



CONTINENTAL PRACTITIONER
STUDY ON

Advancing Social Performance in Renewable Energy Projects

Prepared for INSPIRE by

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SUMMARY

INSPIRE

The Initiative for Social Performance in Renewable Energy (INSPIRE) is a female-led, practitioner-driven organisation based in South Africa, committed to ensuring that renewable energy deployment delivers equitable and transformative socio-economic benefits for host communities. With a focus on professionalising social performance (SP), building trusted relationships, and fostering collaboration, INSPIRE plays a vital role in advancing South Africa's Just Energy Transition and influencing global renewable energy practices.

South Africa's Renewable Energy Independent Power Producer Procurement Programme (REIPPPP) has significantly expanded renewable energy capacity but faces persistent challenges, including inequitable benefit-sharing, limited community engagement, and mistrust among stakeholders. Globally, similar barriers undermine the socio-economic potential of renewable energy projects, particularly in the Global South. INSPIRE addresses these challenges by equipping stakeholders with the tools, knowledge, and strategies to embed social performance as a cornerstone of renewable energy success. INSPIRE envisions a shift from inadequate social performance to trusted, impactful, and co-designed engagements and benefit-sharing models that deliver long-term socio-economic benefits. By empowering practitioners, fostering collaboration, and generating actionable insights, INSPIRE creates the enabling conditions for systemic change within the renewable energy ecosystem.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Lesedi Komi is a Social Performance Practitioner with experience across community development, renewable energy, and climate change-focused initiatives.

She is committed to ensuring projects are inclusive, socially responsible, and designed for long-term sustainability, bringing a people-centred approach to development that strengthens community outcomes and project impact.



Executive Summary

This report captures insights from fifteen social performance practitioners across Africa's renewable energy sector, representing government, private companies, civil society, and consultancies. Their reflections highlight that effective social performance is central to ensuring renewable energy projects deliver lasting, inclusive benefits for host communities.

Participating practitioners from eight countries (Zimbabwe, Uganda, Zambia, Kenya, Botswana, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Tunisia) agree that social performance extends far beyond corporate social investment. It entails managing social impacts, safeguarding livelihoods, and promoting community ownership. Embedding social performance specialists within project teams and engaging communities as active partners were identified as key to project success.

While approaches differ, common themes emerged. Zimbabwe's community ownership schemes have empowered local stakeholders, while Uganda and Zambia rely on international frameworks to strengthen safeguards. Kenya faces cultural and land-related challenges, Botswana struggles with institutional gaps, Nigeria highlights governance and corruption risks, and Tunisia faces bureaucratic and civic space constraints.

Across contexts, recurring barriers include underfunded social safeguards, weak policy enforcement, land disputes, community mistrust, and limited benefit-sharing. These often result in projects prioritising technical or financial goals over community inclusion.

Practitioners emphasised early stakeholder engagement, participatory planning, transparent benefit-sharing, and capacity building as vital strategies. They called for stronger national frameworks, institutionalised ESG standards, and greater professional recognition for social practitioners. Expanding knowledge-sharing and regional collaboration was also seen as essential.

The report recommends integrating social performance from the earliest stages of project design, embedding practitioners in project teams to ensure inclusion and accountability, and developing robust national frameworks that mandate social safeguards. It further calls for

prioritising host communities through equitable benefit-sharing, employment opportunities, and capacity building, while promoting transparency, trust, and effective grievance mechanisms across all stages of project implementation.

In conclusion, social performance offers a pathway for Africa's renewable energy transition to drive not only energy access but also empowerment, equity, and resilience. Achieving this requires a shift from infrastructure-focused delivery to a holistic, people-centred approach to sustainability.



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Abbreviations

AfDB	African Development Bank
AI	Artificial Intelligence
BCCN	Botswana Climate Change Network
BCSDZ	Business Council for Sustainable Development Zimbabwe
BERA	Botswana Energy Regulatory Authority
BPC	Botswana Power Corporation
CSI	Corporate Social Investment
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CTC	Climate Technology Centre
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
EA	Environmental Assessment
EHS	Environment, Health and Safety
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESG	Environment, Social and Governance
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
IAIA	International Association for Impact Assessment
IAP2	International Association Public Participation
IFC	International Financial Corporation

INSPIRE	Initiative for Social Performance in Renewable Energy
IPPs	Independent Power Producers
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
ME	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
NPC	Non-Profit Company
PS	Performance Standards
RAP	Resettlement Action Plan
RE	Renewable Energy
REA	Rural Electrification Agency
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
SHEQ	Safety, Health, Environment and Quality
SIA	Social Impact Assessment
SP	Social Performance
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
UN	United Nations

01. OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL PERFORMANCE IN RENEWABLE ENERGY PROJECTS

Africa possesses vast renewable energy potential, with abundant solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal resources driving a rapidly growing clean energy transition. Countries such as Kenya, Ghana, and Zambia are scaling up investments in solar and wind, while regional initiatives like the Southern African Power Pool enhance connectivity and resilience. International actors, particularly the World Bank, support access to electricity and renewable energy deployment through programs such as Mission 300¹, advancing distributed energy systems and clean energy investments.

Amid this growth, renewable energy projects face persistent social challenges, including governance constraints, community resistance, limited stakeholder engagement, and inequitable benefit-sharing. Poor consultation and late involvement of social practitioners often undermine trust and reduce sustainable outcomes.

While technical studies and resources on renewable energy growth are extensive, there remains limited documentation of how social performance shapes the success and sustainability of renewable energy deployment. This report responds directly to that gap by exploring how practitioners across Africa interpret and carry out social performance activities, and what frameworks and practices in their experience enable equitable and people-centred renewable energy deployment.

Social Performance:

All of a company's interactions, activities, and outcomes that can affect – positively or negatively its asset level stakeholders (host communities, local and regional government, industry/business, civil society, and so on).

The Initiative for Social Performance in Renewable Energy (INSPIRE) is a South African Non-Profit Company (NPC) dedicated to ensuring that the transition to renewable energy is people-centred, delivering sustainable benefits to communities across the Global South. INSPIRE advances this vision by building capacity and developing systems and relationships that enable a just and transformational energy transition. Its core approaches include:

- Empowering and equipping local communities to actively engage with and benefit from sustainable energy projects.
- Catalysing corporate commitment toward equitable, people-focused models and structures.
- Harnessing data and innovative thinking to develop new strategies and alliances.
- Shaping policies that prioritise broad-based benefits over narrow interests.
- Training and inspiring governments and leaders to adopt socially just approaches.

In line with this mission, INSPIRE is conducting continent-wide research on social performance in renewable energy projects across Africa. The study focuses on practitioners working at the intersection of companies, communities, and other stakeholders—whether embedded within renewable energy firms, operating locally, or serving as independent consultants. It seeks to deepen understanding of the challenges practitioners face, the strategies they employ, and the frameworks that support meaningful community development and equitable benefit-sharing in large-scale projects.

Ultimately, this research seeks to strengthen practitioner networks across Africa, amplify their collective voice, and support more grounded, locally informed approaches to advancing social performance in Africa's energy transition. By linking practitioner experience and insights with broader policy and corporate practice, the study positions INSPIRE as a catalyst in promoting socially just and inclusive renewable energy development.

1 World Bank. (2025, September 24). 17 countries commit to concrete plans to scale up electricity access as Mission 300 expands. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2025/09/24/17-countries-commit-to-concrete-plans-to-scale-up-electricity-access-as-mission-300-expands>

02. MAPPING STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Since this research engages social performance practitioners within the renewable energy sector across the African continent, it was crucial to undertake a systematic stakeholder mapping process. This process encompassed four stages - stakeholder identification, analysis, prioritisation, and the development of tailored engagement strategies.

2.1 Stakeholder Identification and Analysis

The primary stakeholders identified include *fifteen* social performance practitioners working in renewable energy projects, including both embedded professional and independent consultants, with a strong emphasis on their involvement in local contexts. These practitioners were analysed and prioritised to capture their lived experiences and perspectives. To achieve this, the *influence/interest grid* proved particularly relevant.

To structure this, the study applied the *influence/interest grid*, a strategic tool used to categorise stakeholders according to their level of influence and degree of interest in the research. It also provides a visual representation that supports the prioritisation of engagement efforts, ensuring greater focus on stakeholders with the most significant potential impact. (See *Figure 1*).

- High influence – High interest: stakeholders that significantly possess the biggest impact on the success of the research.
- High influence - Low Interest: keep these stakeholders satisfied in the study because of their influence.
- Low influence – High interest: stakeholders need to be informed about the study because they can be helpful.

- Low influence – low interest: monitor stakeholders throughout the study.

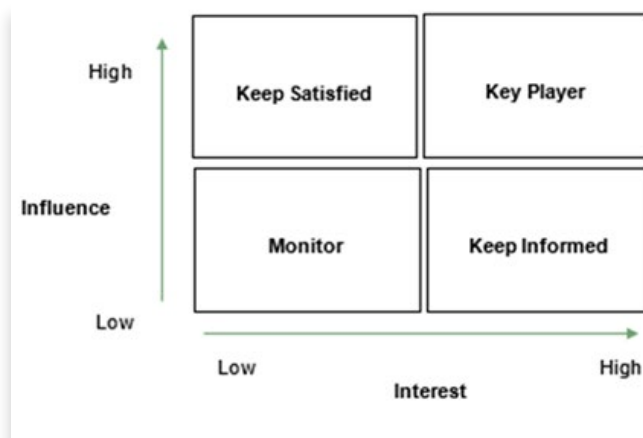


Figure 1: Influence and interest grid

2.2 Stakeholder Composition and Roles

Following the influence/interest grid analysis, the identified practitioners emphasised that the renewable energy sector draws on contributions from individuals with experience across government institutions, private companies, independent consultancy, community-based organisations, and civil society groups.

Government institutions primarily offer regulatory and policy guidance, establishing frameworks that guide investment and implementation. The private sector contributes the capital and technical expertise required to design, develop and operate renewable energy projects, often collaborating with governments through PPPs to expand energy access and drive innovation.

Independent consultants play an advisory role, offering specialised expertise in social performance, community engagement, and policy analysis while ensuring compliance with international standards and building local capacity.

Similarly, community-based organisations promote social inclusion and community empowerment, advocating for sustainable policies and aligning projects with local needs. Civil society organisations, in turn, represent citizens' interests by advancing advocacy, education, and policy dialogue to foster inclusive and transparent energy governance.

Collectively, these actors form a dynamic interdependent environment that supports both economic growth and social sustainability in the renewable energy landscape.

2.3 Stakeholder Engagements Strategies

Building on the mapping exercise, the study employed a two-pronged engagement approach designed to capture practitioner insights.

- Structured questionnaire to gather structured insights across a wide group of practitioners; and
- In-depth one-on-one interviews to enable deeper exploration of individual experiences and perspectives.

To guide this process, stakeholder engagement was aligned to the International Association for Public Participation Spectrum (IAP2)², a globally recognised framework for determining levels of participation. There are five levels of the IAP2 Spectrum and these are: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower, each representing degrees of stakeholder influence.

- Inform: this level constitutes providing the stakeholders with clear information for comprehension of the study;
- Consult: stakeholders have to be consulted because their perspectives on renewable energy contribute significantly to the study;
- Involve: ensuring that concerns and aspirations registered are considered and reflected in the research;
- Collaboration: an imperative aspect with stakeholders because it incorporates their advice and recommendations for the research; and
- Empower: stakeholders have to be empowered by implementing their concerns and aspirations in the study.

2.4 Countries Represented in the Study

The study engaged numerous practitioners across several African countries have been engaged to share their insights on renewable energy projects. As one practitioner noted, “*Sharing experiences across countries helps us learn what works and what doesn’t.*” The map (Figure 2) illustrates the countries represented and highlights the breadth of perspectives captured in the study.



Figure 2: Countries with social performance practitioners' representatives

2 Federation of International Association for Public Participation. (2024). IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation. Federation of IAP2 International.

03. FINDINGS FROM PRACTITIONERS' ENGAGEMENT

The interviews revealed a rich and varied set of experiences that reflect the complexity of social performance practice within the renewable energy landscape across the continent. Practitioners highlighted how their affiliations, professional responsibilities and geographical contexts shape both the challenges the encounter and the strategies that inform their work. Their reflections provide a nuanced framing of how social performance is interpreted and implemented in real life project settings, highlighting the interplay between policy, industry practices, and community dynamics. The following section unpacks these perspectives in great depth.

3.1 BACKGROUND AND ROLE OF SOCIAL PERFORMANCE PRACTITIONERS

The fifteen respondents represented a diverse range of backgrounds, including government institutions, private companies, community-based organisations, civil society organisations, and independent consultancy. Their professional roles significantly influenced their perceptions of social performance in renewable energy projects, with work experience ranging from three to fifteen years, often including direct community engagement in the renewable energy space. As one respondent noted, *“Our experience on the ground shows that early engagement with communities is crucial for project success.”*

3.1.1 Case Box 1: Government Energy Policy Advisor (Botswana)

- Role:** Developed regulatory guidelines and oversight frameworks for renewable energy projects.
- Contribution:** Coordinated local consultations and approvals for solar and wind energy projects.
- Impact:** Streamlined project approvals while ensuring compliance with national energy and social policies.

3.1.2 Case Box 2: Private Sector Social Performance Manager (Kenya)

- Role:** Oversaw community engagement and benefit-sharing for geothermal and wind projects.
- Contribution:** Implemented local hiring programs and training initiatives to support project operations.
- Impact:** Strengthened community support and facilitated smooth project implementation.

3.1.3 Case Box 3: Independent Consultant (Tanzania)

- Role:** Conducted social impact assessments and facilitated workshops on community participation.
- Contribution:** Advised project developers on mitigating social risks and building local capacity.
- Impact:** Enhanced sustainability and reduced potential conflicts between developers and communities.

3.1.4 Case Box 4: NGO/Civil Society Practitioner (Regional)

- Role:** Advocated for equitable community benefits and transparency in project decision-making.
- Contribution:** Educated local populations on renewable energy project opportunities and risks.
- Impact:** Increased community ownership and participation in renewable energy initiatives.

Most practitioners reported working predominantly with solar energy, though respondents from Kenya and Tanzania highlighted growing focus on geothermal, hydropower, and wind due to larger-scale projects in those contexts.

This diversity of roles, experiences, and geographic settings shaped practitioners' understanding of social performance – particularly regarding community benefits, and local ownership in renewable energy projects.

3.2 UNDERSTANDING AND FRAMING OF SOCIAL PERFORMANCE

Respondents revealed a shared understanding that social performance is a critical dimension of renewable energy projects. They emphasised that SP extends beyond corporate social investment (CSI) and should not be confused with it. While CSI often refers to financial contributions or community upliftment initiatives, social performance encompasses the broader obligation of managing a project's social impacts on community livelihoods. This means developers are not only encouraged but expected to ensure that projects do not cause harm to host communities and, ideally, deliver sustainable social benefits. Practitioners highlighted that social performance must extend beyond technical delivery and financial success, requiring deliberate attention to how projects affect the daily lives of surrounding communities.

They also stressed the importance of having dedicated social performance experts embedded within renewable energy projects to guide these processes. From their perspective, renewable energy projects should not be limited to the provision of electricity but should actively foster community ownership and participation. While acknowledging that impacts both positive and negative are inevitable, practitioners underscored the need to maximise the benefits of such projects through employment creation, improved infrastructure, local development, and inclusive stakeholder engagement, while minimizing potential harm. Ultimately, they argued that communities must be regarded as custodians of these projects rather than passive beneficiaries.

The respondents reflected that while *community benefit* and *community ownership* are related, they remain distinct concepts. Community benefit refers to the tangible outcomes that projects deliver to host communities, such as employment opportunities, improved health services, and enhanced infrastructure. Some respondents described it more broadly as the positive outcomes that flow from a project. In contrast, community ownership was defined as the involvement of host communities in decision-making or, in some cases, holding a direct stake in the project. This form of participation was seen as critical to project success, as it fosters a sense of inclusion and belonging, ensuring that communities feel part of the projects rather than passive recipients.

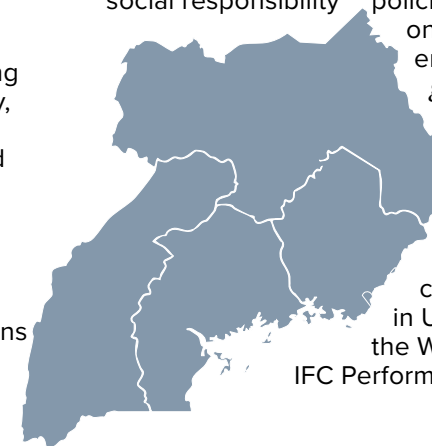
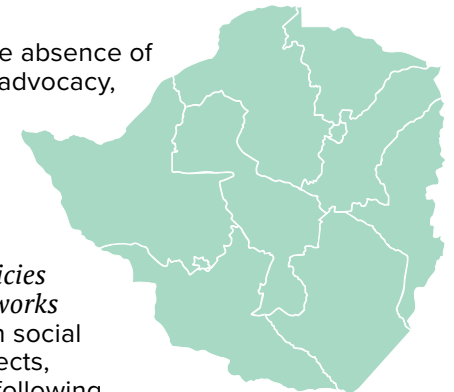
Respondents further highlighted that both community benefit and community ownership are more effectively realised when social performance practitioners are embedded in the projects, and when project developers themselves are conversant with these concepts. This dual awareness ensures that benefits are not delivered in isolation but are tied to longer-term ownership and sustainability.

Cross-country differences also emerged from the interviews. In Zimbabwe, for example, community ownership has been operationalised through a *Community Ownership Scheme* model that allows communities to participate in resource control, profit-sharing, and governance. Interestingly, the respondent noted that a similar model is practiced in various developed countries, making them transferable to other contexts. Additionally, two respondents underscored that *corporate social investment (CSI)* should not be conflated with community benefit, as they serve different purposes and require separate strategies if both are to be fully realised. In Botswana, the picture is quite different. Thus, respondents observed that while community benefit is relatively common, community ownership remains limited. Renewable energy projects are largely implemented for communities rather than with

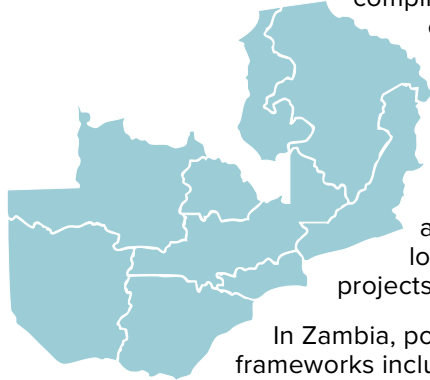
them, reflecting the absence of enabling policies, advocacy, and financing mechanisms that could make community ownership viable.

With regard to *policies or company frameworks* that guide work on social or community aspects, in Zimbabwe, the following were reflected: ESMS; Stakeholder Engagement Plans; Social Impact Assessment (SIA); Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs); SHEQ policies; Community Engagement; Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI), and Social Investment Policies. The *strength* depicted is recognition of both international tools (SIA, RAP) and company-level social responsibility policies. Strong emphasis on stakeholder engagement.

While the *gap* is heavy reliance on environmental or corporate policies rather than a robust national social policy framework. Policies and company frameworks in Uganda include the World Bank ESF, IFC Performance Standards,



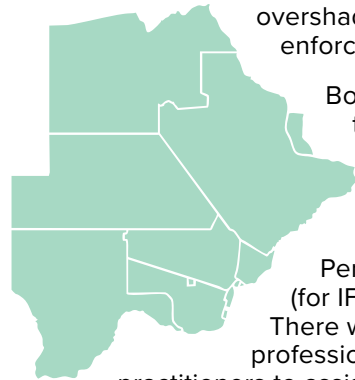
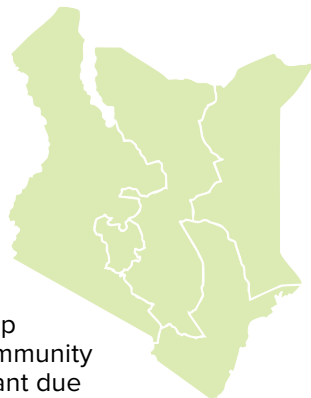
AfDB ISS, EHS guidelines, Ministry of Gender guidelines, legal Acts, requirements for social performance practitioners. The *strengths* are the institutionalised role of social practitioners, government actively issues guidelines, clear link between funding approval and social safeguard compliance. The *gaps* entail reliance on international financiers may limit local ownership; social safeguards may be inconsistently applied in smaller, locally funded projects.



In Zambia, policies/ company frameworks include: World Bank Environmental & Social Standards;

UN Sustainable Development Goals. As such, the *strengths*: Adoption of global best practices (World Bank and SDGs). The *gap* is limited mention of domestic/national policy frameworks suggest weak local institutional structures for social performance.

Kenya has numerous policies/ company frameworks, namely: Human rights policies, government-led compliance frameworks, UN SDGs (especially SDG 7), Agenda 21, and World Bank Safeguard Standards. With such, the *strengths*: Recognition that government leadership is critical; emphasis on community welfare and rights (important due to land acquisition issues). *Gaps* in implementation may be uneven, as reliance on international or UN frameworks may



overshadow stronger localised enforcement.

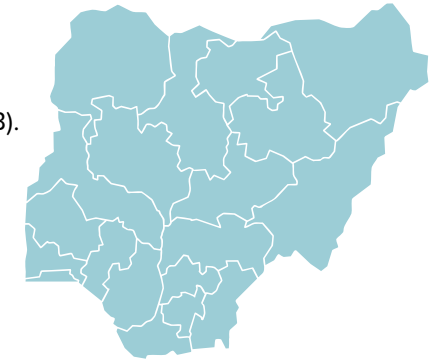
Botswana reflected the following policies/ company frameworks: Environmental Assessment Act, IFC Performance Standards (for IFC-linked projects). There were proposals for a professional body of social practitioners to assist immensely. Thus, the *strengths* are legal foundation through the EA Act; awareness of international standards; recognition of the need to professionalise social impact practice. *Gaps* identified is that the EA Act is primarily environmental, not fully adequate for complex social issues; local projects not tied to IFC funding may lack robust safeguards. Tanzania has the following

policies/ company frameworks: Social management policies, social sustainability policies, health & safety policies, stakeholder engagement plans, and grievance mechanism plans. The *strengths* are broad adoption of organisational and corporate-level frameworks; recognition of grievance mechanisms as central. Whilst the *gap* is reliance on company-driven frameworks rather than strong national policies may create uneven application across projects.



In Nigeria, the following policies/ company frameworks include: EIA Act (1992), National Environmental Policy (1989/1999), NREEE Policy (2015), Rural Electrification Agency programs

(Solar Naija, mini-grids), donor partnerships (World Bank, AfDB). The *strengths* are well-developed national policies that explicitly integrate social/ community aspects into renewable energy; institutional implementation via the Rural Electrification Agency (REA). *Gaps* are implementation challenges due to regulatory enforcement capacity and possible misalignment between national policies and local community realities. Tunisia depicted the following policies/ company frameworks: ESG standards (introduced by IFC in 2023), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, and IFC Performance Standards. With the *strengths* reflected in the private sector being proactive in CSR and ESG integration, IFC support reinforces best practices. The *gap* in ESG and CSR are company-led, meaning social safeguards may vary depending on firm commitment, and a weaker role of government compared to Uganda or Nigeria.



3.3 CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS

In discussing the challenges faced when working at the interface of communities, companies, and government, respondents also highlighted barriers to advancing meaningful community development in renewable energy projects within their respective countries or contexts, (see *Table 1 below*).

Table 1: Challenges and Barriers in Renewable Energy Projects

Respondent(s)	Challenges	Contributing Factors	Strategies	Insights
ZIMBABWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many renewable energy projects face setbacks due to underfunded RAPs. Heavy reliance on external financiers for compensation and social mitigation. Community resistance often arises from limited understanding and poor consultation. Also, late involvement of social practitioners reduces opportunities for proactive engagement and conflict prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects are often hindered by financial constraints, which restrict effective implementation and community compensation; Weak accountability in PPPs further complicates oversight and transparency; While limited local capacity reduces the ability to sustain projects and ensure meaningful community participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective stakeholder engagement plans; Robust grievance mechanisms; and Early conflict resolution strategies are essential for building trust, managing expectations, and ensuring that community concerns are addressed in projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social practitioners are often undervalued in renewable energy projects; and Implementing structured engagement processes can help mitigate power imbalances between stakeholders and ensure inclusion in projects.
UGANDA	<p>In many contexts, the following are some of the challenges faced, in turn limiting participation and undermining the social sustainability in renewable energy projects;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Weak labour laws; Land disputes; Lack of sufficient financial resources for consultations; and Community vulnerability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-economic fragility and weak investment in social safeguards leave communities vulnerable; In turn, limit inclusive participation, ultimately undermining the sustainability and legitimacy of projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive engagement through stakeholder mapping, Undertake focus group engagement with women and youth (vulnerable groups); Integration of social practitioners into project teams ensures that diverse community perspectives are considered and conflicts are addressed early. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Neglecting social dimensions in renewable energy projects undermines long-term sustainability and erodes community trust, as projects fail to address local needs, expectations, and potential social risks.

ZAMBIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fragile trust between communities and project developers. ● Community dependency on handouts rather than collaborative partnerships. ● Weak accountability concerning compensation and community benefits, leading to conflict. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Government presence in projects is sometimes limited. ● Project updates channelled through third parties can mislead even project funders (misinformation). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transparency among the project's stakeholders. ● Early grievance redress. ● Engagement with local leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social practitioners, ensure innovation and sensitivity to manage both expectations and misinformation, while balancing community needs with sustainable project delivery.
KENYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Land acquisition disputes, involving conflicts over land ownership and use. ● Mistrust, stemming from historical project failures and poor consultation resulting in scepticism among communities. ● Marginalisation of women, youth, and indigenous groups. ● Intervention by political actors can distort project priorities and also undermining community trust. ● Corruption experienced in the mismanagement of project funds and affects the benefits to communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Complex land tenure is often layered, involving multiple stakeholders This can lead to disputes over who has the authority to approve land use, and delays in project implementation. ● Cultural and political dynamics strongly shape community responses to projects, with traditions, social hierarchies, and ancestral claims influencing decisions. Local leadership, party affiliations, and government priorities can complicate engagement, sometimes affecting project outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community sensitisation. ● Grievance mechanisms. ● Engagement with local elders and relevant authorities. ● Gender inclusion. ● Capacity building within the host communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Past failures increase mistrust among communities. ● Cultural consideration remains critical. ● Political insulated approaches enhance success.

BOTSWANA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Marginalisation of social performance, experienced in social aspects often overlooked, reducing meaningful collaboration with host communities. ● Inadequate engagement, where consultations are superficial, with communities seen as obstacles rather than partners for the benefit of the project. ● Weak monitoring of commitments, where promises to communities are not tracked, affecting trust and accountability from projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Institutional and regulatory gaps, constituting weak or unclear frameworks resulting in social issues being poorly managed and inadequately addressed. ● Social considerations are often treated reactively or as an afterthought, leading to inconsistent engagement and missed opportunities for long-term community partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Planned, and consistent engagement with communities. ● Targeted discussions with specific community groups (focus groups) to capture diverse perspectives. ● Dialogue platforms including formal spaces for continuous engagement and addressing conflicts. ● Aligning project goals with community interests for sustainability. ● Community needs through identifying and integrating local priorities in the projects, and cultural preservation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communities are often seen as barriers to project implementation, with their concerns viewed as delays rather than legitimate interests, leading to mistrust and conflict. ● Ensuring meaningful integration of social aspects into projects continues to pose challenges.
TANZANIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communities anticipate extensive benefits, which, if unmet, can lead to resistance to the project. ● Governance delays are seen in slow approvals and, in turn disrupt project timelines. ● Delays in compensation or resettlement create tensions and undermine trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Socio-cultural dynamics, thus, local traditions and social norms shape community responses, with neglect leading to mistrust or conflict. ● Delays from project approvals or community issues can increase costs and strain relationships with stakeholders. ● Foreign companies often face higher expectations and closer monitoring due to perceived profit motives or past grievances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Open communication channels to address concerns and clarify project goals. ● Align community expectations with what the project can deliver. ● Continuous engagement throughout the project lifecycle. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local developers gain stronger support from communities as they are perceived as more familiar, accessible, and invested in local well-being. ● Culturally sensitive approaches are important through respecting traditions, and social norms. ● Slow project approvals, compensation, or negotiations can disrupt timelines and increase costs.

<p>NIGERIA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inadequate engagement with communities leads to misunderstandings and unmet expectations. ● Limited communication and past negative experiences foster scepticism and resistance toward projects. ● Corruption, through mismanagement or misuse of resources undermines community trust and project integrity. ● Policy inconsistency through frequent changes or unclear regulations. ● Local elites or influential groups may receive project benefits, leaving broader communities sidelined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent changes in leadership or government priorities create uncertainty for project implementation. ● Unclear, inconsistent, or rapidly changing regulations increase the likelihood of non-compliance and project delays. ● Complex administrative procedures and slow decision-making prolong approvals, progress, and raise costs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Maintaining transparent and timely information flow builds trust between developers and communities. ● Involving communities in project decisions ensures their perspectives are considered and increases local ownership. ● Using impartial mediators or platforms helps resolve conflicts fairly and fosters constructive dialogue among stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Corruption and poor governance strongly undermine project quality. ● Stakeholder engagement is important in rebuilding trust. ● Policy stability are important for long-term investment.
<p>TUNISIA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited avenues for community participation and expression. ● Few civil society actors are involved in project oversight or advocacy. ● Slow administrative processes hinder project progress. ● Lack of transparency in how project benefits are distributed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inflexible government structures and slow decision-making hinder project progress. ● Limited participation by NGOs and community groups reduces accountability, oversight, and opportunities for inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Effective consultations through engaging communities in meaningful and well-structured discussions. ● Communicating what a project can deliver helps prevent misunderstandings, manage communities' expectations. ● Openly sharing information about projects and decision-making processes builds accountability and community trusts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Challenges are driven more by governance constraints than by poverty. ● Meaningful engagement is essential for fostering cooperation and ensuring project legitimacy.

Renewable energy projects across the surveyed countries face recurring challenges, including community resistance, poor social performance, governance delays, land disputes, and inequitable benefit distribution. These issues stem from financial constraints, regulatory gaps, socio-cultural dynamics, and limited local capacity. Thus, effective strategies such as structured stakeholder engagement, grievance mechanisms, culturally sensitive approaches, and continuous communication highlight the importance of early, inclusive, and transparent engagement to build trust, manage expectations, and improve project outcomes.

Subsequently, renewable energy projects are often shaped by power imbalances and tensions between stakeholders, where governments, developers, and communities hold unequal influence over decisions, resources, and benefits. Thus, respondents reflected the following aspects on that regard (refer to the Table 2 below).

Table 2: Power Imbalances between Stakeholders

Respondent(s)	Ways to Navigate Power Imbalances/ Tensions Between Stakeholders	Insights
ZIMBABWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stakeholder Engagement Plans. ● Grievance mechanisms. ● Structured communication lines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mapping stakeholder influence helps anticipate conflict. ● Social practitioners play a vital but undervalued role in maintaining transparency and collaboration.
UGANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inclusive engagement. ● Focus groups for vulnerable groups. ● Integration of social practitioners in project teams. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural sensitivity and representation of women and youth foster trust and ensure projects reflect community needs.
ZAMBIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continuous engagement. ● Emotional intelligence. ● Transparency, and trust-building with community leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Early conflict recognition. ● Open communication. ● Equitable treatment enhances shared ownership and accountability.
KENYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community sensitisation. ● Grievance mechanisms. ● Gender inclusion. ● Involvement of traditional leaders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Addressing land disputes and historical mistrust through dialogue strengthens legitimacy and community buy-in.

BOTSWANA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured engagement aligned with IFC Performance Standards. Focus group discussions. Dialogue platforms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balancing project objectives with community needs encourages collaboration and reduces resistance rooted in past experiences.
TANZANIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dialogue, expectation management, and continuous engagement among developers, authorities, and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transparent communication among stakeholders. Follow-up on compensation reduce delays and land-related conflicts.
NIGERIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open communication between the project developers and the communities. Participatory decision-making, and use of neutral facilitators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Platforms for community voice and early attention to grievances mitigate resistance and strengthen sustainability.
TUNISIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective stakeholder consultations. Expectation alignment within a restricted civic space. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultations act as significant tools to manage tensions and ensure cooperation in a constrained governance environment.

Across the responses, it is evident that navigating power imbalances or tensions between stakeholders requires intentional, inclusive, and transparent engagement strategies. While the specific approaches differ ranging from formal SEPs in Zimbabwe to community sensitisation in Kenya and participatory mechanisms in Nigeria, the underlying principle remains consistent among empowering communities through dialogue, clarity, and shared ownership. The effectiveness of these ways depends heavily on governance context, institutional flexibility, and the recognition of social practitioners as key actors in balancing stakeholder power. Ultimately, projects that treat stakeholder engagement as a continuous, trust-building process rather than a requirement, are better positioned to mitigate conflict and enhance long-term social performance.



3.4 PRACTICES AND STRATEGIES

Across Africa, renewable energy projects have introduced diverse strategies to support communities in engaging with and benefiting from new energy initiatives. However, these practices vary significantly by country, shaped by governance structures, cultural norms, and the degree of institutionalisation of social performance. Importantly, there are both success stories and examples of failure, with lessons learned often serving as benchmarks for improvement elsewhere.

As such, Zimbabwe's experience demonstrates that inclusive stakeholder engagement, transparent benefit-sharing, participatory methods, and systematic needs assessments are essential for advancing social performance in renewable energy projects. Partnerships such as the Business Council for Sustainable Development Zimbabwe (BCSDZ) and the Climate Technology Centre (CTC) demonstrate how collaboration and climate-smart approaches can strengthen sustainability outcomes. Benchmarking against international examples, South Africa's *Social Labour Plan* and Australia's *Social Policy Plan* emphasised the value of linking projects to a social license to operate, ensuring fair wages, inclusive employment, and accountable benefit-sharing. As one practitioner observed, "*Strong policy frameworks not only guide action but also hold all stakeholders accountable, creating predictable and equitable outcomes for communities.*"

The lesson for renewable energy projects is that embedding well-resourced, policy-backed practices combined with early and meaningful engagement of communities, ensures equitable benefits, builds trust, and mitigates risks associated with power imbalances or community resistance. This insight underlines the importance of social practitioners in navigating stakeholder dynamics and institutionalizing effective social performance across Africa's energy transition.

Uganda demonstrates the critical importance of early, timely, and continuous engagement with local leaders, complemented by the use of media platforms (radio and TV) and robust feedback mechanisms to support communities' meaningful participation in renewable energy projects. The *Total Exploration Project* serves as a success story, integrating continuous monitoring and active

community involvement throughout the project lifecycle. By contrast, the *Bujagali Dam Project* experienced significant challenges due to poor compensation and inadequate attention to displaced communities. The lesson is, that *investment in social performance must begin early in the project cycle* to prevent long-term tensions, build trust, and foster sustainable relationships between developers and host communities.

In Zambia, needs assessments, continuous stakeholder engagement, strong monitoring and evaluation, and the inclusion of local leaders are key strategies for advancing social performance in renewable energy projects. For example, *Solar Aid Zambia* successfully distributed solar lamps to off-grid households by actively involving communities throughout the project lifecycle. By contrast, agricultural solar projects faltered due to poor stakeholder inclusion and inadequate infrastructure. As one practitioner observed, "*Projects that fail to involve local leaders and understand community needs rarely achieve meaningful results.*" The lesson is that thorough needs assessments and the inclusion of local leadership are critical for aligning projects with community priorities, building trust, and ensuring sustainable, impactful outcomes.

In Kenya, effective practices include empowering host communities, engaging stakeholders during ESIA, transparent information disclosure, and inclusive decision-making. Successful mini-grid and solar access projects have demonstrated the value of strong community consultations. In contrast, the *Kitonyoni solar mini-grid* struggled because women and youth were excluded, limiting community buy-in, reducing opportunities for local capacity building, and resulting in uneven distribution of electrification

benefits. As one practitioner noted, "*When key groups are left out, projects cannot achieve equitable or sustainable outcomes.*" The central lesson is that inclusivity and early engagement are critical to ensuring the long-term sustainability and social legitimacy of renewable energy projects.

In continuation, Botswana's community ownership models (such as equity shares in projects), capacity building, early stakeholder engagement, and social impact assessments have proven effective in advancing social performance. The *Khwee village partnership*, where mining initiatives supported education and livelihoods, provides a positive example of these approaches in action. However, as one practitioner noted, "*Ownership and capacity building are powerful tools for community empowerment, yet they are still under-prioritised in practice.*" The main lesson is that integrating community ownership and capacity-building initiatives not only fosters local empowerment but also aligns with Botswana's broader economic diversification agenda, highlighting the need to embed these strategies consistently across projects.

While in Tanzania, practices such as focus group discussions and ballot systems for fair employment allocation have proven effective in promoting inclusivity in renewable energy projects. However, past failures often resulted from poor stakeholder engagement and weak needs assessments. As one practitioner observed, "*Participatory approaches are no longer optional, projects that ignore community voices risk failure and conflict.*" The critical lesson is that adopting participatory methods early and consistently helps ensure equitable outcomes, addresses community priorities, and prevents the repetition of earlier mistakes from projects.

In Nigeria, thorough consultation with communities and the involvement of social practitioners or community development officers are critical strategies for ensuring social performance in renewable energy projects. The *Ondo State mini-grid project* succeeded due to strong stakeholder engagement and active community consultation, whereas a solar borehole project faltered when engineers sidelined social practitioners. As one practitioner noted, *“Projects that ignore social expertise may meet technical targets but fail socially, leading to resistance and missed opportunities.”* The lesson is that social expertise is indispensable; over-reliance on technical staff without integrating community perspectives undermines project legitimacy and sustainability.

Tunisia’s early consultations, clear benefit-sharing agreements, partnerships with local associations, and collective/shared-benefits approaches have proven effective in advancing social performance in renewable energy projects. Successful initiatives benefit from strong international partnerships and active private sector involvement. Conversely, projects often fail due to inadequate financing, slow institutional responses, and the exclusion of local communities. As one practitioner emphasised, *“Transparent agreements and meaningful civic engagement are the foundation of sustainable energy projects.”* Thus, the lesson is that ensuring clarity in benefits and fostering strong community participation is essential to sustaining renewable energy development.

3.5 OPPORTUNITIES AND INSIGHTS

The table below (*Table 3*) presents opportunities and insights to improve social performance in renewable energy projects across Africa. The opportunities are categorised across three levels: policy, practitioner, and community, to illustrate the distinct areas of action. The table also highlights models and approaches that can be widely adopted, alongside support and collaboration mechanisms that can strengthen efforts among stakeholders working in this space.

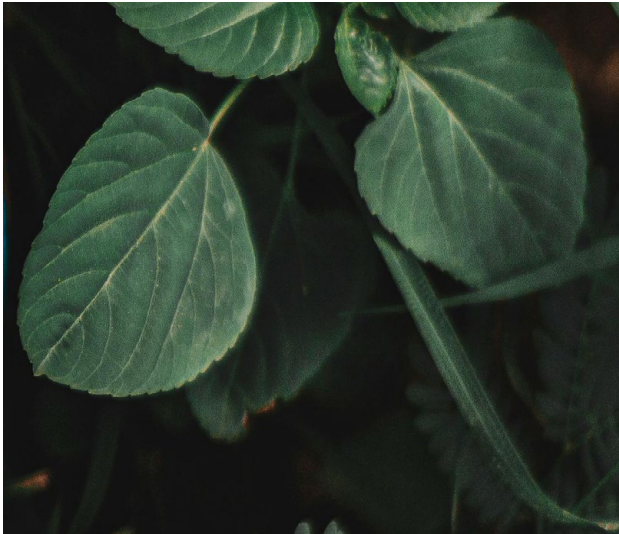


Table 3: Opportunities and Insights in Renewable Energy Projects

Respondent(s)	Level(s)	Opportunities	Models/Approaches to Adopt	Support/ Collaboration
Zimbabwe	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing and enforcing clear social performance regulations ensures that renewable energy projects include and benefit host communities. Such frameworks should mandate community consultation, equitable compensation, and transparent grievance mechanisms. When aligned with IFC and national standards, these frameworks promote trust, reduce conflict, and make projects more sustainable and inclusive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PPPs for benefit-sharing, aligned with IFC and World Bank safeguards, enhance accountability and inclusive development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government advocacy that prioritises social performance. Strong frameworks attract donor confidence and sustainable funding.
Uganda	Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early and continuous involvement of social practitioners. Dedicated social aspects integrated into project design and implementation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder mapping. Adoption of ESIA as a standard practice in projects. Establishment of effective grievance redress mechanisms to enhance accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity building and knowledge-sharing platforms to ensure projects are aligned with community needs and priorities.
Zambia	Policy & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy interventions to promote investment and expand energy access, including tariff reductions. Targeted skills transfer and local community empowerment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt PPPs for solar projects to enhance sustainability. Active community engagement throughout planning and implementation of renewable energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train local leaders and leverage knowledge networks to expand energy access and create employment opportunities.

Kenya	Practitioner & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Foster inclusive engagement to secure community buy-in, which is a challenge in most projects. Active community participation in Environmental and Social Impact Assessments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement robust monitoring and evaluation systems in projects. Mentorship and technical training for social practitioners to enhance project effectiveness and social performance outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure fair wages. Foster inclusive engagement with women, youth, and vulnerable groups to strengthen project sustainability and community impact.
Botswana	Policy & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of social considerations into the national legislation Promote community ownership models to enhance inclusivity and equitable benefit-sharing in renewable energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt IFC Performance Standards for projects. Establish national ESG frameworks. Implement revenue-sharing models to ensure accountability, inclusion, and sustainable outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated social impact bodies (<i>local or national level</i>). Leverage networking platforms. Prioritise early stakeholder engagement to build trust and strengthen social performance in renewable energy projects.
Tanzania	Practitioner & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provision of training and awareness programs for technical staff. Adopt participatory approaches in employment allocation and project decision-making to enhance social inclusion and project effectiveness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish social impact associations. Implement grievance redress systems, for projects. Promote cross-training between social and technical practitioners to strengthen accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of strong monitoring frameworks. Conduct comprehensive stakeholder mapping. Establish inclusive feedback mechanisms in projects. Foster collaboration, accountability, and effective social performance management systems.

Nigeria	Practitioner & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early involvement of social practitioners in projects. Tailoring projects to local community needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adopt community-based models for decentralised energy. Professional networks for social practitioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish peer/ professional support networks. Involve communities from the project design phase to ensure ownership and long-term sustainability.
Tunisia	Policy & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporate social considerations into national energy legislation. Embed community ownership models to ensure local inclusion and equitable of renewable energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishment of regional practitioner networks. Foster partnerships with civil society organisations with regard to renewable energy projects. Collective dialogue platforms, to strengthen knowledge exchange, and enhance social performance in renewable energy projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build the capacity of civil society. Provide dedicated financing for social projects/ initiatives. Promote inclusivity in renewable energy projects.



3.6 NETWORKS AND LEARNING

Out of the fifteen respondents engaged in the study, eight highlighted that they are actively linked to networks or communities of practice related to social performance or energy justice. Thus, the networks include international professional associations (e.g., IFC-linked or global renewable energy bodies), regional platforms (e.g., African renewable energy forums, SADC practitioner networks), national associations (e.g., local energy or social performance groups), and community-based organisations and civil societies (grassroots, local leadership, cooperatives). International and regional networks were seen as particularly valuable for accessing global best practices and donor opportunities, while national associations enabled practitioners to engage with policy processes. Community-based organisations and civil societies were highlighted as crucial for building community ownership and ensuring that renewable energy projects align with grassroots priorities. In contrast, seven respondents reported that they are not currently active in any network. The absence of such linkages was associated with lack of networks/ associations in their regions, limited exposure to best practices, and fewer opportunities for collaboration. This divergence suggests that while networks play a critical role in strengthening practitioners' capacity and influence, gaps remain in accessibility, inclusivity, and awareness of such platforms.

Based on the responses regarding networks and communities of practice related to social performance and energy justice, the table below (Table 4) summarises the key findings.

Table 4: Network and Learning

Respondent(s)	Networks/ Communities of Practice	Gaps
ZIMBABWE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA) ● International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) ● Social Workers Association ● Business Council for Sustainable Development Zimbabwe (BCSDZ) ● Benchmarks with IFC Performance Standards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Limited coordination between networks and renewable energy sector. ● Limited focus on energy justice and inclusive participation.
UGANDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Uganda Impact Assessment Association ● International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) ● International Sociological Association (ISA) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of renewable energy focused social performance network. ● Limited collaboration between academia, government, and practitioners.
ZAMBIA	No network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Absence of professional or practitioner networks in social performance or renewable energy. ● Limited coordination among stakeholders.

KENYA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) – Kenya 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited integration between technical (engineering) and social practice. No formal social performance or energy justice network.
BOTSWANA	No network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of organised networks or associations on social performance. Absence of coordination platforms for practitioners.
TANZANIA	No network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No formal social performance associations. Limited coordination between technical and social practitioners.
NIGERIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rural Sociological Association of Nigeria Agricultural Extension Society of Nigeria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor linkage between social development networks and renewable energy. Late-stage social practitioner involvement in projects.
TUNISIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tunisian Network for Transparency in Energy and Mines RAED Network for Democracy and Social Justice Civil Society Network for a Just Energy Transition Publish What You Pay (PWYP) Network Justice in Resource Network (JRN) Réseau Associatif pour la Transition Énergétique Juste (RATÉJ) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited integration of civil society networks with government and private sector. Division among existing networks.
AFRICA (REGIONAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Management Association (EMA) Participation in various continental networks and alliances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poor continental coordination of social performance initiatives. Limited cross-country knowledge sharing.

In continuation, the respondents identified several learning spaces and platforms to strengthen their skills in social performance and renewable energy projects. In Zimbabwe, Microsoft Teams, Google Chat, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and general internet access were commonly used for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Uganda highlighted WhatsApp and LinkedIn, valued for global networking and professional learning. Zambia emphasised seminars as important forums for professional engagement, while mentoring was noted by a pan-African practitioner as essential for skills transfer.

In Kenya, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and virtual platforms like Google Meet were widely used, offering flexible access to knowledge. Botswana practitioners highlighted LinkedIn, regional conferences, and reviewing local sustainability reports as key resources. Tanzania noted LinkedIn and IAIA, whereas Nigerian practitioners emphasised LinkedIn and national, regional, and international associations. In Tunisia, online courses, webinars, and national and international social performance platforms were highlighted. Overall, LinkedIn, virtual meeting platforms, WhatsApp, webinars, seminars, mentoring, and professional networks emerged as the most valuable spaces, enabling access to best practices, networking opportunities, and context-specific knowledge to improve social performance in renewable energy projects.

3.7 CLOSING REFLECTIONS

The closing reflections from the fifteen respondents stressed the critical role of host communities in renewable energy projects across the continent. Consistent with earlier discussions, respondents emphasised that social performance must be integrated from project inception rather than treated as an afterthought. Practitioners in Zimbabwe, particularly highlighted the value of starting at the grassroots level, highlighting solar energy's capacity to stimulate local empowerment and investment. Similarly, insights from Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia reinforced the importance of continuous, inclusive engagement to ensure that projects remain responsive to community needs. As previously noted, such meaningful participation not only enhances social acceptance but also strengthens the sustainability and resilience of renewable energy projects.

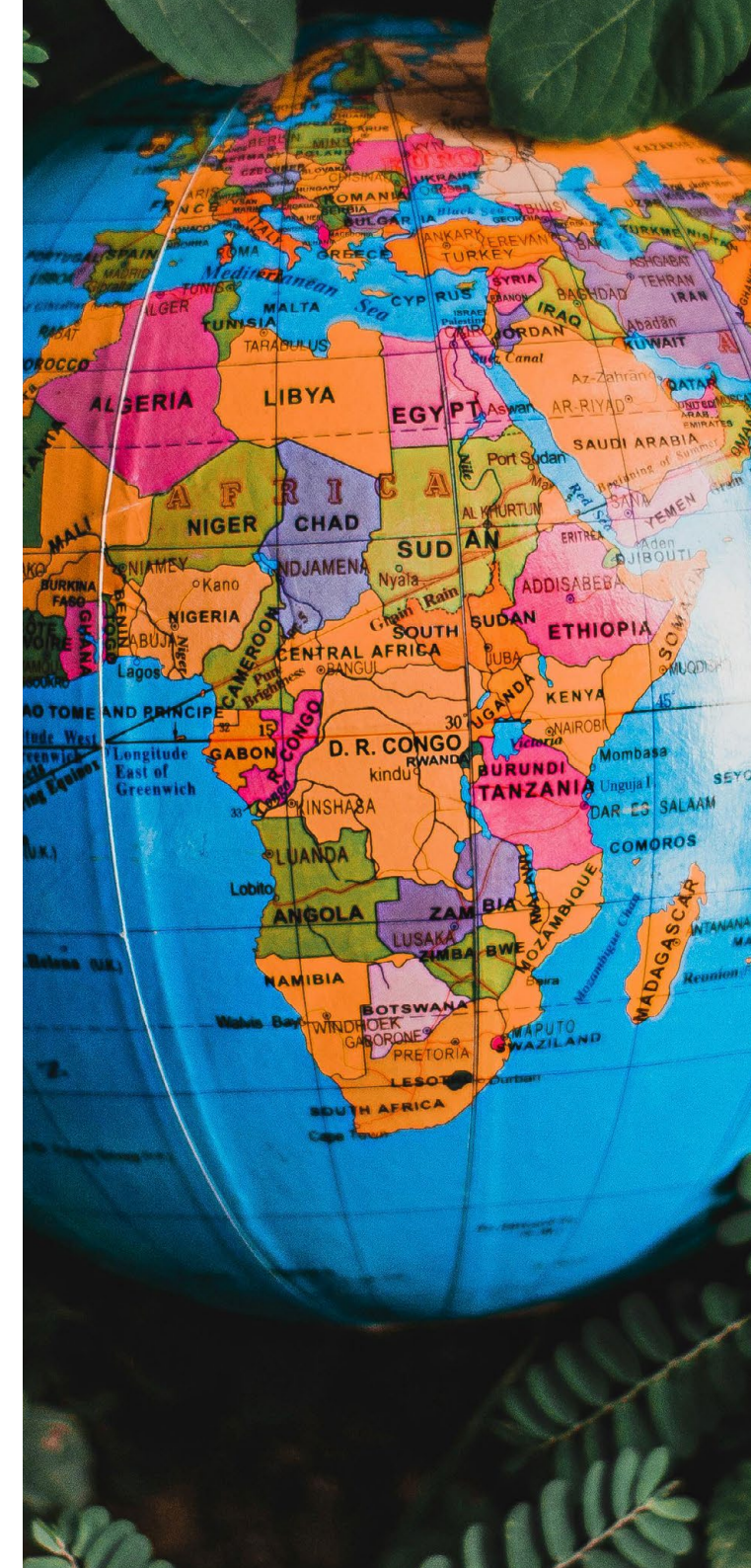
Respondents further identified operational and strategic practices that underpin effective social performance. In Uganda, the “identify, engage, sensitise, and revert” model was cited as an effective framework for structuring community interaction and maintaining transparency throughout the project cycle. Zambia's reflections introduced the use of AI as a tool to promote inclusion and equitable access, while Kenyan practitioners highlighted the need for fair benefit-sharing, especially in rural areas where communities often host but do not directly benefit from large-scale projects. Collectively, these perspectives resonance earlier findings that social practitioners play a key role in mediating community relations, resolving conflict, and ensuring that development outcomes are both equitable and enduring.

The reflections also highlight the critical connection between social performance, governance, and policy frameworks. As discussed in previous sections, respondents from Botswana and Tanzania pointed to the necessity of national

social performance policies and ESG standards to institutionalise accountability and prevent the marginalisation of community interests. Practitioners from Nigeria reinforced this by noting that historical neglect of local voices can be corrected through proactive engagement and policy alignment among developers, donors, and governments. Tunisia provided a particularly robust example of community partnership, demonstrating that trust, transparency, and fairness are foundational to securing social licence and long-term success.

A cross-cutting insight across all countries was the importance of collaboration and knowledge exchange. Practitioners working across borders observed that networking, mentorship, and peer learning, discussed earlier in the report are vital mechanisms for strengthening practitioner capacity and ensuring consistent standards of practice. Engaging local leaders, civil society, and professional associations was found to enhance ownership, accountability, and innovation. These exchanges not only foster shared learning but also enable replication of successful social performance models across diverse contexts.

Finally, the reflections reaffirm the link between social performance and sustainable development outcomes. Beyond achieving social acceptance, inclusive renewable energy projects contribute to job creation, skills transfer, and socio-economic empowerment. Resonating earlier findings, respondents emphasised that lasting impact depends on positioning communities as co-creators rather than beneficiaries. Taken together, these insights reinforce that a holistic, people-centred approach, grounded in robust governance, collaboration, and continuous engagement, is indispensable for achieving both technical excellence and meaningful social outcomes in renewable energy development across the continent.



3.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Policymakers/ Government

1. Policymakers should develop robust frameworks (e.g., national social performance policies, ESG standards, and dedicated social impact regulations) that mandate inclusion, transparency, and accountability. These frameworks should support consistent engagement with host communities and provide benchmarks for investors.
2. Policymakers should establish regulatory frameworks and incentives that require or encourage developers to provide direct community benefits. These frameworks should promote equitable benefit-sharing, ensuring that renewable energy investments contribute to *local socio-economic development* and not just national energy targets.
3. Integrating tools such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital platforms can improve monitoring, inclusion, and engagement, especially in remote or rural communities. Virtual communication tools (e.g., WhatsApp, Google Meet, LinkedIn) should be utilised for continuous engagement and practitioner learning.

Developers/ Renewable Energy Companies

4. Developers should work closely with governments, local leaders, civil society, donors, and other stakeholders to align project goals with community priorities, strengthen legitimacy, and ensure sustainability. Collaborative engagement helps reduce conflict and builds trust.
5. Ensure trust-building through timely disclosure of project information, support for grievance systems, and consistent monitoring of social commitments throughout the project lifecycle.
6. Integrate social performance practitioners into project teams from the planning stage, ensuring they have the authority and resources to guide community engagement and influence decision-making processes.
7. Renewable projects should place host communities at the centre, ensuring their participation in planning, decision-making, and benefit-sharing. Developers should adopt models such as “identify, engage, sensitise, and revert” to structure ongoing dialogue and feedback with communities.
8. Developers should embed transparency and inclusivity in all project engagement processes by allocating adequate resources for stakeholder engagement and grievance mechanisms. They must support SP practitioners in executing these plans and ensure that community feedback influences project decisions to minimise conflict and build long-term trust.

Social Performance Practitioners

9. Promote transparency and accountability by maintaining open communication with communities, managing effective grievance redress mechanisms, and conducting regular monitoring and social reporting.
10. Invest in capacity building for both practitioners and community members, including technical training, mentoring, and knowledge exchange. Also, virtual platforms, professional networks, and professional learning can strengthen practitioners’ effectiveness and allow the dissemination of best practices.
11. Practitioners should lead in designing and implementing culturally sensitive and inclusive engagement strategies, ensuring that stakeholder engagement plans, focus groups, and sensitisation campaigns reflect local norms and priorities. They should also ensure that vulnerable groups such as women, youth, and marginalised communities are meaningfully included in consultations and decision-making.



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