



Atacama
CONSULTING

THE ATACAMA NEWSLETTER

Issue #001



Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of our 2024 newsletter!

In this edition, we highlight key strides within Atacama Consulting. We are delighted to share the move to our permanent home, the firm's growth over the years, and our recent participation in the Uganda Bankers Association conference. This newsletter also aims to create awareness among readers about our environmental and social services, and in this edition, we focus on stakeholder engagement during resettlement services.

For any inquiries or comments, please contact us via email: admin@atacama.co.ug

Also feel free to access the firm's newly revamped website: www.atacama.co.ug and social media platforms: X, Instagram, and LinkedIn, to get an insight into day-to-day developments at Atacama Consulting.

Enjoy this read!



Atacama Consulting Office Premises

We are pleased to inform you that Atacama Consulting now has a permanent home. As of 1st February 2024, Atacama Consulting offices shifted to Plot 15, Upper Naguru East Road, Naguru, Kampala Uganda. The postal address (P. O. BOX 12130, Kampala, Uganda), office telephone contact: +256 751090752 and email address: admin@atacama.co.ug remain the same.

The new office premises provide a spacious and nature-friendly environment that fosters efficiency and productivity among staff, while delivering environmental and social solutions to our clientele. The office is well equipped with modern amenities that facilitate, among others; teamwork, creativity, innovation, and virtual working arrangements.

In keeping with environmental and social sustainability, which are key ethos embedded in our operations, the office premises are equipped with solar panels to consistently meet the energy demands of the firm while at the same time contributing to the reduction of our carbon footprint.



New physical address:

Plot 15, Upper Naguru East Road, Naguru

P.O. Box 12130 Kampala, Uganda

Tel: +256 751090752

Email: admin@atacama.co.ug

Website: www.atacama.co.ug



Atacama Consulting Growth Journey



Atacama team building 2022

Since Atacama's inception in February 2005, the firm has remained committed to providing sustainable environmental and social solutions and these have been extended across diverse sectors which include: Energy, Transport Infrastructure, Agriculture and Forestry, Finance, Manufacturing, Telecommunications, Mining, Tourism and Health. To ensure quality and sustainability in its operations, the firm operates an Integrated Management System compliant with ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and ISO 45001 Management Systems. Furthermore, recognising the importance of data and information security as part of its operations, the firm has embarked on the process of attaining ISO 27001 (Information Security Management System) certification.

From operating under two technical units, these have grown to four technical units to ensure that the firm continually diversifies and specializes to ensure that we meet the needs and demand of our global clientele while remaining abreast of the globally evolving environmental and social sustainability landscape.

The technical units now include; Sustainability services, Social & Policy services, Impact Assessment services, and Resettlement services. These are supported by the Finance and Planning & Administration units. All these units are further supported by the Business Development, Information Security, Business Process Automation, and Integrated Management System (IMS) functions.

At the core of all the above is an intentional talent management and retention programme. Since 2012, Atacama has run a robust internship program, contributing to the development of a multi-talented and highly skilled team within the firm. This continuous addition of new talent has enabled the firm to maintain high levels of innovation and creativity in providing quality services while championing continuous professional education.

The firm has also built a strong network of associate consultants and established strategic partnerships with both local and international firms, allowing it to undertake large and complex projects, thereby growing in terms of staff and specialised skill sets. This growth has increased the diversity and capacity of the team to undertake any project at any given time in diverse locations.

Currently, the firm's footprint extends beyond East Africa to parts of Southern Africa, West Africa, and recently, South East Asia. The firm envisions expanding its horizon to other regions of the world.





Atacama Consulting Foundation

In March 2024, Atacama Consulting established the Atacama Consulting Foundation, the social impact arm of the firm. Through the Foundation, Atacama aims to engage in impactful social initiatives in the areas of education, health, waste management and community based natural resource management.

The foundation recently awarded five scholarships to students in the fields of Environmental Science, Technology & Management; Forestry; Environmental Science & Natural Resource Management; and Natural Resource Economics from four Ugandan Universities, namely: Makerere, Kyambogo, Gulu and Busitema.



Atacama Consulting Foundation Scholarship recipients standing next to Mr. Henry Semakula from the Ministry of Education & Sports

Navigating the Future of Banking: ESG, Sustainability and Digital Transformation

In an era marked by escalating population growth, unsustainable resource consumption, global climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, among other issues, sustainability has never been more relevant.

In emphasis of this urgency, the Worldwide Fund (WWF) predicts that we will require the resources of at least three planets by 2050, if the current trajectory persists. Therefore, the concept of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) emerges as a crucial tool to ensure the protection of the environment and organisational sustainability.

On 19th June 2024, Atacama Consulting participated in the 7th edition of the Uganda Bankers' Association (UBA) Annual Conference that took place at Kampala Serena Hotel, Kampala Uganda.

The theme of the conference was, **Navigating the Future of Banking: ESG, Sustainability and Digital Transformation**. The aim of the conference was to shine a light on sustainability through climate and environmental advocacy initiatives, encouraging the Finance sector to adopt more cautious and sustainable practices within their operations and embrace digital transformation across the industry.

As part of Atacama's participation in the conference, we authored a paper titled: "Seamlessly integrating ESG considerations into the Business Strategy: Balancing Short-term Financial Objectives with Long-term ESG Objectives and addressing ESG Concerns of different Stakeholders.

This paper can be accessed on the Uganda Bankers' Association (UBA) website:

<https://www.ugandabankers.org/annual-bankers-conference-magazines>



Images courtesy of Uganda Bankers Association

Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement during Resettlement Projects



The International Finance Corporation (IFC) Performance Standards define resettlement as both physical displacement (relocation or loss of shelter) and economic displacement (loss of assets or access to assets) that leads to loss of income sources or other means of livelihood. Resettlement usually occurs when land is required for the general good of the public, and the affected people have no right to refuse the acquisition of the land.

Resettlement is often a frightening experience for the Project Affected Persons (PAPs) and it is equally a challenging experience for all stakeholders, including the project developer. Many people tend to have a perception that it will involve counting their affected assets and receiving only cash compensation and a one size fits all livelihood restoration plan that they are enrolled on.

It is often said that perception is reality; this therefore calls for effective and continuous stakeholder engagement and consultation throughout the project life cycle as this can help shape the stakeholder's perception about a project.



The engagements should aim at information sharing with the stakeholders including receiving feedback from them as this can help demystify wrong perceptions about the resettlement process. Consultations should not be done as a mere tick box exercise but should aim at getting views from stakeholders and incorporating them in the various resettlement programs.

The consultations should facilitate a two-way flow of information and ideas. IFC Performance Standard 1 (PS1) states that, "For projects with potentially significant adverse impacts on affected communities, the project will conduct an Informed Consultation and Participation (ICP) process that will result in the informed participation of affected communities. ICP involves a more in-depth exchange of views and information and an organised and iterative consultation process, leading to the project incorporating into its decision-making process the views of stakeholders on matters that affect them directly, such as proposed mitigation measures, the sharing of development benefits and opportunities, and implementation issues.



While undertaking the consultations, views of vulnerable groups should be put into consideration. The vulnerable groups may include women, elderly, disabled, etc. as the context may determine. In some cultures, women may not freely express their views in general meetings that consist of both men and women, so it is highly advisable to conduct focus group discussions of only women and any other vulnerable groups so that their views are well captured.

It is also worth noting that women contribute the greatest percentage of family livelihoods in rural areas, therefore their views are crucial. In essence, there should be a consideration for a gendered approach towards stakeholder consultation and engagement.


There is often a tendency of engaging only stakeholders that are pro-project. However, it is equally important to engage stakeholders that oppose it. It is a responsibility to engage with all stakeholders, as this helps bridge the gap between the project and its critics. When the stakeholder engagement and consultations are done right, stakeholders feel engaged which builds trust and helps the project meet less resistance hence receiving the social license to operate.



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