

S1-2

**Namibia's Rural Electrification Programme 1991-2007:
Technology Choices and Institutional Arrangements**

Mr. Ralf Tobich, CEO

Utility Consulting Southern Africa, Namibia

Abstract

Namibia's national rural electrification programme commenced shortly after the country's independence in 1991, supported by foreign funding. With an initial focus on grid electrification of growth centres, the programme covered all larger towns and villages over the next 8 years.

In 1999, a Rural Electricity Distribution Master Plan was commissioned to prioritise electrification of the remaining smaller villages and settlements. SWER networks became a more prominent technology choice, and off-grid electrification options were increasingly considered.

Faced with a lack of institutional capacity to operate and maintain the new distribution networks, Government in 1995 outsourced this responsibility to a private operator in the most densely populated central northern regions. During its five-year term, Northern Electricity significantly improved service delivery and achieved unprecedented payment levels.