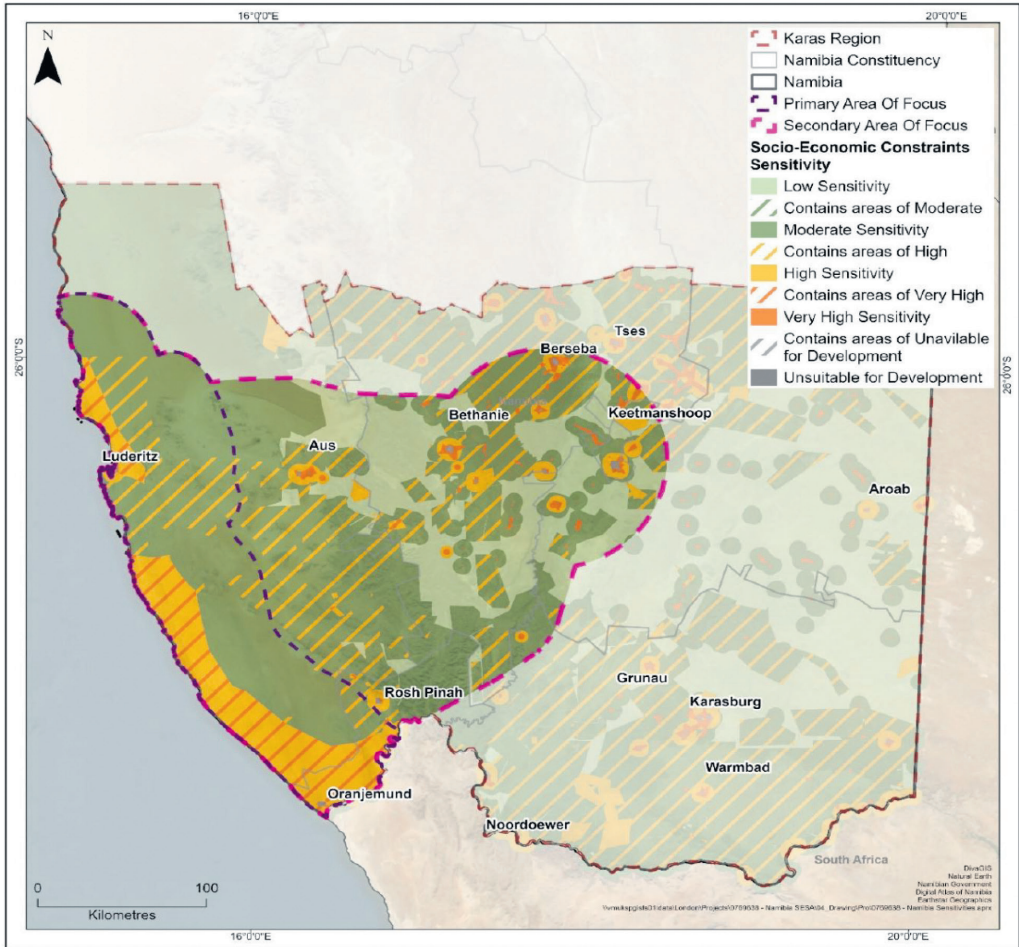
Why the SESA matters

The southern corridor SESA identifies environmental and social risks across southern Namibia, helping authorities and investors make informed decisions on suitable locations for green hydrogen and other industrial developments. By identifying potential risks early, the assessment supports project de-risking, reducing costly delays, environmental damage and investment uncertainty. This is particularly important for major projects, as they seek concessional finance from development finance institutions (DFIs), they must comply with the IFC Performance Standards or other international ESG standards, which promote responsible investment, environmental protection and community engagement.

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“The country's southern region, particularly the ǀKharas Region, possesses exceptional renewable energy potential, but also contains some of Namibia's most valuable biodiversity, tourism and cultural heritage assets.

FIGURE 2-3 COMBINED SOCIO-ECONOMIC SENSITIVITY MAP (WITH MINING)



Source: ERM



The assessment warns that poorly located infrastructure could permanently damage habitats, fragment ecosystems and threaten sensitive species. This is particularly concerning in arid environments where vegetation and ecological systems recover extremely slowly.

The SESA therefore strengthens investor confidence, supports international financing requirements and provides a foundation for sustainable green industrialisation.

Key findings

One of the SESA's most significant findings concerns biodiversity. The southern corridor contains exceptionally sensitive ecosystems, including protected areas, important wildlife habitats and plant and animal species found in few other places.

The assessment warns that poorly located infrastructure could permanently damage habitats, fragment ecosystems and threaten sensitive species. This is particularly concerning in arid environments where vegetation and ecological systems recover extremely slowly.

The report therefore recommends directing development towards less sensitive areas, minimising infrastructure footprints and coordinating roads, transmission lines and pipelines wherever possible.

A second finding concerns water. Although green hydrogen production requires substantial amounts of water, the assessment recognises seawater desalination as an important option for meeting industrial demand without placing excessive pressure on existing freshwater resources. However, desalination facilities require careful environmental assessment, particularly regarding marine ecosystems and the disposal of concentrated brine.

The third major finding relates to communities and infrastructure. Large-scale industrialisation could attract significant numbers of workers to Lüderitz and surrounding settlements. While this creates opportunities for employment and business development, rapid population growth could place pressure on housing, healthcare, sanitation and other essential services.

Without proper planning, rising accommodation costs and competition for services could negatively affect existing res-

idents. The SESA also identifies opportunities for skills development, local procurement and economic diversification, provided communities are adequately prepared to participate.

Collective impact

The southern corridor SESA examines the combined (cumulative) impacts of green hydrogen, mining, oil and gas, tourism and renewable energy developments, particularly their potential competition for land, infrastructure and skilled workers.

The assessment highlights opportunities for these industries to share infrastructure, including desalination plants, electricity transmission networks and transport facilities. Such collaboration could reduce development costs, minimise environmental impacts and support sustainable industrial growth.

As authorities consider approving new projects, the SESA provides valuable guidance for identifying suitable development areas, protecting biodiversity and coordinating infrastructure investments.

Well-informed and coordinated regional-level land use planning across multiple economic sectors is a key recommendation in the SESA.

To advance the social compact for development, the government should prioritise community participation, local economic benefits and adequate housing, water and sanitation infrastructure, while ensuring that individual projects undergo the required environmental assessments.

Ultimately, the SESA findings demonstrate that Namibia can advance green industrialisation while protecting its environment, attracting responsible investment and creating lasting benefits for communities.

Jona Musheko is the Manager of External Affairs & Communications at the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NG-H2P). ■



Source: Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme

Some of the Youth for Green Hydrogen scholarship beneficiaries at the Africa Institutional Management Services (AIMS) Vocational Training Centre at Stampriet.

Investing in Namibia's future

• JONA MUSHEKO

The third Youth for Green Hydrogen scholarship programme advances technical skills development, writes Jona Musheko

Young Namibians from the Hardap and ||Kharas regions are progressing through technical and vocational training as the country prepares its workforce for emerging renewable energy and green hydrogen industries.

Namibia's efforts to prepare young people for opportunities in the emerging green hydrogen and renewable energy industries continue to gain momentum, with beneficiaries of the third Youth for Green Hydrogen (Y4H2) Scholarship Programme progressing through technical and vocational education and training (TVET) at three institutions in southern Namibia.

The initiative forms part of the Namibia-Germany

cooperation on green hydrogen development under the Joint Communiqué of Intent (JCol). Funded by the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR), the programme is implemented through the Southern African Science Service Centre for Climate Change and Adaptive Land Management (SASSCAL), in collaboration with the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NGH2P).

Following the third scholarship call launched in July 2025, 90 scholarships were awarded to young people from the Hardap and ||Kharas regions, providing opportunities to acquire practical technical skills relevant to Namibia's evolving industrial economy.

The beneficiaries commenced their studies in October 2025, while the third cohort was officially inaugurated on 19 June 2026 at the Africa Institutional Management Services (AIMS) Vocational Training Centre at Stampriet.>

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The scholarship programme supports training in technical disciplines that are expected to become increasingly important as Namibia expands renewable energy generation, green hydrogen production and associated industrial activities.



The Youth for Green Hydrogen Scholarship Programme reflects the importance of developing local skills alongside investment in energy infrastructure and industrial projects.

Skills for emerging industries

The scholarship programme supports training in technical disciplines that are expected to become increasingly important as Namibia expands renewable energy generation, green hydrogen production and associated industrial activities.

At the Namibia Institute of Mining and Technology (NIMT), at Keetmanshoop, 42 scholarships were initially awarded across electrical general, fitting and turning, and boilermaking.

At the Johanna Jacobs Vocational Training Centre at Gibeon, 13 scholarships were awarded for solar installation training. Beneficiaries have completed Level 1 training, performed satisfactorily in the National Training Authority (NTA) external examinations and progressed to Level 2.

Their training is particularly relevant as Namibia expands its solar energy capacity to support electricity generation and future green industrial development.

Meanwhile, AIMS Vocational Training Centre at Stampriet received 35 scholarship beneficiaries in electrical general, automotive mechatronics, and welding and boilermaking.

Students are progressing through their respective training levels and preparing for NTA assessments, building technical competencies applicable across renewable energy, construction, manufacturing and industrial maintenance.

Connecting youth with industry

Beyond formal training the programme is creating opportunities for beneficiaries to engage with industry stakeholders and gain exposure to Namibia's emerging green economy.

In September 2026, SASSCAL facilitated the par-

ticipation of 33 scholarship beneficiaries from the three training institutions in the African Green Industries Summit, held at Swakopmund from 9-10 September. The NGH2P extends appreciation to SASSCAL leadership for continued support towards these young Namibians.

The summit provided an opportunity for trainees to interact with industry practitioners, learn about developments in green industrialisation and gain insights into potential career pathways. This exposure helped young people understand how their technical qualifications can contribute to future industrial projects.

Preparing for tomorrow's economy

The Youth for Green Hydrogen Scholarship Programme reflects the importance of developing local skills alongside investment in energy infrastructure and industrial projects.

As Namibia advances green hydrogen production, renewable energy and related manufacturing activities, demand for qualified artisans, technicians and other skilled professionals is expected to grow.

By investing in young people today, the programme is helping to establish a foundation for greater Namibian participation in these future opportunities.

Ultimately, Namibia's green industrialisation ambitions will depend not only on attracting investment and developing infrastructure, but also on ensuring that young Namibians possess the skills to participate meaningfully in building and sustaining these industries.

*** Jona Musheko is the Manager of External Affairs & Communications at the Namibia Green Hydrogen Programme (NGH2P).■**



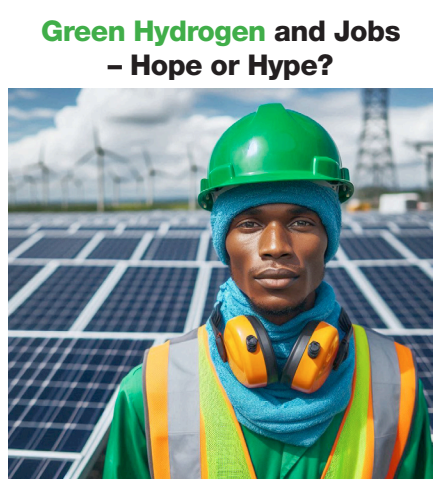
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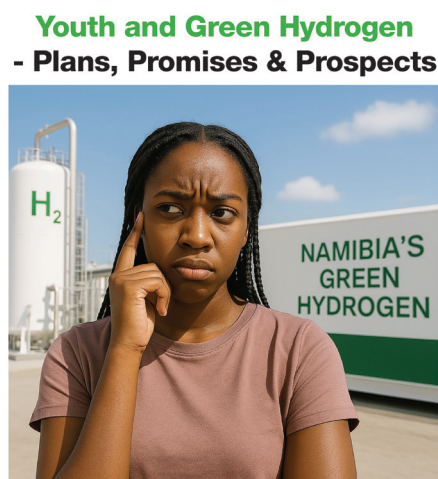
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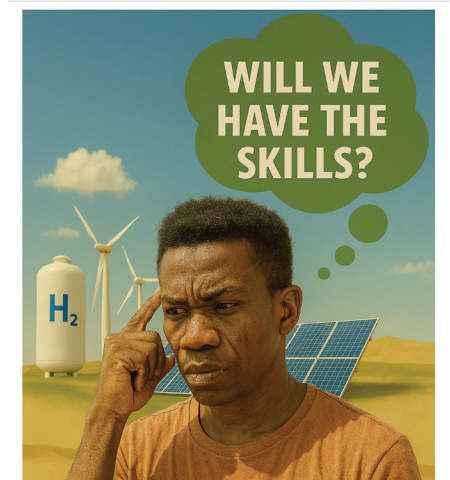
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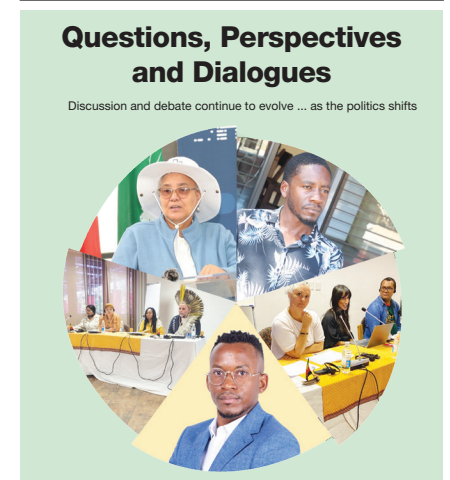
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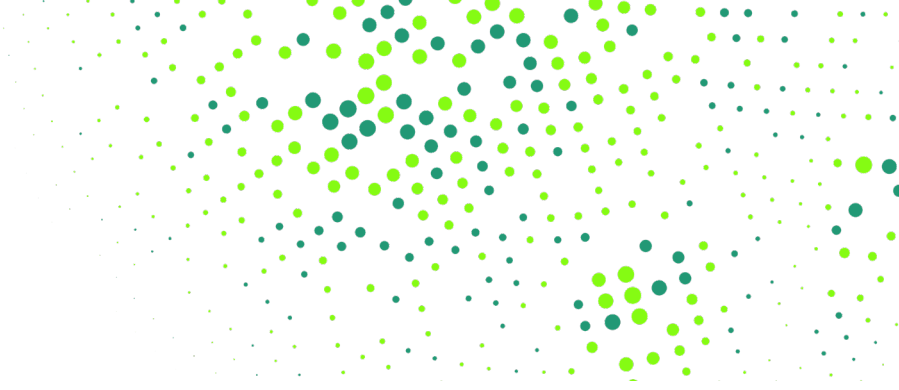
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Present in more than 60 countries world-wide, the Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) is a German non-profit organisation promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law across the African continent. Cooperating with its Namibian partners, such as IPPR, HSF also seeks to contribute to sustainable development by strengthening peace, human security, and environmental protection. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the HSF.

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The Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) is a not-for-profit organisation with a mission to deliver independent, analytical, critical yet constructive research into social, political and economic issues that affect development in Namibia. The IPPR was established in the belief that free and critical debate informed by quality research promotes development.

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