

Capacitating the core: introducing social performance to the renewable energy sector in Africa

Holle Linnea Wlokas*, Stellenbosch University, Center for Complex Systems in Transition

Paul Kapelus, Synergy Global Consulting

Abstract

Depending on technology type, scale and location, renewable energy projects can have a range of positive and negative economic, environmental and social impacts. Impacts of all kinds require relationship management involving government, communities and companies. Social performance is the professional response and offering in this context.

Social performance essentially deals with all the different ways a company and its operations contribute positively or negatively to the communities and societies in which they operate, and how these contributions and impacts are managed or optimised. Within this context, social performance is a critically important business tool to ensure a company's positioning in the local economy is sound, which directly relates to an effective risk mitigation and reputation management.

What are the critical social performance issues that renewable energy companies should anticipate, consider and plan towards when determining a business strategy throughout construction and operation of renewable energy plants? Building upon decades of experience in the extractives industries, it is possible to not only identify the current issues that require immediate attention but also the emerging external and internal factors that are going to be both exerting pressure on and driving a renewable energy company's relationship with its stakeholders.

This paper develops a comprehensive response to this question by outlining three agendas, which are to be advanced within academia, private sector and civil society. All three contributions are critical to the implementation of a just and deep energy transition on the continent.

Keywords: Renewable energy; Social performance, Energy Transition, Just transition
Corresponding author: holle@sun.ac.za; +27 79 936 1157