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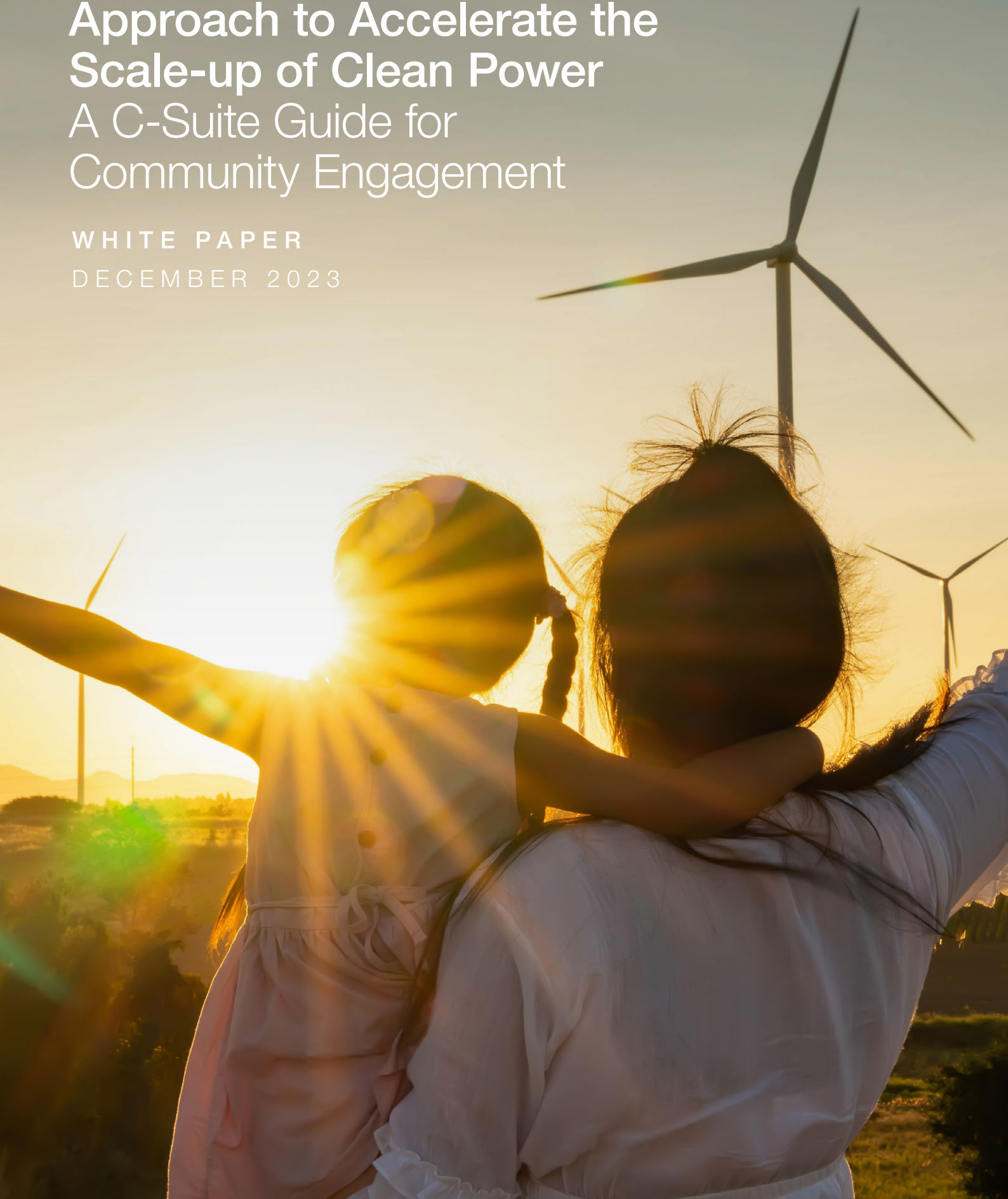


Using a People-positive Approach to Accelerate the Scale-up of Clean Power

A C-Suite Guide for Community Engagement

WHITE PAPER

DECEMBER 2023



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Foreword

Businesses have a key role in delivering on global climate targets, while ensuring a secure, just and equitable energy transition. This requires a massive buildout of clean power infrastructure, with total investment estimated at \$4.5 trillion by 2030.¹ Bringing people along on this journey will be critical not only to achieve an accelerated transition, but also to ensure these investments deliver broader social, economic and environmental value.



Mads Nipper
Chief Executive Officer,
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Renewable energy is our single most important tool to tackle the climate crisis, while preserving nature, providing energy security and delivering affordable energy in the long term. According to the International Energy Agency's updated Net Zero Roadmap, the path to keeping global warming below 1.5°C is still open – but it is narrowing fast. To stay on track, total installed clean energy capacity must triple to 11,000 GW by 2030.

Such speed and scale are unprecedented, and community support is crucial to facilitate it. The buildout holds the potential to create millions of new jobs. Realizing this potential is a core part of driving a people-positive renewables buildout that we believe is necessary to unlock a rapid energy transition.

Yet people-positive renewable energy is an ambition that still needs an industry definition, and we welcome the building blocks this paper sets out. We believe that for energy projects to be people-positive, there are a few key elements the industry should explore. These include how to effectively prioritize local upskilling and job creation, how to meaningfully engage with people living close to new sites, and how to best ensure people from marginalized groups have equitable access to the opportunities and shared benefits of clean energy.

Our industry needs dialogue with community groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to define common standards for a people-positive energy transition. We also invite our industry peers to work together to find the best ways to integrate people-positive measures into the buildout. And we urge governments to not only focus on the lowest price, but also the wider societal value creation in their transition plans. We need to build green energy now, and we need to build it right for the people and the planet.



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Great partnerships pave the way for incredible progress! It is evident that the acceleration of renewables needs to move beyond the norms of “business as usual” to meet the unprecedented technological, financial and logistical challenges our world faces to transform the energy sector.

We firmly believe it is the duty and responsibility of corporations to carry this partnership ethos into the local communities hosting our renewable energy projects. Moreover, we understand there is no one-size-fits-all solution as communities across the world face many different challenges. We must approach the delivery of our renewable projects with empathy and understanding.

This report outlines the core principles of establishing and nurturing partnerships with local communities, while also providing insights into how we can build trust and transparency through our community engagement practices. This requires an evolution of our business processes and operations, placing emphasis on community engagement and integration of local partnerships throughout the project life cycle.

By fostering these partnerships, we ignite a powerful engine for change, yielding benefits that extend far beyond renewable energy, driving substantial positive impacts for both our people and our planet.

Executive summary

A massive buildout of new energy infrastructure, in particular clean power, is needed to meet the goals of the energy transition. As this infrastructure will increasingly intersect with population centres and natural ecosystems, managing its impact will become even more important. There are other factors to consider, including a growing recognition of the need for a just and equitable energy transition, broader access to information and easier amplification of voices through social media. If not managed, businesses risk losing their social licence to operate and eroding business value. When managed well, clean power infrastructure development presents a considerable opportunity to create significant business value as well as wider system value for society, the economy and the environment.

Community engagement has for a long time been an integral part of project development for energy and infrastructure companies. While there is no singular template for what good looks like, given the many variables involved and the unique social contexts, numerous learnings and best practices

have been developed over the years that form the basic building blocks of successful engagement. These include: 1) understanding and respecting the local context; 2) engaging early, continuously, meaningfully and transparently; and 3) defining a clear plan focused on delivering shared value.

While these building blocks are important for successful engagement, they are no longer enough. Achieving the necessary speed and scale in the energy transition in a responsible way merits a new approach. This new approach includes: 1) prioritizing system value impact within the business strategy; 2) leveraging cross-sectoral collaboration to move towards a partnership approach with communities; and 3) working with other industry leaders to develop a framework for measuring people-positive impact.

The clean power industry has an opportunity to do things differently. By leading with a people-positive approach to community engagement, the industry can not only improve business performance, but also drive a more equitable and just energy transition.



1

The case for change

Fostering a successful energy transition requires balancing the dimensions of the “energy triangle”: equity, security and sustainability.² Achieving this equilibrium entails thoughtful transformation of the global energy mix in a way that maximizes societal impact.

The scale of the clean energy transition requires a significantly large area of land and water, inevitably bringing infrastructure closer to communities.

To meet net zero goals, clean power³ capacity alone is expected to expand three-fold by 2030 and nine-fold by 2050,⁴ requiring significantly large areas of land and water. Estimates range from 2-3% for the EU⁵ and the US⁶ and up to 5% for Japan and South Korea. Finding project sites that do not impact people will become increasingly difficult. In addition, the accelerating pace of deployment increases both the frequency and magnitude of that impact.

Due to its permanent nature, large-scale clean power infrastructure located near homes, areas of economic activity, recreational sites or even natural ecosystems requires an effort to be accepted and integrated into the social and cultural fabric. The scale and pace of clean power infrastructure deployment now requires businesses to work harder than ever to secure acceptance.

Awareness and sensitivity are higher, and amplification of voices is easier.

Growing awareness of the need for a just and equitable energy transition, broader access to information (and misinformation) as well as the amplification of voices through social media, is adding to the challenge.

A 2020 study⁷ analysed nearly 300 cases of opposition to clean power projects across 23 countries from 1997 to 2019. It showed that 10% of projects got cancelled, 21% were suspended and of the remaining, 50% were delayed. Concerns raised varied significantly based on the local context, and were related to environmental, cultural, social and economic impacts.

Delays, suspensions or even cancellation of projects not only slow down the energy transition, but also impact business performance due to revenue loss and higher operating costs. In extreme cases, lengthy legal battles and hostile working environments can affect a business’ ability to operate safely and profitably, and can even cause damage to brand equity and reputation.

The clean power transformation presents a considerable opportunity to create wider system value – for society, the economy and the environment.

Clean power infrastructure projects can create considerable social, economic and environmental value (or “system value”).⁸ Social and economic outcomes include secure access to electricity, economic development, job creation, upskilling and reskilling, improved air quality and health outcomes. Clean power projects also have an impact on the environment and, when properly designed, can enable nature-positive outcomes. To maximize system value, community engagement needs to be an integral part of the project life cycle from site selection to decommissioning. This helps ensure a better understanding of the local cultural, environmental and economic needs at each stage and can guide business decisions.

Business leaders have an opportunity to adopt new approaches to create wider system value. This will not only enable a just and equitable energy transition, but also accelerate its pace.

BOX 1. Understanding opposition

The terms NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) and BANANA (Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything) are used when referring to opposition to all types of infrastructure projects from communities, indigenous groups, conservation groups and even local public and regulatory authorities. These terms, however, do not adequately capture the broad spectrum of reasons that lead to opposition.

Drawing from recent studies by the Energy Transitions Committee,⁹ MIT Renewable Energy Clinic,¹⁰ Brookings¹¹ and a paper in the Energy Policy Journal,¹² the concerns and main sources of opposition can be grouped into four main categories. These are usually more relevant for stakeholders who have been historically excluded, or not listened to, and can arise due to past harms as well as a natural tendency to resist change.

1. Social impact – Concerns related to fair participation and opportunities for meaningful consultation and representation in the decision-making process. Concerns also relate to disregard for right to sovereignty and self-determination as well as threats to sites of cultural, spiritual and ancestral significance and way of life, especially for indigenous communities. Concerns can also relate to health and safety risks, real or perceived.

2. Economic impact – Concerns related to monetary impacts such as loss of property value and restricted economic activities (e.g. loss of revenues from agriculture and tourism). Concerns also relate to non-monetary impact such as adverse effects on aesthetics as well as access to sites for recreational purposes.

3. Environmental impact – Concerns related to threats to endangered species, protection of natural ecosystems and biodiversity. The concerns can get amplified if communities have a direct dependence on those ecosystems for their livelihoods or if the areas concerned have cultural significance.

4. Impact due to institutional uncertainty, complexity or conflict – Concerns due to the lack of legal or regulatory frameworks to adequately consider, address and defend communities' interests. These concerns can also stem from uncertainty, complexity or conflicting interests regarding jurisdictional authority between local, regional, federal, state or even intergovernmental bodies.

Addressing community concerns forms a vital part of the engagement approach to gain a social licence to operate and expedite project delivery, as illustrated by the findings of the ENSURE project, part of the Kopernikus initiative.¹³

CASE STUDY

How ReNew is upskilling women in rural India for the energy transition

The Little Rann of Kutch is a desert located in the state of Gujarat in India. During the six-month salt-farming season, over 17,000 salt farmers, mostly women, endure extreme temperatures to earn about \$120 a year by farming and selling salt. In June 2022, independent power producer ReNew launched Project Surya in collaboration with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), India, to propel female salt farmers into India's clean energy transition.

Through a mix of classroom and on-field training, women are trained as solar panel technicians through a course covering topics ranging from the basics of electricity and solar energy to digital skills and finance. These women can be employed in upcoming solar facilities in Gujarat, such as India's largest solar park.¹⁴ Employment can increase one woman's earnings to \$1,200 per year, improving the quality of life for many families and growing the local economy.

2

The basics: Three pillars for successful engagement

Community engagement has for a long time been an integral part of project development for energy and infrastructure companies. There is no singular template for it because of the many variables

involved and the unique social contexts. However, numerous learnings and best practices have been developed over the years, forming the basic building blocks for a successful engagement.

2.1 Understand and respect the local context

To effectively engage with impacted stakeholders, it is critical to understand and respect the social, economic, political and environmental landscape. Projects can encounter both strong advocates and fierce opposition because stakeholders perceive the benefits and impacts differently.

Mapping the stakeholders, their key concerns as well as potential impacts creates a foundation

to build a targeted approach that enables meaningful engagement practices. Listening to diverse perspectives from impacted groups and their representatives is essential for building an understanding of the local culture and communities' world views, and for establishing trust. Including local knowledge and priorities can improve the engagement process itself as well as the final project design, creating system value.

CASE STUDY

How local conservation groups' insights helped shape Lightsource bp's project

During the planning stages of Lightsource bp's Mokoan solar project in Australia, the company invited local community and conservation groups for consultations. The local Regent Honeyeater Conservation Group informed Lightsource bp of their ongoing work to improve habitat connectivity for regent honeyeaters (a native bird species that is listed as critically endangered at the state and federal levels and is on the IUCN Red List).¹⁵

The group expressed concern about the potential impact of the solar project on their work and highlighted that the development site had the potential to connect existing areas of habitat. Therefore, Lightsource bp amended the project layout to provide a wildlife corridor through the site. It designed habitat creation plans for the corridor in consultation with the group, selecting specific forage species to support the native fauna and ensure habitat connectivity. This example highlights the role local knowledge can play in shaping project development plans.



Regent Honeyeater

2.2 Engage early, continuously, meaningfully and transparently

Community engagement should occur throughout the project life cycle from early development to decommissioning. Meaningful consultations should begin early on when changes to the project plan are still possible. Engagement plans should address all stakeholders, including people directly impacted, traditionally underserved and excluded. Dialogues can focus on their concerns, needs and opportunities to mitigate impact and create community benefits. Communication should be clear, open, honest and provided at a suitable cadence for stakeholders to stay well-informed. Businesses should share project objectives, potential impacts and benefits using accessible language tailored to the audience.

Offering a variety of engagement methods and channels can increase participation and make it easier to gather input that positively shapes the

project early on. Beyond traditional outreach (e.g. forums, city council meetings and door-to-door interaction), digital tools can be effective solutions for sharing data and capturing feedback. Sharing real-time credible data can improve transparency and tackle misinformation. Similarly, making information available digitally can create more transparency about the project status across the permitting process, better informing local stakeholders and fostering a collaborative spirit.

Finally, establishing an inclusive and transparent framework to collect and evaluate input, make decisions and share feedback is useful. In case of conflicts and disputes, a clear, fair and independent resolution process is necessary. Feedback loops should be incorporated to monitor and improve both the process as well as the outcomes.

CASE STUDY

How Enel's early community engagement was key for delivering social value

The rapid development of solar projects is impacting numerous communities in Spain, with 26 solar parks constructed by Enel alone across 22 municipalities since 2019. Through community engagement, Enel has identified local employment as an opportunity to create shared value.

In collaboration with local governments and NGOs, Enel has created employment committees to establish a transparent process to prioritize employing local labour and using local

services during construction.¹⁶ In addition, training programmes for non-specialized workers guarantee that the entire non-technical labour need for the projects is met locally.

Since 2019, Enel has trained more than 1,526 people living near the solar parks and will train an additional 5,000 in the next three years.¹⁷ It is using the same approach in Italy and other countries where it operates.



2.3 Define a clear plan focused on delivering shared value

A shared value approach shapes projects in such a way that they generate value for those most affected while also being beneficial for the business.

Every infrastructure project introduces externalities and has an impact – either short or long term, temporary or permanent, and in distinct phases of the project life cycle. It is important to acknowledge, monitor and minimize these externalities.

Beyond minimizing negative impact, businesses should provide fair compensation where relevant and create a plan for sharing direct benefits¹⁸ as

well as indirect benefits.¹⁹ Several models for benefit sharing could be used, such as community benefits agreements (CBAs) that outline benefits like social investment funds, local hiring commitments and infrastructure development. Increasingly, companies are offering equity participation in projects.

Finally, distribution of benefits should be transparent. Shared value strategies must be adjusted and refined based on the evolving needs and dynamics of the community as the project progresses and as communities themselves change.

CASE STUDY

How Iberdrola's Convive programme contributes to local development

Iberdrola's Convive programme²⁰ has three main action areas: 1) contributing to socio-economic development; 2) protecting and enhancing biodiversity; and 3) improving the impact of renewables and the social acceptance of the energy transition through third-party partnerships.

The programme has delivered a range of outcomes. For example, it set up a solar energy community, Pueblo Solar Cedillo,²¹ in connection with the development of a utility-scale solar PV plant in Cedillo, Spain. The community is open to the local population of around 450 people as well as businesses. Participants can obtain up to 50% savings on their electricity bills while decarbonizing their consumption.



3

Call for action: Embracing a people-positive approach

Achieving the speed and scale of the energy transition in a responsible way requires a new approach. This includes evolving business strategies, encouraging cross-sectoral collaboration and developing new industry standards.

In addition to adhering to the pillars for successful engagement outlined in the previous chapter, below are some proactive steps businesses can take towards meaningful action:

3.1 Prioritize system value impact within the business strategy

Business leaders should embed system value impact into the company strategy, embracing it as a core value to lead by example. A top-down mandate acknowledging that this creates business value is necessary. For this to happen, all business areas within the organization need to be aligned and working towards a common goal, based on clearly defined company policies and procedures.

Traditionally, community engagement falls on the community relations or corporate social responsibility (CSR) units and is reported through performance on environmental, social and governance (ESG) metrics. Other business areas may not be aligned to the same principles and could even have conflicting performance

targets that may cause further misalignment. As an example, if the business development unit is assessed purely on the number of projects moved from development to construction phase, the unit would not have the right incentives to focus on community engagement and shared value creation. Similarly, if the procurement unit is assessed only on sourcing the lowest-cost suppliers, they would overlook opportunities to work with local or diverse suppliers. Regardless, balancing long-term engagement with project development milestones is just as important.

It is equally important to create a positive culture of transparency and willingness to share best practices and lessons learned across the organization.

CASE STUDY

How SSE embeds just transition into its overall business strategy

SSE's just transition strategy²² aligns business and net zero goals. It outlines 20 principles to promote a fair and just transition for workers, consumers and communities while transitioning from high-carbon activities to a net zero world. Of these, four principles focus on supporting communities during the transition: 1) Provide robust stakeholder consultation, 2) Form partnerships across sectors, 3) Promote further industrial development, and 4) Respect and record cultural heritage.

As an example of the first principle,²³ Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) Distribution, part of the SSE group, created an independent customer engagement group to help embed consumer and stakeholder views into its business plan and offer a robust challenge to proposals. The group will continue advising SSEN Distribution as an independent panel, providing rigorous scrutiny to ensure every consumer is considered and accounted for.

3.2 Leverage cross-sectoral collaboration to move towards a partnership approach with communities

Businesses have a role in providing concrete implementation models for policy to have the desired effect and lean on policy-makers to help guide “what good looks like” for their respective local, regional or national contexts. Here, policy-makers play a key role in creating frameworks to support inclusive ways of developing projects as well as ensuring communities fully realize the benefits.

Policy mechanisms such as the non-price criteria²⁴ in renewable energy auctions and industry guidelines, even if not legally binding, can help guide business decisions on developing projects with positive impact on people. Conversely, businesses can go beyond the statutory requirements and draw on their own best practices to create system value for all stakeholders in regions with weak institutions and/or regulatory frameworks.

Cross-sectoral collaboration can also be useful to widen community engagement towards a

partnership approach. Community groups can often be unaware of their rights in due processes, and lack the technical expertise or simply the resources to meaningfully participate in consultations. Governments, philanthropies and other organizations such as universities can help bridge this gap and support community engagement in inclusive decision-making. The Scottish government provides an impactful example of this with its Community and Renewable Energy Schemes (CARES), providing support for community groups that want to participate in shared ownership arrangements of renewable projects.²⁵

There is much to gain from a collaborative approach and often the missing component is a convening body to bring stakeholders together. Businesses are well-positioned to kick-start discussions that may evolve into mutually beneficial, long-term strategic partnerships with communities. However, wider collaboration with governments, philanthropy and other civil society groups is also needed.

CASE STUDY

How TP Renewable Microgrid is providing clean electricity to rural India

TP Renewable Microgrid, a whole-owned subsidiary of Tata Power, uses a shared value creation approach for community engagement. This creates an ecosystem enabling local communities to use the benefits of microgrids for overall socio-economic development, amplifying India's efforts to provide reliable and clean power to rural communities currently dependant on fossil-based power.

Through the programme, company representatives engage with social influencers, governments, local communities, village-level entrepreneurs, farmers and civil society groups to understand their needs. Solutions are designed in collaboration with technology innovators, skill development partners, philanthropic

organizations, financial institutions and other stakeholders to meet local communities' needs. This enables TP Renewable Microgrid to create a win-win situation: it can launch numerous initiatives to provide economic, environmental and social benefits to local communities, while ensuring that projects are smoothly installed, commissioned, operated and maintained.

TP Renewable Microgrid has commissioned renewable microgrids in 200 villages in northwest India with a consumer base of around 21,000. The microgrids save more than 3 million litres of diesel and reduce more than 8,000 tons of carbon dioxide annually while also impacting nearly 300,000 lives.

3.3 Work with other industry leaders to develop a framework for measuring people-positive impact

With new approaches, the clean power industry can accelerate infrastructure deployment in an equitable way. A first step would be for business to work closely with the broader ecosystem – including policy-makers, civil society, and philanthropic

and community groups – to agree on a common definition of “people-positive”. At the same time, a framework to measure and validate the impact of clean power infrastructure on people should be created.

BOX 2 People-positive

People-positivity is the concept of social sustainability that ensures that people’s well-being and social structures are safeguarded and restored while striving for – and even accelerating action towards – climate goals.

A people-positive approach could expand on the current concepts of equitable and just – which are often limited to energy access, affordability and economic development – to include local upskilling and job creation, engagement in the decision-

making process, as well as equitable distribution of benefits and burdens. It acknowledges that every project will have an impact on people.²⁶ The key element is the “net” idea of value creation, as for carbon neutrality and net-positivity for biodiversity strategies. In the context of social sustainability, it is critical that the benefits outweigh the costs and the burden for the affected people.

Source: Ørsted.

People-positivity needs a more comprehensive definition that could be widely agreed on and accepted by all relevant stakeholders. It could be used by the industry for addressing community engagement as well as by policy-makers for describing standards for their regions.

In addition, a common framework or methodology to measure the impact of a clean power project (or a portfolio of projects) on people could help align business and government on actions. Such a framework could help guide business decisions in improving the engagement process, creating appropriate compensation schemes and informing

the best opportunities for value creation. While broader metrics could focus on system value outcomes, there could also be metrics that are specific and relevant to the local context, potentially developed through consultations.

A commonly agreed definition of what a “people-positive” approach entails and a framework to validate it would help mitigate the risk of watering down equitable goals and commitments and using them for “social washing”. It would also create an objective basis for validating impacts and value creation instead of relying on self-proclaimed outcomes.

Conclusion

Better community engagement practices would help accelerate the energy transition through faster deployment of clean power infrastructure and result in more equitable and just outcomes for people and society. For example, this could mean job creation or shared economic value. Businesses also stand to benefit from reduced risk of opposition, elimination of bottlenecks and avoidance of costly delays. Communities' involvement can infuse projects with local knowledge to improve project plans. Public authorities, on their part, can get closer to achieving climate, energy security and economic development goals.

Community engagement is not a novel concept, having a long history of successes and missteps. However, societal expectations are evolving.

Today, the clean power infrastructure industry has an opportunity to do things differently and embrace a new people-positive approach. This transformation requires collaborative efforts across businesses, communities and the broader ecosystem, including policy-makers, NGOs, philanthropies and civil society groups.

As the clean energy transition continues to build momentum, bringing people along on this journey will be critical. A clear definition and a new framework for people-positive community engagement will be needed. For example, stakeholders have tools to measure and benchmark carbon impact. Replicating something similar on social impact could accelerate progress towards a just and equitable energy transition.



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