

ENERGY  
CATALYST

# Country Guide: Namibia

June 2020





## Government

Namibia achieved independence from South Africa in 1990 and has since been led by the governing party, The South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), through a constitutional, multiparty democratic system. SWAPO was most recently re-elected in the 2019 general election, winning 56.3% of the votes; however, this is down dramatically from the 80% received in the 2014 elections.

Namibia has considerable mineral wealth, which is the main reason for the apartheid South African government maintaining control of Namibia throughout the Namibian struggle for independence between 1966 and 1990.

Today, the country is still closely aligned to South Africa, its processes and institutions. The country's currency, the Namibian Dollar (NAD), is still pegged to the South African Rand, and the Reserve Bank (the Bank of Namibia) largely aligns itself with the stance of the South African Reserve Bank (SARB).

The country is member of the African Union, the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).

## Economy

Namibia is an upper-middle income country and between 2010 and 2015, Namibia achieved annual GDP growth rates above 5% which was buoyed largely by investments in the mining sector and expansive government fiscal policies; however, economic growth since then has slowed notably and the country experienced a recession in 2017 (-0.8%). The tertiary sector and primary sectors are the largest contributors to the country's GDP, at 62% and 21%, respectively as of 2017. The primary sector is dominated by mining activities and the major minerals mined in Namibia include diamonds, copper, gold, and uranium. The tertiary sector is more diverse and is underpinned by a strong, well-developed financial sector that is liquid and well-capitalised.

According to the Vision 2030 document, by 2030 Namibia seeks to become a prosperous, peaceful, stable and industrialised nation. The Vision 2030 targets for Namibia are:

- Reduce unemployment to 5% from 35%
- Reduce inequality through a reduction in the Gini-coefficient from 0.7 to 0.3
- Achieve high-income status according to per capita income
- Increase the contribution from manufacturing and the services sector to 80% of GDP

**Table 1: Namibia at a glance**

<b>Capital</b>	Windhoek
<b>Total Area</b>	825,615 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	2.45 million (2018)
<b>Official languages</b>	English
<b>Rural Population</b>	50% (2018)
<b>GDP</b>	US\$ 15,000 M (2019)
<b>GDP Per Capita</b>	US\$ 6073.20 (2018)
<b>Currency</b>	Namibian Dollar (NAD)
<b>Exchange rate 01/03/2020</b>	1 GBP = 20.08 NAD
<b>Exchange rate 01/03/2018</b>	1 GBP = 16.22 NAD
<b>Access to Electricity</b>	49% (2018)
<b>Urban electricity access</b>	76.65% (2017)
<b>Rural electricity access</b>	29.29% (2017)

In the yearly World Bank survey on “Doing Business”, a comparison of business regulation in 190 economies, Namibia scored higher than the Sub-Saharan African average. The 2020 edition of Doing Business ranks Namibia as 104 out of the 190 with a score of 61.4 out of 100 for the ease of starting a business. Figure 2 provides the ranking and scores of Namibia compared to other economies for various ‘Doing Business’ topics, showing areas where Namibia is performing well and those that need to be improved. Contracting, access to credit and electricity are areas where Namibia is competitive; however, registering property, the time and effort to start a business and cross-border trading are areas that need improvement.

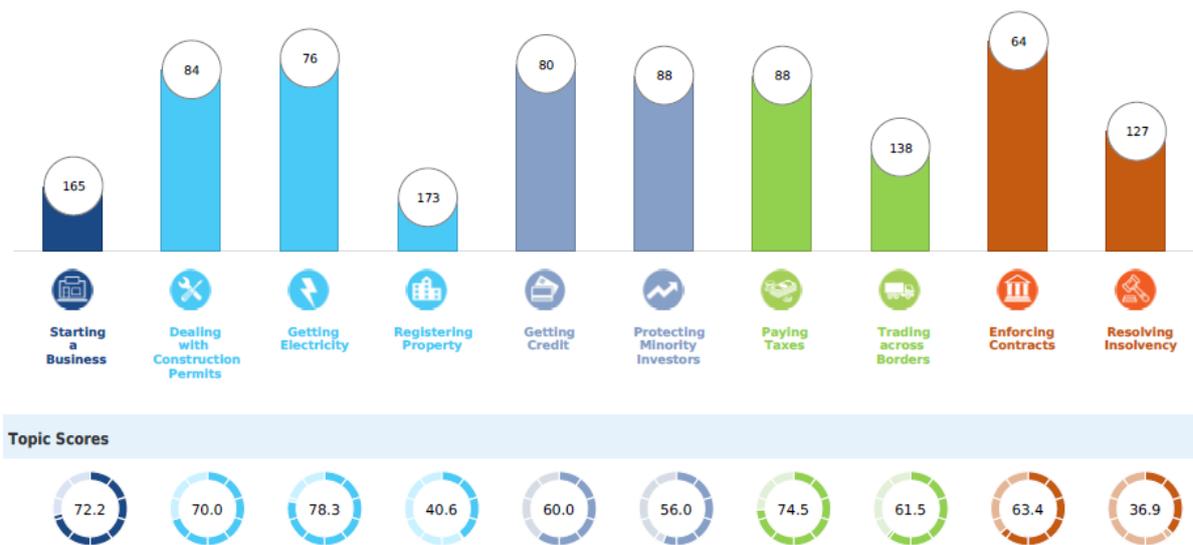


Figure 2: World Bank doing business 2020 global rankings and scores for various ‘Doing Business’ topics in Namibia. Source: World Bank Group, 2020

### The energy sector in Namibia

Namibia, as of 2018, had 611 MW of installed electricity generation capacity, of which 521 MW was available. The majority of the total installed capacity comes from the Ruacana hydroelectric powerplant (330 MW). The peak electricity demand in Namibia was estimated at over 672 MW, meaning that Namibia is an electricity importer. In terms of production and consumption, Namibia produced an estimated 1557 GWh of electricity in 2018, which could have been aggravated by the drought conditions experienced in many areas in Southern Africa in that year, against a total consumption figure of 4160 GWh. This means that in 2018, Namibia imported approximately 62% of its electricity needs. The imported electricity is provided by the Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) primarily from South Africa.

Looking at the energy sector more broadly, the total primary energy supply (TPES) in Namibia in 2017 was 20,350 GWh. 15,350 GWh of this TPES came from crude oil, which was all imported into the country. More than half (57%) of the crude oil was used in the transport sector and 10% was used in industry in 2018. Lastly, bioenergy contribution was estimated at just under 2000 GWh.

Namibia is well endowed with energy resources, beyond the existing and utilised hydropower resources and natural gas, both of which have not been fully exploited. Geological data suggests that there are considerable oil and gas reserves in the Walvis, Luderitz and Orange River offshore basins. Namibia has considerable solar, biomass, hydropower and wind energy resources; while the total installed renewable energy capacity was 431MW in 2018, the total opportunity is many times greater. The solar potential in Namibia, according to their National Integrated Resource Plan, has “no limit” in their estimations, while the biomass, wind and hydro potential was estimated at 600 MW, 300 MW and 300MW, respectively.

The Government’s energy sector goal, according to Namibia’s 5<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan, is to have a sustainable mix of locally generated capacity of 755 MW by 2022 to support households and industry needs, reduce reliance on imports, and increase the national electricity access rate from 49% in 2018 to 67.5% by 2023.

Key to achieving the National Development Plan (NDP) objective for the energy sector is to overcome the present challenges facing the country, which, in relation to the energy industry, include:

- Accessibility and security of developer funding
- Inability to meet current energy demand, compounded by reliance on hydropower in an increasingly drought-stricken region
- Maintenance and refurbishment of existing assets to increase availability
- Attracting and developing key skills in the industry

Below, a review of the renewable electricity generation technologies currently employed in the country is provided.

## Hydropower

The Ruacana hydroelectric power station, the country’s flagship power station commissioned in 1978 with a total project cost of NAD \$162 million, originally consisted of three 80 MW turbines, with another 90 MW turbine added in 2012. It has been designed as a run-of-river plant on the Kunene River, on Namibia’s northern border with Angola.

NamPower, the national electricity utility, is currently upgrading the facility to increase output from the current 332 MW to 347 MW. Unfortunately, due to the climate and rainfall patterns in the country, the peak power supply is not synchronised with the peak demand period (June through July), as the power plant produces half the amount of power in the winter months as it does between January and May.

Even though Namibia is an arid country, the resource potential from the Kunene River could still be exploited for additional capacity. In March 2020, the Namibian and Angolan governments signed a bilateral agreement for the construction of the cross border 600 MW Baynes hydroelectric dam on the Kunene River, which will cost an estimated US \$1.2bn. Construction is scheduled to start in 2021 and a completion date is scheduled for 2025; the plant will see 300 MW of electricity directed to each of Angola and Namibia.

**Table 2: Overview of the main stakeholders in the energy sector in Namibia**

Institution	Role
<b>Ministry of Mines and Energy (MME)</b>	Policy setting and overall regulation of the Namibian energy sector
<b>Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET)</b>	Setting of policies, plans and regulations regarding climate change and environmental protection in Namibia Regulates EIA procedures Advance climate change activities in Namibia
<b>Ministry of Finance</b>	Provision of funding for all government ministries and regulates the national, provincial and municipal financial management according to legislation
<b>Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI)</b>	Enhance and attract foreign direct investments into the energy sector
<b>National Planning Commission (NPC)</b>	Planning national priorities, promulgating development objectives and strategies and setting sectoral plans and budgets allocations
<b>Electricity Control Board</b>	Established in 2000 to regulate electricity generation, transmission and distribution, which includes setting electricity tariffs and reviewing and issuing licenses for importation, exportation and trade of energy products. Provide recommendations to the MME regarding energy sector policies
<b>National Technical Committee on Renewable Energy (NTCRE)</b>	Develops standards and codes of practice for performance, manufacture, installation and maintenance of renewable energy technologies that enter the Namibian market
<b>NamPower</b>	Ownership and operation of most electricity generation and all transmission assets in Namibia. Electricity system operator and trader to balance supply and demand
<b>Regional Electricity Distributors (REDs)</b>	State-owned entities that control the supply and distribution of electricity in dedicated regions in Namibia
<b>Namibia Energy Institute (NEI)</b>	Conduct and disseminate research, capacity building and raising awareness on renewable energy technologies, energy efficiency, oil, natural gas and nuclear energy Provision of technical assistance to the MME for renewable independent power producers
<b>SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE)</b>	SACREEE was established by SADC in 2015 to contribute towards increasing access to modern energy services and improving energy security across the SADC Region through the promotion of market driven uptake of renewable energy and energy efficient technologies. SACREEE will play a key role in implementing the Southern African Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan, and in harmonizing policy approaches, regulation and standards, investment coordination, regional capacity building and knowledge building measures.

## Solar energy

Namibia has one of the greatest solar resources in the world. Being a large country with a low population density, land is readily available. In terms of insolation, Figure 3 illustrates the high resource potential in Namibia. Averaging between 5 and 6 kWh/m<sup>2</sup>, the Southern Namib and Kalahari regions receive the most solar radiation. Excluding the land area used for agriculture (47%), conservation (17%) and urban areas (<1%), the theoretical solar potential for Namibia is in excess of 1,445 TWh per annum or nearly 350 times the current electricity demand.

In 2015, the Electricity Control Board (ECB) established the Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff (REFIT) programme which was applicable to solar PV, biomass and wind energy technologies. Under this programme, renewable energy projects between 500 kW and 5 MW would be procured by the utility, NamPower. The REFIT programme was generally well received and to date the programme has seen 14 projects reach financial close and 11 are connected to the national grid with a total power capacity of 90 MW. Of these 11 connected Independent Power Producers (IPPs), 10 are solar PV projects with capacities of 5 MW making the REFIT solar PV capacity as at 2019 50 MW.

Outside of the REFIT programme, several solar PV projects have been developed which included the Omburu Sun Energy project (4.5 MW) in the Erongo region and HOPSOL Power Generation (5 MW) which have both been operational since 2016.

In 2018, the two 10 MW GreeNam Electricity solar PV projects and the 37 MW Hardap Solar PV (supplying 5% of the country's electricity demand annually) were commissioned, supplying an additional 47 MW to the NamPower grid.

In the pipeline, the 80 MW Groot Solar PV Park at the Groot Glass manufacturing facility is currently under construction; it is expected to reach completion in 2021 and will be used for local electricity supply with the 12 MW surplus being fed into the NamPower grid.

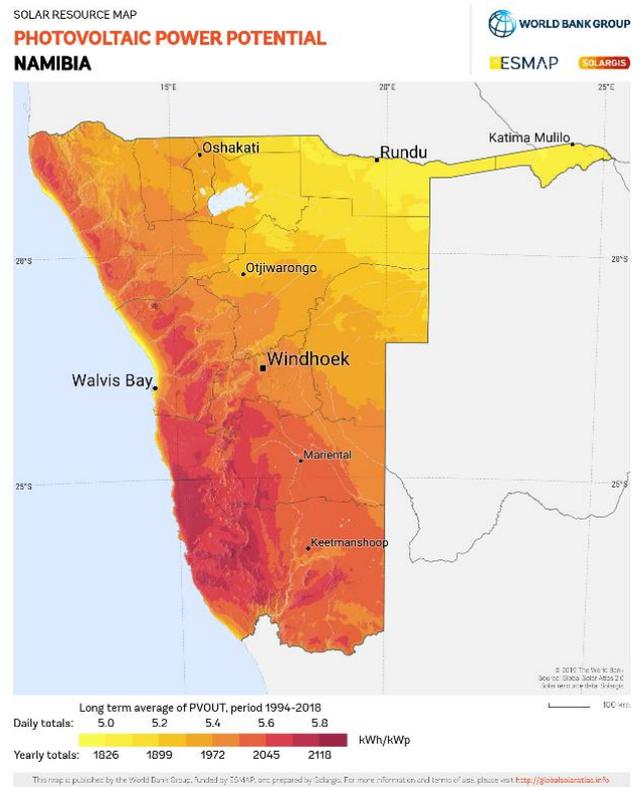


Figure 3: Solar resource Namibia (2019 The World Bank, Source: Global Solar Atlas 2.0, Solar resource data: Solargis)

## Biomass energy

Much of Namibia's bioenergy potential lies in the use of bush encroachment vegetation in the Northern areas of the country. Bush encroachment is seen as a major economic and ecological threat in Namibia, as wooded bush and shrub species spread rapidly across areas that were previously grasslands. Current estimates for the bush encroachment see up to 450,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land being affected and growth rates of 3.2% (1.4 million hectares) per annum.

The negative ecological impact from bush encroachment includes depletion of productive grazing and agricultural lands, dewatering of soils, and reduced biodiversity. It is thought that an imbalance between grazers and browsers, suppression of bush fires, overstocking of pasture lands and prolonged drought periods have spurred the densification and spread of these wooded species. Economically, the reduction in agricultural productivity alone is estimated to cost the country NAD \$2 billion annually, in addition to the losses incurred in the tourism sectors as the bush encroachment impairs and hinders the movement and identification of wildlife.

Bush encroachment can be reduced through bush thinning, which involves selective removal of certain aggressive species to clear land for grazing and natural grassland. Current efforts for curbing bush encroachment are estimated at clearing 200,000 hectares per annum, or 14% of the annual encroachment rate of 1.4 million hectares.

Historically, arboricides have been used to chemically combat the encroaching species, but recently considerable interest has been placed on the biomass potential of this resource; charcoal production and the use of bush wood chips for thermal and electrical energy is gaining momentum. Charcoal production is a well-established industry in Namibia, but has not focused on the use of bush encroaching biomass as a feedstock to date.

The Ohorongo Cement plant and Namibia Breweries have begun using wood chips to partially meet their thermal energy requirements. The benefits of switching to wood chips from invading bush are multifold: switching away from fossil-fuels such as coal contributes to significant emissions reductions; reliance on local energy sources improves the balance of trade in the country; addressing the bush encroachment problems is ecologically beneficial; and sourcing and supplying wood chips creates jobs in rural areas.

The use of biomass for electrical energy is also receiving attention both privately and publicly in Namibia. The 400 KW Ondangwa Waste-to-Energy plant in Ondangwe is in advanced stages and will use sewerage waste and plant biomass to produce electricity and fertiliser. This plant is expected to produce 3.4 GWh of baseload electricity per annum, mitigate 2,330 tCO<sub>2</sub>e per annum, and create 30 direct jobs.

The estimated biomass consumption of a 20 MW biomass power plant is 180,000 tonnes, which would require approximately 18,000 hectares of land to be thinned of encroaching bush per year, assuming energy content of around 8 MWh/hectare. Therefore, the bush encroachment resource in Namibia could theoretically supply more than 70 of these 20 MW power plants (1,400 MW) for the next 30 years. The NIRP, however, estimates the national biomass potential as 600 MW.

## Wind energy

Namibia has suitable wind resource for large-scale wind power projects according to the most recent NIRP. It was estimated that the country's wind resource potential was around 300 MW, and is most concentrated along the western coastline, particularly in the south-west.

The only project that reached financial close under the REFIT programme that was not a solar PV plant was an onshore wind project in Luderitz with a generating capacity of 5 MW and a predicted capacity factor of 40%. The project was synchronised with the grid in December 2018 and was developed by Innosun Energy Holding.

External to the REFIT programme, NamPower has signed a power purchase agreement (PPA) with Diaz Wind Power, another large-scale wind project near Luderitz. The project will have a capacity of 44 MW, making it the largest renewable energy power plant in the country (excluding hydro). As of January 2020, the Diaz Wind Power project has been allocated land from the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, which means that construction of this project can begin. Plans are in place to expand this project to 90 MW if the project is able to demonstrate its success at 44 MW.

## National Renewable Energy Policy

The Namibian government published the 2017 National Renewable Energy Policy to bolster renewable energy development in the country and ratify its commitment to a clean energy future. It is aligned to and supportive of existing national policies, regulations and frameworks, including the National Energy Policy, the NDP, the Electricity Act (2007), the Rural Electricity Distribution Master Plan (2010) and the Off-Grid Energisation Master Plan (2007), among others.

The National Renewable Energy Policy has a vision to enable access to modern, clean, sustainable and affordable energy through grid-supplied, off-grid and distributed solutions. If successful, Namibia will become a regional leader in the development and deployment of renewable energy.

Pursuant to this vision, the National Renewable Energy Policy outlines the following key objectives:

- Ensure 70% of the population has adequate and affordable energy access by 2020 and near-universal access by 2030
- Make renewable energy development a national priority
- Undertake and implement supportive measures, such as financial incentives or enabling mechanisms, to spur renewable energy deployment and attract investment into the sector
- In addition to lending and tax support to renewable energy developers, the Namibian government will prioritise training and capacity building for Namibian citizens in this sector to enable greater participation
- Bridge the energy import deficit wherever it makes economic sense to do so
- 70% of electricity generation (as kWh) in 2030 to come from renewable energy sources
- Recognising that some regions in Namibia may be optimally supplied with electricity through off-grid solutions, the government shall balance the development of both grid-connected and off-grid renewable energy development by identifying locations where off-grid solutions are better suited through periodic, evidence-based and community engaging evaluations

- Through diversification of the energy mix, (including non-electricity energy sources) towards renewable sources, the energy sector will contribute meaningfully to the achievement of the Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) submission's target of an 89% emissions reduction by 2030

The role of mini-grids for achieving universal electricity access in Namibia has been cited in the Off-Grid Energisation Master Plan (OGEMP) in 2007 and is further recognised in the National Renewable Energy Policy. Electrifying all households through a centralised grid is not the most practical and cost-effective solution in Namibia, and off-grid or distributed energy solutions that do not compromise quality or reliability, will be required to meet the universal electrification target.

Namibia already has experience with off-grid and mini-grid systems, as demonstrated by the Tsumkwe Energy Project, a 200 KW solar hybrid system developed in partnership with the Desert Research Foundation of Namibia. In addition to installing the electricity generating equipment to provide power to the community, streetlights, rechargeable electric lanterns and a solar kiosk were installed to extend the benefit of this electrification project beyond just power supply.

**Table 3: Active support programmes in Namibia**

Programme	Main activities
<b>Southern African Sustainable Energy Initiative</b>	A regional project focused on developing capacity in the Higher Education Institutions of partner countries for national and regional planning, development and implementation of sustainable energy systems and projects. It is coordinated by the Namibia University of Science and Technology, in partnership with the University of Lesotho, University of Botswana and Hochschule Darmstadt in Germany.
<b>Scaling up the Africa Clean Energy Corridor (ACEC)</b>	The SADC Centre for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency (SACREEE), headquartered in Windhoek, has partnered with IRENA to accelerate the expansion of renewable electricity production, taking advantage of the continent's enormous untapped potential and helping to sustain future growth through renewable power development zoning, planning processes, enabling mechanisms, capacity building and public information.
<b>Gender Mainstreaming and Women in Sustainable Energy Programme</b>	The programme contributes to increased access to modern, affordable, and reliable energy services, energy security and environmental sustainability by tailoring national and regional policies, projects and programs to the energy needs of men and women. It also aims to foster women's economic empowerment through sustainable energy access.
<b>Energy Infrastructure Programme</b>	The EIP comprises various energy projects that are planned for construction during the NDP5 period (2017/2018-2021/22) and seeks to increase energy generation in Namibia to a capacity of 755 MW to reduce reliance on energy imports. EIP will achieve these goals through the deployment of renewable (360 MW by 2022) and thermal energy technologies through NamPower and independent power producers under the leadership of the Ministry of Mines and Energy. Additionally, the EIP aims to increase energy access in rural, urban and peri-urban areas in Namibia.
<b>Renewable Energy Feed-in Tariff Programme</b>	In 2015 the Namibian government implemented the REFIT programme to procure biomass, solar PV and wind energy projects between 500 kW and 5 MW in size. To date, this programme has managed to secure 14 power purchase agreements (PPAs) with the IPPs, predominantly using solar PV (11 projects). The National Renewable Energy Policy has recommended the country continue with the REFIT programme structure for projects under 5 MW but to shift towards an auction-based, competitive bidding system similar to that in South Africa for projects over 10 MW, which could see the development of a renewable energy auction programme developing in future.
<b>The Off-Grid Energisation Master Plan (OGEMP)</b>	The OGEMP was published in 2007 and is a 20-year programme to provide access to appropriate energy technologies to areas not serviced by the grid. The underlying objective of the OGEMP is to provide access to appropriate energy technologies to everyone living or working in off-grid, pre-grid and "grey" areas. The approach through which these areas would be electrified was using Energy Shops in off-grid communities that would sell approved, suitable energy products, particularly renewable energy products, to community members. Additionally, consumer credit finance would be provided through revolving funds, such as the solar revolving fund, which offers concessional loans to households to improve affordability of these energy products.
<b>Climate Resilient Agriculture in three of the Vulnerable Extreme northern crop growing regions (CRAVE)</b>	The aim is to increase climate-resilience and reduce food insecurity for subsistence farmers in Namibia. CRAVE will reduce food insecurity by allowing beneficiaries to acquire abilities to adopt conservation agriculture and climate-resilient agricultural practices to produce food, as well as providing them with access to renewable energy in the form of off-grid solar energy technologies for water pumping, refrigeration and domestic uses.
<b>Adaptation Fund: Water desalination plants using renewable power</b>	The objective of the project is to pilot the treatment by reverse osmosis (RO) of poor-quality local groundwater to a level that complies with the national standards for drinking water, using sun and wind energy to power the process. The project will be executed by NamWater and will improve the resilience of vulnerable communities to the deleterious water supply and quality impacts that climate change is causing.

**Table 3: Active support programmes in Namibia**

<b>The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative</b>	The Economics of Land Degradation (ELD) Initiative is a global collaboration to evaluate and raise awareness of the economic benefits of land and land-based ecosystems. In 2017, the ELD-Initiative conducted a national economic study on the benefits of bush control for Namibia. The findings of the study suggest that a comprehensive programme of bush control and biomass utilisation could generate an estimated potential net benefit of USD \$0.4 billion for the Namibian economy compared to no action at all.
<b>Southern Africa Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Strategy and Action Plan</b>	Adopted in 2017 with an implementation period spanning until 2030, the REESAP aims to provide a framework for SADC Member States to develop their own renewable energy and energy efficiency strategies and action plans, leading to greater uptake of RE resources as well as mobilisation of financial resources for the sector. REESAP will be implemented at the most appropriate levels by relevant agencies in the region and in member states, one of which is Namibia. SACREEE, which is headquartered in Windhoek, is the primary implementation body for this programme.

## Industry associations

The **Renewable Energy Industry Association of Namibia** has been established to promote renewable energy and educate stakeholders on renewable energy technologies. The association will also represent the renewable energy industry in Namibia for workshops, government liaison and communications and lobby for renewable energy uptake in Namibia.

**Namibian Petroleum Operators Association (NAMPOA)** is a forum representing all oil and gas exploration companies operating in Namibia and enables effective communication on vital issues to key stakeholders, including the Government of Namibia.

**Regional Electricity Regulators Association of Southern Africa (RERA)** is a sub-organisation of SADC for the cooperation of their national electricity and energy regulatory authorities. The Secretariat is located in Windhoek. The main objective of RERA is to facilitate harmonisation of regulatory policies, legislation, standards and practices. It serves as a platform for effective cooperation among energy regulators within the SADC region. The member from the Namibian state is the Electricity Control Board (ECB).

**Association of Consulting Engineers of Namibia (ACEN)** established in 1982, membership to ACEN has grown to 55 firms with 400 employees between them. ACEN offers collective representation for consulting engineers. ACEN seeks to promote best practice and professionalism in the industry and advance the profession of consulting engineering in Namibia.

**The Namibian Manufacturers Association**, established in 1994, aims to facilitate a sustainable, competitive and prosperous manufacturing and processing industry for the benefit of all stakeholders. This is to be achieved through close cooperation with government departments, industries and interested parties.

## References and further reading

### **National Energy Policy 2017**

[http://www.mme.gov.na/files/publications/fd8\\_National%20Energy%20Policy%20-%20July%202017.pdf](http://www.mme.gov.na/files/publications/fd8_National%20Energy%20Policy%20-%20July%202017.pdf)

### **National Renewable Energy Policy 2017**

[http://www.mme.gov.na/files/publications/03f\\_National%20Renewable%20Energy%20Policy%20-%20July%202017.pdf](http://www.mme.gov.na/files/publications/03f_National%20Renewable%20Energy%20Policy%20-%20July%202017.pdf)

### **National Integrated Resource Plan 2016**

[https://www.ecb.org.na/images/docs/Noticeboard/ELECTRICITY%20SECTOR%20NATIONAL%20INTEGRATED%20RESOURCE%20PLAN%20\(NIRP\)%202016%20Version%201.pdf](https://www.ecb.org.na/images/docs/Noticeboard/ELECTRICITY%20SECTOR%20NATIONAL%20INTEGRATED%20RESOURCE%20PLAN%20(NIRP)%202016%20Version%201.pdf)

### **Electricity Control Board 2017 Annual Report**

[https://www.ecb.org.na/images/docs/Annual%20Reports/ECB\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2017.pdf](https://www.ecb.org.na/images/docs/Annual%20Reports/ECB_Annual_Report_2017.pdf)

### **Doing Business – World Bank**

<https://www.doingbusiness.org/en/data/exploreconomies/namibia>

**The 5<sup>th</sup> National Development Plan from 2017/2018 – 2021/2022** [http://www.npc.gov.na/?wpfb\\_dl=293](http://www.npc.gov.na/?wpfb_dl=293)

### **Official UK Government travel advice for Namibia**

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/namibia>

## Useful contacts

### British High Commission

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### Namibian High Commission

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### Namibia Investment Centre

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### Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism

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