BACKGROUND INFORMATION DOCUMENT (BID)

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Proposed Construction and Operation of a New Telecommunication Guyed Mast Tower (Epinga Site) and Associated Activities in the Ohangwena Region - Application for Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC)

Proponent: **Mobile Telecommunications Limited**

Prepared by: **Serja Hydrogeo-Environmental Consultants CC**

(Appointed Environmental Assessment Practitioner / Consultant)

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mobile Telecommunications Limited (hereinafter referred to as MTC Namibia or the *Proponent*) proposes to construct and operate a 60m high guyed mast telecommunication tower in Epinga Village in the Ohangwena Region (*the project site).* The site is internally referred to by MTC as *Epinga Tower Site*.

The proposed tower is planned for a 9m x 9m project site (footprint) located at Epinga village, about 12km northeast of Eenhana Town in the Omundaungilo Constituency, Ohangwena Region (coordinates: -17.41079° 16.43748), under the Oukwanyama Traditional Authority. The locality map and land use map are shown in Figures 1 and 2, respectively.

1.1 Need for an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study

Telecommunication structures and related infrastructures are among the listed activities that may not be undertaken without an ECC under the Environmental Management Act (EMA) (2007) and its 2012 Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations.

The listed activities relevant to this project as per EIA regulations, are:

Listed Activity 10: Infrastructure

- *10.1 The construction of-*

  (g) Communication networks, including towers, telecommunication, and marine telecommunication lines and cables;

  (j) Masts of any material or type and any height, including those used for telecommunication broadcasting and radio transmission, but excluding - (i) flag poles and (ii) lightning conductor poles.

Subsequently, to comply with the EMA and its Regulations and ensure environmental management and sustainability, MTC Namibia appointed Serja Hydrogeo-Environmental Consultants CC (Serja Consultants), Independent Environmental Consultants, to apply for the ECC and conduct the required Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

The EIA process will entail a baseline assessment of the biophysical & social environment and public consultation. The findings of the EIA process are then incorporated into an EIA Report, and a Draft EMP will also be compiled for the proposed project activities. The ECC application is submitted to and registered with the Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT) as the Environmental Regulatory Authority.

Once the ECC is issued by the Environmental Commissioner, the Proponent will plan for the activities and thereafter commence with the tower construction activities and, subsequently, its operations and maintenance.

1.2 The Purpose of this Document

It should be noted that this <u>BID is not an EIA Report but a non-technical summary of the EIA process used to:</u>

- Share first-hand, summarized information of the proposed project activities.
- Provide public guidance and a basis for their participation from the beginning of the EIA process to register as interested and affected parties and raise issues/concerns.
- Register the ECC application on the Portal.

The information obtained from I&APs will then form the basis of the EIA Report and EMP to help the Regulatory Authorities (MEFT) make informed decisions and consider the issuance of the ECC.

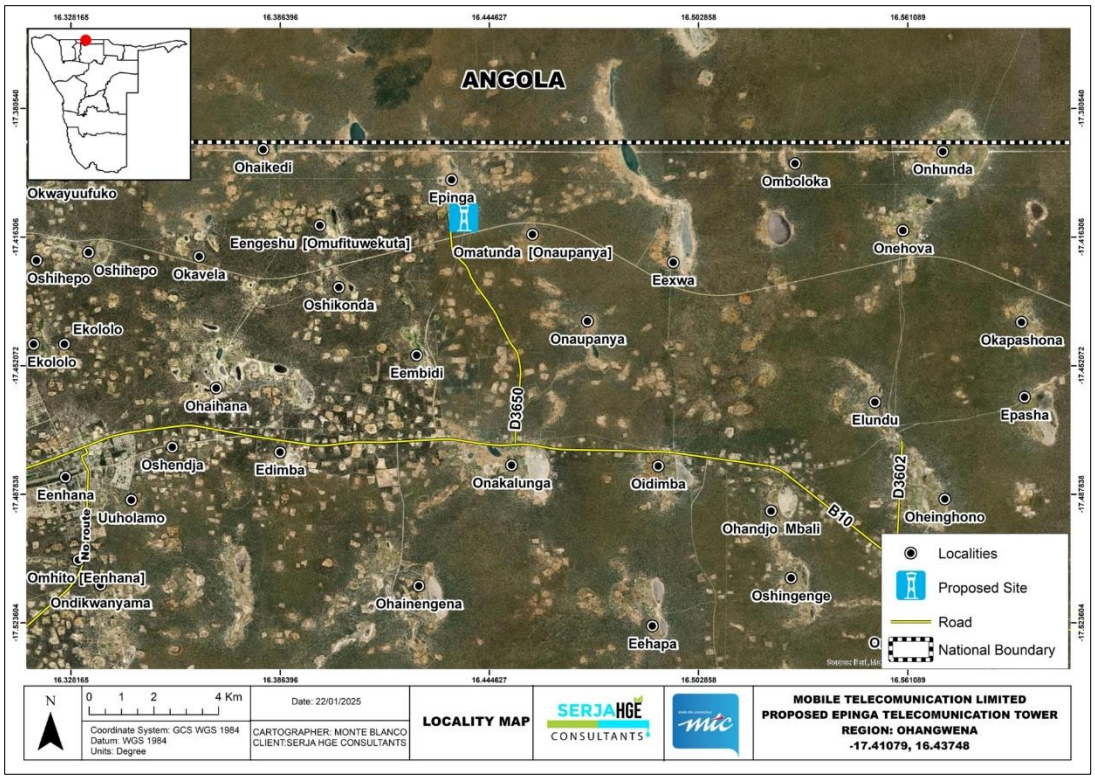

Figure 1: Locality map of the proposed MTC Epinga Site tower

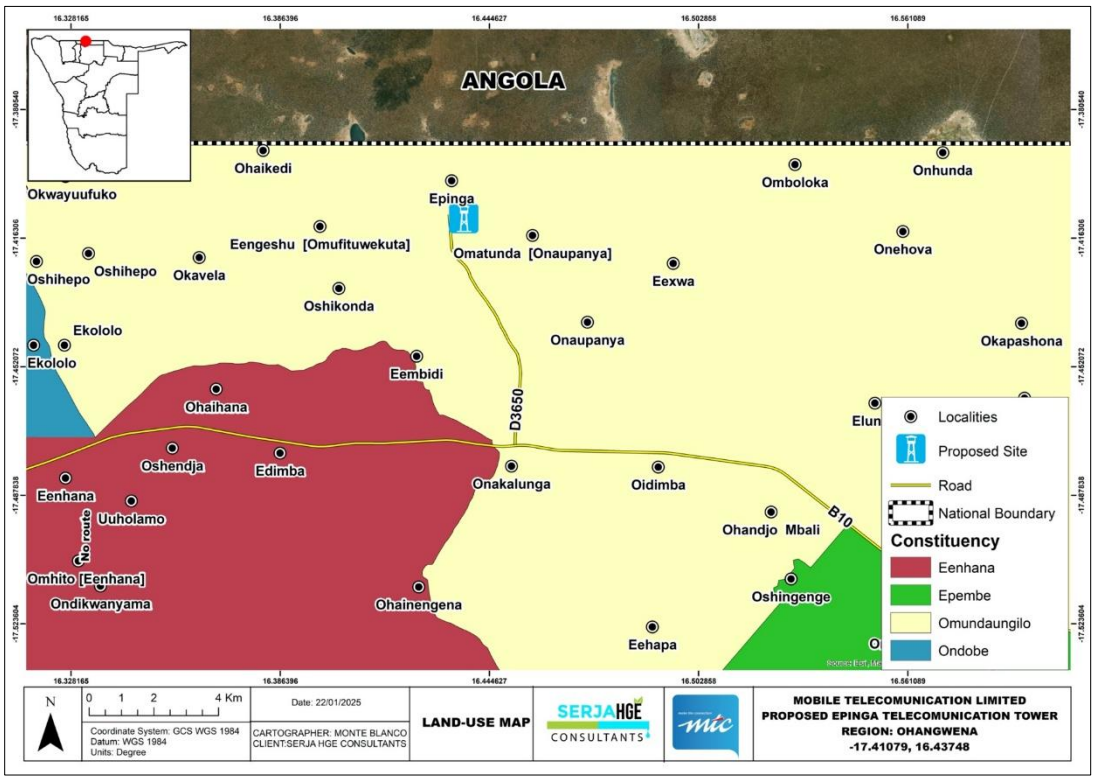

Figure 2: Epinga Site land use map

2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 Planning and Design

The selection of the tower site was based on Radio Access Network Rural coverage for both voice and data services. The design details of the proposed tower site are provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Design details for the Epinga Tower Site

Site	Tower Height	Antenna Type	Azimuth	Planned Power Output
Epinga	60m	3x Panels (the tower will have microwave dishes for transmission)	90/180/270 Degrees	G9, L8 20W, 40W

2.2 Construction Phase

Construction works for this project will include excavation, concrete civil works, and tower rigging. There will be minimal earthworks required to prepare the sites for the tower construction and installation. The construction of the concrete foundation for the tower will take place onsite by using manual labor as far as possible.

The construction work is anticipated to take 2 to 3 months, and the construction activities will be limited to normal working hours, i.e., 08h00 and 17h00.

For security purposes, the tower site will be fenced off to restrict access to authorized personnel (such as the maintenance team) only and prevent vandalism. A contractor will be appointed to carry out the tower construction/installation.

The appointed contractor will have to make arrangements for the logistics (including accommodation and transport to the construction site) of their workforce.

MTC and their appointed contractor for construction will be required to adhere to health, safety, and environmental requirements for construction and operation (as well as maintenance) to be presented in the Draft EMP for the project.

2.2.1 Required Resources and Services

The following services and infrastructure, as provided below, will be required for the project activities:

- Human resources and accommodation: The number of workers required for the construction of the tower and all logistics related to the workers will be determined by the contractor to be appointed for construction works once the ECC is issued.
- Accommodation: The construction contractor will be responsible for their private accommodation offsite.
- Water supply: although an insignificant amount of water is required during tower construction, minimal water will still be needed for in-situ concrete mixture (foundation casting) as well as drinking. This water will be sourced from the nearest water point, either by purchasing from the host premises or upon agreement with the nearest town or village Council.
- Power supply: electricity is not required during the construction stage of the tower, but only during the operational phase. The tower will be connected to the nearby power grid for the operational phase.
- Fuel Supply (machinery and equipment): There will be no onsite refueling of project vehicles, as this will be required to be done at the nearest fuel service stations.
- Accessibility (roads): The site is accessible via routes north of the D3650 road.
- Waste management: the different waste will be handled as follows:

-Sewage: A portable toilet will be provided on-site and emptied according to manufacturers' instructions.

-General and domestic waste: Solid waste containers will be made available onsite for waste storage and later proper disposal at the nearest certified Waste Disposal site.

-Hazardous waste: All vehicles, machinery, and fuel-consuming equipment on site will be provided with drip trays to capture potential fuel spills and waste oils.

The waste fuel/oils will be carefully stored in a standardized container to be disposed of at the nearest approved hazardous waste management facility.

- Health and Safety: Adequate and appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be provided to all project personnel while on and working at the site. A fully-equipped first aid kit will be readily available onsite.
- Potential Accidental Fire Outbreaks: A minimum of two well-serviced fire extinguishers will be readily available onsite.

2.3 Operations and Maintenance Phase

During this phase, the tower is operational and provides telecommunication signals to residents of the villages and settlements within the signal radius of the tower network. Tower maintenance will be carried out by the MTC maintenance team/department according to maintenance schedules, as and when necessary. MTC is required to adhere to environmental, health, and safety measures to be provided in the site Draft EMP.

3 POTENTIAL IMPACTS

3.1 Positive Impacts (Benefits)

-Creation of temporary jobs during the tower installation phase.

-Increase access to telecommunications by enhancing communications capabilities in the area

-Promotes technical expansion of businesses and institutions such as schools and local services due to improved access to reliable communication services

-Contributes to local economic development through increased access to telecommunications services for local amenities and social infrastructure in the area.

3.2 Adverse (Negative) impacts

-Physical land/soil disturbance resulting in compaction and erosion

-Environmental pollution (littering)

-Impact on archaeological and cultural heritage resources in the case of any archaeological and heritage finds onsite (inadvertent unearthing during site preparation/excavations).

-Potential health and safety risks associated with mishandling of construction and operations (and maintenance) equipment.

-Health and Safety issues related to Electromagnetic Radiation emitted from the antennae of cellular structures may affect human health.

-Civil Aviation concerns may arise regarding the height of the tower and the position and stability of transmitters concerning any civil aviation facilities in the tower's vicinity.

-Visual impact associated with the presence of the tower in the surroundings may be a nuisance to locals.

The above-listed potential impacts, as well as new issues that may arise from comments submitted by I&APs via emails and/or to be noted from the consultations, will be described/assessed and addressed in the EIA Report. The management and mitigation measures of these potential impacts will be provided in the Draft EMP for implementation.

4 THE EIA PROCESS STEPS

The following steps are followed for this EIA Study:

- Step 1: Project initiation - ECC application and registration at the DEAF, development of stakeholders list, and compilation of the BID.
- Step 2: Baseline assessment - Literature and legal review (desktop study) of applicable data sources.
- Step 3: Ongoing Public Consultation and facilitation (throughout the EIA process)

  The EIA notifications will be placed in two different newspapers *(The New Era and Windhoek Observer)* in March 2025 for two consecutive weeks.
- Step 4: Information sharing - Circulation of the BID to pre-identified I&APs and the public who request EIA registration.
- Step 5: Public consultation- Site visits and assessments, as well as neighborhood engagements and consultation engagements with relevant local authorities, will be held at locations near the proposed tower site in the Omundaungilo Constituency at the end of March 2025. Communication will be made to all registered stakeholders and I&APs, including neighbors to the site.
- Step 6: Compilation of the Draft Environmental Scoping Assessment Report and Environmental Management Plan (EMP) and Review of Documents.
- Step 7: Final Reporting and Submission of the EIA Report and EMP to the Environmental Commissioner at MEFT for evaluation and consideration of the ECC.
- Stage 8: Follow-up with MEFT on the status of the evaluation of the submitted EIA documents and decision on the ECC.

All the inputs, concerns, issues, and/or comments should be put **in writing** (email, short messages (SMS or WhatsApp), or handwritten letters) so that they may be considered in the Environmental Assessment Report as well as in the Draft EMP.

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4.1 Details for the Consultation and Engagement

Consultations and engagement for the project will be conducted at the end of March 2025 and communicated to all registered I&APs.

4.2 Deadline for Registration and Comments

The last date for registration as I&APs and or to submit comments, concerns, and issues is **before the end of the day on Thursday, 17 April 2025.**