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BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT

THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A 13 MW SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC POWER PLANT ON FARM MAXWELL NO.82, OTJOZONDJUPA REGION, NAMIBIA.

PREPARED FOR

ISPS SOLAR OPERATIONS NAMIBIA (PTY) LTD



JANUARY 2022

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THE PROPOSED CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATION OF A 13 MW SOLAR PHOTOVOLTAIC POWER PLANT ON FARM MAXWELL NO.82, OTJOZONDJUPA REGION, NAMIBIA.

1 PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

The purpose of this Background Information Document (BID) is to provide Interested and Affected Parties (I&APs) a background to the proposed project and to invite I&APs to register as part of the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) process.

The proponent, ISPS Solar Operations Namibia (Pty) Ltd (previously Mettle Solar Namibia Operations), a subsidiary of the Sustainable Power Solutions Investments (Pty) Ltd group intends to construct and operate a 13 MW solar photovoltaic (PV) power plant on farm Maxwell No. 82, which will be linked to the Eldorado substation and supply B2Gold (Otjikoto mine) with electricity through the Namibian Modified Single Buyer (MSB) framework.

Through registering for the project, all I&APs will be kept informed throughout the ESIA process, and a platform for participation will be provided to submit comments/recommendations pertaining to the project.

This BID includes the following information:

- The proposed project and location;
- The necessity of the project, potential benefits or adverse impacts anticipated;
- The alternatives to the project that have been considered and assessed;
- How the ESIA process works;
- The public participation process and how to become involved; and

- The way forward.

2 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT

2.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION

Environmental Compliance Consultancy (ECC) has been engaged by the proponent to undertake an ESIA and develop an Environmental Management Plan (EMP) in terms of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 and its regulations. An environmental clearance application will be submitted to the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) for the project, which is the relevant authority to issue a Record of Decision (RoD) with regards to the proposed project.

2.2 LOCATION

Farm Maxwell No. 82 is located between Otjiwarongo and Otavi to the northwest of the B2Gold (Otjikoto) mine. The farm can be accessed by road via the B1 highway for approximately 61 km west towards Otavi turning left onto the D2886 district road for another approximate 13 km distance. The location is shown in Figure 1.

2.3 WHAT IS PROPOSED

The proponent proposes to construct and operate a 13MW solar PV power plant on a portion of farm Maxwell No. 82 in the Otjozondjupa Region, Namibia.

2.4 WHY IS THE PROJECT NEEDED

Namibia is a country with very few overcast days throughout the year, thus being ideal for renewable energy sources like solar power. The proposed solar PV plant will supply the Otjikoto mine with renewable energy; this is an important factor to reduce the carbon footprint of one of Namibia's major gold producers.

2.5 CONSTRUCTION AND OPERATIONAL PHASES

The following are envisioned during the proposed project:

- The development involves the construction and operation of a PV farm (solar panels mounted on steel frames, receiving mast and cabling) and will cover an area of approximately 22ha.
- Overhead powerlines will be constructed by Nampower from the new Eldorado substation to the Otjikoto mine to supply the mine with electricity (falls under a separate Nampower project and scoped out of this assessment).
- Furthermore, a permanent ablution block will also be constructed on-site for use during the operational phase.

2.6 POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROJECT

2.6.1 SOCIO-ECONOMIC

The potential social impacts are anticipated to be of low significance, and those that may transpire shall be confined within the allocated boundary on farm Maxwell No. 82, these potential impacts may include the following:

- Jobs will be created as a result of the project.
- Potential to unearth, damage or destroy undiscovered heritage remains;

- Occupational health and safety;
- Potential visual disturbances to nearby landowners; and
- Minor disruption to the residents of neighbouring farms, including some potential increase in dust and noise levels during the construction phase.

2.6.2 ENVIRONMENTAL

Some of the potential environmental impacts are anticipated to be of minor significance, and those that may occur shall be contained within the farm boundaries, these potential minor impacts may include the following:

- Disturbance of soil during the construction phase;
- Potential soil erosion within cleared areas;
- Potential groundwater and soil contamination from chemicals or hydrocarbons spilt during construction and maintenance; and
- Potential sewage or chemical spills from the septic tank and portable chemical toilets.

There may also be impacts of a more significant nature that may require further investigation during the ESIA process. The impacts proposed at this stage include, but are not limited to:

- Vegetation clearing with regards to the proposed construction on a 22 ha area;
- Potential avifauna collision risk with the reflective surfaces;
- Potential impacts on biodiversity and ecology through habitat fragmentation or habitat loss; and
- Potential disturbance or displacement of protected or vulnerable species.

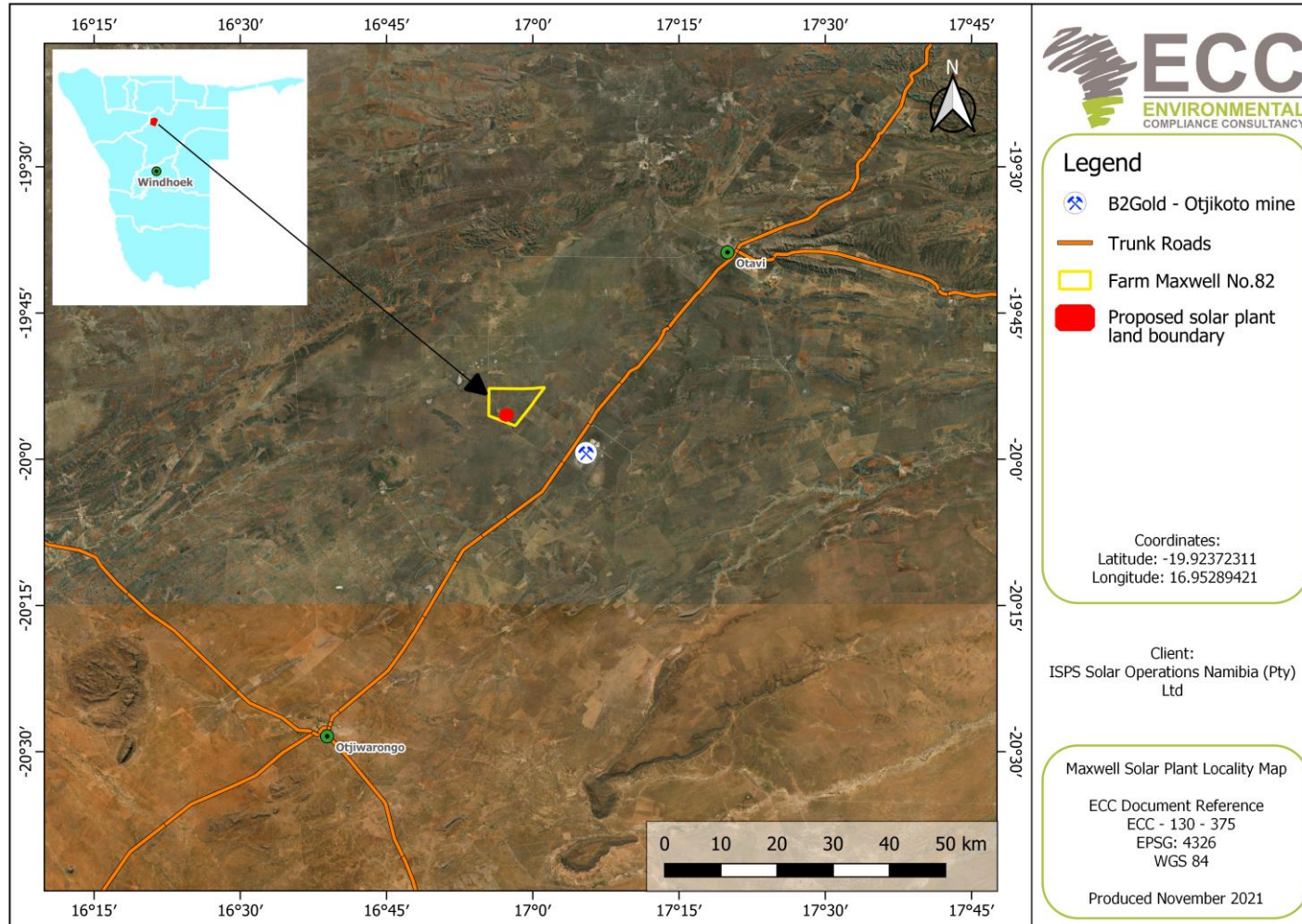


FIGURE 1 – LOCATION MAP OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

3 CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Best practice environmental assessment methodology calls for consideration and assessment of alternatives to a proposed project.

There were no other readily available and feasible sites, and the current identified location is ideally located near the Otjikoto mine. The landowner has provided permission to the proponent for the development of the proposed solar PV plant.

During the assessment, alternatives will consider optimisation and using eco-friendly solutions to reduce potential impacts.

4 THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

This ESIA, conducted by ECC, is undertaken in terms of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 and its regulations. The process followed in this ESIA is set out in the flowchart in Figure 2.

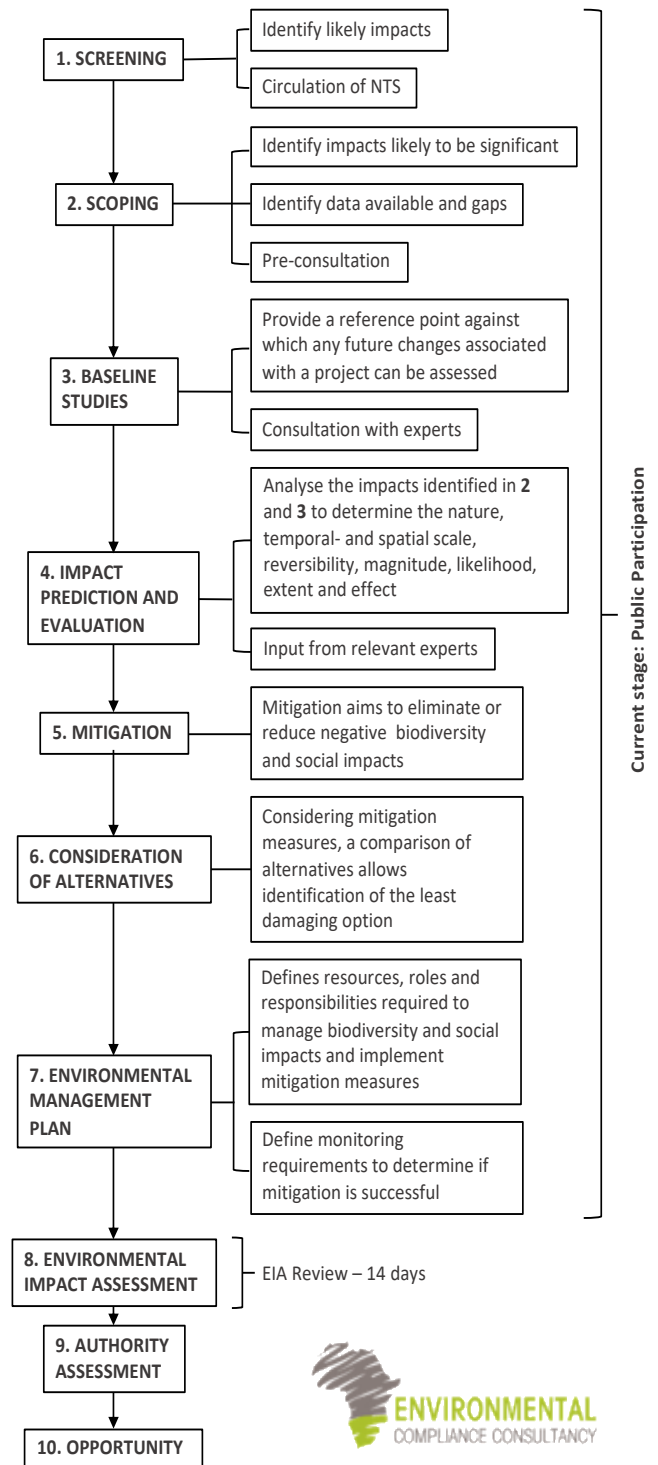


FIGURE 2 - FLOWCHART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT PROCESS

4.1 SCREENING

A review of the proposed project's screening findings against the listed activities was conducted; the findings of which are summarised below.

ENERGY GENERATION, TRANSMISSION AND STORAGE ACTIVITIES

(1.a) The construction of facilities for the generation of electricity;

(1.b) The construction of facilities for the transmission and supply of electricity;

- A 13 MW solar PV power plant will be constructed and operated on-site.

WASTE MANAGEMENT, TREATMENT, HANDLING AND DISPOSAL ACTIVITIES

(2.1) The construction of facilities for waste sites, treatment of waste and disposal of waste.

(2.3) The import, processing, use and recycling, temporary storage, transit or export of waste.

- Chemical toilets will be used during the construction phase and a septic tank will be installed on-site (operational phase).
- Waste generated during the construction phase will be collected in a skip and will be disposed of at the nearest landfill site.
- The majority of domestic waste will be recycled.

FORESTRY ACTIVITIES

(4.) The clearance of forest areas, deforestation, afforestation, timber harvesting or any other related activity that requires authorisation in term of the Forest Act, 2001 (Act No. 12 of 2001) or any other law.

- Vegetation will be cleared for the construction and installation of the solar PV power plant and ablution facilities, which will cover approximately 22 hectares.

WATER RESOURCE DEVELOPMENTS

(8.1) The abstraction of ground or surface water for industrial or commercial purposes.

- Water will be abstracted for use on-site for the ablution facilities and maintenance cleaning during the operational phase.

HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE TREATMENT, HANDLING AND STORAGE

(9.2) Any process or activity which requires a permit, licence or other forms of authorisation, or the modification of or changes to existing facilities for any process or activity which requires an amendment of an existing permit, licence or authorisation or which requires a new permit, licence or authorisation in terms of a law governing the generation or release of emissions, pollution, effluent or waste.

- A septic tank will be installed to collect and treat sewage waste.

4.2 SCOPING

Due to the nature of the proposed project, and the implementation of industry best practice mitigation measures during the development, construction and operational phases, the effects on the environment and society are expected to be minor to moderate and will be limited to within the farm boundaries.

4.3 BASELINE STUDIES

For the proposed project, baseline information was obtained through a desk-based study by focusing on the environmental receptors that could be affected by the proposed project. ECC will also engage with stakeholders, I&APs and the proponents to seek input into the assessment, and should it be required specialist studies will be initiated.

4.4 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Impacts will be assessed using the ECC ESIA methodology. The ESIA will be conducted in terms of the Environmental Management Act, 2007 and its regulations. ECC's methodology for impact assessments was developed using IFC standards in particular Performance Standard 1 'Assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts' (IFC 2012, 2017) and Namibian Draft Procedures and Guidance for ESIA and EMP (GRN, 2008) including international and national best practice with over 25 years of combined ESIA experience.

4.5 ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

An EMP shall be developed for the proposed project setting out auditable management actions for ISPS Solar Operations Namibia (Pty) Ltd to ensure careful and sustainable management measures are implemented for their activities in respect of the surrounding environment and community.

4.6 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND ADVERTISING

Public participation is an important part of the ESIA process; it allows the public and other stakeholders to raise concerns or provide valuable local environmental knowledge that can benefit the assessment,

in addition, it can aid the design process. This project is currently at the scoping phase and public participation phase.

At this phase ECC will perform the following:

- Identify key stakeholders, authorities, municipalities, environmental groups and interested or affected members of the public, hereafter referred to as I&APs.
- Distribute the BID for the proposed project (this document).
- Advertise the environmental application in two national newspapers
- Place notices on-site at or near the boundary.
- If required host a public meeting to encourage stakeholder participation and engagement, and provide details of issues identified by the environmental practitioner, stakeholders and I&APs.
- Record all comments of I&APs and present such comments, as well as responses provided by ECC, in the comments and responses report, which will be included in the scoping report that shall be submitted with the application, and
- Circulate I&AP comments to the project team for consideration of project design.

Comments must be submitted in writing and can be emailed using the details in the “contact us” section below.

CONTACT US

We welcome any enquiries regarding this document and its content. Please contact:

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