



PRACTICE NOTE

PLANNING, IMPLEMENTING, MANAGING, & MEASURING – FOR IMPACT

LEARNING EVENT INSIGHTS

DEEPENING REIPPPP'S COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IMPACT

In partnership with:



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What can, and must, be learned to improve community development in the REIPPPP, the largest renewable energy programme ever undertaken in South Africa?

This was the question that 150 diverse participants came together to explore at a dedicated Learning Event in early 2020. The event was funded by USAID, in partnership with the IPP Office, and supported by the industry associations SAWEA and SAPVIA, and was hosted at the IDC in Johannesburg. This practice note is one of six compiled by a group dedicated to recording the day's rich discussions, and captures insights related to the specific important theme of **planning, implement and measuring**.

THE CHALLENGE

The socioeconomic, transformational, and societal contribution of the REIPPPP – its 'impact', in short – is under scrutiny. What metrics are used to meaningfully determine impact? What is the best way to measure and communicate the extent of the difference made? These questions lead to a deeper reflection about the overarching vision for impact of the renewable energy industry.

The Economic Development (ED) component of the REIPPPP structure, in particular, requires independent power producers (IPPs) to deliver fast and on schedule, and report successes or failures on a quarterly basis. This incentivises a short-term, do-and-comply approach to development. These tight deadlines mean IPPs find themselves seeking a social licence to operate with a sense of urgency in the early stages of community entry. Often, as a result, ED managers respond to the most visible and immediate needs –

identified, more often than not, by local government, government departments and other stakeholders, rather than by communities themselves – or they focus only on those issues that are most likely to ensure peaceful relations in the short term.

Yet, with its 20-year horizon, the REIPPPP is not going to be a flash in the pan, and in fact also allows for a longer-term approach to community development, one that is balanced with the immediate felt needs of the community. Longer-term planning for meaningful impact requires taking into consideration the context and culture of a community, as well as the entire development ecosystem surrounding it, including, critically, the institutions and programmes of government. Reaching this point of understanding – of the community's context, culture and development ecosystem – requires strong relationships built on trust, which in turn take time and journeying together.



A photograph of two women in a rural setting. The woman on the right is wearing a red shawl and a yellow headwrap, carrying a large white sack with green and red markings on her head. The woman on the left is wearing a blue and white patterned headwrap and a floral shirt. They are standing in front of a mud-brick building with a corrugated metal roof. Large green banana leaves are visible in the background.

NEW INSIGHTS

Ideas we need to let go

- **Always be responsive.** Social impact – in other words, the effect of our programmes on the fabric of the community, down to the well-being of individuals and families – is a dynamic phenomenon. Achieving it may require that we experiment on the way forward, taking a detour from what we initially intended to implement.
- **Deliberately observe and measure.** It is impossible to manage (or improve) something without measuring it. It is important to be clear on what we want to achieve, to regularly assess progress, and to be intentional about learning along the way.
- **Celebrate successes and communicate failures.** Make sure that our staff and people in the community, who are at the frontline of ‘delivering’ impact, take stock of achievements (small or big) to encourage continued commitment. Failures must also be discussed and shared to ensure learning and improvement.
- **Take the (broader) community on the journey.** Even when interventions are focused on a very specific group, communicating the intentions and alignment to the broader community ensures that we do not miss out on wider understanding and support.

*Insights that **disrupt** and **liberate** our thinking*

- **‘Hurry up and deliver’.** We need to let go of only focusing on short-term developmental thinking and view the immediate needs of communities against a longer-term picture of impact. This requires going further than ‘ticking boxes’ every quarter and reporting on numbers only. Travelling fast means covering shallow ground only; to successfully travel slower and ‘deeper’, we must allow for more time to move from planning to implementation, and finally to reporting.
- **Planning as a once-off exercise.** Technical and social processes do not unfold in a straight line. Thus, we need to ensure that there is flexibility in the planning process that accommodates the shifts and changes that will inevitably occur. The same applies for expectations on supposedly ‘fixed’ deliverables. Getting this right also involves aligning with government interventions at local, district and provincial level.
- **Seeing issues in isolation.** These are complex environments, with many role-players and a detailed back-story. Thus we need to shift to thinking through why an issue exists, what else it is connected to, and what its root cause could be.



RECOMMENDATIONS

*Actions for **local or community** impact*

● **Planning, implementing, and managing for impact.** Impact is a multi-dimensional concept requiring a multi-pronged approach, as well as a resilient mindset that embraces change.

- + Start by investing more in the initial engagement (community engagement should start before construction).
- + Use the 70–20–10 approach: 70% of funding to 'deep' strategic and transformative interventions that build local capacity over time, 20% to quick-impact, high-visibility, goodwill-building programmes proposed by the community, and 10% towards discretionary funds in the face of a short-term crisis.
- + Use multi-stakeholder centric processes, such as Theory of Change and Theory U, and have the courage to be agile over time, adapting to changes as they come, and drawing on proven research. This includes allowing for things to go wrong.
- + When planning for mega projects, start small (piloting), continuously learn and refine through reflection, and then grow initiatives. Scaling of projects should be built into the planning; it should not be an after-thought.

- + Form partnerships with other IPPs and other private-sector funders in the same community so that it is easier to achieve shared impacts by pooling research, resources, and returns.

- + Make use of community forums to shift the balance of power in communities. Through ensuring transparent, consistent communication in these forums, it is possible to break any negative habitual power structures that may be inhibiting meaningful impact.

● **Impact measurement.** A complex and multi-dimensional concept, like impact, requires a robust approach to measurement and evaluation.

- + Given the maturity of the industry, it is time to begin using credible impact measurement methodologies, whether or not this is strictly required in the current reporting framework. From a business perspective, it makes sense to keep ourselves accountable, as any lack of accountability will reflect on the IPP.
- + It is beholden on IPPs to capacitate practitioners to engage meaningfully in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) methodologies – of which there are many, and from which the most appropriate for each context can be selected.

Actions for **national** impact

- **Develop flexible and responsive national planning frameworks.** This will allow IPPs to respond to contextual realities and ensure that planning processes are aligned across different levels of government (national, provincial, district, local).
- **Develop an industry-level impact measurement framework.** This will facilitate wider adoption of M&E, synergise indicators, and allow for reporting on an

aggregate impact across the industry. This will be best achieved in a collaborative fashion, by formalising a national community of practice for the sector.

- **Mainstreaming sound M&E practices.** The IPP Office has an important role to play in inculcating a responsive and bottom-up approach, built on extensive consultation within communities and across the sector. This will align indicators and, by extension, increase depth of impact.

FURTHER READING

- **[International – Planning Toolkit]**
The State of Queensland, Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning. 2017. Community engagement toolkit for planning
Available online: <https://planning.dilgp.qld.gov.au>.
- **[International – Planning Toolkit]**
Community Places. 2014. Community Planning Toolkit: Community Engagement. Available online: www.communityplanningtoolkit.org
- **[International – Workbook and Toolbox]** Department of Sustainability and Environment and Department of Primary Industries. Effective Community Engagement Workbook Version 2. Available online: <https://aese.psu.edu/research/centers/cecd/engagement-toolbox/planning/worksheets/CommEngageWorkbook.pdf>
- **[International – Discussion Paper]**
International Finance Corporation. 2019. A Guide to Community Engagement for Public-Private Partnerships. IFC World Bank Draft Discussion Paper.
Available online: <https://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/sites/ppp.worldbank.org/files/2019-10/A%20Guide%20to%20Community%20Engagement%20for%20Public-Private%20Partnerships%20-%20Draft%20Discussion%20June%202019.pdf>

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