



FIRST PEOPLES WORLDWIDE

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Doing Business in Conflict Zones

Since Kosmos Energy began offshore drilling in Western Sahara, the company has been criticized repeatedly for doing business in what many consider an illegally occupied country. The company's recent [response](#) to a disparaging [article](#) reads: "We are aware that some people do not support our project offshore Cap Boujdour—perfect consensus on an issue with so many competing interests is not possible. We are however not alone in believing that responsible resource development can improve living standards among, and create economic opportunity for, the local population by supporting private investment and job creation. The response from the local stakeholders that we met through our voluntary social impact assessment in the Western Sahara has been overwhelming positive, as they support foreign investment in an underdeveloped region. During these processes, we have conducted community outreach in Layounne and Boujdour and met with elected officials, business leaders, tribal leaders and representatives from civil society organizations, the tourism industry and the fishing community."

Kosmos should also disclose its approach to balancing the harshly conflicting interests of the Moroccan government—which asserts sovereignty over Western Sahara, and the Saharawi—who oppose Morocco's claims to their lands. The company should specify if and how the Saharawi are included in its community engagement processes, and how it's identifying appropriate Saharawi leaders with whom to engage.

Sources: [Business and Human Rights Resource Centre](#)

The Importance of Inclusive Engagement

A recent [article](#) published in *The Guardian* is accusing the Canadian government of “pushing First Nations to give up land rights for oil and gas profits.” The article cites private meetings between resource companies and the Assembly of First Nations, organized and funded by the government, that are reportedly sparking strong criticism from grassroots communities.

The style and nature of dialogue with Indigenous Peoples about resource extraction is often just as important as the dialogue itself. Private meetings with elite Indigenous leaders, without participation from grassroots communities, gives the impression that the government is trying to “buy off” chiefs, a tactic used to divide and conquer Indigenous Peoples throughout history in Canada and elsewhere. A more inclusive and transparent approach would likely yield less criticism.

Sources: [The Guardian](#)

The Cost of Ignoring Cleanup

Occidental Petroleum and five Achuar communities in Peru have reached an out-of-court settlement in which the company agreed to compensate the communities for three decades of alleged oil contamination. The amount of the settlement is undisclosed, but both parties are reportedly satisfied. The settlement relates to Occidental’s operations in Block 1-AB from 1971 until 2000, when the concession was sold to Pluspetrol. Pluspetrol has since experienced its own tumultuous disputes with the Achuar, [which escalated significantly in the past two months](#).

Indigenous resistance to resource extraction is often rooted in longstanding grievances with business practices that predate the emergence of corporate social responsibility. Rectifying these grievances, however old they may be, will often be a prerequisite for companies and communities to move forward with constructive relationships.

Sources: [Reuters](#)

ADB Considers Risky Loan

Indigenous leaders are raising objections to the Asian Development Bank's proposed loan to Sarawak Energy to finish construction of a high voltage transmission line in Borneo. The company allegedly failed to consult or compensate communities along the line's route. Additionally, the line is associated with controversial hydroelectric dams being constructed by the company, some of which have been suspended for months at a time due to protests. It is worth questioning whether Sarawak Energy's sustained record of poor social risk management in Borneo would affect the terms and conditions tied to this loan.

Sources: [World-wire](#)

Thousands Evicted for Clean Energy and Tourism

Thousands of Maasai pastoralists in Kenya and Tanzania are being forced off their lands at gunpoint by their respective governments. In Kenya, the evictions are intended to make way for geothermal energy projects, while in Tanzania, they are associated with Ortello Business Corporation, a luxury hunting company based in the United Arab Emirates with close ties to the ruling family of Dubai. Most conversations about Indigenous Peoples and corporations revolve around the oil, gas, and mining sectors, but it's important not to neglect other industries (in this case, "clean" energy and tourism) that can be responsible for abysmal violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Sources: [Cultural Survival](#), [Ecologist](#)

Navajo Residents Question Oil Drilling

Residents of the Navajo Nation are questioning whether federal and tribal officials are adequately regulating oil drilling in the San Juan Basin. Their grievances are both environmental and economic; despite vast amounts of energy produced on the reservation, about 15,000 homes remain without electricity. There are also concerns about hundreds of new wells being drilled along the reservation's eastern border, where the tribe has no jurisdiction. If the industry does not improve community engagement in the San Juan Basin, it risks amplifying

tribal participation in [broader efforts to thwart oil drilling in the region](#). Companies active on or near the reservation include ConocoPhillips, Energen, ExxonMobil, Kinder Morgan, and WPX.

Sources: [Indian Country Today](#), [Indian Country Today](#)

IADB Land Titling Project Criticized

An \$80 million land titling project in Peru is being criticized for fueling deforestation and land conflicts with Indigenous Peoples. The project, which is funded by the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), will award over 700,000 individual land titles to migrant farmers, despite the prevalence of unrecognized Indigenous territories in the country. The Asociación Interétnico de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana (AIDESEP) sent a petition to the government demanding formal consultations before the project proceeds. In response, the government and the IADB announced that they will “redesign the project and recommend that the titling of Indigenous lands is prioritized.” AIDESEP intends to file a complaint with the IADB if their grievances are not addressed.

Insecure land tenure is one of the greatest drivers of risk to corporations operating on or near Indigenous territories, but most governments’ efforts to address the issue are either dysfunctional or inconsistent with international law. Companies should use their influence with governments to promote better policies and greater allocation of resources to titling and protecting Indigenous territories.

Sources: [Forest Peoples Programme](#)