

## **Communication and Consultation - Rossing Uranium Mine**

The Rössing mine was first established in Namibia in 1976. Rössing's production currently accounts for 10.2 percent of Namibia's exports and contributes 1.9 percent to the gross domestic product. As one of the major investment projects in Namibia and a significant contributor to the Namibian economy during the early stages of the country's independence, the mine is historically, politically, and economically significant to the country.

The average length of service of its employees is approximately 14 years, and a significant percentage of employees have spent their entire career working for Rössing.

Rössing is currently assessing two options: expansion (that will considerably extend mine life) or closure. The communication program developed by Rössing to introduce the closure option serves as a model example for early communication through which an effective long-term communication strategy can evolve and a consultation process with regard to closure can ultimately be built.

Open house sessions were held in three towns where Rössing has a substantial presence: Arandis (residents), Swakopmund (business community), and Windhoek (government). Rössing committed three days in each town, and involved the participation of more than 30 Rössing senior employees with whom stakeholders could engage.

The environment impact assessment of the proposed expansion and closure was discussed. A follow up process is also in place with regard to establishing a more formal forum. This forum will meet on a routine basis for regular contact between Rössing and its stakeholders.

Key features of the communications approach adopted by Rössing include:

- **Timing:** Rössing seized an opportunity where closure could be introduced as merely an option in covering different aspects of the operation (expansion, environmental impact assessment). As a result, discussions on closure were held in a relatively positive environment rather than one dominated by fear, insecurity, and anxiety.
- **Taking information to the stakeholders:** By holding open day forums in its three primary areas of impact the company was seen to be proactive, transparent, and genuinely keen to engage and communicate with its stakeholders.
- **Involvement of Rössing employees:** By holding these forums not just with external stakeholders but also with its employees and union members Rössing established both an internal and external communication process.
- **Two-way process:** By involving more than 30 Rössing employees in the open house sessions an opportunity was provided for comprehensive two-way communication between stakeholders and company personnel.

- Following up on questions: Rössing followed up on questions either verbally or in writing when needed.
- Providing opportunities for the less vocal: Using an open house, in addition to presentations and questions, stakeholders were able to communicate one-on-one company personnel. This provided an avenue for the less vocal to express their views and concerns.
- Identification of stakeholders: By starting very early, Rössing has the opportunity of identifying representative stakeholders and has a strong chance of correctly identifying the “right” to participate in a consultation process.
- Building of a consultation process: This early broad-based communication process can serve as a forerunner in building a mature consultation process.
- Ownership of communication: Even though a professional company was contracted to design the materials and literature for the communication program, the program is wholly owned and managed by Rössing.
- Open and transparent: While specific stakeholders were specially targeted and invited to the open house sessions, it was also advertised in the local newspapers for any interested parties to attend.