

COMMENTS AND INPUTS FROM THE EIA CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENTS (EXTRACTED FROM THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING MINUTES)

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Study for the Proposed Construction of the New Oute River Bridge on District Road 3703 (DR3703) in the Kunene Region - Application for Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC)

The Summary of comments and issues that were made during the EIA consultation process is presented in Table 1.

Comments from the EIA consultation meeting at the Kunene Governor’s office in Opuwo on the 24th of March 2026

Table 1: Key Issues, suggestions, and comments received during the EIA consultation process for the Oute Bridge construction EIA in Tses Village

Aspect	Summary of impact or concern
Comments and Issues received or noted during the consultation period (in the consultation meetings)	
Proper management of public perceptions and ensuring transparency	The Kunene Region has had complex political dynamics. Thus, leaders will continue to manage perceptions carefully and ensure the process is transparent while still delivering a quality product.
Following proper communication channels throughout the project	Communication must always go through the Governor’s Office, which will convey the information to the Kunene Regional Council. Therefore, going forward, consultations and engagements should continue and avoid bypassing key stakeholders for the project.
Project support for the Region	The office of the Governor, the regional council, and the community highly support the project as it is long overdue to serve the communities.
The urgent need for a bridge across the river	That river crossing needs attention as it has many other small rivers that flow into it, and it has claimed lives since before independence.
The protection of known and unknown archaeological and cultural heritage resources on and around the project site	The protection of the community archaeological factor for the community, as there has been previously unearthed very old pottery in another project in the Region. There is an old grave, some 500 meters north of the river crossing,

Aspect	Summary of impact or concern
Waste management	Implement proper waste management. Minimise waste and provide a refuse site if needed. Dispose of hazardous waste (e.g., oil from machinery) correctly.
Employment opportunities for locals	Prioritise local employment. "Local" should mean the broader area/constituency, not just one village or certain households. Therefore, the contractor must avoid giving most jobs to members of the same family.
Respecting local traditional practices and rituals	Respect traditional rituals and consult spiritual/traditional leaders before key activities, such as drilling, can be undertaken. Thus, building a consensus to avoid disputes over cultural heritage matters.

The key comments and issues made during the EIA consultation process were recorded and noted as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Key Issues, suggestions, and comments received during the EIA consultation process for the Oute Bridge construction EIA in Tses Village

No.	Name of the speaker/commenter & Capacity	Comment/Issue/Suggestion	Response provided by:
1.	Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: Kunene Region Governor	Welcome. We are happy to be here because this bridge is a long-awaited asset for the region, something people have been praying for as long as I have been alive.	All in attendance: Thank you, Honourable Governor.
2.	Mr. Junias Set: Project Engineer	We have come today for a courtesy call to brief you on the project's progress, scope, and the environmental management requirements, including the public participation meeting scheduled for today at 14:30 with the two affected quadrant villages. Normally, we would channel everything through the Regional Council, but the process has changed. Your office (the Governor's Office) is now the primary point of contact for this project. In December 2025, we engaged the Regional Council, but it has since shifted here.	Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: Yes, that is how it should have always been.

No.	Name of the speaker/commenter & Capacity	Comment/Issue/Suggestion	Response provided by:
3.		<p>In December 2025, we conducted the site reconnaissance visit together with stakeholders and identified the bridge location. We have since completed the topographical survey and the hydrological study. This was followed by the preliminary design for the bridge, which was submitted to the project client (RA) and received approval. We have brought some drawings to share today.</p> <p>Just a brief bridge design overview, it is a standard beam bridge design, approximately 102m long with a total width of 13m, of which the carriageway will be 7m (3.5m per lane), plus shoulders.</p> <p>The hydrological study helped determine the required width and height of the bridge. We have also prepared the preliminary design. We are now moving into the detailed design phase, which includes geotechnical investigations, currently underway on-site. You will see the drilling team doing about 9 holes, each at least 15m deep, to identify potential barricade areas. The work started last week and will continue for the next two weeks.</p> <p>We are also identifying a suitable borrow pit for construction materials. A potential water source, a community borehole, east of the bridge site, is being investigated for yield, current use, and ownership.</p> <p>After the geotechnical work, we will finalise the structural aspects of the detailed design. We have not yet determined exact quantities or labour numbers, but based on experience from similar projects in the south (e.g., a 60m bridge that employed around 30–35 people depending on the phase), we expect significant but not permanent local employment opportunities. Workers will be on and off during construction.</p>	<p>Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: We have long awaited this bridge and strongly support it. The community is unlikely to oppose the project outright, but they will raise legitimate questions, such as: How many local people will be employed? And how will tenders and opportunities be distributed fairly, or why do the same people often get the contracts?</p> <p>These concerns are understandable, especially in a region with complex political dynamics. As leaders, we must manage perceptions carefully and ensure the process is transparent while still delivering a quality product.</p>

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		Construction is targeted to go out to tender within the next 3 months. Detailed design is expected to wrap up around April.	
4.	Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: Kunene Region Governor	This area has many political sensitivities and dynamics, and the reason Mr Truman is trying to be part of this meeting, or perhaps you invited him. Communication must now flow primarily through the Governor's Office, which will cascade information to the Regional Council as needed. I expect differences in views between institutions; that is normal in such environments. With that said, in no way am I saying the regional council is irrelevant; they are just as important as the office of the governor.	Mr. Komeya Ilishuwa: There was a misunderstanding about the time of the public engagement. Mr Truman and the affected constituency he represents heard of a meeting scheduled for 10:00 as they were mobilising the affected communities. We have cleared this with him: that is a completely different meeting for the governor, not the public engagement, still set for 14:30. Perhaps he mistook it for an invitation.
5.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: Environmental Assessment Practitioner	<p>The project requires an Environmental Clearance Certificate (ECC) from the Department of Environmental Affairs & Forestry (DEAF) of the MEFT. We have listed the triggering activities under the relevant regulations. The key elements include a site visit to identify potential positive and negative impacts, and a public consultation (today at 14:30) to gather community input.</p> <p>We will prepare two main reports: an EIA scoping Report and an Environmental Management Plan (EMP), a legal tool that sets out guidelines for construction activities. This EMP covers aspects such as working hours, PPE requirements, protected flora and fauna, waste management, areas not to be disturbed, compensation procedures, and, importantly, social aspects such as local employment, grazing land impacts, livestock watering points, and overall community livelihoods.</p>	<p>Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: My personal approach is consistent: what I say and believe during the day is the same at night. I am pro-development and have lobbied hard for this project. It will happen for the greater good of the region. No single individual or small group will be allowed to stand in its way, though we anticipate concerns and will address them.</p> <p>We must be prepared for the politics on the ground when taking on contracts in this region. However, the situation is stabilising, and I do not foresee major obstacles as long as the team does the right thing and maintains proper coordination.</p>

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		The goal is to maximise benefits for everyone while minimising and mitigating negative impacts where possible. Therefore, construction cannot start until the ECC is issued by the Environmental Commissioner.	
6.	Mr. Junias Set: Project Engineer	We will properly document stakeholder engagement, including photos where consent is given. We would appreciate having someone from your office present to support the process and help address community questions on the spot. Thank you for your time and guidance, Honourable. We look forward to your continued support to see this important project through.	Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: All information we share is public and transparent; there are no proxies or hidden agendas with me. I will join you myself for the community engagement later today.
7.	Hon. Vipuakuje Muharukua: Kunene Region Governor	How long will the meeting be? Can you just quickly set up an agenda with my secretary to ensure the meeting does not unnecessarily stretch on for too long?	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: We already have one in place. The brief in which we explain the project and why it needs an ECC should not take too long; however, the engagement part, in which we address the questions and concerns, usually cannot be anticipated and can go on for quite some time. This can range from 2 to 3 hours.

Comments from the Public Meeting at the Ohungumure EIA consultation meeting on the 24th of March 2026

No.	Name of the speaker/commenter & Capacity	Comment/Issue/Suggestion	Response provided by:
8.	Community Member 1	We are happy for this project and thank you for coming here to share this information with us. That river crossing needs attention as it has many other small rivers that flow into it, and it has claimed lives since before independence.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: Thank you, too, for the input. Duly noted.
9.		I would like to place emphasis on the archaeological factor to the community, as we have previously unearthed very old pottery in another project. In	Stefanus Johannes: Thank you for confirming this. We will make the necessary corrections.

No.	Name of the speaker/commenter & Capacity	Comment/Issue/Suggestion	Response provided by:
		addition, the river you are referring to as the Oute River is in fact the Hoarusib River, based on the national database.	
10.	Community Member 2	How far will the road/bridge extend, and how about the other river crossings between here and Opuwo?	Mr. Ismael Nehadi (Network Planning Division RA): I cannot really tell because my office has not received any information with regard to the small crossings before Oute; that is all I have insight into.
11.	Community Member 3	During construction, please divert the water flow so it can water our gardens on both sides of the bridge.	Hon. Western Uakaisiua Muharukua (Opuwo Rural Constituency Councillor). Before we move further, we should remember that we are gathered here to be enlightened on the negative and positive effects that the construction of this bridge will have on us. Let us come up with questions that are related to this topic and give the environmental consultants something to put in their reports.
12.	Chief Muharukua: Orotjitombo Area	There is an old grave, some 500 meters north of the river crossing, that we can show you. Apart from that, there is nothing along the road or river that might halt the project, so you may proceed. I also urge the community to prepare itself ahead of this project to be ready and place itself in a position to be able to work when the employment opportunities arise.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: The comment is highly appreciated, and well noted on the grave site near the project site. We will visit the grave site and mark it to map it so that a buffer zone can be established around it.
13.		Implement proper waste management. Minimise waste and provide a refuse site if needed. Dispose of hazardous waste (e.g., oil from machinery) correctly.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: Indeed. The waste will be sorted and temporarily stored at the site before it is disposed of at approved and appropriate municipal or recognised disposal sites. For instance, domestic/solid waste will be disposed of at a standard solid waste facility, and contaminated/hazardous waste will be disposed of at approved sites, such as the Kupferberg Landfill site in Windhoek. There is a very limited number of such facilities in the country. There will be no new unauthorised dumpsites near the project. All these measures will be included in the EMP.

No.	Name of the speaker/commenter & Capacity	Comment/Issue/Suggestion	Response provided by:
14.	Community Member 4	Prioritise local employment. "Local" should mean the broader area/constituency, not just one village or certain households. Avoid giving most jobs to members of the same families.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: Such a preference is possible, and fair to ensure that people from different families/homes/villages near the site can have a chance to benefit. This has been applied in other similar projects as well. It was agreed that this recommendation would be clearly communicated to the appointed contractor.
15.	Community Member 1	Respect traditional rituals and consult spiritual/traditional leaders before key activities (e.g., drilling). Build consensus to avoid disputes.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: This is highly appreciated and acknowledged for implementation. The team will consult relevant traditional authorities and incorporate cultural protocols where appropriate to ensure smooth implementation and community support.
16.	Hon. Western Uakaisiua Muharukua (Opuwo Rural constituency)	I am happy that all stakeholders are represented in this meeting: the EAPs, the consulting engineers, the RA, the Governor, the Kunene Regional Council, and TAs. This is how things should always be done to ensure smooth operations. I think we will agree that this engagement was a success based on the attendance of not just us but the community as well. Going forward, continue consultation and do not bypass key stakeholders. Thank you very much.	Mr. Stefanus Johannes: We strongly support and agree with you, Honourable Councillor. All future engagements will include these offices to maintain transparency and prevent tension.