



MEDIA RELEASE

Community and Stakeholder Dialogue on Environmental and Social Impacts of Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration

Location: Oranjemund, Namibia

Date: 10 February 2025

Organized by: Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) – Land, Environment and Development (LEAD) Project

Oranjemund Hosts Dialogue on Future Offshore Oil Projects and Environmental Protection

Oranjemund, Namibia — The Legal Assistance Centre (LAC) has hosted a Community Dialogue on the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) for Block 2914A and its implications for future oil and gas exploration projects in Namibia. Two information events took place on **10 February 2025** at the **Oranjemund Recreation Club**: a morning session for key stakeholders and a public talk in the evening, both discussing pressing environmental and social risks associated with offshore oil exploration. Off-site events to reach out to the Oranjemund community and “bring the law to the people” included a mobile legal advice clinic in front of the Youth Centre, where the LAC team gave free advice on legal matters, and a visit to the Oranjemund Private School.

Namibia’s offshore oil and gas industry is rapidly expanding, with serious concerns raised over the potential risks to marine biodiversity, local livelihoods and coastal ecosystems. The ESIA for Block 2914A had been approved in October 2024, but expert reviews, including a study by the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (ELAW), indicate significant deficiencies in the assessment, such as inadequate oil spill response plans and outdated biodiversity evaluations.

Public participation is a fundamental right as stated in the Environmental Management Act (EMA). This dialogue is crucial to ensuring that communities fully understand the implications of these projects and can advocate for stronger inclusion in the decision-making process and environmental protection. Yet all participants of the public talk and stakeholder event gave feedback, that they had never been consulted or invited to make use of their rights to express their views as a concerned community.

An inspiring example of successful public intervention presented at the talk is the ongoing case against Shell in South Africa, where the court has halted the oil giant's seismic testing for oil and gas along the country's eastern coastline. The decision has been applauded by environmentalists who fear that the sound blasting will harm marine life.

Events like this public talk, which aim to empower communities to engage actively in environmental decision-making, demand transparency and accountability to help shape a future where Namibia's natural resources are protected, are increasingly vital in the face of rising exploration activities.

Key topics of the talk at a glance:

1. The growing impact of offshore oil exploration, the need for environmental safeguards.
2. The right to public engagement under the Environmental Management Act (EMA).
3. Key deficiencies in the ESIA for Block 2914A and their implications for future projects.
4. Oil spill response failures, threats to marine life, economic risks for fishing communities.
5. The need to balance energy development with using natural resources sustainably.
6. How to engage in the ESIA process, demand transparency, and influence policy decisions.
7. Identifying potential threats to environmental defenders, strategies to mitigate risks, and tools to ensure safe participation in advocacy work.

For more information please contact:

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About the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC):

The Legal Assistance Centre is a Namibian non-governmental organization committed to providing legal services and promoting human rights, environmental protection, and social justice. For more information, visit lac.org.na.